Introduction

Most Christians believe in Jesus’ resurrection, which is held to be the foundation of Christian faith because of its confirmation of God’s revelation and His breaking into history. Jesus’ resurrection is the surest sign of God’s entering history to redeem humanity from sin and death. In this paradigm of God entering human history, Jesus’ resurrection refers to his exaltation – indeed, his resurrection is viewed throughout the New Testament as a symbol of exaltation. As Pheme Perkins says, “The early Christian kerygma stands or falls with the resurrection, since exaltation forms the foundation of the confession that Jesus is Lord.” The Easter event is the foundation of Christian faith.

The historicity of Jesus’ resurrection began to be questioned, however, with the advent of seventeenth-century rationalism, and in the post-Enlightenment world, Jesus’ resurrection was regarded as either part of the superstition and deception that reason should liberate humanity from or as merely a theological event that was outside of history. Scholars attempt to illustrate the theological meaning of Jesus’ resurrection apart from its historicity. Some scholars who believe that Jesus’ resurrection is a symbol of exaltation do not even distinguish his resurrection from his ascension. Margaret Barker, citing the Gospel of Philip, boldly stated that Jesus’ original “rising” occurred at his baptism and Jesus’ resurrection was not historical but only the mystical experience of entering the presence of God after his baptism. That means that the resurrection as a symbol of his exaltation as the son of God occurred before his death. In this approach, the resurrection as a historical fact disappears. Others believe that the traditions of exaltation and resurrection are independent. According to Edward Schillebeeckx, the language of exaltation is best suited to the expectation of Jesus’ second coming at the parousia. For him, it is even possible to speak of Jesus’ exaltation as

3 They suggest that resurrection and ascension are two ways of the same thing. Douglas Farrow, however, criticizes this idea. See Douglas Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia: On the Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).
5 Perkins, 20.
his return to the Father and his sending the Spirit without referring to his resurrection.  

Here, Jesus’ resurrection is not viewed as a historical event but only as a theological event, despite the fact that, as Daniel P. Fuller states, “there can be no question that the New Testament regards the resurrection as an historical event.” Jesus’ resurrection is simply regarded as the product of the primitive Christian community. The question, then, is how the early Christians could turn so quickly to the belief in Jesus’ second coming in light of the experience of Jesus’ crucifixion. If Jesus’ resurrection is not seen as a historical event, there is no way to account for the origin of the early church. Thus, if Jesus was not resurrected, the interpretation of the realized Kingdom of God would appear to run into a major difficulty. What else can confirm the realization of the Kingdom of God if the resurrection is not a historical event? If Jesus’ resurrection and history are not linked, the theology of the realized Kingdom of God – which is affirmed by Jesus’ resurrection – lacks persuasiveness. Alternatively, a synthesis of theology and ethics can be found in the optimism regarding improvement and the passion for progress. As Abraham van de Beek comments, when Hegelian philosophy changed the focus to history as process, the Kingdom of God became an explicit issue. Christians could summarize the aim of history and promote an optimistic view of history in the theological formula of the Kingdom of God. However, such an anthropocentric understanding of history is unable to give meaning to eschatology as the doctrine of the last things. Even many of others who regard Jesus’ resurrection as a historical event believe it is blasphemous or impossible to subject it to historical investigation. As a result, neither a refined concept of the Kingdom of God nor an eschatology that could successfully function as a theology of hope can be developed.

Likewise, in the modern discourse on the Kingdom of God, theologians made the apparent error of intentionally isolating the theological meaning of Jesus’ resurrection from the resurrection narratives that describe it as a historical event. If the Kingdom of God has to do with history then so does Jesus’ resurrection. If reflection on history intensifies the concept of the Kingdom of God, the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection should not be
disregarded because Jesus’ resurrection as the sign of his exaltation and of the realization of the Kingdom helps us see the meaning and purpose of history. Jesus’ resurrection is the point where the meaning of the Kingdom meets the goal of history. Jesus’ resurrection must somehow define the concept of the Kingdom of God in relation to the meaning and goal of history.

It is therefore necessary to define the nature of Jesus’ resurrection for the understanding of history in the light of the realized Kingdom of God. This work assumes that Jesus’ resurrection is the sign of that realization and hence that the concept of the Kingdom of God changes when the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection is discounted. The title of this work, *The Eschatological Meaning of Jesus’ Resurrection as a Historical Event,* reflects the attempt to show how the two elements of Jesus’ resurrection, namely history and theology, are linked. The Christian belief in Jesus’ resurrection has to do with the invisible world of God and at the same time with the empirical world of human beings and things.9 Thus, my main concern is to explain the relation between the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection and its theological meaning, which is distinctly eschatological.

**A. Research Questions**

My study of Jesus’ resurrection entails two complex questions pertaining to the relationship between historical and theological matters. First, can we probe the historical reality of Jesus’ resurrection? Second, what theological meaning is grounded specifically in the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection? I refer to the former as the “why” question because it has to do with why Jesus’ resurrection should be subject to historical investigation. The latter is the “what” question: What is the theological meaning of Jesus’ resurrection? Theologians have mainly attempted to answer these questions by separating the historical facts from the theological meaning of the resurrection.

But because Jesus is a part of history and this historicity is believed to be crucial with respect to truth, all formulas of faith about Jesus himself require historical examination. The relation between belief in the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection and its theological meaning and the relation between the historical evidence and faith must be examined. To

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fully investigate that relation, this work will address the following five sub-questions:

1. Is belief in Jesus’ resurrection compatible with historical reality?
2. What is the nature of Jesus’ resurrected body?
3. What is the role of the resurrection within the N.T. idea of salvation?
4. What is the nature of the realized Kingdom of God?
5. What is the eschatological hope that is affirmed by the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection?

The first two questions focus on the historical reality and corporeality of Jesus’ resurrection, whereas the other three explore the theological implications of Jesus’ resurrection. To explain these questions more fully, I will give an overview of the ambivalence surrounding the question of faith and reason introduced by Enlightenment rationalism in Part I. I address the problem of faith and historical reality. In Part II I explore the theological meaning(s) directly implied by the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection and will look at the modern eschatological discourse on the Kingdom of God in relation to the theological meaning of Jesus’ resurrection.

Indeed, both the chronological problem and the metaphysical difficulty or existential problem can be posited as issues with respect to the problem of faith and the historical reality of Jesus’ resurrection. While the chronological difficulty is found in the distance of the present from the past, the metaphysical difficulty lies in the question how an accidental event of history can be reconciled with rational truth. The latter is an existential problem that questions the relevance of such an outdated message in the modern scientific world. Likewise, the theological meaning of Jesus’ resurrection is intrinsically related to its historical factuality.

Therefore, the fact that all questions are being treated separately in their respective chapters does not mean that the research questions are separate questions as such. Indeed, they are interrelated. Although we distinguish between two main research questions, i.e. the “why” and the “what” questions, they are not separate issues. The five sub-questions present a means of combining history and theology in relation to Jesus’ resurrection by emphasizing the corporeality of Jesus’ resurrection as the symbol of the realized Kingdom of God. This book, therefore, reexamines eschatology in the light of Jesus’ resurrection as a historical event and the nature of the Kingdom of God.

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10 For these issues as posited by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, see Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology* (MA: Blackwell, 2007), 308-10; hereafter *Christian Theology*. 
B. Justification for this Study

This study compares W. Pannenberg and N.T. Wright on the relationship between history and the theological meaning of Jesus’ resurrection. The most significant reasons for focusing on these scholars are the parallels in their discussion of the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection and the contribution that the work of each scholar may make to that of the other. As to the parallels, both Pannenberg and Wright agree that Jesus’ resurrection should be brought into public discussion and subjected to historical investigation. They challenge modern historians’ presuppositions, attempt to find a way to overcome the methodological limitations and to close the gap between the *historical Jesus* and the *kerygmatic Jesus*, a result ardently desired by post-Enlightenment scholars. Second, both emphasize the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection as a means of bridging the gap between theology and history. For both, the theological meaning of Jesus’ resurrection depends on its historicity. Third, their placement of Jesus’ resurrection at the core of their theology reshapes their eschatology, which defines Jesus’ resurrection as the sign of the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Their view of Jesus’ resurrection as an eschatological event contrasts with the position of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann who define theology as an eschatological endeavor. For Pannenberg and Wright, the Kingdom of God has been realized, but it is still awaiting completion.

With respect to comparing systematic theologians and NT scholars, Pannenberg can be seen as the counterpart to Wright because Wright challenges systematic theologians to apply biblical and historical resources to their own research. Pannenberg is one of the most encyclopedic scholars, not only in his examination of the theological tradition but also in his adoption of many results that biblical exegesis has arrived at. Theology should be combined with history and systematic theology with exegesis. If Pannenberg has revitalized the traditional subjects of dogmatic eschatology with regard to Jesus’ resurrection, Wright advances the exegetical proof for the eschatology that is implied by Jesus’ resurrection.

Therefore, it is valuable to compare the work of both scholars, not only because their work provides an understanding of each and identifies the strengths and weaknesses in their

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11 In his review of Wright’s *Evil and the Justice of God*, James R.A. Merrick of the University of Aberdeen observes interesting parallels to Pannenberg. He notes that Wright and Pannenberg situate the problem of evil within an eschatological framework in which the solution is contingent on the historical working out of God’s redemption of humankind.

12 Their challenging arguments are very significant when we note that, even though eschatology has been the main issue in discussions on the historical Jesus and in the hermeneutics of the Bible since the nineteenth century, Jesus’ resurrection has not been a focus of eschatological studies.
theology but also because a combination of the thought of a systematic theologian and a biblical theologian on Jesus’ resurrection supports and enriches their ideas on eschatology. In comparing their work, we can determine how a systematic theologian’s eschatological formula accords with a New Testament scholar’s historical conviction regarding Jesus’ bodily resurrection.

C. Outline of the Work

This work first summarizes Pannenberg’s and Wright’s thematic positions according to the five research questions by concentrating on an analysis of the relevant themes and their theological implications. Part I consists of two chapters that compare these two scholars on the first two research questions and one concluding, evaluative chapter. Part II is comprised of three chapters on the remaining questions, and one chapter that explores anew the theological issues in those chapters. My purpose in this comparison is not simply to identify their similarities and dissimilarities by examining their entire theology but to relate their thematic ideas to the research questions. Designating their respective eschatological thinking as proleptic (Pannenberg) and inaugurated (Wright) eschatology, I define the inauguration of the Kingdom of God as calling and inviting the people of God to live their present earthly lives under the lordship of Jesus as confirmed by his resurrection. Throughout the book I will emphasize the contribution Pannenberg and Wright have made to the centrality of Jesus’ resurrection to eschatology.
Part I

Can Jesus’ Resurrection be Proven to be a Historical Event?
Introduction

Jesus’ resurrection always seems to be linked to the two main questions of why and what. This part will examine the why question, i.e. why Jesus’ resurrection can be treated as a historical event. The challenge in examining the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection is first of all a matter of balancing faith and the historical reality of Jesus’ resurrection. The first chapter, therefore, introduces Pannenberg and Wright’s concept of reality. The second chapter looks at how Pannenberg and Wright’s understanding of Jesus’ resurrection reflects its historicity. The main issue in the second chapter is the nature of Jesus’ resurrected body, because the corporeality of the resurrection defines its historicity. We will learn how to define the Jewish concept of resurrection and apply it to Jesus’ resurrection.

In this part, we will see how they respond to the separation of theology from history and warn against the inclination to treat Jesus’ resurrection only theologically or only historically. Before proceeding to the main subject, we need to have a general idea of the different ways in which theologians in general have bridged the gap between faith and reason, the opposing positions on the historical examination of Jesus’ resurrection.

A. The Post-Enlightenment Position of No Compatibility

The clash between faith and historical reality intensified in the post-Enlightenment world with the development of the modern scientific view that natural law does not allow for miracles, in particular Jesus’ bodily resurrection.

René Descartes (1596–1650) challenged individuals to obtain certainty by doubting everything, while Isaac Newton (1643–1727) reduced the workings of nature to mathematical formulas in a way that led to the conclusion that the world was simply like a perfectly functioning clock.1 Nature was understood to be perfect when God created it and subsequently continued to run by itself. The reduction of nature to mathematical formulas and the belief in deism, a view that argued that a perfect God set a perfect world in motion,

1 The publication of Isaac Newton’s Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy (1687) ushered in the era of confidence in the intellectual ability of humans to understand and order their environments.
became widespread. It was argued that authority depended neither on the Bible nor on the church but on human reason, \(^2\) which was believed to make humanity capable of discerning what God had done. In the post-Enlightenment world, reason was the supreme authority since it was believed to have endowed all humanity with the fundamental possibility of knowledge and of developing the world. In this context traditional beliefs in the Bible were challenged, which intensified the gap between faith and reason. Jesus’ resurrection as a historical event was denied by scholars like Reimarus, Schleiermacher, Hegel, and Bultmann. The historicity of Jesus’ resurrection was no longer an accredited theme on which the authority of Christianity could rest.

There are three different possible stances on the incompatibility of faith and reason in relation to Jesus’ resurrection. The first position is illustrated by Reimarus’ skepticism regarding Christianity because of the non-historicity of Jesus’ resurrection. The second stance is represented by Lessing, Kant, and Barth’s conviction that Jesus’ resurrection was historical but should not be a subject of historical investigation. It is history, but at the same time it is beyond historical investigation. Like the separation of authority from history, the last position on the gap between faith and reason follows the view of Schleiermacher and Bultmann that the question of the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection is not a problem. That it may not have happened historically does not detract from its authority. Truth does not depend upon such a contingent historical event. All three positions separate the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection from the authority of the Christian faith.

1. **No Historical Event, No True Religion!**

In the anti-supernatural climate of the age of reason, Hermann S. Reimarus (1694–1768), a Hamburg scholar, had difficulty accepting the occurrence of miracles, especially Jesus’ resurrection. \(^3\) According to Reimarus’ reconstructed scenario, the resurrection of Jesus was

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\(^2\) According to Hans Küng, during that time “the place of original certainty has been transferred from God to human beings.” Hans Küng, *Christianity: Its Essence and History* (trs. John Bowden, London: SCM, 1995), 671; hereafter Küng. But Küng does not view Jesus’ resurrection as a general historical event that can be examined by historical investigation.

\(^3\) Reimarus sees the story of the Israelites passing through the Red Sea as one of the most inventive stories in the Bible. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (trs. W. Montgomery, London: A. & C. Black, 1910), 15; hereafter Schweitzer. Colin Brown comments correctly that it was English deism that leads Reimarus
invented by Jesus’ disciples to fulfill their common wants and interests. Embarking on a historical quest, he argued that first-century Jews espoused an erroneous religion and that Jesus came to bring them the right one. To Reimarus, Jesus seemed to be nothing more than a Jewish revolutionary, the Messiah of a worldly kingdom of heaven, but he was shown to be a failure by his death on the cross. According to him, Christian faith that was not grounded in historical fact could not hold any authority. He argued that there were a mass of contradictions present in Jesus himself and that his disciples in the New Testament do not affirm Christianity to be the only true religion.

Deploring the denial of reason in the pulpit, Reimarus argued that a revelation that all people have good grounds for believing was impossible. In this context of the post-Enlightenment world, Christianity could not be regarded as a true religion because it was not rooted in historical fact.

Reimarus’ appeal to use historical facts as a criterion for the authority of the Christian faith was immediately attacked by his contemporaries. They argued that Jesus’ resurrection was historical but beyond historical verification and that religious truth should not depend on an accidental event but on rational inevitability.

2. A Historical Event beyond Historical Verification

Gotthold Lessing (1729–1781), who collected Reimarus’ works, disagreed with Reimarus’ historical skepticism and affirmed that religion need not depend on the objective facts of history. Because miracles such as Jesus’ resurrection lost their power the moment they were reported to others, Christian truth cannot be demonstrated by reported miracles. So Lessing called the gap between accidental truths of history and reason “the ugly broad ditch.” That

to the strong position of anti-supernaturalism. See Colin Brown, Jesus in European Thought, 1778-1860 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), especially chapters 3-5.


5 Reimarus argues that evidence or testimony as to the divinity of Jesus in the gospels was faked by the disciples and early Christians. Such conceptions of Jesus in the gospels were written retrospectively in a disappointed apocalyptic expectation of an imminent end, and even the story of the resurrection was faked. See Reimarus, 13-31. Based on this scenario, i.e. that, the disciples made use of Jesus’ life and death for their own interests even though Jesus failed to bring the Kingdom, Reimarus came to the conclusion that a Christianity that was not based on the real Jesus of Nazareth was unreasonable.

6 D.P. Fuller, 34-5.
means that Christianity cannot rely on the accidental truths of history but must be based on the necessary truths of reason that all people already possess in their souls. Even if Lessing believed Jesus rose from the dead as a historical fact, he refused to base the truth of Christianity on a demonstrable fact. He himself had no objection to the historicity of the resurrection because, as a historical event, the resurrection involves knowledge of the deity of Jesus. He does emphasize, however, that there is an ugly, broad ditch between accidental truths of history and the necessary truths of reason that we cannot cross.

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) followed Lessing in his radical confirmation of the disjunction between faith and history. According to Kant, the empirical stuff of history is incapable of conveying eternal truth because eternal truth can be known only in the depths of one’s own soul by the use of practical reason. The pure religious faith that can found a universal church can only be a rational faith that can be shared by everyone. Historical faith on its own, however, is dead because it “can extend its influence no further than tidings of it can reach, subject to circumstances of time and place and dependent upon the capacity (of men) to judge the credibility of such tidings.”

Historical faith “contains nothing, and leads to nothing, which could have any moral value for us.” The supernatural features of Jesus’ resurrection and ascension cannot be used in the interest of religion within the limits of reason alone without doing violence to their historical valuation. Historical faith that is grounded solely on facts or history contributes nothing to the final purpose of reading Scripture. The purpose of reading the Bible is to discover its instruction for the church, and only moral faith can make people holy “as their Father in Heaven is holy” and prove its authenticity through a good ethical life. On this basis, Kant claims that the faith of the church is not a historical faith but the faith of every individual who possesses the moral capacity for eternal happiness – that is saving power. Understanding supernatural events merely as ideas of reason would violate universal law. Likewise, Lessing’s Christianity as a religion of reason merges into Kant’s religion of practical reason motivated by a categorical imperative.

Employing the distinction between two German words – Historie and Geschichte – Martin Kähler argued that nothing regarding Jesus’ resurrection can be known through the application of the historical (historisch) method because Historie reduces the Jesus of the

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7 D.P. Fuller, 36.
9 Limits of Reason, 102.
10 Limits of Reason, 119.
gospels to a human analogy. When Kähler states that Jesus’ resurrection is historical, he does not mean that it is a general historical event itself but only an interpreted one, namely, geschichtlich. Kähler’s emphasis on Geschichte maximizes the disjunction between historical faith and event as espoused previously by Lessing and Kant who felt that the church had to celebrate the Jesus of the gospels in the preaching of the apostles and not the historical Jesus.¹¹

Karl Barth subsequently holds the view that Jesus’ resurrection belongs to a higher stratum of history. According to him, there is no worldly analogy to God’s salvific events that historical examination can rely on. Because Christ’s death on the cross is a historical (historisch) fact while Jesus’ resurrection is geschichtlich, Jesus’ death and resurrection belong to different strata of history and cannot be examined in terms of historical analogy. According to Barth, Jesus’ resurrection is the revelation that discloses Jesus as the Christ. Nonetheless, revelation through Jesus’ resurrection “touches the world of the flesh, but touches it as a tangent touches a circle, that is, without touching it.”¹² Therefore, although, in Barth’s view, the resurrection took place about two thousand years ago outside the gates of Jerusalem, it is not history at all.¹³ Barth rejects a revelation that arises out of history as the realization of a general possibility. Barth took over Overbeck’s term “primal history,” Urgeschichte, to define the concept of Jesus’ resurrection as an occurrence in history. For Barth, redemptive history belongs to Urgeschichte, which is not subject to historical research but only to faith graciously given by God Himself. According to Barth, there is a history between God and the world, but “this history has no independent signification”¹⁴ because “that other to which God stands in relationship, in an actuality which can neither be suspended nor dissolved, is not simply and directly the created world.”¹⁵ Historical events are part of the primal history that is the basis of all other history. For Barth, since all events result from the primal history, “it attains its goal as this primal history attains its goal.”¹⁶ As

¹³ The Epistle to the Romans, 30.
¹⁴ Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics II/2, 8 (trs. G. W. Bromiley et al., Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 634; hereafter CD.
¹⁵ CD II/2, 7.
¹⁶ CD II/2, 8. The primal history underlies and “is the goal of the whole history of His relationship ad extra, with the creation and man in general, as the history of this covenant” (CD II/2, 8-9).
Barth elaborates:

In the beginning, before time and space as we know them, before creation, before there was any reality distinct from God which could be the object of the love of God or the setting for His acts of freedom. ... [He] anticipated and determined within Himself ... that the goal and meaning of all His dealings with the as yet not-existence universe should be the fact that in His Son He would be gracious towards man, uniting Himself with him.  

Jason M. Curtis therefore comments that the term Urgeschichte concerns “several realities including the incarnation, the divine eternal decision that precedes this event, creation, and the resurrection.” In this context, revelation in Jesus’ resurrection as the appearance of God cannot belong to general history but only to primal history. On this basis, as Robert W. Jenson points out, Barth denied throughout his Church Dogmatics that “any temporal event, even those of the saving history or those that constitute the church, could be ‘eschatological’.” For Barth, it was not the temporal events that were to be emphasized, but the meaning of the events – that is what mattered and were revelatory.

Jürgen Moltmann criticizes Barth for individualizing theology and accuses him of “Gnosticism.” Nonetheless, he seems to hold the same view. Even though Moltmann viewed historical inquiry as the basis for a Christology based on the resurrection, his concept of history in relation to Jesus’ resurrection is peculiar. For Moltmann as well, the resurrection of Jesus does not speak the “language of facts” but “only the language of faith and hope, that is, the ‘language of promise’.” Then, the cross and resurrection belong to different levels of history in Moltmann’s view. Indeed, Moltmann’s criticism of Kähler’s concept of two different strata of history is caught in the same trap. And his critique of Barth’s view as Gnostic applies to Moltmann himself as well.

Likewise, a moderate dispute regarding the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Jesus of the gospels represented by the above theologians defines the resurrection as a historical

17 CD II/2, 101.
18 Jason M. Curtis, Trinity and Time: An Investigation into God’s Being and His Relationship with the Created Order, with Special Reference to Karl Barth and Robert W. Jenson (Edinburgh, Scotland: University of Edinburgh, 2007), 90. Cf. CD II/2, 105, 124; III/1, 78-81; and IV/1, 336. Jason interprets this term as “pre-history” in the particular passage CD IV/1, 336, but “primal history” in the case of CD II/2, 8. He insists that that the latter is better in expressing Barth’s intention for this term.
(historisch) event but beyond critical inquiry. For Bultmann, however, this seems too moderate because, when he refers to Jesus’ resurrection as a historical event, he is not using the term historical in the sense of historisch but only in the sense of geschichtlich. For him, Jesus’ resurrection is merely an interpreted history.

3. Not a Historical Event, but Not a Problem!

Rudolf K. Bultmann (1884–1976) exemplifies the alleged consequence of the distinction.21 He explains the reason for his lack of interest in the historicity of Christ’s events as follows: “We can know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary; and other sources about Jesus did not exist.”22 When Bultmann states that the Easter faith is historical, “this does not mean that Christian faith asserts that the resurrection can be historically demonstrated, which it obviously cannot. Nor does it mean that … the resurrection is an event which happened in space and in time, even though historical science has no access to this event.”23 He is only concerned with the theological meaning of the events of Jesus’ life.

Bultmann demythologized the historical (geschichtlich) Christ of the Bible whom Kähler sought24 because, for Bultmann, Jesus’ resurrection was not historical (historisch) but a myth.25 He defines “myth” as “a very specific historical phenomenon,”26 but this does not mean the factual report of an occurrence or an event. Myth conceals the real intention, which is to talk about the nature of human existence, and hence it needs an existentialist interpretation. According to Bultmann, the worldview of the New Testament is highly

22 Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus and the Word (trs. L.P. Smith and E.H. Lantero, New York:Scribner’s, 1934), 8; hereafter Jesus and the Word.
24 For the knowledge of Jesus, Kähler argues, we do not need historians but living faith “in the brief and concise apostolic proclamation of the crucified and risen Lord” (Kähler, 95-6).
mythological, and Jesus’ resurrection as a salvation event corresponds to this worldview. Because the modern era finds mythological talk unbelievable, it is impossible to revive the mythical worldview, and that demands demythologization. This mythological understanding of Jesus’ resurrection finds its source in Bultmann’s anti-supernaturalism, which was also found earlier in Schleiermacher’s feeling of absolute dependence. As Daniel P. Fuller rightly explains, for Schleiermacher, miracles had to be denied, for “if God did break into the natural flow of things, then we could not have a feeling of absolute dependence from the nature that surrounds us, for this nature would never be a perfect expression of God until it had been invaded by the supernatural.”

The same argument can be applied to Hegel: since the process of history is perfect, the supernatural intrusion of God cannot be allowed. For Hegel, Jesus’ resurrection reveals the course of history. The process of historical dialectics can be found in the spirit and the image of Jesus’ pure humanity over against the disciples’ grief over the death of Jesus. This rising of the spirit is the result of a dialectical process between Jesus’ pure humanity and the disciples’ grief. That is what Jesus’ resurrection reveals. Jesus’ resurrection is the event that proves the sovereignty of reason over the world and shows how history presents the rational process. Historical reality is not at issue here, and Jesus’ resurrection is not regarded as a historical event but only as a religious belief that has moral value.

To repeat, Barth criticizes Bultmann’s denial that the resurrection actually did occur in space and in time. For Barth, however, both Jesus’ resurrection and the crucifixion are not historical in the same sense as Caesar’s crossing of the Rubicon is. Whereas Barth acknowledged the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection, Bultmann regarded it as a myth; but they do agree in referring to the resurrection of Jesus as a meta-historical event. Barth and Bultmann focus not on historical reality but on the theological meaning of Jesus’ resurrection. For them, Jesus’ resurrection is not the language of fact but that of myth or only theology.

Likewise, the continuous denial of the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection and of the possibility of miracles has been characteristic of modern thought since the Enlightenment. The result is a separation of Christian faith from history. Pannenberg and Wright, however, regard such a separation as an attempt to move theology to where it is thought to be safe from modern historical and scientific attacks. Criticizing such attempts, both attempt to prove the compatibility of faith and reason. In the following chapters we will see how they respond to

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this separation and warn against intentions to treat Jesus’ resurrection only theologically or only historically.
Chapter One

Belief in Jesus’ Resurrection Is Compatible with Historical Reality

This chapter introduces Pannenberg and Wright’s concepts of reality and explores how they resolve the matter of the compatibility of faith and reason. Pannenberg starts by defining the concept of reality while Wright begins with the concept of critical realism. At the same time, they point to the limits of the modern methodology used for the historical examination of Jesus’ resurrection. This exploration will demonstrate how Pannenberg’s view of reality as history and Wright’s critical realism answer the question of the compatibility of faith and reason concerning Jesus’ resurrection.

A. Wolfhart Pannenberg: Faith and Reason Must Be Compatible

Four themes can be noted in Pannenberg’s argument on the compatibility of faith and reason in relation to Jesus’ resurrection. First, Pannenberg’s ontological concept of reality defines the compatibility of faith and reason. According to him, reality is historical because reality reveals change in history. If reality is historical, then we have to say that reality is revealed only at the end of history when it can be viewed and understood as a whole. That means that when Pannenberg defines reality as a whole, he is thinking of the ontological priority of the future. Reality is revealed only in the form of anticipation. If the future has ontological priority with respect to reality, our knowledge cannot omit faith because faith relates to the future. Also, the truth of the Christian faith can also be affirmed only at the end when it is revealed as a whole; reason and faith share the unity of reality.

Second, history is the ground of faith. According to Pannenberg, faith cannot transform reality, and hence faith is not a decision separate from reality. The ground of the Christian faith cannot be supported on the basis of the development of the unconvincing
historical figure of Jesus; \(^1\) “the essence of faith must come to harm precisely if in the long run rational conviction about its basis fails to appear.”\(^2\) Therefore, reality is not to be viewed either as a matter of mere faith or of mere reason. In this context, faith in the reality of Jesus’ resurrection cannot be separated from historical investigation. Without historical confirmation, Christian belief is vulnerable, and historical and scientific attempts to confirm the Christian faith are made precisely for the sake of the purity of faith.

Third, on this basis, Pannenberg criticizes Barth and Bultmann for separating general history from redemptive history. They advocated an understanding of God that is accessible only to individual experience or faith. Pannenberg cannot condone theological separations of history and theology or, so to speak, history and redemptive history. According to Pannenberg, revelation is indirect in history, and this implies one linear history, not a history beyond history. His argument is based on the apocalyptic understanding of history he derives from his biblical analysis of revelation.

Fourth, Pannenberg points out the methodological limits of the atheistic or anthropocentric worldview of science that presupposes the impossibility of the resurrection. Pannenberg takes Ernst Troeltsch\(^3\) as an example of the presuppositions of modern historical positivism because it is the modern scientific worldview that Troeltsch’s principle of analogy presupposes. To the extent that science asks about reality, however, it has to presuppose God as having created this world because, according to Pannenberg, it is the faithfulness of the creator that the regularity of the natural law could imply. And science is not able to explain about the matter of contingency without presupposing God. For Pannenberg, the scientific conviction that Jesus’ resurrection is an event that violates the laws of nature is acceptable only if the universe is a closed system. But that is not so. To presuppose God is to appeal to a combination of faith and reason. Therefore, Jesus’ resurrection must be regarded as a historical event that is at least methodologically open to historians examining the plausibility of its occurrence.

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1 W. Elert and P. Althaus were convinced that Easter is the basis of faith in Christ, but, according to Pannenberg, they failed to explain in what sense Jesus’ resurrection belongs to the ground of faith in Jesus’ divinity. Pannenberg argues that, for Althaus as well as Elert, Jesus’ resurrection is only a matter of the religious judgment of faith, not a historically demonstrable matter. He holds that, for Althaus, the resurrection of Jesus is “not a demonstrable historical fact.” Pannenberg, Jesus: God and Man (trs. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe, London: SCM, 1964), 109; hereafter JGM.


3 Although Pannenberg admits, methodologically, the principles of historical-critical investigation elaborated by Ernst Troeltsch for the history of religions school, he does not go along with the principle of analogy or, so to speak, the omnipotence of the principle of analogy.
Pannenberg also criticizes theologians, as well as historical and scientific rationalists, who appeal, on the one hand, to the distinction between history in general and redemptive history and, on the other, have separated the fields of theology and science.

1. The Ontological Concept of the Reality of Jesus’ Resurrection

The following sections explain Pannenberg’s ontological conception of reality. The first section will introduce Pannenberg’s definition of reality as a whole, and the second will expand on the conception of reality as a whole in relation to history. Reality as a whole means that reality is history. Reality as a whole is not viewed in terms of a division between being and sense as in ancient Greek thought but as changing throughout history. The third section looks at how Pannenberg explains beings changing over time by the concept of reality in the form of anticipation. According to that concept, reality changes throughout history. The anticipation of reality is not an epistemological term for Pannenberg but refers to the metaphysical structure of reality. Reality as historical or anticipatory implies the ontological priority of the future. Therefore, the final section introduces and describes what Pannenberg means by the term *ontological priority of the future* in relationship to anticipated reality.

1) Reality (*Wirklichkeit*) as a Whole

In ancient Greek thought, reality or *logos* was regarded as unchangeably fixed, and sense knowledge was not based on reality. Reality was viewed differently in different times and cultures, because reality and sense knowledge were not the same. As rational thought, logos allowed access to true being, which was regarded as unchangeable and indestructible, and

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hence could only be expressed in the singular. While ontological priority was given to singular, unchangeable being, “beings” perceived by the senses were plural in terms of “real being” and its appearances in the sensory world. Although Aristotle held that “substance connotes the identical that lies at the basis of all change,” his metaphysics, according to Pannenberg, refers to change that remains external to the form.

Pannenberg argues that reality is not fixed and eternal but is constantly changing. The reality of something may be experienced differently according to the degree of its reality, and hence reality is to be determined by the measure of reality as a whole. Again, “reality is, on the one hand, a word for what is all-embracing and enables us to see the whole of being as one great interconnected unity and, on the other hand, a term for individual things and events insofar as these belong to and have an effect on the whole.” What Pannenberg implies is that our experience is part of reality as a whole. The highest degree of reality can be experienced only at the level of complete unity of all the individual realities experienced by all people. For that reason, the notion of reality in change does not invalidate the unity of reality. Reality as the unity of being and existence is effectively experienced in our life because reality in our experience “has always both an objective and a subjective side: in it the unity, and the difference, of subjectivity and extra subjective reality are always present.” At this point, Pannenberg argues that Kant’s focus on subjectivity as the locus of human knowledge is simply an attempt to set reason and reality over against each other as units. Kant acknowledged the need for reason to discover unity in the multiplicity of experiences but concluded that this need could not be fulfilled because “human understanding never comes to an end in its attempt to synthesize the multiplicity of experience.” For Pannenberg, any attempt to set reason and self-subsisting reality against each other is a product of reason.

Accepting a rather Hegelian view of reality, Pannenberg finds the root of the

5 Quoted in MIG, 71.
6 In this sense, he learns from process philosophy, which discerns the essential characteristics of changing reality. According to Pannenberg, Alfred North Whitehead does not seem to resolve the problem of division because his concept of “actual entities” as the elementary event out of which all complex and enduring forms are composed is detrimental to the understanding of real being. See MIG, 71-3.
8 MIG, 23.
9 MIG, 22.
10 On this point Pannenberg agrees with Hegel and the philosophy of process as found in Henri Bergson, Samuel Alexander, and Whitehead. Hegel, as a thinker who, in contrast to all other philosophical ideas about reality until then, realized that “the truth is the whole.” See BQT II, 21. Cf.
eschatological character of reality as a whole, which is “the whole of being,” in the Hebraic tradition. He examines the biblical understanding that the reality of God, the world, heaven, humankind, the meaning of sin, etc., varies from age to age and from culture to culture. According to the ancient Greek concept of reality, what was new in history or was purely fortuitous was regarded as “unreal” because reality was fixed in an ordered cosmos. In biblical thought, however, God’s contingent acts in history relate reality to the whole. The Bible confirms that, because only God can see everything at once, reality can be experienced only when experiencing faith in God in history. Truth, or emeth (Hebrew), is related to experiencing the fullness of God in history. According to this conception, only the one who binds himself to God may gain access to the truth of God. Reality “cannot be comprehended by the sort of reason (nous, as in Parmenides) that is directed toward what is contemporaneously present”\(^\text{11}\) but can only be grasped through trust in a God who will prove Himself in the future to be truly reliable.

Therefore, because faith is affirmed only when we see the reality of the content of faith at the end, it “has a futuristic orientation which extrapolates beyond our current knowledge of reality.”\(^\text{12}\) Pannenberg defines the truth of Christian faith and its reality as being eschatological in nature. In this sense, reason alone cannot be the basis for making decisions regarding reality and defining the concept of reality. Pannenberg is concerned with the unity of a reality that consists in the order of the many or many individual things. The unity is confirmed only at the end, and hence faith and reason together participate in experiencing reality.

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\(^{11}\) G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* (trs. J.B. Baillie, intro. George Lichtheim, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1967), 81. The reality of being is not to be found already existing somewhere as a finished product but is instead thought of as history, as process.


2) Reality as History

Comparing the cultic and mythical idea of reality that prevailed in many ancient cultures and Greek thought with the biblical concept, Pannenberg concludes that the Bible sees reality as historical. As Pannenberg defines reality as a unity undergoing change throughout history, he implies that universal history is reality as a whole. Because new dimensions of events experienced by humans bring new insights and meanings and change our understanding of reality, Pannenberg argues, reality can only be grasped as the whole of history. Because, Pannenberg holds, the totality or unity that unites the differences does not exist here and now, reality is temporal until the end. Reality is in a process and changing. For Pannenberg, that means that reality is historical. The knowledge of anything and its reality is developed throughout history, and hence the unity that exists in change can only be seen when history is understood as a whole. Regarding the biblical tendency to draw the reality of the whole of Israel’s history within an increasingly broad chronological framework, Pannenberg argues, “indeed, if it is at all possible, despite all the tensions and contrasts that are undoubtedly present within Scripture, to compress this biblical understanding of reality into a single word, that word would certainly be ‘history’.”

Also, for Pannenberg, to speak of history is, on the one hand, to speak of reality and, on the other hand, to speak of God as the unity of history because this unity cannot be based on humankind but only on God; only through the God of the Bible is the reality in which we live disclosed as history. For Pannenberg, this means that history is understandable only through the biblical tradition that the God of Israel is the ultimate reality, and only in the light of God, Yahweh, can everything be comprehended, as was the case for the Israelites. The truth of the God of Israel thus discloses itself only when people experience trust in God’s faithfulness (Is. 7:9). History moves toward the fulfillment of God’s promise, and hence reality as a whole is disclosed only at the end of history. For Pannenberg, reality “points in the direction of unforeseeable possibilities which can only be understood in the light of the ultimate future or the end of time” because “God is the bearer of history and history is moving toward a goal, viz., that God will be known.” This view of reality results from

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13 F&R, 10.
14 F&R, 10.
experiencing the reality of God in historical change not only as an originator, as the ancient Greek philosophers presumed, but also (and especially) as an ongoing creativity. In this sense, history itself can be called a revelation from God whose end time will reveal the will of God fully.

Likewise, reality and the reality of God in the biblical tradition were experienced through history. Pannenberg insists, “The Israelites always regarded historical events as the fulfillment of God’s earlier promises because they respected God’s freedom to fulfill his promises in whatever way he liked.” God’s fulfillment of his promises in history explicitly demonstrates that new divine activity will occur in human existence in the future. Therefore, history, as Pannenberg understands it, does not run from the past to the future but from the future to the past, as the fulfillment of God’s will discloses entirely new aspects of the past. According to Pannenberg, the biblical understanding of history provides “a survey including every known individual event, but presented as a single great historical movement, encompassing not only the past, looking back to the creation of the world, but also the future, with its emphasis on the end of the world.” Pannenberg finds a similar emphasis in the apocalyptic understanding of reality, arguing that “the arch of this universal history spanned the whole of time, from the beginning … to the last judgment, the coming of the Kingdom of God and the resurrection of the dead.” Here, Pannenberg sees the totality of reality as taking an active part within the framework of an understanding of universal history such that the whole of reality can be viewed only as a single unity of history. Reality as a whole, therefore, is only seen at the end of history because only at the end of history can we see history wholly. At this point, Pannenberg parts ways with Hegel and process philosophers, arguing that “the horizon of the future is lost in Hegel’s thought.” As Mostert comments, for Pannenberg “the problem with the idea of ‘reality as a whole’ lies in its implied completeness and closedness.” That is why Pannenberg criticizes Hegel’s idea of the unity of history because it does not presuppose any open future and hence no eschatology prior to it and criticizes the process philosophers for devaluing enduring forms and entities.

hereafter BQT I.

16 In this sense, Pannenberg argues that if redemptive events are viewed as somehow separated from the historical process, not as historical events, then they have nothing to do with reality.
17 F&R, 12.
18 F&R, 15.
19 F&R, 15.
20 BQT II, 22.
Notably, by defining reality as the entirety of history, Pannenberg emphasizes not only the whole as the eschatological view of reality but also our present participation in it. He examines this further in his concept of reality in the form of anticipation, and we will look at this concept in the following section.

1) Reality in the Form of Anticipation

According to Pannenberg, reality is possible only in the form of anticipation because a thing or event “would possess its essence through anticipation, though only at the end of the developmental process would one be able to know that this was its essence.”22 Because the essence of everything can be fully actualized only at the end of the process of time, reality can only be experienced as a form of anticipation now and here. Mostert comments that “It cannot equate the unity and totality of the real with anything presently existing; but it cannot give up thinking about the larger unity within which all things have their existence. The question at issue here is whether the nature of reality as a whole can be known.”23 For Pannenberg, the concept of anticipation means that, although what exists now is not a totality and unity complete in itself, the reality is present in anything existing now and can be experienced in the form of anticipation. In his view, reality as a whole is spread over time. Then, “the key question is the relation between the anticipation and the anticipated reality.”24 Here it is to be noted that, for Pannenberg, the term anticipation is not simply epistemological but also ontological. He views the concept of anticipation in terms of the Aristotelian doctrine of natural movement: “the reality of beings – their actuality (energeia), whose content is the idea or concept (eidos) – as the goal (telos) of their becoming.”25 Thus, “the result of becoming is an entelechy or completeness [entelecheia: actuality, fulfillment, completedness]: literally, having the telos within. As motion, energeia is directed toward the

23 Mostert, 75.
24 Mostert, 76.
25 MIG, 105.
entelecheia.” Pannenberg sees the possibility of knowing reality in anticipation in Aristotle’s concept of *energeia* as a process directing one toward entelecheia. Since the reality of being is the experiencing of the whole, we anticipate reality through experiencing the present being as constituting reality. In this sense, the reality of being is the total experience of being in time, as Pannenberg argues:

Only at the end of their movement through time, or event at the end or more complex series of events, could anyone decide what actually makes up their distinctive character, their essence. At that time, however, *one would have to maintain that this had been the essence of the thing in question from the very beginning*. The decision concerning the being that stands at the end of the process has retroactive power.27

If motion is understood as a goal-directed becoming, then the goal at which it aims, which will be “completely” reached at the end, must somehow be already present and efficacious during the motion: otherwise, what is moving could not move itself toward the goal. *Entelechey* therefore means both being at the goal and the way in which the goal is present and efficacious in the movement that leads to it – namely, as something which is absent and not yet attained. When one considers that the *telos* is at the same time the reality of the thing, its idea (*eidos*), then one must grant that this *entelecheia* which is already present in the process of becoming is a form of presence of the thing’s essence, although the thing will be completely there only at the end of its becoming…. The presence of the *entelecheia* in the process of becoming has an anticipatory structure; it implies an anticipatory reality of the *eidos* before its full realization.28

The conception of the anticipatory form of knowledge, in spite of its finitude in its own time, corresponds to an element of the “not yet” within the very reality the present knowledge aims at.

To sum up, for Pannenberg, this conceptual anticipation is not only a matter of knowing but also of the being of everything. Everything has in it its own essence, but only in the form of anticipation of that which will be completed in the future. That is why Christoph Schwöbel calls Pannenberg’s philosophy the *realism of anticipation*, both ontologically and epistemologically.29 As Pannenberg explains, “Our consciousness of experience has always

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27 MIG, 105; italics mine.

28 MIG, 106. “What in one respect is becoming is in another respect already present; what is later (in the individual case) from the standpoint of origination is earlier from the standpoint of the species and essence” (MIG, 107). Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1049b-1050.

both an objective and a subjective side: in it the unity, and the difference, of subjectivity and extra subjective reality are always already present.” This is what we should understand when speaking of Pannenberg’s eschatological realism and the ontological priority of the future. The latter will be explored in the following section.

2) The Ontological Priority of the Future

For Pannenberg, all events and objects are open to a new definition of their identity until the end of history because the totality of reality is constituted only at the final end. He explains that, because “the ‘essence’ of an object or event is not yet definitively defined so long as its context can change in the course of history,” “a meaningful whole can only be seen in retrospect, and thus only in a provisional way.” The essence or the anticipated essential definition of an event we experience at present is not yet reality, as it still changes in time. In the Bible as well, “the decisive element was not to be found in a cosmic order in the present or in a very early happening in the past, but in the future.” Our experience with an individual object or event or its experiential essence needs to be judged as real. If so, it is the future that has ontological priority, not the past, because reality can be found only at the end.

Pannenberg elaborates, “This must be the case if, given the limitations of finite knowledge, anticipation is to be more than a preliminary stage that one could leave behind by grasping the concept of the thing. Not only our knowing but also the identity of things themselves is not yet completely present in the process of time.” It is in this sense that the future has ontological priority.

In addition, Pannenberg links this view of reality as history to humanity’s openness to the future. Since history is not oriented to the past but to the future, the future is no longer

30 MIG, 23.
31 Given this, we can appreciate Pannenberg’s positive acknowledgement of historiography that “the meaning of universal history cannot be derived from one small segment of the historical fabric,” Don H. Olive, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind: Wolfhart Pannenberg (Waco: Word Books, 1975[1973]), 45; hereafter Olive. The meaning of history, not only of the whole but also of a small segment, can be known only at the end or completion of history. From this positive programmatic condition we can infer Pannenberg’s view of reality, which Christoper Schwöbel calls eschatological realism. Schwöbel, 187.
32 SyTh III, 301.
33 Bradshaw, 17.
34 F&R, 18.
35 MIG, 104.
meaningless for humanity. As Pannenberg argues, “Man no longer lives turned away from the future, but open to everything new that comes to him from the future (that is, from God).”36 The past does not define the future, but rather the future defines the past, allowing humanity’s openness to the world, as some modern philosophers acknowledged. As Pannenberg argues, humanity is not directed toward the ordered cosmos, as the ancient Greek philosophers thought but lives experiencing history as revealed by God’s sovereign acts that determine the future. This experience of humanity provides it with a new view of the past and present: reality is based on the priority of the future not only epistemologically but also ontologically.

Accordingly, with his argument regarding the ontological priority of the future, Pannenberg attempts to prove that reality is, on the one hand, not completely separated from present experience and, on the other, is eschatologically determined. Mostert explains the key point, “The appearing reality can be understood as ‘the appearance of something that always is’ – as held in classical ontology – or, in Pannenberg’s phrase, as ‘the arrival of what is future’.”37 In this view of the priority of the future, the normally conceived relationship between the past, present, and future is reversed; it is not the past, but the final end that confirms the reality of everything. Therefore, times flows from the future to the past.

2. History as the Ground of Faith

The central theme of Pannenberg’s theology concerning history is elucidated in his first book, Revelation as History, in which he argues that belief in the God of the Bible depends on history. Referring to the relationship between faith and things on which faith is based, he argues that faith is not to be separated from history because things are experienced only through history. If we understand that reality goes beyond everything that is visibly and tangibly present or producible, we must admit that our faith or trust may be disappointed in general, as our trust always reckons with the invisible and not yet available reality. Pannenberg says, “Trusts and faith are always accompanied and threatened by doubt. Faith and doubt are by no means mutually exclusive; doubt is rather the shadow which everywhere

36 F&R, 19.
37 Mostert, 96-7.
follows faith and trust.”\textsuperscript{38} For this reason, Pannenberg concludes that “believing trust cannot be separated from the trusting person’s belief in the truth of the thing in which he trusts and towards which his trust is directed.”\textsuperscript{39} Even if unconditional faith in Jesus and in the God whom he reveals can be called true faith, it is undeniable that faith in Jesus and God involves believing that certain things about Jesus and God are true. Faith cannot be separated from these things, and without them faith cannot exist; indeed, faith “cannot be without an object.”\textsuperscript{40} According to Pannenberg, the events of Jesus’ life are meaningful only if they are historically real, as the reality of what is said about the revelation of God in Jesus demands historical confirmation. In order for Christian faith to be maintained, the story of Jesus Christ must be historical since we cannot honestly identify ourselves as Christians if the story of Jesus and his God is merely a fiction, not history. For Pannenberg, the object of faith is God’s acts in history, and hence history is the ground of Christian faith. Without history, faith cannot exist. That is, if theology is to discuss “the historical action of God even at the level of facticity, it cannot surrender”\textsuperscript{41} to the diversity of the concept of history. For that reason, Pannenberg contends that Christian faith links up to past events in a unique way that is open to historical confirmation, arguing:

there is no other religion in which the historical person of its Founder forms the basis to such an extent that everything stands or falls with him. If we were to omit from the Christian message any account of Jesus’ earthly activity and of the destiny of crucifixion and death, nothing specifically Christian would remain. In particular, the teaching of Jesus cannot in itself be the ground and content of faith.\textsuperscript{42}

In other words, Christian faith is bound up wholly and entirely with the historical events of Jesus’ life, including his teaching, death, and resurrection, and the entirety of their meaning.

Therefore, Pannenberg states that our Christian faith in God, the God of Israel, “too is bound up precisely with the events which constitute the life’s destiny of Jesus of Nazareth.”\textsuperscript{43} The authority of Scripture is not sufficient to establish the legitimacy of faith since appealing to religious-ethical experience and the individual’s decisions can lead to a subjectivism that can destroy the essence of faith. For that reason, Pannenberg argues that

\textsuperscript{38} Pannenberg, \textit{Apostles’ Creed: In the Light of Today’s Questions} (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000), 6; hereafter \textit{Creed}.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Creed}, 6.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Creed}, 5.
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{SyTh I}, 232.
\textsuperscript{42} \textit{F&R}, 68.
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{F&R}, 68-9.
Christian faith cannot be maintained by accepting the history of Jesus as a myth of the primitive Christian community; only historical confirmation can ground faith, as Christian faith rests on Jesus’ historical human existence. It is not the decision by faith but rather the event itself that is the transforming power, and hence Jesus’ resurrection is not a matter of mere faith but rather one of historical fact.

1) Event: Not as Decision by Faith but as Transforming Power

It is worth our while to note that, for Pannenberg, basing faith on our historical knowledge of Jesus does not mean that one confirms the principle only through the force of one’s own intellect. Since “no one comes to the knowledge of God by his own reason or strength” but by revelation as event, we come to faith not by an intellectual act but by the compelling character of the event. As Olive explains, “The force of the knowledge of revelation is resident within the events and the report of these events, not within man himself.” Therefore, for Pannenberg, the transforming power is not added externally to an event but is the event itself: “The convincingness of the Christian message can stem only from its contents. Where this is not the case, the appeal to the Holy Spirit is no help at all to the preacher.” Pannenberg argues that it is erroneous to appeal to the Holy Spirit to cause belief in the Christian message because an unconvincing message cannot gain power simply by appealing to the Spirit. The Christ event is recognized as revelation, and hence the Holy Spirit does not have to be the condition for faith.

Then, if the events of the past and the present are the domains of reason, belong to the field of knowledge, rather than that of faith, our faith in Jesus’ resurrection as a historical event needs reason to confirm it. If the event itself, rather than the decision to believe, is the transforming power, then what we believe concerning the event should conform to reason. Nonetheless, because, as we have seen, the reality of events can only be confirmed at the end, reason alone is not able to provide the final answer. Pannenberg argues that reason does not

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44 See W. Pannenberg, An Introduction to Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 4-5; hereafter An Introduction.
45 Pannenberg, Revelation as History (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), 137; hereafter RaH.
46 Olive, 38.
47 BQT II, 35.
48 Cf. RaH, 36.
confirm faith but rather the fact on which faith is grounded. In other words, even if fact belongs to reason, its final confirmation belongs to faith, and that explains why faith and reason are compatible.

Therefore, to affirm that reason verifies history does not mean that reason confirms faith. For Pannenberg, that divinely revealed events and messages that a human being cannot produce by himself “do have transforming power”49 means that the event in question is not a matter of faith but of reason. In this sense, Pannenberg argues that Christian faith cannot be maintained by relating the history of Jesus simply to a myth of Christian ancestors; rather, “the story of Jesus Christ has to be history … if the Christian faith is to continue.”50 History is the fundamental issue that encompasses both reason and Christian faith for Pannenberg.

2) Jesus’ Resurrection as an Event, not Merely a Matter of Faith

According to Pannenberg, Jesus’ resurrection is the key issue in the understanding of the relationship between faith and reason. Faith in Jesus’ resurrection and its theological meaning requires a historical grounding whenever Christians confess that the God of Jesus is the one and only true God and that He truly raised Jesus from the dead. For Israelites, history was regarded as the fulfillment of God’s earlier promises, and “the event of Christ and above all the raising of Jesus from the dead can be seen as fulfilling the promise of the old covenant.”51 In this biblical aspect of history as God’s fulfillment of promises, faith in God’s promise cannot be separated from the event because faithfulness is confirmed by the event as the fulfillment of the promise. Faith and reason, then, share the same structure as the event of Jesus’ resurrection. Reason concerns the reality of Jesus’ resurrection as the event of the past as much as faith in Jesus’ resurrection concerns the future when God fulfills His promise given by Jesus’ resurrection. Both are part of the reality of Jesus’ resurrection. The event of Christ and the raising of Jesus from the dead in turn become “the promise of our participation in the life that appeared in Jesus’ resurrection.”52 Likewise, even Christian belief in Jesus’ resurrection is not simply a matter of mere faith. Jesus’ resurrection, as both the fulfillment of the old covenant and the promise of the future, leaves open the possibility of conducting

49 RaH, 137.
50 An Introduction, 5.
51 F&R, 13.
52 F&R, 13.
historical research into the reality of Jesus’ appearances, which is necessary for supporting faith in the future confirmation of reality.

It is not my purpose here to make room for Pannenberg’s presentation of historical proofs of Jesus’ resurrection. Rather, I want to show how he defines the nature of the event of Jesus’ resurrection in relation to faith according to biblical and Christian tradition. Pannenberg states that “Christian faith builds its hope on the truth of an event which occurred in the far-distant past.”53 In this sense, because it is naturally true that faith depends on our having an exact and reliable knowledge of events, faith cannot replace that knowledge. If Jesus’ resurrection has a significant theological meaning, according to Pannenberg, that meaning does not arise merely because some individual has risen from the dead but because “the person raised up is this Jesus of Nazareth whose execution the Jews sought since he was supposed to have blasphemed God. If this man was raised from the dead, it is evident that the God of Israel, whom he was supposed to have blasphemed, has acknowledged him. Our faith is based on that event.”54 This is how Pannenberg understands the context of what Paul argues in 1 Corinthians 15:17ff.55 Because the hope for universal resurrection is based in the knowledge of the events, according to Pannenberg’s interpretation of Paul, “Christian faith would be in a bad state if the resurrection of Jesus were not really an historical fact.”56 Faith does not guarantee the certainty of the past event.

In this context, “To appeal solely to the decision of faith in answer to the question of the truth of the Christian message is to reduce faith to nonsense.”57 What Pannenberg warns against here is an overwhelming mistrust of historical research with respect to its application to biblical traditions as the destruction of the basis of faith. Nonetheless, when Pannenberg refers to positive historiography in relation to Jesus’ resurrection, he reminds his readers that no absolute meaning can be ascribed to reality until the end of history even if science is associated with reality itself. Pannenberg presents a more philosophical aspect here regarding the reality of the event and compares ancient Greek thought on logos with the Hebrew concept of truth.

While ancient Greek thought takes true being as comprehended under logos to be enduring and stable and considers speech to be reliable, the Hebrew concept of truth is

53 F&R, 69.
54 F&R, 69.
55 “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.”
56 F&R, 72.
57 F&R, 69.
retrospectively experienced within events. Nonetheless, the fact that God’s truth is experienced in history entails that faith “not be set in simple opposition to the Greek experience of stability through the logos.”\(^58\) Pannenberg argues that history bridges faith and reality and thus achieves consensus between the Greek and Hebraic understanding of truth, faith, and reason. Because humankind may attain stability by binding itself to God, truth “always proves itself for the first time through the future. Therefore it is accessible now only by trusting anticipation of the still-outstanding proof, and that means precisely, by faith.”\(^59\) In this view, “the two become one for the first time only in Jesus Christ”\(^60\) because Jesus’ resurrection is the pre-actualization of the end. Although the reality of truth in the biblical view lies in the future, it is not inaccessible, as Pannenberg explains:

For the constancy of the biblical God is not available in advance (as the timeless and therefore also “now all together” of that which always already is), but from time to time is disclosed in retrospect in a new way at every historical stage. Therefore, it is certain of the future only in the trustful self-surrender of faith – that faith, to be sure, which is grounded in the experience of the faithfulness and constancy of God that has already been proven by his historical guidance. The unavailability of the truth of God is thus connected with its historicness.\(^61\)

If it is true that historical events are the activities of the transcendent God, the essence of such events cannot be expressed adequately in any cosmic order but remains free from every such order.\(^62\) Because history constantly gives rise to something new in reality, that is, something never before present, a historical-critical methodology alone cannot access reality, unless historians remain open to the future and constantly keep in mind the limitations of historical criticism. Pannenberg is referring here to a negative programmatic condition of historiography: no historical-critical method is proper or sufficient for contesting an event’s factuality unless it remains open to the existence of a Creator God who acts contingently in history in His freedom.

Therefore, appealing to more than simply the decision by faith for the facticity of the event does not mean the destruction of faith, according to Pannenberg. He attempts to establish “a method for the development of historical hypotheses which will claim universal

\(^{58}\) BQT II, 7.
\(^{59}\) BQT II, 7.
\(^{60}\) BQT II, 27.
\(^{61}\) BQT II, 9-10.
\(^{62}\) BQT I, 48.
rational acceptance.” Even if non-historical applications could support a positive view of the proclamations of the Christian church, they result in a notable loss in the eschatological character of the Christ event by dismissing its historical ground. Therefore, Pannenberg urges us to remember that as faith has its presuppositions, it is not instantly confirmed by a “decision of faith” alone but by maintaining an openness to the judgment of reason.

3. One General History: No Separation between Heilsgeschichte and History

The following sections describe how Pannenberg’s conception of the biblical view of revelation as the indirect disclosure of God in history allows an apocalyptic understanding of history. Here God’s indirect revelations accord with the biblical concept of history as God’s divine actions. Pannenberg argues that there is only one general history as the revelation of God. There is no separation between history and redemptive history.

1) Pannenberg’s Critique of Barth’s and Bultmann’s Abandonment of History

Theological opposition to historical research into Jesus’ resurrection is due to the distinction between fact and its theological meaning. Referring to Barth and Bultmann, Pannenberg criticizes them for believing that general historical research and the history of the promise of God belong to two completely different spiritual planes. Pannenberg presents two similar means of separation, namely Bultmann’s and Gogarten’s existential theology on the one hand

63 Ross, 214.
64 Pannenberg sees two distinct questions in a Christology “from below” and a Christology “from above.” The former asks about the historical Jesus and the latter about the Jesus experienced in the proclamation of the Christian community. And Pannenberg sees both Barth and Bultmann as falling in the latter category. Pannenberg insists, however, that “the two categories are certainly not mutually exclusive,” reminding us that historical confirmation is in fact a significant help for the proclamation of church ministry that the theology of Word applies to. JGM, 21.
65 F&R, 70.
66 Pannenberg sees this distinction as being philosophically at home in Kantianism and it “has often been connected with the positivistic understanding of the historical method.” JGM, 109.
67 BQT 1, 38. Regarding the current theological tendency represented by Martin Kähler’s The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ, Pannenberg argues that “in this work the source of Christian theology is not to be found in history but in the ‘content’ of the preached Christ” (Olive, 44).
and Martin Kähler’s and Barth’s tradition of redemptive history on the other. In these two similar conceptions, redemptive history remains opposed to ordinary history (Historie). Regarding the Barthian and Bultmannian concept of history, Pannenberg refers to Heilsgeschichte as “a special kind of salvation history in which revelation takes place in events immune to general historical methods.”

According to Barth, while these redemptive events truly occur in our space and time, they are not describable in accordance with how ordinary history is described because revelation cannot be backed by historical research. Salvation is an event only in Urgeschichte (primal history), not Historie, an event accessible to historical investigation. As Jenson states, Pannenberg criticizes Barth for having held that the entire history of salvation is actual only in God’s eternal decision “before all time.”

For Pannenberg, Barth’s Urgeschichte “depreciates real history just as does the reduction of history to historicity.” Pannenberg sees Bultmann and Barth as attempting to flee to a harbor that is supposedly safe from the historical-critical flood tide in order to defend the theology of redemptive history because, for them, “critical-historical investigation as the scientific verification of events did not seem to leave any more room for redemptive events.” For both Barth and Bultmann, history and theology belong to different fields, and what happened to Jesus, as a result, cannot be historically examined. They thus denied not only that “the events constituting the life’s destiny of Jesus of Nazareth, which are fundamental for faith, must be and can only be known by historical research” but also “that the conclusions of historical research must contain the ground of Christian faith.”

As M. Kolden comments, for Pannenberg, redemptive events are redemptive precisely because they are historical. Criticizing two theological arguments for abandoning history, Pannenberg appeals to a belief in the existence of one general history because biblical proof of the one general history can be found in God’s events in history that the Bible

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69 Olive, 44.

70 CD I/1, 325, 326-8.

71 Jenson, 33. “When Barth refers to God’s own eternity, to the eternity of the choice that he is, he regularly and decisively qualifies this as ‘before all time’” (Jenson, 34).

72 BQT I, 16. Pannenberg sees Kähler’s redemptive theology as still present in the form of Urgeschichte.

73 BQT I, 16.

74 F&R, 71.

75 F&R, 71.

76 Kolden, 6.
witnesses: “Israel occupies a singular position in the history of religion because of its historical consciousness.” Israel’s distinguishable experience of the reality of God is not found in the shadows of a mythical primitive history but in a decisive historical change itself. For that reason, “without a well-founded historical knowledge, ‘faith would be blind gullibility, credulity, or even superstition’,,” and neither history nor theology can be satisfied with the concept of two separated histories. Thus, Pannenberg argues, there was no distinction between them for the primitive Christian community; rather, for that community they were closely linked. If theology is to be based on the revelation of God, it must include the history in which God reveals himself.

Consequently, if there is no distinction between event and meaning, the theological reasons opposing historical research of the resurrection are insupportable.

2) Revelation as the Indirect Disclosure of God in History

As Kolden explains, “Pannenberg chooses revelation as his starting point for basing theology on history” in order to secure Christian truth. According to Pannenberg, the nineteenth-century theological tendency to view supernaturalism as superstition reduced revelation to the concept of God’s self-revelation. As a theological reaction to nineteenth-century theology, Pannenberg brings revelation into public discussion “in order to insure that the faith of the church is not itself based on a faith-decision but on rationally certain knowledge of the events” that, Pannenberg says, faith presupposes. See Kolden, 9. Cf. “Redemptive Event and History,” in: BQT I, 54-7.

80 On this subject, Pannenberg, in “Redemptive Event and History” BQT I, 15-80, points to the dangers of the “Barthian” and “Bultmannian” approach “to secure religious knowledge from the charge that it is only rooted in the present knower’s subjectivity and has no external or past moorings” (Kolden, 5). For Pannenberg, one of significant reasons for disregarding the importance of history in modern theology is due to the contemporary concept of revelation.

81 See RaH, 4. For Pannenberg, the new and exclusive use of the concept of revelation to mean the self-disclosure of God without imparting any supernatural truths arose when the Enlightenment began to view the old concept of revelation as “the identification of revelation and the inspiration of Holy Scripture, the understanding of revelation as the transmission of supernatural and hidden truths” (RaH, 4). Schleiermacher limited the concept of revelation to the religious sphere. And thus, according to Pannenberg, a strict understanding of self-revelation rejects a medium of revelation that is distinct from God himself. As the Hegelian Philipp Marheineke comments, God is revealed not through the human spirit but through himself, and it is echoed in Karl Barth’s thesis that “God’s revelation to man cannot be apprehended by his own power, but only by means of God through the

77 BQT I, 16.
78 Olive, 37; Olive cites from RaH, 135.
79 Kolden, 5. In opposition to Barthian and Bultmannian attempts to keep Christian faith safe from the Enlightenment challenges, Pannenberg brings revelation into public discussion “in order to insure that the faith of the church is not itself based on a faith-decision but on rationally certain knowledge of the events” that, Pannenberg says, faith presupposes. See Kolden, 9. Cf. “Redemptive Event and History,” in: BQT I, 54-7.
80 See RaH, 4. For Pannenberg, the new and exclusive use of the concept of revelation to mean the self-disclosure of God without imparting any supernatural truths arose when the Enlightenment began to view the old concept of revelation as “the identification of revelation and the inspiration of Holy Scripture, the understanding of revelation as the transmission of supernatural and hidden truths” (RaH, 4). Schleiermacher limited the concept of revelation to the religious sphere. And thus, according to Pannenberg, a strict understanding of self-revelation rejects a medium of revelation that is distinct from God himself. As the Hegelian Philipp Marheineke comments, God is revealed not through the human spirit but through himself, and it is echoed in Karl Barth’s thesis that “God’s revelation to man cannot be apprehended by his own power, but only by means of God through the
revelation was viewed not as God’s making a certain set of arcane truths known but as God’s self-disclosure, representatively in case of Barth and Bultmann, who treated revelation as a subjective or existential matter. Although Pannenberg agrees with the concept of revelation as the self-disclosure of God, he differentiates himself from the others by emphasizing “revelation as history.” Even if God is distinct and unutterably different from the world, when He reveals Himself He does so in a world that is historical.

In this view, revelation is by nature historical because only historical events can make the deity of Yahweh known. Understanding revelation as God’s divine actions in history, Pannenberg defines revelation as the indirect self-manifestation of God, who is understood in history not by His direct self-disclosure but by His acts and only in a partial way: As acts of God, these acts cast light back on God himself, communicating something indirectly about God himself. That does not of course mean that they reveal God or that God reveals himself in them as their originator, for every individual event which is taken to be God’s activity illuminates the being of God only in a partial way. God will carry out many things which cannot be foreseen, and they will also point back to their originator, though in different ways. Thus no one act could be a full revelation of God. The isolated conception of a single divine action as the revelation of God most often leads to a distorted view, to an idol.

Taking a terminological approach to the direct revelation of God himself, Pannenberg argues that what is at issue here is not the direct or indirect means by which revelation is transferred but the content of revelation. He explains that direct communication “has in an immediate way just that content that it intends to communicate, whereas indirect communication initially has some other content than that which is actually to be communicated.”

Holy Spirit” (RaH, 5).

82 Pannenberg links this also to Exodus 20:2; Cf. Deuteronomy 4:34; 4:39; 7:8-9. See SyTh I, 192.

83 According to Pannenberg, an analysis of the Bible with respect to revelation shows the difficulties of defining the concept. Not only do Israelite and primitive Christian thought display a multifaceted concept, “neither [do] the Old nor New Testaments know of any terminological expression for the ‘self-revelation of God’” (RaH, 9). Many experiences of revelation are only constituent parts of the history of Israel. Pannenberg refers to Deuteronomy and the later days of the Judean monarchy (7th century). In this sense, over against Barth’s controversial view of history, Pannenberg defines revelation as an indirect self-disclosure of God in history.

84 RaH, 16.

85 RaH, 14. That something is a direct revelation does not imply that it is immediate – it may also require mediation. “The distinction between direct and indirect communication is not therefore dependent on whether the communication requires a mediator or not. It is not a question of mediateness or immediateness in the act of communication, but whether the content of a
is any type of revelation directly connected in its content with God Himself, whereas “indirect communication is distinguished by not having God as the content in any direct manner. Every activity and act of God can indirectly express something about God.”

Here, the difference between direct and indirect communication lies not in their means of transfer but rather their content. Then, since God’s direct revelation is possible only at the end of history and everything can be seen as a whole, the basis of Pannenberg’s argument is that only Jesus is God’s self-revelation. If God makes Himself manifest in the world, it is only at the end that God is fully revealed. According to Pannenberg, the entire course of history from beginning to end can be grasped only at the end when God reveals Himself fully. Everything, including the meaning of God’s actions in history, becomes clear only at the end of all human history; until then, God reveals Himself throughout historical events in only a partial way. That is, because “history is God’s acting in his creation, and therefore history cannot be fully understood without God,”

history is fully understood only when God reveals Himself fully.

As such, revelation functions as a means of providing confirmation for an event in history. In this sense, revelation has to do with God’s actions in history. According to Pannenberg’s examination of biblical proofs through an analysis of the experience of revelation in the Bible, even Yahweh’s announcement of his name in Exodus 3-6 cannot be considered an example of full self-revelation. Even though the God of the Bible is not revealed to other people in the same way that He is to the Israelites, there is “the existence of a basis of intelligibility for what is said about the God of Israel.”

Pannenberg argues that, because the Bible uses the word Elohim for the God of Abraham and of the Exodus for other gods as well (Judg. 8:33; 11:24; Ps. 82:1), the God of Israel was not at first self-evidently the only universal God. To outsiders, the God of Israel was simply the local god of Israel and required confirmation as the exclusive deity. Revelation has to be confirmed, and in the context of the Babylonian exile the definitive and exclusive truth of the God of Israel as the one true God needed to be confirmed.

In terms of manifestation, revelation as indirect self-authentication appears to

communication can be linked in a direct or indirect way with its intention” (RaH, 14-5).

86 RaH, 15.
87 F&R, 87.
88 See RaH, 9-10.
89 SyTh I, 190.
90 SyTh I, 190.
91 Pannenberg prefers to use “manifestation,” by which he means “any appearance of God that does not involve the disclosure of essence” (RaH, 9).
concern what God will do in the future, not the direct essence of God: “Even when the deity in person appears to the recipient, the aim of the manifestation is not usually to demonstrate the reality of the deity.” 92 Because the reality of revelation is presupposed only when the authority is experienced in the content of the event of revelation, “the fact of an experience of revelation does not guarantee the reality of the God from whom it is received or to whom it is ascribed.” 93 Just as the Israelites’ previous knowledge of the deity was modified by their special experience, so revelation is confirmed in the realm of events.

Accordingly, the revelation of God is not the disclosure of God’s essence. When Pannenberg defines the revelation of God as indirect and historical, he means that, as Kolden summarizes, “(1) God is seen to be continually acting in history, (2) revelation is said to be the goal of previous events, and (3) our knowledge of the content of revelation must continually be revised.” 94 Only when one sees indirect self-communication in every individual act of God as revelation and the divine acts and occurrences in nature and history is it possible to understand the totality of God’s actions as revelation. 95 Therefore, Pannenberg concludes that, if theology is to begin with God’s revelation based on the understanding that revelation has its basis in history, theology cannot abandon history.

3) The Bible Proves the Existence of One Linear History

Convinced that the reality of history is accessible according to the biblical understanding of God, Pannenberg asserts that the Jewish understanding of history makes no distinction between earthly history and history beyond this earthly history. According to Pannenberg, the reality of history as discovered by Israel is found throughout the Old and New Testaments. There is no discontinuity in the understanding of history between the Old and New Testament. The Israelite concept of God represents the historical consciousness of Israel in itself:

92 SyTh I, 191.
93 SyTh I, 191.
94 Kolden, 15.
95 For Barth, “only what can be founded on the revelation in Christ is valid as a dogmatic statement” (RaH, 3). Pannenberg says that contemporary Protestant theology has characterized itself as a pure theology of revelation, as is especially evident in Karl Barth and his wide influence. Even others who do not follow Barth want to have a theology based on revelation, and, according to Pannenberg, older theologians of the “biblical Heilsgeschichte and Erlangen neo-Lutheranism, had a starting point in the concept of revelation” (RaH, 3) as well.
For Israel, the reality of God is not exhausted by his being the origin of the world, that is, of normal, ever self-repeating processes and events. Therefore this God can break into the course of his creation and initiate new events in it in an unpredictable way. The certainty that God again and again performs new acts, that he is a “living God,” forms the basis for Israel’s understanding of reality as a linear history moving toward a goal.  

Regarding Israel’s consciousness of linear history, Pannenberg refers to the account of the succession to David’s throne in II Samuel 7 and I Kings 2 as the first developed concept of history in the framework of promise and fulfillment. In these passages, Nathan proclaims God’s assurance of the continuation of the Davidic dynasty, which is fulfilled by Solomon’s coronation. In the much greater framework of Yahwistic history, Genesis 12 opens with the promise to Abraham, while “the J document ends in the book of Joshua with the fulfillment of the promise through Israel’s reclaiming the land.”  

According to Deuteronomic sources, which appeal to the promise-fulfillment structure even if in a somewhat different form, “after the genealogies of the Chronicles had already begun history with Adam, Jewish apocalypticism completed the extension of history so that it covered the whole course of the world from Creation to the end.” As such, there can be only one history and historiography because the final analysis of the end concerns only one history. Likewise, the history of Israel is not a particular sphere of reality but reality in its totality.

Pannenberg thus criticizes Bultmann who asserts that, for Paul, the historicity of humankind itself, rather than that of the nation or the world, is an interesting subject. According to Bultmann, Paul’s eschatology is linked to the person of Jesus, rather than the end of history, and thus Paul’s eschatological focus on the end of history appears to be an attempt to confirm the “historicity of man.” Despite Paul’s focus on “a new history and existence,” however, Pannenberg emphasizes that “Paul also held fast to the continuity between the salvation event which happened in Christ and the history of Israel,” as shown

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96 BQT I, 18.
97 BQT I, 19.
98 BQT I, 20. In the D document, the promise is bound to the law. For the extension of the concept of history in apocalypticism, see BQT I, 20-1.
99 Rudolf Bultmann, The Presence of Eternity: History and Eschatology (Edinburgh: University Press; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), 43; hereafter The Presence. Bultmann sees Paul offering an apocalyptic view of history on the basis of his anthropology. While Bultmann speaks of an opposition between eschatology and history, Karl Löwith speaks of an opposition between the salvation event and history. They are, however, also similar. Löwith “does not understand that redemptive history is not a supra history, but because of its universal tendency essentially includes all events” (BQT I, 32); cf. Karl Löwith, Meaning in History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 184.
100 BQT I, 24.
in Romans 9-11 and Galatians 3:15ff. Pannenberg argues, “It is of great theological significance that the confession of Israel and that of the community of the new covenant consistently hold fast to the one history of God which binds them together.”101 For Pannenberg, therefore, Jesus can be understood only in light of the Old Testament as the revelation of God. Pannenberg argues that New Testament eschatology does not contradict the structure of the historical consciousness of Israel.

Criticizing Pannenberg’s emphasis on the theology of history in the traditions of the Old Testament, James Barr insists that there is no word for history in ancient Hebrew.102 In response to Barr, Pannenberg differentiates the biblical view of history from the modern Western concept of history, and argues that the Bible witnesses to God’s divine actions in history. Pannenberg does not find Barr convincing: while the modern European concept of history is oriented toward human action, history is viewed as divine action in the Old Testament since “it spoke of the ‘act of God’ or of the totality of these acts.”103 He argues that this view of history is supported by biblical examples, such as Joshua 24:31, in which the chosen elders appear to have known all the work that the Lord had done for Israel and the whole history of Israel since the Exodus,104 Isaiah 5:12, in which the prophet complains that the people do not pay attention to the deeds of the Lord, and Psalm 33:4, which “invites the people to praise God because ‘all his work is done in faithfulness’.”105 In this context, Pannenberg asserts that “we can very well speak of the history of God’s act,”106 for God’s acts are represented in a series or sequence. The Bible speaks of the history of God’s acts, and revelation reflects the tension between God’s promise and the fulfillment of history. For the same reason, according to Pannenberg, revelation cannot be separated from history because it is manifested concretely as acts of God in term of events in history. Revelation is thus not direct but indirect and historical. History is not composed of raw or so-called brute facts; rather, human history or revelation “is always bound up with understanding, in hope and remembrance.”107 Here Pannenberg argues that history is the development of understanding itself and insists on defining history in a tradition-historical context related to

101 BQT I, 25.
103 SyTh I, 230.
105 SyTh I, 230.
106 SyTh I, 231.
107 RaH, 152.
the traditions and expectations in which people live, without which natural events in history have no meaning.

Therefore, it can be concluded that even if the events of history speak their own language, the language of facts does not relate the brute facts apart from “the context of the tradition and the expectations in which the given events occur.”

In this tradition-historical context, history is always understood in terms of expectation and retrospection; the consciousness of the one history binds the eschatological community of Jesus Christ and ancient Israel together in the framework of the promise and fulfillment of redemptive history, just as the Old and New Testaments are bound in the consciousness of the one general history in its totality.

4) The Apocalyptic Understanding of History

According to Pannenberg, it is apocalypticism that serves as a turning point for the understanding of revelation as history, “by extending the decisive revelation into the future.”

Because the experience of revelation was provisional, “its truth depended on the future self-demonstration of the truth of God.” The proof is found in Isaiah 40ff., in which Yahweh is identified as the creator and as the sole deity, “not now with a backward look at the exodus, but with a forward look to God’s future action which will show even other peoples that the God of Israel is the one true God, the Creator of the world.”

During the critical situation of the exiles in Babylon, Isaiah was a seer of Yahweh as the God of Israel in God’s future action in which God would show all peoples that he is the one true God, the Creator of the world. As such, it is apocalyptic hope that links revelation to the end of history and, as such, is a highly eschatological term.

It should be noted here first that Pannenberg sees apocalypticism as stressing not dualism, which expects tribulation in the present world, but the expectation of the future fulfillment of God’s promise. The end of the world in terms of apocalyptic expectation is God’s fulfillment of His promise, and history is the only means of proving God’s self-revelation. Second, in the prophets Pannenberg sees the idea that, as the ruler of history, God

108 RaH, 153.
109 SyTh I, 213.
110 SyTh I, 213.
111 SyTh I, 193.
is not limited to Israel. According to Pannenberg, the basic notion of revelation developed in prophetic eschatology is God’s promise and his fulfillment on the basis of that promise. That is the apocalyptic understanding of history as God’s goal that is fulfilled at the end. In this context, God’s fulfillment is to be understood within the process of history. Since Jewish apocalypticism interprets the future as the reality of God’s glory, Pannenberg argues; “Eschatology is not new in apocalypticism, but only the fact that instead of the inner-historical eschatology of the prophets there is now an eschatology of the end of history.” Bultmann, however – drawing a sharp contrast between apocalypticism and the Old Testament understanding of history – argues that there is a close connection between apocalypticism and dualistic Persian eschatology. For Bultmann, apocalypticism based on Persian dualism contradicts the Old Testament doctrine of creation because the God of the Old Testament appears not as the ruler of world history but only of the history of Israel. Pannenberg does not find Bultmann convincing here because the concept of apocalypticism “did not displace faith in creation, but rather the law of God controlled the course of history.” In this view, Pannenberg sees Bultmann dismissing “the connection between the apocalyptic picture of history and the Old Testament scheme of promise-fulfillment.” For Pannenberg, the end of history as anticipated by apocalyptic seers is the goal of the fulfillment of history. According to Pannenberg, it is Bultmann’s contention that, in the New Testament, “history is swallowed up by eschatology,” and, for Bultmann, “The end is not the completion of history but its breaking-off,” and “apocalyptic means a ‘dehistorization’ of history.” This is why Pannenberg criticizes Bultmann’s understanding of apocalyptic eschatology as closely connected to his understanding of Jewish dualistic apocalypticism: Bultmann does not know how to connect the history of Israel and the salvation event of Jesus Christ with this concept.

Instead, Pannenberg sees the apocalyptic concept of the experience of revelation along the lines of the proleptic disclosure of what God will make universally manifest in the

112 Over against Von Rad, who thinks that apocalyptic is related to Wisdom literature rather than to prophetic eschatology, Pannenberg argues that “Jewish apocalyptic must be seen as a continuation and extension of Old Testament eschatology” (Kolden, 7). See “Redemptive Event and History,” in: BQT I, 18-21.
113 BQT I, 23.
114 The Presence, 26ff.
115 The Presence, 28.
116 BQT I, 22.
117 BQT I, 23. For Pannenberg’s detailed critique of Bultmann, see BQT I, 22-9.
118 The Presence, 37.
119 Quoted in BQT I, 23. See The Presence, 30, 35.
future. Apocalyptic seers, like prophets, enjoyed an awareness of being in the light of the truth that would be revealed in the future, since they believed that the definitive truth had already been disclosed. In this apocalyptic sense of revelation, according to Pannenberg, “Jesus could claim that the coming rule of God had already dawned in his message and work.”

In the same way, it is understandable that the resurrection of the dead is proleptically manifested in the resurrection of Jesus. As Mostert comments, Pannenberg sees a very close relation between Jesus’ resurrection and Jewish apocalypticism in the Second Temple period.

4. The Modern Atheistic and Anthropocentric View of the Resurrection

The historicity of Jesus’ resurrection is opposed by the modern scientific view that resurrection from the dead violates the laws of nature. According to Pannenberg, however, such an approach, which assumes an atheistic view of reality, prohibits historians from conducting historical research into the reality of Jesus’ resurrection, regardless of the historicity of Easter traditions, and calls for the use of anthropocentric methodologies, such as Troeltsch’s principle of analogy. Pannenberg argues that even the modern scientific presuppositions do not remove the necessity of taking a historical approach to Jesus’ resurrection.

1) Ernst Troeltsch’s Principle of Analogy

When reflecting on how a critical historian can believe that Jesus rose from the dead, Pannenberg does not completely deny the usefulness of Troeltsch’s critical approach to history. Troeltsch proposes that three interrelated principles should serve as historical-
critical methods: (1) the principle of criticism, which claims that a greater or lesser degree of probability guides our judgment about the past; (2) the principle of analogy, which assesses probability by making analogies between past and present experiences; and (3) the principle of universal correlation, which refers to the interdependence of all historical phenomena. As Van Harvey explains, “Historical explanation, therefore, necessarily takes the form of understanding an event in terms of its antecedents and consequences, in terms of its temporal and spatial place in the causal nexus.”¹²³

Pannenberg does not disagree with Troeltsch’s first and third principle, since he seeks probability for the understanding of Jesus’ resurrection as a historical event but criticizes the second principle because it assumes “the fundamental homogeneity [Gleichartigkeit] of all historical events, on the presupposition of a universal correlation.”¹²⁴ According to Pannenberg, using Troeltsch’s principle of analogy as a method of historical research presumes that “something difficult to understand, comparatively opaque, is to be conceived and understood by the investigator in terms of what lies closer to him.”¹²⁵

In historiography, Pannenberg uses, on the one hand, historiography positively in the sense of the totality that is open until the end, and on the other, criticizes the principle of analogy in its positivistic view of history. Olive comments that Pannenberg’s negative historiographical condition derives from a criticism of the use of analogy in historical research: “Analogy is a revered tool in modern historiography and works from the assumption that there is a basic similarity in all historical events. Consequently, it is to be assumed that the events of the past can be understood along the same lines as the events of the present” (Olive, 46).

The principle of analogy appeals to universal homogeneity in all different historical events. All dissimilarities grounded in a core of homogeneity can be understood at any time without remainder by analogy. According to that principle, then, the reality of history depends on the observer to whom events lie closer because if the observer has no analogy with any new event, there is no history. This is why Pannenberg criticizes the principle of analogy for its anthropocentrism. As McGrath reminds us, the negative use of analogy is based on the anthropocentric presupposition that “if there are no other events subject to the experience of the historian which are analogous to the event under investigation, there is thereby sufficient reason to believe that the alleged ‘event’ did not, in fact, take place in the first instance” Alister E. McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology, 1750-1990* (Basil, Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 171; hereafter McGrath.

Therefore, it is necessary to see how Pannenberg understands the modern scientific worldview that governs the modern view of history. Indeed, Pannenberg’s negative view of the principle of analogy comes to a climax when he refers to the limitations of the modern scientific presuppositions that the principle of analogy shares. For the probability of the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection, it is important to survey the modern scientific presuppositions because, according to Pannenberg, the historical treatment of Jesus’ resurrection has been contradicted by the atheistic view of modern science.


¹²⁵ *BQT* I, 43.
accordance with this principle, Jesus’ resurrection is not an event that can be investigated closely by a historian because it violates the principle of homogeneity. According to Pannenberg, the principle of homogeneity unnecessarily precludes the existence of God and His interruption in history, and is therefore problematic if applied to all phenomena. Specifically, despite its usefulness in affirming the historicity of past events, the principle is problematic because, first, it is subject to abuse. As McGrath points out, Pannenberg criticizes Troeltsch’s principle for “its serious abuse in defining a view of reality, rather than functioning as a tool of historical enquiry.”

For Pannenberg, the principle is inadequate because it does not allow for the existence of a heterogeneous, resistant, and alien reality, and, because it asserts that “all differences should be comprehended in a uniform, universal homogeneity,” it is subject to abuse.

Second, according to Pannenberg, the principle presupposes an anthropocentric worldview. Pannenberg sees the obvious anthropocentric structure of the principle of analogy as a comparative method because analogy is bound fundamentally to the investigator’s current state of knowledge. The principle thus limits historical-critical inquiry by presenting a biased worldview in which, “instead of pointing out analogies from case to case,

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126 McGrath, 171. Pannenberg criticizes Troeltsch’s omnipotence of analogy, which implies a fundamental homogeneity of all historical events (BQT I, 43-4).

127 BQT I, 46.

128 According to Pannenberg, it is undoubtedly anthropocentrism that brought about historical-critical research in the cultural history of modern times. Pannenberg warns that, while historical research can be methodologically anthropocentric in its nature, the problem is that the method is bound up with an anthropocentric worldview. This worldview has the grave consequence of separating ordinary history from biblical history. Pannenberg states: “A fundamental antithesis between the worldviews of historical method and the biblical history of God is found in the anthropocentricity of the historical-critical procedure, which seems apt to exclude all transcendent reality as a matter of course” (BQT I, 39). Taking Ernst Troeltsch’s principle of analogy as a representative example of the case, Pannenberg argues that “the principles of historical research do not have to be essentially and unavoidably imprisoned within an anthropocentric world view” (BQT I, 40). He acknowledges that “Collingwood emphasizes that the interest of a historian rests on presuppositions of faith which have their deepest root in Christianity,” and “Dilthey himself was aware of the fact that the historicity of man was discovered by Christianity” (BQT I, 33, 34). When humankind becomes the center on which history is focused, the biblical consciousness of history must finally fall to the individual human being, and, as a result, “the unity of history is necessarily dissolved into a multiplicity of aspects of the past” (BQT I, 33). Therefore, the consequence of the anthropocentric turn of philosophy was historicism’s relativistic dissolution of the unity of history.

129 BQT I, 44. For Pannenberg, the conviction of universal correspondence is not yet necessarily an expression of an anthropocentric way of thinking: “[T]he basic thesis of the universal correspondence of all historical phenomena does not have a primarily anthropocentric structure” (BQT I, 40). If, however, the causal relations between historical phenomena in universal correlation are presupposed, the problem is nothing more than a misuse of the causal principle. According to Pannenberg, the universal correspondence of all historical events forbids the theological study of history in isolation from the biblical witnesses.
one postulates a fundamental homogeneity \([\text{Gleichartigkeit}]\) of all reality with the current range of experience and research."\(^{130}\) This perspective is relevant only if the universe is a closed system, on the basis of an anthropocentric view of the universe based on modern deism and scientific atheism.

Third, according to Pannenberg, the principle of analogy lacks a value-free sense of experience in its methodology because there are problems with the structure of analogy as a means of knowing. The structure presupposes that something about the unknown is knowable from what is already known by analogy. The problem is that the already known entity on which the analogy is based is also constituted by analogy.\(^{131}\) According to Pannenberg, however, this principle, which begins with present sense experience, has been disputed by W. Dilthey, E. Cassirer, and Fritz Kaufmann on the basis that analogical conclusions do not come from a value-free sense experience but from a “given world of expression in which the historian is at home.”\(^{132}\) Arguing for a neutral approach to the resurrection, Pannenberg concludes that Jesus’ resurrection is not a presupposition but a conclusion.

Accordingly, Pannenberg points out that the lack of analogy in our present experience should not lead us to conclude that the resurrection must be deemed non-historical (\(\text{historisch}\)): because, although Jesus’ resurrection has historical credibility, it is an event without analogy; unless another way to confirm the events reported in the Bible is established, the general historical method must be reconceived.

2) The Modern Scientific and Atheistic View of Reality

Pannenberg acknowledges that mere theological assurance of the power of God over nature is insufficient in determining God’s role not only in human history but also in nature\(^{133}\) because in the deistic worldview, natural science appears to contradict divine power over nature. According to Pannenberg, experimental science does indeed have its roots in the doctrine of creation. With this in mind, Pannenberg suggests reconceiving God’s power over nature by addressing (1) the question of regularity and contingency and (2) the principle of \(\text{inertia}\) and

\(^{130}\) \textit{BQT} I, 45.
\(^{131}\) \textit{BQT} I, 44.
\(^{132}\) \textit{BQT} I, 44.
\(^{133}\) W. Pannenberg, \textit{Toward a Theology of Nature} (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1993), 75, hereafter \textit{TTN}.
God’s conservation. Regarding the first issue, Pannenberg insists that the regularity of natural processes that science abstracts from the concreteness of physical reality into a certain form of knowledge may imply the presence of God in creation. Despite the fact that scientists can see regularity as a sign of God’s separation from this world, according to Pannenberg, regularity could instead imply “the unfailing faithfulness of the creator God to the creation” because “the abstract investigation of the regularities underlining the emergence of these natural forms need not separate them from their natural context in the creation of God and from God himself.” Pannenberg argues that, while regularity as a natural law is abstracted from the contingent conditions of its occurrence, this contingency is the ultimate problem in natural science’s search for regularity in natural laws since it is linked to the origins of the present world. Pannenberg sees addressing contingency in the regularity of nature as the first step in resolving the deistic concern with the relationship between the God of Creation and the world.

The questions “What is the regularity ‘abstracted from’?” and “What is methodically disregarded in the abstract formulas of science” inevitably arise in this context, especially when the regularity of nature assumes contingency as it emerges. To address these questions, Pannenberg attempts to adapt the principle of inertia to the theological question of God by viewing contingency within natural processes. The problem is that the application of the principle of inertia separates the world from God. Specifically, the deistic view of the

134 To narrow down my focus on the scientific problem of the resurrection of Jesus I took up two of five questions posed by Pannenberg to scientists and reshaped them. Cf. TTN, 17-8.
135 TTN, 17.
136 TTN, 17. Pannenberg concludes that natural science cannot avoid speaking about the creative act of God that Christians believe in because the science of regularities cannot explain the contingency that is found in laws of the present universe. Pannenberg issues a challenge to revise or at least to reinterpret the principle of inertia because, in this principle, the importance of contingency in natural processes has been devalued. Cf. TTN, 19-22.
137 There are three theses that Pannenberg advanced for the concept of contingency, specifically historical contingency. (1) Contingent conditions “cannot be derived from the particular formula of law.” (2) The regularity itself described by a formula of natural law “can be considered as contingent because its pattern represents a repeatable sequence of events, a sequence that, being temporal, must take place a first time before it is repeated and becomes a regular sequence.” Pannenberg’s understanding of the irreversibility of physical regularities implies that regularities are not independent in time and temporal sequence. (3) That the irreversibility of physical regularity “is based ultimately on the irreversibility of time” becomes a general thesis. While the irreversibility of time can entail the emergence of repeatable patterns of temporal sequence, “such an emergence itself becomes a contingent event.” See TTN, 21-22.
138 TTN, 17.
139 For Pannenberg’s survey on modern physical theories of the principle of inertia developed since René Descartes, Isaac Newton, Baruch Spinoza, and Immanuel Kant, see TTN, 19-20; and for the theological problems implied in the principle of inertia, see TTN, 30-1.
emancipation of the world from God is implied in the principle of inertia because the principle assumes the universe to be independent from him. For Pannenberg, however, the deistic view that “God has brought forth the world but then withdrawn from it” is not self-evident because “if the stuff of the universe is finally made up of events rather than of solid bodies and if the latter are already the products of the regularities of events, then their inertia or self-persistence is no more self-evident than any other natural regularity.” Thus, if the world is conceived of as creation, its contingency is the evidence that contradicts deistic conceptions.

To sum up, the perfection of the divine action is implied by the regularity itself. The abstracted reality by itself in the mathematical language of science implies its relationship to the faithfulness of God. The perfect world machine that seems to run completely by itself is effected by the perfection of God, and “even a deterministically closed system remains related to contingent beginning conditions.” Therefore, though the deist’s world is regarded as entirely determined, the world does not rest in itself but “comes into existence by a contingent act.” The contingency in the regularity of natural laws thus leads the deistic assumption to contradict its own system.

3) Natural Law and Jesus’ Resurrection as Miracle

According to Pannenberg, modern science as based on so-called methodological atheism claims full and exclusive competence regarding the explanation of nature and thus requires no conception of God. According to the deistic view of natural law that not only separates God from the work of God’s creation but also denies the existence of God, scientific regularity is regarded as abstracted from the concreteness of physical reality based on the conception of the universe as a closed system. That is a scientific atheism. In this atheistic

140 TTN, 99. For modern deism in relation to natural law and the issue of contingency, see TTN, 19-22.
141 TTN, 20.
142 TTN, 99.
143 TTN, 99.
144 TTN, 55.
conviction that natural laws do not need to take into consideration God’s preservation of the world, the scientific view of Jesus’ resurrection is that “the resurrection of a dead person even in the sense of the resurrection to imperishable life would be an event that violates the laws of nature. Therefore, resurrection as a historical event is impossible.”

Miracles as God’s immediate activity in the events of nature are impossible since natural laws are regarded as inalterable.

However, Pannenberg argues that “(t)he concept of miracle as a violation subverts the very concept of law and in effect exposes the futility of the assertion of miracles,” and is thus self-defeating. According to him, the biblical language of miracles refers to extraordinary events that function as “signs” of God’s sovereign power, and it was Augustine who held this notion of miracle and “emphasized that events of that type do not occur contrary to the nature of things.” According to Augustine, the reason that miracles appear to us as contrary to natural laws is due to our limited knowledge of the “course of nature.” But, with the development of medieval theology, the notion of miracle as occurring contra naturam became more generally accepted because the order of nature, although created by God, was affirmed to be unchangeable. Regarding this point, Pannenberg warns us to apply the presuppositions of modern physics carefully because “only a part of the laws of nature are ever known.” He urges us to return to Augustine’s concept of miracle based on an understanding of the limitations of our knowledge, pointing out that Augustine’s concept of miracle entails the contingency of natural law. What we experience as unusual and exceptional compared to the accustomed patterns of events is the objective basis of the

146 JGM, 98.
147 “Because the logic of the concept of natural law requires that there be no exceptions – otherwise the pretended law in question would turn out not to be truly a law of nature” Pannenberg, “The Concept of Miracle,” in: Zygon 37/3 (2002), 759; hereafter “The Concept.” In this understanding of natural law, the concept of miracle appears to be a violation of natural law. “The concept of miracles has become one of the more intricate problems, because miracles are said to involve a violation of the laws of nature” (“The Concept,” 759). Pannenberg says that this is asserted by Hume in the section on miracles in Hume’s Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (1748).
150 “The Concept,” 760.
151 Pannenberg argues that Thomas Aquinas regarded the concept of miracle as contra naturam, Descartes affirmed the unchangeability of natural order, and Baruch Spinoza concludes that therefore miracles cannot occur. See “The Concept,” 760-1.
152 JGM, 98.
contingency of events, which may appear usual or unusual. For Pannenberg, “Miracle is just an unusual event or action, and religious interpretation identifies it as an act of God. ... To those who believe in God the Creator, the world is full of miracles.”

According to Pannenberg, if natural laws describe repetitive patterns in the sequence of events, then contingency in the emergence of such patterns of the order of nature is not self-evident by natural law but only by miracle.

Pannenberg continues to argue that, because this world “as a whole represents a singular, irreversible process, an individual event is never completely determined by natural laws” and the universe is a unique and irreversible total process, “then a temporal limitation in the applicability of formulas of the laws of nature may be more than merely conceivable.”

It can never “succeed in bringing into view the entirety of nature as determined in all details by a number of laws” that are, in any case, not infinitely complex. In this context, scientific knowledge may not be the permanent truth because, when a new observation is made, previous formulas that had been considered valid “will have to be considered as mere approximations of more general regularities.”

Pannenberg cites Günter Ewald’s contention that it is “impossible to give a natural law a definite unalterable form” By extension, if the irreversibility of events is taken into consideration, “the laws of nature are taken out of the realm of timeless validity and are put into the comprehensive horizon of a becoming and perhaps also passing world, at least in that of a changing world.”

As such, “our concept of a law of nature is influenced by whether we think of the world as having come into being before finite time, or as engaged in irreversible change, or as an eternally unchangeable order.” Therefore, the idea of natural laws, influenced by the worldview of an eternally unchangeable order, runs into difficulty when confronted with the principle of the irreversibility of the historical event:

If the world process as a whole represents a unique process that as a whole is unrepeatable, then it also cannot be understood in its entirety as the application of a law.... And since each individual

154 JGM, 98.
155 TTN, 78.
156 TTN, 78.
157 TTN, 77.
158 Günter Ewald, Wirklichkeit, Wissenschaft, Glaube: Die Frage der Wirklichkeit in exakter Wissenschaft und im Christlichen Glauben (Wuppertal, 1963; hereafter Ewald), 18 is quoted in TTN, 77-8.
159 TTN, 106.
160 TTN, 106.
occurrence participates in this uniqueness of the total process, since no occurrence is repeated strictly in the same way in which it has taken place earlier, so, strictly speaking, not a single event is expressed exhaustively by the laws that it satisfies.161

Likewise, according to Pannenberg, the scientific approach appears to be related to determinism in its ability to judge a historical event.162 The science of the microstructure of natural events, however, “can be described only by statements of probability, and this obviously not because of the limitedness of present physical knowledge but because of the nature of the matter itself.”163 The general validity of natural laws expressed by natural science does not allow definitive judgments regarding the possibility or impossibility of an individual event and thus prevents any determinism because of the irreversibility of the event.164 Historical events are not to be imprisoned in a laboratory because the world is not a closed system. As a result, “the judgment about whether an event, however unfamiliar, has happened or not is in the final analysis a matter for the historian and cannot be prejudged by the knowledge of natural science”165 as long as natural science principally seeks satisfactory affirmations of the laws.

161 TTN, 106-7.
162 Pannenberg refers to the faith shattered today “in thoroughgoing determinedness of all natural occurrences by laws, known and still unknown, which are always alike” (TTN, 77).
163 Ewald, 18, quoted in TTN, 78.
164 Pannenberg argues that determinism has been revealed by contemporary physics to be an illusion. Modern physics itself has affirmed the limits of physical and scientific laws as such. The physical laws are viewed today as so limited in time and space in their field of application that they are not applicable everywhere in the same way.
165 JGM, 98.
According to N.T. Wright, Christian theology is confronted with two different views on which all objections to the historical treatment of Jesus’ resurrection are based, namely, modern naïve realism and the postmodern pessimistic view of reality. Highlighting the limits of the naïve realism of the modernist realistic view as well as the postmodern view, he proposes combining the two views\(^{166}\) to resolve this conflict. According to him, it is problematic that the postmodern or phenomenological reading of an event does not equate “historical” with “chronological.” For that reason, Wright calls for a methodological change in the naïve realistic view of the world. According to Wright, the study of Jesus “might lead to a reappraisal of the theory of knowledge itself.”\(^{167}\) He proposes applying critical realism as a theory of knowledge that can compensate for the competing theories that seem to have failed in the postmodernist world.

How Wright applies a critical realist view of Jesus’ resurrection is clarified by his own critics against the objections of theologians and historians. Struggling with naïve realism as well as phenomenalism, Wright introduces an alternative methodology for Jesus’ resurrection, emphasizing that the plausibility of Jesus’ bodily resurrection is maintained by taking a critical realist view of history.

\(^{166}\) Wright therefore not only criticizes all historical surveys indebted to those views in any way but also has no sympathy for objections to a historical approach to Jesus’ resurrection. He sees the historical critics indebted to those views focusing neither on the Jesus of history nor on the resurrection itself for its own sake but, rather, on the results as the “benefits” of Jesus’ work and death. N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 15; hereafter JVG.

\(^{167}\) N.T. Wright, *New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 96; hereafter NTPG. Faced with deconstructing modernity, Christians should not deny the presence of postmodernity and not be frightened of the postmodern critique. Wright believes it is “a necessary judgment on the arrogance of modernity, and it is essentially a judgment from within. Our task is to reflect on this moment of despair within our culture and, reflecting biblically and Christianly, to see our way through the moment of despair and out the other side” Wright, “The Resurrection and the Postmodern Dilemma,” in: *Sewanee Theological Review* 41/2 (1998); http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright_Resurrection_Postmodern.htm (accessed December 2011).
1. Wright’s Critique of Negative Reasons

Wright attempts to prove that theology should not be separated from history by arguing that they are closely interrelated, just as theological and historical terms are. He does not mean, however, that the central truth of Christian faith should be built on a simple observation of the world, which is obviously impossible. Rather, he means that belief in Jesus’ resurrection is not a blind belief that rejects all history and science; instead, “faith in Jesus risen from the dead *transcends but includes* what we call history and what we call science.” Applying a critical realist view to Jesus’ resurrection, Wright appeals to the harmony between theology and history and insists that there is no theological reason that can deny the need for historical research into Jesus’ resurrection.

1) There is No Access: The Phenomenological View of Willi Marxsen

Wright takes Willi Marxsen as an example to present a very pessimistic view of Jesus’ resurrection. Marxsen denies any access to the resurrection as a historical event. According to him, we should not speak of the resurrection as “historical” because what we have access to, apparently, is not the resurrection of Jesus as a historical fact itself but only the beliefs of the early church. Wright argues, however, that Marxsen contradicts himself. First, Marxsen simultaneously presents, on the one hand, a positivistic view regarding the disciples’ faith and, on the other hand, a pessimistic view regarding Jesus’ resurrection. In Wright’s view, Marxsen applies two different standards to the resurrection of Jesus and to early Christian belief. His denial of accessibility to the resurrection seems to be phenomenalistic or postmodernist over against his positivistic view of the disciples’ faith.

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170 There are “no sources, except the late and unreliable so-called Gospel of Peter, that purport to describe Jesus’ coming out of the tomb” N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 15; hereafter *RSG.*
That is why Wright states that Marxsen says “both too little and too much.” In the phenomenological or postmodern worldview of the resurrection that Marxsen proposes, all we have access to for the disciples’ faith as well as Jesus’ resurrection are texts. According to this worldview, we cannot prove that anything regarding early Christianity actually occurred.

Second, Wright argues that Marxsen confuses and fails to distinguish among the diverse senses of “history.” According to Marxsen, the notion of history as writing or speaking about events in the past is problematic, but a historical event involves provable events. Marxsen believes that no one actually recorded the actual transition of Jesus from death to life, and hence nothing can be proved about the event. Wright argues, however, that it is undeniable that the resurrection was recorded, regardless of whether the event truly occurred, and that the writings and testimonies about it should be investigated. Thus, defining Marxsen’s concept of a historical event as a provable event, Wright criticizes it for being too restrictive because even “modern historians” depending on a sense of history as comprising provable events cannot prove anything about the resurrection historically, positive nor negative. This concept cannot prove that Jesus’ resurrection did not take place 2000 years ago any more than it can prove that it took place.

Wright then concludes that the problem of Marxsen’s concept of the sense of history as a provable event is of no interest in determining whether it truly occurred; that is not the core issue in this concept of history. Therefore, according to Wright, Marxsen is not only restrictive but also contradicts the diverse concepts of history. Wright argues that even though we do not have access to the resurrection as an event in itself, we should not refrain from discussing the resurrection as a historical event.

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171 *RSG*, 15. “Too little: in standard positivistic fashion it appears to suggest that we can only regard as ‘historical’ that to which we have direct access (in the sense of ‘first-hand witness accounts’ or the near equivalent). But, as all real historians know, that is not in fact how history works. Positivism is, if anything, even less appropriate in historiography than in other areas…. Ruling out as historical that to which we do not have direct access is actually a way of not doing history at all. As a result, this view also says too much. On its own epistemology, it ought not to even claim access to the disciples’ faith” (*RSG*, 15-6).

172 See *RSG*, 16.
2) There is No Analogy: The Empirical Methodology of Ernst Troeltsch

Troeltsch insists, in line with his principle of analogy, that, because we have no experience of resurrections, historians cannot and should not speak of the resurrection. For him, it is illegitimate to try to write about the resurrection of Jesus as history and to try to prove it today. According to Wright, however, Troeltsch is dependent on a view of history as what modern historians can say, and on a view of history as dealing with provable events. He explains, “When people say ‘but that can’t be something that happened, because we know that that sort of thing does not actually happen’, they are appealing to a kind of would-be scientific principle of history, namely the principle of analogy.” Pointing to the simple scientific conviction that real history can be proven by using the same methods as hard science, Pannenberg argues that “the problem with analogy is that it never quite gets you far enough, precisely because history is full of unlikely things that happened once and once only, so that the analogies are often at best partial, and are dependent anyway on the retort ‘who says?’ to the objection about some kinds of things not normally happening.” Recognizing that scientists cannot examine historical events as they can scientific research using experiments that can be duplicated, Wright criticizes Troeltsch’s principle of analogy as being overly affected by modern scientism. According to Wright, historians should simply examine witnesses or sources to draw a conclusion regarding the most probable explanation for historical events since they are not subject to repeatable experiments in which comparisons can be made. But the question whether Jesus’ resurrection actually took place or not is not Troeltsch’s real concern. Rather, he is only interested in the writings on the resurrection we have.

Against this background, Wright argues that if we cannot or should not discuss the resurrection of Jesus because we cannot use the methods of science, then we cannot and should not discuss the origins of the early church either. Because “Never before had there been a movement which began as a quasi-messianic group within Judaism and was transformed into the sort of movement which Christianity quickly became. Nor has any similar phenomenon ever occurred again.” In other words, the rise of the early church is

173 Ernst Troeltsch, “Über Historische und dogmatische Methode,” in: Gesammelte Schriften 2, 732 is mentioned in RSG, 16.
174 “Scientists.”
176 RSG, 17.
itself a sufficient reason to investigate the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus.

3) There is No Evidence: Rudolf Bultmann, Gerd Lüdemann, and J.N.D. Crossan

Wright states that Rudolf Bultmann, Gerd Lüdemann, and J.N.D. Crossan all agree that “the apparent evidence for the resurrection (i.e. the gospel accounts and the testimony of Paul) can be explained away.” Wright is suspicious of their intentions and presuppositions, however. Despite apparent difficulties in the application of form-critical analysis to the resurrection narratives, Lüdemann, as a post-Bultmannian, analyzes materials according to a hypothetical traditional concept of history. According to Wright, Lüdemann’s and Crossan’s application of a highly developed traditional concept of history accords with Bultmann who understood the origin of the story of Jesus’ resurrection to be in the theological needs of the early church. They believe that the Easter legends and the empty tomb stories grew in the fertile soil of the belief in Jesus’ exaltation. Jesus’ appearance and announcement to the women were introduced into the tradition late and therefore serve an apologetic motif. Thus, the final forms of the resurrection narratives are very apologetic, according to a consensus of the hypotheses espoused by these scholars. The resurrection narratives are declared worthless as historical narratives.

Crossan in particular harbors a ruthless hermeneutical suspicion of the text. Wright explains that, for Crossan, the story of the resurrection is understood from the political view

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177 RSG, 18.
178 Wright insists that “it has proved difficult to subject the resurrection stories to form-critical analysis” (RSG, 18). He does not want to abolish form-criticism, however, but is looking for “a different way of doing it, working from the likely Jewish story-forms that the earliest followers of Jesus would naturally have adopted and towards the kind of forms that the stories might have taken when retold in an environment more attuned to, say, Cynic aphorisms” (RSG, 596). Cf. NTPG, ch. 14.
179 As to the resurrection stories developed in this apologetic motif, modern scholars refer to three serious problems in the first century, “First, the problem which Ignatius addresses: was Jesus really human, or did he only ‘seem’ (dokeo, hence ‘docetism’) to be a true, flesh-and-blood being? This, it has been assumed, is the setting for Luke’s and John’s fuller, and more ‘bodily’, stories of the risen Jesus: breaking bread, expounding scripture, inviting Thomas to touch him, cooking breakfast by the shore. Second, the developed ‘Easter legends’, including stories of appearances and the empty tomb, create a problem: how does one relate these stories to the basic belief in Jesus’ exaltation? Thus they are invented around the same time and in the same texts as the anti-docetic material, stories of an ‘ascension’ which affirm both the initial embodied resurrection and the exaltation, which is not seen as a second stage. Third ... a third problem in the early church: that of rival claims for apostolic authority, dealt with by telling stories which pit one apostle against another (the women against the men, Peter and John against one another, either or both of the latter against Thomas, and so on)” (RSG, 588-9).
of “power-plays in which the accreditation of different apostles or would-be apostles is fought out on the battleground of (fictitious) resurrection narratives.”\textsuperscript{180} Crossan goes further to declare “that the resurrection narratives trivialize Christianity, turning it away from its origins as an aphoristic alternative-lifestyle movement and into a collection of power-seeking factions.”\textsuperscript{181} For this reason, Crossan asserts that speaking about the resurrection of Jesus as a historical event is only hegemonic, and it should be more than that.

Wright criticizes such scenarios of the Easter narrative as based not on evidence and nothing more than elaborate guesswork: “The common tradition-historical scenarios owe a good deal more to nineteenth- and twentieth-century theories about how early Christians ‘must’ have preached and lived than to any sustained attempt to reconstruct the worldviews and mindsets of actual communities in the first century.”\textsuperscript{182} He criticizes such scholars’ treatment of sources of evidence\textsuperscript{183} because the final forms of the gospels in regard to the resurrection narratives are less apologetic.\textsuperscript{184}

To sum up: first, Wright argues that, because the resurrection narratives are derived from an oral tradition based on factual evidence, it is methodologically impossible “to use theories about literary units existing before the gospels took their present form as a way of probing the unknown period between Jesus and the evangelists.”\textsuperscript{185} Wright’s insistence on the oral tradition contradicts the theory of an apologetic motif. Second, Wright argues that Crossan’s methodological use of the Gospel of Peter for the resurrection narratives of the gospels is not correct. Crossan believes that what he calls the “The Cross Gospel” can be identified from an original single source in the passion and resurrection stories, which he dates to the fifth decade A.D. But Wright argues that Crossan fails to provide evidence of the development of the Gospel of Peter “in whole or in reconstructed part, from the period before the canonical Gospels, let alone Paul.”\textsuperscript{186} Therefore, Wright concludes that the real evidence sought by modernistic positivism regarding the rise of the early church will not be obtained unless scholars stop indulging in simple guesswork, and he asserts that the resurrection

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\textsuperscript{180} RSG, 19.  \\
\textsuperscript{181} RSG, 19.  \\
\textsuperscript{182} RSG, 20.  \\
\textsuperscript{183} For Wright’s treatment of the gospels with respect to the resurrection narratives, see especially RSG, 587-682.  \\
\textsuperscript{184} Wright examines the surprising elements of the resurrection narratives: 1) the strange silence of the Bible in the stories, 2) the strange absence of personal hope in the stories, 3) the strange portrait of Jesus in the stories, 4) the strange presence of the women in the stories. Cf. RSG, 596, 599-608, and 616-82.  \\
\textsuperscript{185} RSG, 591.  \\
\textsuperscript{186} RSG, 596.  \\
\end{flushright}
narrative can serve as true evidence of early Christian beliefs.

4) The Resurrection as the Epistemological Ground of Christian Faith: Hans Frei

According to most twentieth-century New Testament scholars, the Easter events cannot be investigated historically. For Hans Frei especially, this is so “because the resurrection is itself the ground of a Christian epistemology.”\(^{187}\) There can be “no other starting-point, no neutral ground on which one might stand, from which one might observe the resurrection itself.”\(^{188}\) Frei believes that the resurrection does not rely on historical investigation; if it did so, it would become a kind of epistemological blasphemy.\(^ {189}\)

For Wright, however, such a proposal is “always in danger of describing a closed epistemological circle, a fideism from within which everything can be seen clearly but which remains necessarily opaque to those outside.”\(^ {190}\) Wright points out that, even if the resurrection has no epistemological ground, “that does not mean that there is no access to Jesus and his death and resurrection in the public world.”\(^ {191}\) Thus, Wright asks, if Frei were right, “How could we know that the resurrection was the only valid epistemological starting-point?”\(^ {192}\) On the basis of this question, Wright argues that Frei’s objection is erroneous.

5) Resurrection and Christology

The conviction that the resurrection is the definitive demonstration of Jesus’ divinity results in a theological objection to historical research of the resurrection. There are some theologians who argue that, in relation to the divinity of Jesus there is no need for historical research about the resurrection. In other words, one cannot “mount a historical argument and end up proving ‘god’, or prove that Jesus was the incarnation of the One True God.”\(^ {193}\)

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\(^{188}\) _RSG_, 21.

\(^{189}\) _RSG_, 21.

\(^{190}\) _RSG_, 21; Wright emphasizes that Bultmann and Lüdemann run this risk.

\(^{191}\) _RSG_, 22.

\(^{192}\) _RSG_, 22.

\(^{193}\) _RSG_, 23.
Likewise, the reality of the resurrection as the definitive demonstration of Jesus’ divinity is beyond historical enquiry.

For Wright, however, Jesus’ resurrection as the demonstration of Jesus’ divinity is linked to the very historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth, and hence leads to the historical question of what led from the belief in Jesus’ resurrection to the belief in Jesus as Messiah and in his divinity. For Wright insists on focusing on the astonishing changes in the earliest days of Christianity and the fact that nothing in the Jewish traditions of the time had prepared Jesus’ followers for them. Early Christians, according to Wright, remained firmly within Jewish monotheism, and “yet they said, from very early on, that Jesus was indeed divine.”

Wright asserts that, in first-century terms, “To say that Jesus is ‘the Christ’ is in the first century terms, to say first and foremost that he is Israel’s Messiah, not to say that he is the incarnate Logos, the second person of the Trinity, the only-begotten son of the father.” Wright continues:

The earlier Christians, those who had followed Jesus during his short public career, had never imagined that a Messiah would be divine. In the same way, the phrase “son of God” is often quoted as if it meant, without more ado, “the second person of the diving Trinity.”

The resurrection has been seen as the demonstration of Jesus’ divinity, but the resurrection did not directly entail Messiahship. Therefore, we should not presuppose Jesus’ divinity before conducting an historical inquiry into Jesus’ resurrection. Wright argues that when first-century Christians spoke of Jesus’ resurrection, they used precise Jewish categories that had been developed over the previous centuries for speaking of the presence and action of the one true God in the world.

How, then, did Jesus’ resurrection become the definitive demonstration of Jesus’ divinity? At this point, historical research into the resurrection is necessary. Although “resurrection does not of itself connote cosmic Lordship, or divinity,” we find an

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194 As we shall see in the next chapter, Wright assures that Jesus’ Messiahship is explicable only if we link Jesus’ resurrection to his life and teaching during his lifetime.
196 RSG, 24.
197 SC, 100.
198 RSG, 24.
199 Wright explains that Presence, Torah, Word, Wisdom, and Spirit are different terms for the same thing: “The God of Israel is the creator and redeemer of Israel and the world” (SC, 77).
200 RSG, 24.
astonishing shift in the early Christian traditions regarding Jesus’ divinity. Therefore, according to Wright, a historical argument for the resurrection need not depend on the belief that Jesus’ divinity is a guarantee of resurrection. Both Christology and belief in Jesus’ divinity call for historical investigation of the resurrection.

6) Resurrection and Eschatology

Many scholars including Albert Schweitzer, Bultmann, and Schillebeeckx defined resurrection as a Christological affirmation of “the Risen One, that is, disclosure of and faith in Jesus in his eschatological, Christological significance.”201 For these theologians, the eschatological experience of resurrection is very existential, so to speak; it is the experience of being “converted.” Viewed this way, the reality of the resurrection cannot be affirmed by historians because eschatology or eschatological experience are not things that can be investigated.

In the sense of eschatology affirmed by the scholars above, the resurrection is not concerned with historical events that are experienced by the senses. For example, Bultmann argues that Gospel accounts about Jesus are not historically factual because the entire conception of the world of the New Testament is generally mythological.202 Because a mythological worldview is no longer useful for modern people, he asserts, the Bible should be demythologized to lay bare its existential meaning. For Bultmann, the Bible does not reveal the real Jesus but a historically reconstructed Jesus, and hence we must determine the purpose that we share with this Jesus.203 In this sense, Jesus’ words become a means of

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202 Bultmann insists: “The Jesus Christ who is God’s son, a preexistent divine being, is at the same time a certain historical person, Jesus of Nazareth; and his destiny as a person is not only a mythical occurrence but at the same time human destiny that ends with his crucifixion. The historical and the mythical here are peculiarly intertwined: the historical Jesus whose father and mother are well known (John 6:42) is at the same time supposed to be the preexistent Son of God, and alongside of the historical event of the cross stands the resurrection, which is not a historical event” (“New Testament and Mythology,” 32).

203 The historicity of Jesus’ events or the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection is not considered to be important. The significant works of historical figures were neither the expression of their personality nor something through which their personality had achieved a “form” but the cause to
engaging in a type of existential re-living; faith is not a theoretical position but a “new act” or a “new obedience,” and the word of God, which is the object of faith, is not to be justified by reason. According to Wright, Bultmann who emphasized the “historic, biblical Christ” over against the “so-called historical Jesus,” stripped away the layers of Jewish apocalyptic mythology to uncover the timeless call to decision. For Bultmann, what counted was not the Jesus of history but only a direct personal encounter with Jesus. We may meet Jesus purely through the kerygma, the “proclamation” about Jesus, that did not announce facts but demanded a decision. Therefore, if we follow Bultmann’s argument, only Christ remains in Christian faith, not the historical Jesus. Here Jesus is nothing more than the eminent model calling humans to be real humans, as in Schweitzer’s portrayal of Jesus. Bultmann sacrificed historicity in order to revive Christianity despite his demythologization, which was designed to sustain the authority of faith.

Here, “eschatology” also becomes a very existential term and is understood as a means to refer to God’s breaking into history, and “talk of God breaking into history means talk of Christology.” Eschatology makes sense for modern humanity only when the point of a new act is the point of eschaton. Neither eschatology nor the resurrection as its expression is subject to historical justification. Wright argues that here the resurrection becomes another way of speaking of Christology, not of eschatology, and that the term eschatology should be used more precisely.

As Wright explains, eschatology in Second Temple Judaism was neither private nor concerned with the individual experience of being converted; rather, it was public and had to do with the restoration of Israel. As such, the resurrection should be viewed as an eschatological event linked to its original meaning within Second Temple Judaism, as “the apocalyptic climax of history.” Therefore, Wright argues, if the resurrection is to be viewed as an eschatological event or eschatological expression, it is necessary to study its form of expression and original meaning within first-century Christianity historically.

which they had surrendered their lives. See Jesus and the Word, 9.

204 Cf. JVG, 13-5.
205 RSG, 26.
2. The Methodological Application of the Critical Realistic View of Jesus’ Resurrection

Wright refers to the positivists’ idea that they can know things on a common-sense level as “naïve realism.” According to Wright, advocates of naïve realism simply look objectively at the world and dismiss the types of knowledge they think are not objective. They regard knowing as a matter of drawing a simple line from the observer to the object and believe that objective reality can be tested by empirical observation. Wright argues that if the validity of reality is to be defined by empirical observation, such a historical event as Jesus’ resurrection cannot claim its own reality as event or, moreover, even come into question because it is not available to empirical observation. The Bible is weighed in the modernist balance and found wanting.206

Thus, according to Wright, phenomenalists are suspicious of empirical observation because all sensual experiences lead back to the knower. For positivists, what is truly real is only sense data, not the object itself. While positivists seek to verify the presence of external objects, phenomenalists are reserved in their decisions and remain cautious. Phenomenalists criticize the methodologies of empiricism and naïve realism, arguing that, regardless of the results of a naïve realistic investigation into the historical Jesus, knowledge depends on the observer’s point of view. Comparing the two conclusions in this light, Wright argues that insisting on the non-historicity of Jesus’ resurrection is sustainable only insofar as its historicity is sustainable. The positivistic and phenomenalist views both claim that there is no historical confirmation of the reality of Jesus’ resurrection, but each contradicts the other.

Wright claims that proving the limits of naïve realism therefore cannot prove Christianity and defeating phenomenalism does not prove the validity of the Christian faith. For these reasons, Wright’s calling on the modernist desire for objectivity in examining Jesus’ resurrection suggests adopting phenomenalism or postmodernism to inquire into the methodological doubt of positivism in accordance with what he calls critical realism. Despite Luke Timothy Johnson’s critique that Wright’s work on critical realism is only a theoretical model, Wright consoles himself by thinking that Ben Meyer, T.F. Torrance, Andrew Louth, Colin E. Gunton, and Anthony C. Thiselton have also provided solid foundations for the

theory.\textsuperscript{207} Objecting to the naïve realistic view of objectivity, critical realists argue: “There is no such thing as the ‘neutral’ or ‘objective’ observer; equally, there is no such thing as the detached observer.”\textsuperscript{208} By applying critical realism, however, Wright does not intend to abandon modernism, but to overcome the fatal defect in its idea of “historical.”\textsuperscript{209} Wright insists that naïve realism can survive only if it gives up the positivistic conviction that it can discuss the world external to the observer on the basis of empirical sense data.\textsuperscript{210}

According to Wright’s understanding of critical realism, critical means that an initial observation must be challenged by critical reflection and realism that it is possible to grasp an object or event in reality.\textsuperscript{211} He explains:

This is a way of describing the process of “knowing” that acknowledges the reality of the thing known, as something other than the knower (hence “realism”), while fully acknowledging that the only access we have to this reality lies along the spiraling path of appropriate dialogue or conversation between the knower and the thing known (hence “critical”).\textsuperscript{212}


\textsuperscript{208} NTPG, 36.

\textsuperscript{209} Wright argues that much of Christianity has been afraid of reducing a supernatural faith to rationalist categories. But the sharp distinction between the “supernatural” and the “rational” is itself a product of Enlightenment thinking, and to emphasize the “supernatural” at the expense of the “rational” or “natural” is itself to capitulate to the Enlightenment worldview at a deeper level than if we were merely to endorse, rather than marginalize, a post-Enlightenment rationalist program. It is, therefore, impossible for Christianity to ignore or relativize the “modernist” challenge of the eighteenth and subsequent centuries. NTPG, 10.

\textsuperscript{210} Positivistic realists believe that a hypothesis is fully dependent on the sense data received and needs more sense evidence in the search for its verification or falsification. In Wright’s eyes, however, this is very misleading: “It is very unlikely that one could construct a good working hypothesis out of sense-data alone, and in fact no reflective thinker in any field imagines that this is the case. One needs a larger framework on which to draw, a larger set of stories about things that are likely to happen in the world. There must always be a leap, made by the imagination that has been attuned sympathetically to the subject-matter, from the (in principle) random observation of phenomena to the hypothesis of a pattern” (NTPG, 37).

\textsuperscript{211} Wright proposes a form of critical realism that is actually opposed to both but combines both, and hence I prefer to call it “modest realism.”

\textsuperscript{212} NTPG, 35.
Wright believes that critical realism is required for a coherent epistemology because a historical question is not “a question about mere facts,” but “primarily the history of human beings, and it attempts to plot, uncover, and understand from the inside the interplay of human intentions and motivations present within a given field of initial investigation.”\textsuperscript{213} What a positivist would call “the facts” are an inseparable part, Wright states, of a much larger whole, and he hypothesizes that “an exploration of the worldviews and mindsets of the communities and individuals involved”\textsuperscript{214} is required. And if it is true that all historical accounts involve “interpretation,” Wright argues, “[t]he real question should be whether this interpretation discloses the totality of the event, opening it up in all its actuality and meaning, or not.”\textsuperscript{215} That is why “one cannot rule out a priori the possibility of things occurring in ways not normally expected, since to do so would be to begin from the fixed point that a particular worldview, namely the eighteenth-century rationalist one, or its twentieth-century positivist successor, is correct in postulating that the universe is simply a ‘closed continuum’ of cause and effect”\textsuperscript{216} and “history” ought to mean “the meaningful narrative of events and intentions.”\textsuperscript{217} For Wright, current Christian belief is rooted in early Christian belief, and hence the application of critical realism is a way for Christians to affirm their faith historically. In the critical-realistic view, only a methodology that merges three concepts – history, theology, and literature – is an appropriate methodology for the study of Christian history. Wright seems to expand critical realism into an alternative way of obtaining truth by the integration of faith and history.

1) Integration of History and Theology

To apply a critical realist view, Wright suggests integrating three interrelated concepts often thought to be disparate: literature, history, and theology.\textsuperscript{218} He explains that the study of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{213} NTPG, 91.
  \item \textsuperscript{214} NTPG, 91.
  \item \textsuperscript{215} NTPG, 92.
  \item \textsuperscript{216} NTPG, 92.
  \item \textsuperscript{217} NTPG, 93.
  \item \textsuperscript{218} Wright argues that, because “usual views of the Bible – including usual evangelical views of the Bible – are actually too low, and do not give it the sufficient weight that it ought to have,” a different way of envisaging authority should be developed from that which most Christians normally
\end{itemize}
Jesus is “first and foremost a matter of history, needing careful ancillary use of the literary study of the texts and the theological study of implications,” and that story and metaphor, including myth, are ways and words allowing God to be truly spoken of in relation to the creator and redeemer. In seeking timeless truth, however, historical research on Jesus has been led by two different ways of reading the Bible: one historical, and the other normative.

Wright insists that historical and normative readings of the Bible should be combined. Neither the study of the Bible and history nor the historical study of Jesus’ resurrection and its theological meaning can be performed with detached, positivistic objectivity. Without theology, it is impossible to apply history to the early church, and seeking a normative Christianity does not imply the objectivity of historical research in the modernist sense. Wright’s point, therefore, is that, in a critical realist view of Christianity, history and theology come together for their mutual affirmation.

219 NTPG, 14.
220 NTPG, 135.
221 Cf. NTPG, 14-28. Both attempts to find timeless truth in the Bible turn out, in fact, to be ultimately unsatisfactory when their methodologies are examined. Wright refers to demythologization and form criticism as two working methodologies of this endeavor of seeking a timeless truth by exploring history. Wright criticizes Bultmann for his idea that demythologization failed to combine history and theology, despite his attempts to research timeless truth. He sacrificed history to get to truth beyond time and space. For Wright’s critique of this, see JVG, 3-25. Until the postmodern challenge to the metahistory of modernism, it was reasonable to try to discover timeless truth beyond time and space. While a historical reading of the Bible explores history in order to falsify the traditional foundation of Christian belief, the normative reading of the Bible explored “the historical meaning in order to abstract from it timeless theological truth” (NTPG, 20). These are based fundamentally on the modern belief in positivism and the object/subject distinction. Wright argues that both cannot be affirmed. For Wright’s comments on the problems of these two methodologies, see NTPG, 20-25. But Wright sees both ways of reading the Bible as intertwined. He insists that since both the historical and the normative readings are in fact engaged in seeking an ultimate truth beyond space and time, and that, if this timeless message can be used today, they need to be combined. Wright reminds us that the various statements of New Testament historical scholarship in the last few decades have made systematic theologians unsure “which Jesus to choose to weave into their work” (NTPG, 139). Some historians or theologians, who protest that one should never mix theological questions with historical matters, “have written about Christian theology with little attention to the historical question of Christian beginnings” (NTPG, 12). Most people, however, who have tried to devote some space to historical questions, have been confused by a distortion of first-century Christianity. “Usually this has taken place to the detriment of history, as various theological or practical agendas have been projected back anachronistically into the first century” (NTPG, 12). The search for objectivity has left only uncertainty behind. In a postmodern reading, however, the examination of the process of reading in itself is strongly urged, and pre-critical piety and the positivism of the Enlightenment are also rejected.
2) Examining Worldviews in Terms of Stories, Symbols, Praxis, and Questions

Positivistic realists believe that the realist model of science is equally applicable to both the physical and the human world. Wright argues, however, that because the human world is fundamentally different from the physical world, this contention is implausible. Critical realism urges historians of the Bible to research ancient worldviews, mindsets, aims, intentions, and motivations, that Wright believes is important within the discipline of historical study:

The main thing that would have struck observers of early Christianity was not its “religious” side, nor indeed its early doctrinal formulations, but its total way of life. When, therefore, we look at the history of (what we call) first-century religious movements such as Judaism and Christianity, it is vital that we look for the “inside” of its events: the aims, intentions and motivations and self-perceptions of the people involved.222

Positivistic historiography has often dismissed these inside elements of events and worldviews.

According to Wright, worldviews are, in fact, profoundly theological223 and “include many dimensions of human existence other than simply theory.”224 Wright describes four concepts that worldviews characteristically address and in each of which the entire worldview can be glimpsed:225 praxis, worldviews, symbols, and stories. Praxis is “a way-of-being-in-the-world”; worldviews are represented by symbols and narratives; symbols are cultural phenomena “including objects and institutions, in which, not least by association with praxis and story, the worldview comes to a visible and tangible expression”;226 and stories narrate events both great and small, “whether intended as factual or fictitious, which encode the worldview.”227 Wright argues that it is nonsensical to construct meaning out of sense data alone because “one needs a larger framework on which to draw, a larger set of stories about things that are likely to happen in the world.”228 For this reason, praxis,

222 NTPG, 120.
223 For Wright’s comment on the relation between worldview and theology, see NTPG, 122-43.
225 NTPG, 123.
226 RSG, 37.
227 RSG, 37.
228 NTPG, 37.
worldviews, symbols, and stories are to be considered together. As the existential question looking for a solution apparently entails action, history itself cannot exist by itself but must reach for points beyond history.

Historians, therefore, should not only focus on the description of individual documents but also on the entire phenomena they describe. History is neither an examination of “bare facts” nor simply “subjective interpretations” but the meaningful narration of events and intentions. Wright concludes that, when we speak of history, we bring the stories of events, meaning, and intentions into question.

Summary

The answers suggested by two scholars to the first research question, have been summed up in this chapter. Pannenberg and Wright are convinced that faith and historical reality are compatible with each other. Pointing to the errors in the modern and the postmodern application of their realistic view in the question of Jesus’ resurrection, Pannenberg and Wright suggest a redefined concept of reality to combine faith and history. They criticize all negative attitudes toward the treatment of Jesus’ resurrection as a historical event, that is, the modern positivistic and postmodern phenomenalistic views of reality. Pannenberg and Wright, seeing anthropocentric and atheistic views in modernism and postmodernism, expand their argument by redefining the concept of reality.

According to their concept of reality, reality is not fixed but changes in history. Reality is historical and hence can be grasped as a whole. For Pannenberg, “reality is historical” means that reality can be grasped as a whole only at the end. In the concept of reality as a whole, reality is anticipated in the present experience. And in the form of anticipation, the future has ontological priority (cf. above A. 1). Jesus’ resurrection meets history at this point, anticipating the end. Because reason can neither grasp reality as a whole at once nor be authoritative on its own, faith cannot be disproved by reason. Nonetheless, reason is not useless in the decision of faith because our faith is also not decisive for the reality that changes in history. For Pannenberg, therefore, faith and reason meet on historical fact as the ground of faith, and that is the crucial point of Jesus’ resurrection. This event is not to be regarded merely as a theological matter isolated in the realm of faith, but the event itself.

229 NTPG, 82.
is the transforming power (cf. above A. 2). Pannenberg asserts emphatically that theology is universal insofar as it concerns the reality of God the Creator and hence both theologians and historians must be open to answering questions challenging the Christian faith if they believe the Christian faith is true. Analyzing the biblical and apocalyptic understanding of history, Pannenberg opposes the Kantian dualism supported by Albrecht Ritschl, Barth, and Bultmann who sought existential meaning in Jesus’ resurrection apart from its historicity. To Pannenberg, such attempts to separate Christian truth from rational inquiry and salvation history from general history are subjective, while truth, by nature, is universal, and hence cannot be merely subjective. That is why Pannenberg criticizes any attempt to abandon history (cf. above A. 3). According to Pannenberg, the presuppositions of modern realism are anthropocentric and atheistic. He argues that this view regards the universe as a closed system and thus it is not a matter of historical plausibility but presuppositions. The reason that a historical treatment of Jesus’ resurrection is disallowed is because there is no analogy for this event. Theologians who separate history into two different layers and historians who not allow historical investigations into miraculous events are all indebted to atheistic and anthropocentric presuppositions. Recalling the time when Christian theology was regarded as the only true philosophy, however, Pannenberg urges a rethinking of God’s creation as the origin of the universe that is inferred from the regularity that science confirms, and from contingency, the other side of regularity in science. Regularity and contingency are two sides of one coin, faith and reason are to be combined, and this combination is inevitably necessary within the theology of nature (cf. above A. 4).

Wright also criticizes the division between faith in Jesus’ resurrection and its historical facticity and elaborates on the negative intentions of Marxsen, Troeltsch, Barth, Bultmann, and Crossan, who all argue that historical confirmation of Jesus’ resurrection is impossible. For Wright, such theological objections to the historical treatment of Jesus’ resurrection reduce Christian truth to Gnosticism (cf. above B. 1). Wright suggests that the concept of reality be reconsidered for the historical investigation of Jesus’ resurrection and proposes a methodological application of the critical realist view of reality. In this application, because both dubious naïve realism and positivism have been disarmed by postmodern

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230 For Pannenberg, theology should dare to make a breakthrough into the universal consciousness of truth, insofar as it is the study of God.

231 It seems unfair to mention Barth here because he does not deny that Jesus’ resurrection took place in history. But Barth’s transcendental eschatology has made it impossible to conceive Jesus’ resurrection as a historical event.

232 Olive, 34.
skepticism, faith and reason need to be combined, and faith cannot be divorced from historical sources. If worldviews conflict, we need a new solution. Theology cannot be isolated from other challenging worldviews but must respond to them if Christians believe that their God is the God of the universe. Critical realism is thus an alternative methodology that can integrate history and theology in order to explain worldviews (cf. above B. 2).
Chapter Two

The Nature of Jesus’ Resurrected Body

This chapter will explore how Pannenberg’s and Wright’s respective understandings of Jesus’ resurrection reflect its historicity and how they warn against separating theology from history. The main issue in this chapter is the nature of Jesus’ resurrected body; this issue needs to be examined because the corporeality of Jesus’ resurrected body defines its historicity. If we view Jesus’ resurrection as a historical event, defining the nature of Jesus’ resurrected body is the most important issue. According to the view of reality espoused by Pannenberg and Wright, the question of Jesus’ resurrection as a historical fact not only concerns a spiritual experience; it involves a worldview, along with metaphorical concepts and the reality of the resurrection. Jesus’ resurrection should be interpreted according to the metaphorical concept of resurrection in Judaism, the worldview that defines the metaphor, and the reality of how primitive Christians understood the resurrected body according to the two types of Easter stories. We will see how Pannenberg and Wright define the Jewish concept of resurrection and how they apply it to Jesus’ resurrection.

A. Pannenberg: The Corporeality of the Resurrected Body as Evidence

1. The Metaphorical Meaning and the Corporeality of the Resurrected Body of Jesus

Pannenberg defines the biblical\(^1\) and apocalyptic\(^2\) concept of resurrection as metaphorical.\(^3\) According to Pannenberg, the hope of resurrection can only be expressed metaphorically

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1 See Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:13ff.; 1 Corinthians 11:30; 15:6, 51; 1 Corinthians 15:20.
2 Pannenberg refers to Ethiopian Enoch 92:3, “The just man will arise from sleep,” the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch 30:1, “Then all those will arise who have gone to sleep hoping in him [the Messiah],” and IV Ezra “The dust releases those who sleep therein” (JGM, 74-5).
3 Expressed in terms of being woken up.
because it cannot be experienced in the present world. That means that applying metaphors from this-worldly occurrences is the only possible way to uncover what “is still hidden to us in its true essence”; it is a natural event cannot be investigated by science. The only means of understanding the content of Jesus’ resurrected body is to reconsider the metaphorical understanding of the resurrection. It reflects an anthropological characteristic of hope. According to Pannenberg, the apocalyptic hope of resurrection is comparable to the modern anthropological understanding of human nature in “openness to the world” (Weltoffenheit) and “freedom from the environment” (Umweltfreitheit). Linking Weltoffenheit to Gottoffenheit, Pannenberg ties historicity closely to human nature, speaking of “the historicity of human being” (der Geschichtlichkeit des Menschen). Humans look forward to a future that does not yet exist, and this openness (Weltoffenheit) is represented in the expectation of resurrection. We will discuss this in the first section below.

The theological term soma pneumatikon is also related to the hope of eternal life that does not exclude corporeality. If resurrection was used as a metaphor that represented the Israelites’ individual hope for the final reward, it comes to have an earthly character. If that is so, neither science nor mere faith alone can claim sole access to the event of the resurrection. Pannenberg argues that Jesus’ resurrection cannot be investigated either by scientific methodology on its own or solely by applying faith. The question of the corporeality of Jesus’ resurrected body is not a matter of mere faith because the hope of resurrection in the sense of the resurrection of the body represents universal hope as found in human nature.

Therefore, concerning the discussion on the bodily resurrection of Jesus, we must be aware of wrong presuppositions regarding the scientific judgment of the provability of resurrection. As Bradshaw explains, Pannenberg’s application of a metaphorical view to the

4 JGM, 75. In the history of the traditional use of the metaphor, resurrection entails two significant aspects: “(1) the specific saving character of the hope in the resurrection, and (2) the concept of a transformation in connection with the resurrection” (JGM, 78). First, with respect to its salvific character, comparing Paul in, for example, II Corinthians 5:10, and Mark 12:26f., Pannenberg concludes that the saving character is confirmed by Paul and Jesus as well. But in addition to the idea that resurrection is granted only to the just, the idea of universal resurrection is found to prevail in general. For Pannenberg, several OT texts like Isaiah 26:7ff., 19; Daniel 12:1-3 and the Apocalypse of Enoch (22: 10, 12) appear to be similar. Although those texts portray the resurrection as the salvation of the just, both Daniel and Enoch announce in somewhat different ways the double resurrection of the good and the bad. In many texts, resurrection is granted only to the just as salvation because “the wicked receive their punishment without resurrection” (JGM, 79). Nevertheless, the idea of universal resurrection is found to prevail in texts such as IV Ezra 7:29ff.; Syr. Baruch 50:2ff; 30:1-5; and Psalms of Solomon 3:12, and in the older Tannaitic school of rabbis.
resurrection does not mean that the data cannot be examined by historians\textsuperscript{5} nor that faith alone can define the nature of the event. A kind of integration is necessary because, if a metaphorical understanding is not applied, present everyday experience does not allow us to explain “a transformation into a reality which is entirely unknown to us.”\textsuperscript{6} By using the concept of metaphor, Pannenberg does not intend to confirm the non-historicity of the resurrection but only to indicate the opaqueness of its true essence to us.

1) The Anthropological Concept of Resurrection: \textit{Weltoffenheit}, \textit{Umweltfreiheit}, and Hope beyond Death

Pannenberg believes that the apocalyptic hope of resurrection, the question of hope beyond death, remains valid for us even today because of its compatibility with the so-called modern anthropological belief in “man’s openness in relationship to the world (\textit{Weltoffenheit}) or his environmental freedom (\textit{Umweltfreiheit}).”\textsuperscript{7} Introducing a modern anthropological factor in the Jewish hope beyond death, he suggests that the biblical concept of death and resurrection presents the heart of human meaning and destiny. The hope of resurrection defines the nature of humankind, which is not restricted by its environmental situation. Rather, humans determine the direction of their impulses that point beyond every given situation toward fulfillment. Hope belongs to the structure of human existence in “openness to the world” (\textit{Weltoffenheit}) and “freedom from the environment” (\textit{Umweltfreiheit}).

Pondering modern anthropological views, Pannenberg recommends that the issue of hope beyond death be reexamined. He argues that hope is not meaningless because “[i]f the destiny of the individual man is not absorbed in his relation to society, the question is inescapable whether the individual may expect a fulfillment of his destiny as man beyond death, or whether the question about man’s humanity must simply be disregarded as meaningless.”\textsuperscript{8} Citing Ernst Bloch for anthropological insight, Pannenberg adds: “The phenomenology of hope indicates that it belongs to the essence of conscious human existence to hope beyond death,”\textsuperscript{9} particularly since “man is the only being who knows that he must

\textsuperscript{5} JGM, 75.
\textsuperscript{6} Creed, 98.
\textsuperscript{7} JGM, 85.
\textsuperscript{8} JGM, 83-4.
\textsuperscript{9} JGM, 85. For Pannenberg’s citation of Bloch, see JGM, 84.
die.” This structure of human existence and the acknowledgement of death expands to the consideration of what lies beyond death and leads to the quest for the fulfillment of human destiny. In this light, the hope of eternal life beyond death as the language of the resurrection of the dead is another mode of existence for the entire person. There is no need for hope if death is the end: “When knowledge of the inescapability of death has really seized a person, then everything that fills his days becomes stale and empty.” People require phenomenological proof to acquire the strength to endure existence. Linking the hope of resurrection to the philosophically appropriate expression for human destiny, Pannenberg argues that it is possible to maintain our belief in the apocalyptic hope and in the primitive Christian perception of the event of Jesus’ resurrection. This image of human nature, formed by hope beyond death, was expressed by the primitive church in the concept of the immortality of the soul as well as that of in the resurrection of the dead. The concept of the immortality of soul and the hope of the resurrection of the dead are the expressions of an anthropological concern of humans about themselves. According to Pannenberg, the concept of the immortal soul is no longer tenable because of what we now know of the holistic nature of humanity.

Therefore, it is impossible to grasp the nature of Jesus’ resurrection without the notion of metaphor. The resurrection needs to be reexamined in the light of modern anthropological understandings.

2) The Theological Concept of the Resurrected Body: Soma Pneumatikon

According to Pannenberg, the origin of the hope of resurrection is related to the idea of the God of universal creation and history. The general resurrection of the dead at the end of history is a specific apocalyptic idea that arose in connection with theodicy in the context of the Babylonian exile, in which individual experience no longer served as a barometer for the

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10 JGM, 85.
11 JGM, 84.
12 According to Pannenberg, humans cannot be understood outside of their relationship to society. He argues: “Only if the individual man has his destiny exclusively in the community of humanity, if he thus finds the purpose of his existence not as an individual but only in his belonging to society, if he is thus completely absorbed as an individual in humanity as it is at hand in his concrete society, only then would the idea of a life beyond death be something to be relinquished. Therefore, also in Israel the idea of a future resurrection of the dead was not thought of as long as the individual was entirely absorbed in his people” (JGM, 83).
merits and offenses of God’s people and where no relationship could be seen between good deeds and rewards or between transgressions and judgments (Ezek. 18:2ff., 20; cf. Jer. 31:29). The Israelites’ acknowledgement of the present course of the world that the righteous suffer and the ungodly prosper produced faith in God’s justice in terms of final reward and the idea of the resurrection of the dead (for example, of martyrs) as the expression of the transition to eternal life as a reward to the just, as found in Daniel 12:213 and Isaiah 26:19.14

Likewise, addressing the meaning of the expression “resurrection of the dead” in the Bible and apocalyptic texts, Pannenberg argues that, for early Christians, Jesus’ resurrection was not “just a random miracle, but a very particular reality expected by postexilic Judaism in connection with the end of history.”15 In this regard, Pannenberg distinguishes Jesus’ resurrection from the occasional miracle of resurrection, such as that of “the young man from Nain (Luke 7:11-17), the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:35-43 and parallels), and Lazarus (John 11),”16 where resurrection was simply the resuscitation of a corpse. The spiritual body (soma pneumatikon) that Paul defines was regarded not as returning to the same body but to a transformed one that the Jews longed for as the final reward. According to Pannenberg, therefore, the final form of the resurrection accords with Paul’s concept of soma pneumatikon into which the present body is transformed.17 The present body is perishable, whereas the transformed body is imperishable in glory and power.

At this point, it is noteworthy that, according to Pannenberg, Paul’s ideas of soma pneumatikon and the present participation in eternal life are distinct from the Greek notion of

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14 Cf. Ezekiel 37:1–14; here resurrection is used as a metaphor for the rebirth of the people and not as the concept of individual resurrection. Cf. Wilckens, 86–88.
15 JGM, 74.
16 JGM, 77. In any case, those narrators are obviously not referring to the same kind of resurrection that was reported by the witnesses to Jesus’ resurrection because it was clear to early Christians that His resurrection was final, whereas the other resurrected figures would die again.
17 “For Paul, Resurrection means the new life of a new body, not the return of life into a dead but not yet decayed fleshly body” (JGM, 75). Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:35-56. “It is self-evident for him that the future body will be a different one from the present body, not a fleshly body but – as he says – a ‘spiritual body’” (JGM, 75). For Pannenberg, however, this text is not about the resurrected body of Christ but about the resurrection that Christians expect in the future. According to Pannenberg, Paul may have argued an essential parallel between the distinctive conception of Jesus’ resurrected body and that of the universally resurrected bodies of Christians.
the immortal soul. Plato’s idea of the immortality of the soul rests on knowledge of unchanging and eternal ideas.18 The present participation in salvation does not mean compatibility with the immortal soul in Platonic thought because in Greek thought the soul is by nature immortal.19 The immortality of the soul does not correspond to the God the Creator who promises us eternal life. The hope of resurrection originated from the acknowledgment that the soul is mortal by nature. The resurrected individual will have a body, but one so radically different that nothing will remain unchanged. Jesus’ resurrected body as *soma pneumatikon* is an imperishable body that is no longer limited by death.20 Plato’s immortal soul is not directly compatible with the hope of bodily resurrection,21 and it is evident why Christian theology initially hesitated to accept Platonic ideas.22

As a result, the term *soma pneumatikon* concerns only the relationship of the immortal, spiritual body to the present mortal and physical body in accordance with a radical

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18 Cf. Plato, *Phaed.* 74a-f.; 79d; 80a-f; 245c.5-246a.2; and 247d.3.
19 Although in Paul “the equation of salvation and resurrection rests on the sharing of believers in the destiny of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen” (SyTh III, 568) and “at this point there is something corresponding to the Platonic doctrine of the immortality of the soul,” (SyTh III, 570), they are distinct. Salvation was believed by the primitive Christians to be acquired by a relationship with Jesus, the risen Lord, but Platonic immortality was to be inherent in the soul. This is the reason why Christian theology accepted the Platonic idea of the immortal soul, as Pannenberg comments, because of the problematic implications of resurrection. Cf. SyTh III, 573-80.
20 “The appearance of Christ to Paul must have been of such a sort that it could not be confused with a resuscitated corpse, but that it confronted him as a reality of an entirely different sort” (*JGM*, 77).
21 For the problematic idea of resurrection in this regard, see SyTh III, 573-80.
22 Pannenberg explains that subsequent church tradition differentiated the Judeo-Christian hope of resurrection from Plato’s concept of the immortal soul. He argues that patristic theology distinguished between the resurrection as transformation and the revivification of a dead person. Cf. footnote 70, *JGM*, 77. Pannenberg points out another difference between Plato’s concept of the immortal soul and the Judeo-Christian hope of resurrection when he explains that, for Plato, the soul “is not identical with the individual whose history runs once and for all between birth and death” (SyTh III, 572), because “the soul passes through an indefinite number of incarnations and is thus on a different level of being from that of once-for-all individual existence in the body” (SyTh III, 572). In contrast, in the Christian hope of resurrection, eternal salvation was expected only for the individual and had no relationship to reincarnation. Therefore, “early Christian theology took over the Greek idea of the immortality of the soul but modified it in such a way that the soul is defined as the vital principle only of the one individual” (SyTh III, 575). Despite this differentiation, referring to the 2nd-century apologists Tatian and his *Address to the Greeks*, 7.1; 13.1, 2ff., Theophilus of Antioch, Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 2. 34, Tertullian, *A treatise on the soul*, 22, 21-22, and Athenagoras, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, 15, Pannenberg argues that, after initial hesitation, Christian theology combined the immortality of the soul with the biblical hope of resurrection in the form of the unity of soul and body as the person. In distinction from Plato’s view of the immortal soul, Christian theology saw the human being as a creature destined for immortality in fellowship with God in body and soul. In this modification, the person is a unity of body and soul, and, hence, the hope is that there will be only a physical renewal after death. According to Pannenberg this idea is already found in Athenagoras.
transformation. Despite their radical differentiation, however, there is continuity between the two bodies according to the biblical concept of resurrection because transformation will happen to the same body; it is the intended reality, expressed in the metaphorical language of resurrection, and is distinct from the Platonic immortality of the soul. Therefore, though we cannot examine the resurrection scientifically, we can investigate the apocalyptic and metaphorical conceptions of resurrection. The metaphorical conception of resurrection does not reduce the Easter event to a spiritual one but strongly refers to its physical implications. The physicality of the *soma pneumatikon* is entailed in the metaphor.

2. Two Independent Types of Easter Stories: The Appearances and the Empty Tomb

To examine the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection and the historical development of the tradition of the gospels, Pannenberg investigates the two different types of Easter stories: the appearances of the resurrected Jesus and the empty tomb independently of each other.\(^{23}\) According to Pannenberg, in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul enumerated the appearances of and witnesses to the resurrected Jesus to prove the facticity of Jesus’ resurrection. Pannenberg emphasizes that, although 1 Corinthians was probably written in Ephesus in the spring of 56 or 57 A.D., Galatians 1:18 announces that Paul heard the story earlier from at least James and Peter when he visited Jerusalem three years after his conversion. According to the tradition of the appearance stories in 1 Corinthians, the stories were written “very close to the events themselves.”\(^{24}\) The story of the appearances arose prior to Paul’s visit to Jerusalem, very likely about six to eight years after Jesus’ death. In this view of the age of the formulated traditions used by Paul in 1 Corinthians, it is assumed that many members of the early Christian community truly saw the resurrected Jesus. In this context, Pannenberg concludes that the historicity of Jesus’ appearance is valid independent of the judgment regarding the tradition of the empty tomb.

Continuously, Pannenberg does not doubt the trustworthiness of the reports of the empty tomb despite Paul’s lack of interest in them. In fact Paul nowhere mentions the

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\(^{23}\) Pannenberg argues that, although the gospels connect the two different stories, they are still separate in the oldest stratum of tradition as found in Mark and Paul. Cf. *JGM*, 88-9.

\(^{24}\) *JGM*, 90.
tradition of the empty tomb. According to Pannenberg, although the tradition of Jesus’ empty tomb was not an important issue for the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection for Paul, it was important for the early Christian community in Jerusalem, where they might have had difficulty believing in Jesus’ resurrection if the story could have been rebutted by viewing the grave in which the body of Jesus had been interred and had decayed.

Supporting his argument, Pannenberg cites Paul Althaus’ emphatic insistence that the resurrection kerygma “could not have been maintained in Jerusalem for a single day, for a single hour, if the emptiness of the tomb had not been established as a fact for all concerned.”25 For Pannenberg, the report of grave robbery is not convincing, as the empty tomb was probably thought to be a fact because the Roman authorities found themselves obliged to take steps against the rumor. Although the members of the Jewish community who were against the Christian message of Jesus’ resurrection would have had every interest in preserving such a report, they shared the conviction of their Christian opponents and limited themselves to explaining the resurrection by the report of robbery.26

1) The Relationship between the Two Types of Stories

Regarding the relationship between the stories of the empty tomb and those of the appearances, Pannenberg argues that it is essential to determine if the disciples returned to Galilee immediately after Jesus had been taken prisoner or remained in Jerusalem until his death. H. von Campenhausen assumes that the disciples, expecting to see the resurrected Jesus in his home territory, went to Galilee after the discovery of the empty tomb.27 Thus, according to Campenhausen, “the theory of the immediate flight to Galilee is a ‘legend of modern criticism’.”28 In contrast, Hans Grass asserts that the disciples fled to Galilee immediately after Jesus’ arrest with their hopes destroyed.29 Agreeing with Grass, Pannenberg argues that none of the disciples except John was a witness to Jesus’ execution or

25 P. Althaus, *Die Wahrheit des kirchlichen Osterglaubens* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1941), 25 is quoted in *JGM*, 100.
26 For the argument about Hans Grass’ skeptical analysis based on the textual tradition, see *JGM*, 101-3.
27 H. von Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1952; hereafter Campenhausen), 44-5, and 49 are quoted in *JGM*, 104.
28 Campenhausen, 44 is quoted in D.P. Fuller, 160.
played a role in the burial; indeed, even “in the oldest strata of the tradition, the disciples did not show any concern for the empty tomb.” Then, as Grass argues, what set “the Easter history in motion was not the empty tomb, but the appearances.” Because the disciples had fled before Jesus’ death, the empty tomb was discovered without them, and the Easter appearances would be independent of the empty tomb.

On this basis, Pannenberg argues that the appearances are more decisive, but not because the tomb was not empty. Rather, he maintains that the tomb might really be empty because, if we suppose that the story of the empty tomb was generated without the disciples, it should be explained who came up with these stories and what the motive was. If disciples did not invent the story, Jesus’ decayed body in the tomb could be used to contradict the appearances. In this sense, Pannenberg concluded that the tomb and appearance traditions had come into existence independently and that “the Easter faith of the disciples is to be explained from the appearances,” despite repeated attempts since David Friedrich Strauss to explain the Easter traditions on the basis of the Easter faith of the disciples. D.P. Fuller comments that Grass overlooked the importance of the empty tomb over against the appearances when the latter argued that “the new body Jesus received at his resurrection was so spiritual and unlike the physical body he had during his earthly ministry that the remains of that body could still be in the tomb while Jesus manifested himself to his disciples in his new, ‘spiritual body’.” Therefore, as Pannenberg argues, in the sense of Grass’ understanding of the appearances stories, these stories must prove that the tomb was empty.

Accordingly, if it is confirmed that the two types of stories had independent origins, the subjective vision hypothesis becomes more questionable, not only because the empty tomb story is historically probable but also because the disciples’ distress after Jesus’ execution cannot support an alternative hypothesis. The reality of Jesus’ resurrection becomes highly probable historically.

30 *JGM*, 105.
31 Quoted in D.P. Fuller, 152. Cf. Grass, 119.
32 *JGM*, 96.
33 Grass, 232 is quoted in D.P. Fuller, 152.
According to Pannenberg, if we suppose that the two types of Easter stories had been invented during the later development of the legend, the origin of the early church could not have been based on a good historical foundation. Pannenberg links Jesus’ resurrection as a historical problem with the origins of primitive Christianity and asserts: “One cannot doubt that the disciples were convinced that they had seen the resurrected Lord. Otherwise the origin of the community in Jerusalem and with it of the church becomes an enigma.”

Pannenberg reminds us that explaining the development of the Easter stories psychologically makes no sense because it cannot be disputed that Jesus’ death had put great pressure on the disciples’ faith. Thus, because “one could hardly expect the production of confirmatory experience from the faith of the disciples that stood under such a burden,” such an assumption is untenable, even in the criticism of the New Testament tradition. For Pannenberg, any psychological motivation for maintaining faith in Jesus’ resurrection after his execution fails to explain the emergence of early Christianity.

In this regard, it is conceivable that the two independent types of stories support their historical facticity. The enthusiastic manifestations of Jesus’ resurrection were a result of the experience of Jesus’ appearances because the disciples’ return to Jerusalem after his execution cannot be explained without the experience. And the empty tomb story was not developed by the disciples but arose independently. It became one of the main Easter stories because it was not contradicted in Jerusalem by the presence of the decaying body in the tomb.

Therefore, if reconstructing the course of events is a historical task, Pannenberg argues that a historical approach can be applied in the examination of the reality of Jesus’ resurrection, especially in relationship to the emergence of primitive Christianity. The Easter traditions of the appearances and the empty tomb cannot be explained by the Easter faith of the disciples but rather by the traditions themselves.

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34 Quoted in JGM, 91.
35 JGM, 96.
36 Pannenberg agrees with Grass who is convinced that the disciples knew about the story of the empty tomb only after their return to Jerusalem.
3) The Reality of Jesus’ Appearances

In the historical inquiry into Jesus’ resurrection, the reality of Jesus’ appearances after his death is one of the most significant issues. Regarding Paul’s experience with the appearance in the Damascus narrative in Acts 9, Pannenberg speaks of the event in terms of the category of “visions” because the experience of the appearance of the resurrected Jesus involved “an extraordinary vision, not an event that was visible to everyone.” On the road to Damascus, Paul saw Jesus with a spiritual body, a *soma pneumatikon*, not with an earthly body. His experience was not that of an encounter on earth but rather an appearance from “heaven.”

From Paul’s concept of *soma pneumatikon*, however, Pannenberg infers the reality of Jesus’ appearances. When Paul refers to Jesus’ spiritual body, he is not talking about a disembodied person/spirit in the sense of some Platonic tradition. Therefore, Jesus’ appearances as a vision are not to be confused with an imaginary appearance: “Otherwise Paul would not have been able to talk as he did about the resurrection reality as a transformation.” Because perishable flesh and blood cannot inherit the imperishable, the physical body undergoes a radical transformation; it is the earthly present body that will experience the “transformation.” According to the concept of transformation, Pannenberg claims, the Easter visions were not indistinguishable from other “ecstatic visionary experiences.” There may be criteria that distinguished Jesus’ appearance from other religious enthusiastic visions. The criterion that the primitive Christians must have used belonged to an older, Jewish tradition: “That the completely alien reality experienced in these appearances could be understood as an encounter with one who had been raised from the dead can only be explained from the presupposition of a particular form of the apocalyptic expectation of the resurrection of the dead.” Thus, we do not have to draw the hard conclusion that Jesus’ appearances were simply subjective visions. Pannenberg maintains that the appearances are not to be understood as produced by the enthusiastically excited imagination of the disciples. The Easter stories cannot to be explained on the basis of the Easter faith of the disciples because Jesus’ death exposed the disciples to the most severe skepticism. According to

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37 *JGM*, 93.
38 Pannenberg argues that “this element in the Damascus narrative in Acts, ch. 9, corresponds completely to the fact that, for the oldest New Testament witnesses, the resurrection and Jesus’ departure to heaven coincide. The appearances of the resurrected Lord thus were experienced as appearances coming from heaven” (*JGM*, 92).
39 *Creed*, 99.
40 *JGM*, 93.
Pannenberg, such a mental reaction to Jesus’ death could not be something like Jesus’ appearances. That should be taken into account when we use the term “vision” in connection with the early Christians’ understanding of the Easter appearances.

Therefore, using the term *vision* very carefully, Pannenberg warns us not to equate a very subjective vision with any psychological response when referring to the reality of Jesus’ appearance: when dealing with resurrection as a transformation whose reality is entirely unknown to us, we cannot avoid “metaphor.” The term “vision” as well is to be used when referring to the appearance of Jesus’ transformed body because the reality of the appeared body was unknown as well. In this regard, historians must consider the possibility of Jesus’ appearances an *apocalyptic vision* “for the reconstruction of the course of events as long as [there are] no special circumstances in the tradition.”\(^{41}\) If any historical reconstruction of the course of events in the emergence of the primitive church is possible, then both the vision of Jesus’ appearance and the reality of Jesus’ appearances with regard to the apocalyptic expectation of resurrection are possible. As regards Jesus’ appearances, therefore, in relation to the emergence of primitive Christianity, historians are obligated to reconstruct the historical reality.

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\(^{41}\) *JGM*, 98.
To justify historical research into Jesus’ resurrection, Wright attempts to apply critical realism to his investigation of it. Beginning with the investigation of the concept of resurrection in the ancient pagan world, Wright confirms that this world had no hope of resurrection. According to Homer, returning to life after death was impossible, while for Plato there was no need to return to life from death because this world was a prison, and it was the world beyond death that all longed for. Proceeding to the examination of the Jewish concept of resurrection, Wright asserts that ancient Judaism maintained the hope of resurrection in terms of God’s good creation, with the hope of resurrection as the re-embodiment of the dead that could only be understood within a worldview based on belief in the faithfulness of God. The hope of resurrection and the creator God confirms this physical world to be good. In this ancient Jewish worldview, we can assume that the metaphor of resurrection was linked to the restoration of Israel, with the hope of resurrection as, not the hope of life beyond death, but the hope of living forever in this world, i.e., the hope that God would raise the dead for reembodiment into a transformed body on a day of vindication for all those killed by pagans. Therefore, the day of resurrection was believed to be the day of the restoration of Israel, the people of God.

To examine the historical facticity of Jesus’ resurrection, Wright insists on investigating these metaphors. The fact that, despite the lack of political and geographical change, early Christians believed that the restoration of Israel had already occurred calls attention to the cause of the rapid change in their national hope of restoration. Wright proposes to examine two different traditional types of stories of Jesus’ resurrection, namely the empty tomb and appearances stories, for if they come together and do not contradict each other despite being from two different traditions, they provide evidence of the resurrection as a historical event. Since consideration of the empty tomb story cannot prove the resurrection without consideration of the appearances story, these stories’ agreement provide strong historical support for Jesus’ resurrection and explain the origins of the primitive church. It is only when these stories are regarded as historical fact that we can attempt to identify the reason for the sudden change in the early Jewish hope of resurrection.
1. No Possibility of Resurrection: Life beyond Death in the Pagan World

According to Wright, the Jewish concept of the resurrection of the dead has no parallel in pagan systems of belief in life beyond death. The ancient Greek word for resurrection, *anastasis*, “did not mean that the existence into which the dead passed immediately was a continuing bodily one”\(^{42}\) but that the dead return to “this physical sort of life.” In any sense of life beyond death in pagan literature, the term *resurrection* was not the term used for the dead. According to Homer, there is no way to return from the dead, as the dead are merely intangible “shades (*skiai*), ghosts (*psychai*), phantoms (*eidola*)”\(^{43}\) dwelling in Hades, which “holds no comforts, no prospects, but only good in a profound sense of loss.”\(^{44}\) As such, “they remain essentially subhuman and without hope.”\(^{45}\) Thus, before Plato’s philosophical description of the soul (*psyche*), the soul “was not seen as a glorious immortal being that would enjoy life away from the body.”\(^{46}\)

According to Plato, there is no need to return from the dead since the soul is the “true” part of existence, while the “bodily life is full of delusion and danger.”\(^{47}\) Since the soul is immortal, it will continue to exist after the death of the body as it had existed before birth. After death, the soul is released from the prison of the body. In this context, resurrection is undesirable, for Plato, while separation of the soul and the body – so-called death – and residence in Hades, a place of pleasure rather than pain, is desirable.\(^{48}\) According to Plato, “Death is either the end of everything, in which case there is nothing to be alarmed about, or it is a process of change, in which case since the change is bound to be for the better, one should be glad.”\(^{49}\) Therefore, neither Homer nor Plato would have agreed with the beliefs and message of the early church, and although Greek myths admit various possibilities for the souls in Hades and beyond, they do not offer the hope of resurrection. For Homer, there was only one way – straight to Hades – and for Plato there was no desire to escape from Hades. Regarding ancient Egypt as well, Wright explains that the symbolic praxis of

\(^{42}\) *RSG*, 47.
\(^{43}\) *RSG*, 43.
\(^{44}\) *RSG*, 44.
\(^{45}\) *RSG*, 44.
\(^{46}\) *RSG*, 44. Wright asks: if we have immortal souls, what are they? He insists that belief in an immortal soul finds minimal support in the New Testament, including the teachings of Jesus. For Wright’s comment, see N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 39; hereafter *SbH*.
\(^{47}\) *RSG*, 49.
\(^{48}\) *RSG*, 53.
\(^{49}\) *RSG*, 54.
Egyptian burial customs, mummification, and its other attendant practices implies “that the person still is ‘alive’ in some bodily sense, despite appearances.” In this belief system, “there was no eschatology, no apocalypse, no collective cataclysm, because there was no crisis.” In the Egyptian belief in life after death, death was life.

Remarkably, the Homeric view of Hades and even the Egyptian belief in a physical life beyond death do not leave open the possibility of a return to this world within the physical body. Wright concludes that, although Egyptian beliefs in a physical life beyond death and the Homeric and Platonic traditions and popular beliefs flowing from them “remained powerful well into early Christian periods,” they had no tangible influence on the early Christian faith in resurrection.

2. The Hope of Resurrection based on the Faithfulness of God, the Creator

While an interest in “life after death” appeared in various pagan worldviews, the hope for resurrection is found only partly in the Bible. Wright argues that, first, pagan interest in life after death was not based on hope and, second, the absence of an interest in life beyond death in the ancient Jewish world does not imply that there was “no hope for life after death,” as the hope of resurrection in Judaism is based upon the covenant with God, the creator. Regarding the Jewish belief in resurrection, Wright defines resurrection as an affirming language of God’s good creation. This language is linked only to Jewish monotheism. According to him, “there is no such thing as first-century Judaism, and that it may be best to speak of ‘Judaisms’, plural.” Nonetheless, if there is continuity regarding certain major and vital issues among

50 RSG, 47.
51 RSG, 47. Wright cites from J. Davies, Death, Burial and Rebirth in the Religious of Antiquity (London: Routledge, 1999), 34f.
52 Although “most of the ancients believed in life after death; some of them developed complex and fascinating beliefs about it,” but, outside Judaism and Christianity, “they did not believe in resurrection” (SbH, 47).
53 RSG, 44.
54 Wright challenges the theory of progressive revelation that distinguishes three different developmental steps in the hope of resurrection. Instead, Wright sees important links between the apparently different positions. Cf. RSG, 86.
55 NTPG, 245. Indeed, an understanding of the eschatological expectation of first-century Jews can be misleading unless we consider the basic beliefs more or less common to all groups within Judaism. Wright suggests an integrated investigation of first-century Jewish monotheism, election, covenant theology, and eschatological hope so that when we speak about the first-century Jews’ eschatological hope we can deal with it in relation to other elements of the main story and beliefs that
these diverse Judaisms, it is that “There is one god, who made the entire universe, and this god is in covenant with Israel. He has chosen her for a purpose: she is to be the light of the world.” Based upon this, Wright concludes that “resurrection” is not a pagan but rather a Jewish concept.

In this sense, Jesus’ resurrection can be seen as the affirmation of the faithfulness of God, the Creator, for the early Christians. Wright presents four arguments supporting his understanding of the ancient Jewish concept of resurrection. First, even if many parts of the Old Testament appear similar to Homer’s works, the constant strong hope in the Old Testament was not that of life beyond the grave but of a present life focused on the fate of Israel and the promised land. The reason that the part of the Old Testament partly does not present the hope of resurrection is not because the Jews did not have a vibrant hope of life beyond the grave but because “at the heart of that hope was the knowledge that YHWH, the God of Israel, was the creator of the world; that he was faithful to the covenant with Israel, and beyond that with the whole world; and that, as such, he would be true to his word both to Israel and to the whole creation.” Therefore, Wright argues that the absence of interest in life beyond death is the substance of hope that lies within creation. Belief in the faithfulness of God, the good Creator of the world, in the absence of hope of life after death is the reason for the difference between ancient Judaism and paganism.

Second, several biblical texts dating from the time of ancient Israel provide a
connection between the ancient belief system and Jewish belief in resurrection during the Second Temple period. Isaiah 24-27 describes cosmic judgment and the resurrection of God’s people. The date of this text is still a matter of dispute, according to Wright, because assigning the text to a late date according to the developmental scheme is not acceptable.\(^\text{60}\)

Accepting John Day’s argument that “Isaiah 26:19 is dependent on Hosea 13:14,” \(^\text{61}\) Wright argues that Hosea 6 and 13:14, which claim that “YHWH will give his people a new bodily life the other side of death,” \(^\text{62}\) can be dated firmly to the eighth century BC. Therefore, the literal meaning of the resurrection, according to these biblical texts, is wholly dependent on the ancient belief in God as the Creator and his faithfulness, even if this meaning appears to be a new element extraneous to the ancient belief in life beyond death.

Third, belief in resurrection did not emerge in Israel in Persia, where Zoroastrianism was the official religion, after Israel’s release from exile in Babylon, \(^\text{63}\) nor was it “derived by a process of imitation from the dying and rising deity (Baal) of Canaanite mythology.” \(^\text{64}\) On this basis, Wright affirms that the future hope “is based not on anything in the human make-up (e.g. an ‘immortal soul’), but on YHWH and him alone.” \(^\text{65}\) Faith in God the Creator was the reason for the focus on the present life and for the use of resurrection as a term of reward according to God’s faithfulness in Second Temple Judaism.

Finally, the hope of resurrection was not limited to the hope of Israel’s restoration but expanded to the universal restoration of the cosmos, since the God of Israel was believed

\(^{60}\) RSG, 116.

\(^{61}\) RSG, 118. Cf. John Day, “A Case of Inner Scriptural Interpretation: The Dependence of Isaiah xxvi.13-xxvii.11 on Hosea xiii.4-xiv.10 (Eng. 9) and Its Relevance to Some Theories of the Redaction of the ‘Isaiah Apocalypse’,” in: Journal of Theological Studies 31 (1980), 309-19, and “The Development of Belief in Life After Death in Ancient Israel,” in: J. Barton and D.J. Reimer (eds.), After the Exile: Essays in Honour of Rex Mason (Macon, Ga.: Mercer U.P., 1996), 244. In line with Day’s argument, Wright confirms that the original Hebrew text seems to be denying that YHWH will redeem Israel from Sheol and Death, but the LXX and other ancient versions, as well as the New Testament, read it in a positive sense. Therefore, the author of Isaiah 26:19 could also be read in the same way.

\(^{62}\) RSG, 119.

\(^{63}\) Wright cites J.J. Collins’ view of Zoroastrianism: “Although Persian influence on the Jewish belief was accepted as obvious by an earlier generation of scholars, the popularity of this view has waned considerably. There is no evidence of Persian motifs in such crucial Jewish passages as Daniel 12 and I Enoch 22.” See footnote 168 in RSG, 125. Wright also insists that the belief in resurrection was not dualistic but emerged around the time of the exile and was re-emphasized in the second century BC, and was seen to reflect Israel’s status as the unique chosen people of the one creator god and “it grew directly from the emphasis on the goodness of creation, on YHWH as the god who both kills and makes alive, and on the future of nation and land.” (RSG, 125).

\(^{64}\) RSG, 126. Wright comments that this is Day’s suggestion. Cf. J. Day, “The Development of Belief in Life After Death in Ancient Israel,” 195-205.

\(^{65}\) RSG, 107.
to be the Creator of the world. This matter is discussed in more detail in the following section.

3. The Metaphor of the Bodily Resurrection as the Restoration of Israel

Stating that the fundamental story on which first-century Jews based themselves was the story in the Bible, Wright argues that within this story Israel constantly looked to the covenant of the Creator God. The people of Israel believed that their God, who had created the world, would liberate them from their oppressors and complete the covenant. In this light, according to Wright, first-century Jews conceived of the end of slavery as a new exodus, and this was linked to the hope of the bodily resurrection of the dead. Indeed, as for the metaphor of the resurrection of the dead, the “Day of YHWH,” the “Kingdom of God,” “the victory over evil and pagan rulers,” “the rescue of Israel,” “the end of exile,” “the coming of the Messiah,” “the new Exodus,” and “the return of YHWH Himself,” were all different expressions of the eschatological expectation in both the Second Temple period and in first century AD. For that reason, hope of resurrection is to be understood against the background of hope for the restoration of Israel.

For instance, Psalm 105, which retells the story of the patriarchs and the Exodus, concludes by calling Israel to praise YHWH and keep His commandments, and Psalm 106

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66 For Israel’s beliefs, see NTPG, 245-79. Wright looks at “creation and covenant” through the analysis of Psalms, 19, 147, 74, and Paul’s three central passages, Colossians 1:15-20; 1 Corinthians 15: Romans 1-11. See N.T. Wright, Paul: In Fresh Perspective (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 21-39; hereafter Paul.

67 Wright sees the end of slavery in terms of a new exodus and says that “the imagery from the Exodus narrative was already being employed as a way of talking about the coming redemption in the great prophets and the psalms.” The people of Israel expected the God who parted the Red Sea and led them with fire and smoke onto Sinai to do the same thing again. The exodus will happen again, says Wright, on an even grander scale. “Israel’s ultimate comfort, of course, will come through the return of YHWH himself” (Paul, 135).

68 Paul, 131. Cf. NTPG, 299-301. Wright analyzes two crucial texts for this perception, “texts whose reuse and appropriation in the post-biblical period gives us important clues to the viewpoints of the time: Deuteronomy 30 and Daniel 9” (Paul, 132). For his comments on Deuteronomy 30, and Daniel 9, see Paul, 131-5. The eschatological hope strongly held by first-century Jews is not to be considered apart from all the other theological beliefs in the God of Israel. Wright stresses very clearly how completely first-century Jewish beliefs in God are related to the monotheism of a creational, providential, covenantal God, and His election, covenant, redemption, forgiveness, and restoration of His people. As a result, it is clear that Israel’s eschatological hope is to be understood in this great story of God who will restore his people from all unrighteous things. See NTPG, 244-338 dealing with the beliefs of Israel.

69 NTPG, 216.
is a petition from God to the people of Israel to come together from the nations so that they may give thanks to his holy name. According to Wright, the resurrection image found in the vision of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37:1-14 is followed directly by the hope of Israel’s restoration.

The old metaphor of corpses coming to life had, ever since Ezekiel at least, been one of the most vivid ways of denoting the return from exile and connoting the renewal of the covenant and of all creation. If Israel’s god would “raise” his people (metaphorically) by bringing them back from their continuing exile, he would also, within that context, “raise” those people (literally) who had died in the hope of that nation and covenantal vindication. As such, “resurrection” was not only simply a pious hope about new life for dead people. It carried with it all that was associated with the return from exile itself.

Although Daniel 12:2-3 doubtlessly refers to concrete bodily resurrection, it “does not mean to offer a global theory of the ultimate destination of the whole human race, but simply to affirm that, in a renewed bodily life, God will give everlasting life to some and everlasting contempt to others.” Thus, the immediate context of the passage is martyrdom. Wright argues that the main source for the idea and images in Daniel 12:2-3 is undoubtedly Isaiah 24-27, and 52-53. Here, the term resurrection is the expression of hope in a restoration of Israel from exile. What the text narrates is not an isolated piece of speculation about the human destiny but a specific situation that was promised by God: “Israel’s god will reverse the actions of the wicked pagans, and raise the martyrs, and the teachers who kept Israel on course, to a glorious life.”

The language of resurrection is very metaphorical and based on the metaphor of the restoration of Israel. Nonetheless, Wright concedes that the belief in resurrection comes to have a literal meaning because the hope is itself based on a view of the Creator and the covenant God.

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70 Wright says that the latter psalm tells the story in a different way: “The exodus was itself an ambiguous time, with much disobedience and judgment on Israel herself, and the period of living in Canaan, similarly, was deeply flawed, and resulted in exile” (NTPG, 216).
71 Cf. Ezekiel 37:15-28, and see RSG, 119-21; JVG, 299-300.
72 NTPG, 332.
73 RSG, 110. “Daniel 12:2-3 speaks clearly of bodily resurrection for individuals,” but “this is not something other than God’s long-promised act of vindication for the exiled nation” (RSG, 116).
74 Wright confirms that here “the prediction of the resurrection is not an isolated piece of speculation about the ultimate fate of humans, or even Judaeans, in general, but a specific promise addressed to a specific situation” (RSG, 113).
75 See RSG, 115-8.
76 Wright notes the echo of Jeremiah 30:7 in Daniel 12:2.
77 RSG, 113-4.
Despite the metaphorical nature of the biblical language of resurrection as Israel’s restoration, it further implies the reversal of death itself.\textsuperscript{78} As the hope of resurrection is found in the ancient belief in a creator God, Wright argues, it is far from the pagan dualistic view of the world. Because the author of Isaiah 26 intended to speak of the literal return from exile using the metaphor of resurrection, resurrection was about corpses coming to new physical life at the same time. Wright emphasizes the way in which the metaphor itself came to life in a literal reference to re-embodiment without losing the larger concrete referent of national restoration. Therefore, resurrection has two basic meanings in the Second Temple period: the restoration of Israel and the resurrection of human bodies. There was no other kind of resurrection.

4. Resurrection in the Early Church

Acknowledging that the strange stories of Jesus’ resurrection are without precedent, Wright argues that four surface discrepancies in the four canonical gospels do not mean that nothing happened. According to Wright, the four strange features shared by the gospels’ accounts compel us to take those stories as very early accounts\textsuperscript{79} and not as later inventions, as is often suggested.

The first strange fact about the four accounts, according to Wright, is that there are no biblical echoes in the resurrection narratives: whoever wrote the stories would have viewed the resurrection in the form of a fulfilled prophecy, just as Paul declared the resurrection to have occurred according to the scriptures. If these stories were invented later, as is often supposed, then this silence is strange. Wright argues that the silence proves that even if stories were written down later, the stories go back to the very early oral tradition that “was formed and set firmly in the memory of different storytellers before there was any time for biblical reflection.”\textsuperscript{80} Second, the presence of the women as the principal witnesses is strange. In light of Paul’s argument that women were not credible witnesses to Jesus’ resurrection, it is strange that women are the first witnesses in all four gospel narratives. The

\textsuperscript{78} RSG, 127. “Resurrection meant bodies. We cannot emphasize this too strongly, not least because much modern writing continues, most misleadingly, to use the word ‘resurrection’ as a virtual synonym for ‘life after death’ in the popular sense” (\textit{SbH}, 48).
\textsuperscript{79} Cf. RSG, 599-608.
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{SbH}, 54.
“women first” stories would not be explicable if they had been produced in the “men only” form we find in 1 Corinthians 15. The third strange aspect is the portraits of the resurrected Jesus in the gospels. Jesus’ resurrected body was physical but also went through walls, and was sometimes recognized and sometimes not. Wright emphasizes that these portraits are not to be assumed to have been written with a special intention, such as to prove an experience of inner illumination or to combat Docetism. The last strange element is that the stories do not link Jesus’ resurrection to Christian hope, whereas the resurrection is spoken of in connection with the final hope in all other parts of the New Testament. According to these reasons, Wright insists that the stories are essentially very early pre-Pauline stories, not later inventions, and are understandable only if we accept the two types of Easter stories to be true; the empty tomb and that people truly encountered a risen Jesus.

Wright’s question is, then, how the early Christians came to believe in these two events from a Jewish context: although the first-century Jewish world did have a conception of resurrection, the changes in their beliefs could not have been produced within that old tradition. Wright argues that changes in early Christian beliefs in relationship to Jesus’ resurrection could not be understood without reference to the events of the empty tomb and the encounters with a risen Jesus. Early Christianity did not develop a spectrum of beliefs about life after death in the context of paganism for missionary purposes, even though early Christians “engaged energetically with the pagan world of ideas.” When they spoke of resurrection, the early Christians neither referred to someone who possessed “a heavenly and exalted status” nor understood Jesus’ prediction of resurrection as his “perceived presence” in the ongoing church.

Nevertheless, “there are substantial mutations from within the ‘resurrection’ stream of Judaism.” Wright classifies these as follows:

81 ShH, 57.
82 According to Wright, there is no correspondence between the denials of the pagans and Sadducees. See RSG, 131–40.
83 RSG, 209.
84 RSG, 209. Wright urgently insists that Paul does not support “what in the modern sense is called a ‘spiritual’ view of the resurrection, that is, one for which a body, and an empty tomb, would be irrelevant” (RSG, 213).
85 RSG, 210. According to Wright, there is nothing similar to paganism here, but there is continuity and discontinuity between Judaism and Christianity concerning the belief in the resurrection.
86 Wright sees seven early Christian modifications within the Jewish belief in resurrection. For a detailed discussion of them see ShH, 52-63.
(1) There is no virtual spectrum of beliefs about life beyond death in the early Christian church, such as many different strands of Judaism, paganism, and different beliefs about life beyond death, despite the widely different backgrounds of the early Christians.

(2) Unlike Second Temple Judaism, in which resurrection was not important but only a peripheral topic, here it became central.

(3) In early Christianity, resurrection involved more precisely an organically transformed body occupying space and time; in Judaism, however, it was not always clear what form the resurrected body would possess.

(4) Unlike the Jewish tradition of hope of resurrection, there is firm division in the belief in the resurrection: a belief in Jesus’ resurrection and a belief in universal resurrection.

(5) Early Christians believed they were charged with the task of transforming the present in the light of the future.

(6) The metaphor of resurrection for early Christians was remarkably different from the Jewish metaphorical use of the notion of resurrection, which meant the restoration of Israel. For early Christians, resurrection refers metaphorically to baptism as a form of dying and rising with Christ and as a new life of strenuous ethical obedience. “In fact, within early Christianity we begin to discover the language of return from exile, or the ethnic and territorial renewal of Israel, now itself used metaphorically to refer both to the present renewal of human beings and to their eventual bodily resurrection.”

(7) In association with Jesus’ Messiahship, his resurrection led to changes in Jewish messianic belief. Because none of the ancient Jews expected either the death or resurrection of the Messiah, many were suspicious of Jesus’ Messiahship when he died. But the early Christians believed that Jesus was the true Messiah despite his crucifixion.

Therefore, Wright argues that these changes challenge historians to explain why they had occurred: How had the hope of resurrection and the belief in Jesus’ resurrection entered the mainstream of early Christianity despite the lack of any sign of universal affirmation of the resurrection that both paganism and Judaism insisted on? Wright responds that the reason is that two events truly occurred on Easter day: the viewing of Jesus’ empty tomb and his appearances.

87 Wright notes two things. First, the resurrection in the early church grew out of Judaism rather than paganism, and, second, two features that can be found in Paul are first, “the resurrection” being split into two, and second, the significantly different final life in the future from what was found in Judaism. See RSG, 401-49. Wright notes that for Paul, resurrection happened in two stages: first Jesus’ resurrection, then that of all believers; see RSG, 276. For the tight thematic integration of Jesus’ story with his followers, note the parallel between Philippians 2:6-11 and 3:20-21.

88 Wright borrows Dominic Crossan’s term “collaborative eschatology.” I will deal with this below, in Chapter Five B.

89 ShH, 59.
1) Two Dependent Easter Traditions

Wright attempts to prove that the two types of stories of Jesus’ resurrection cannot be read independently: If they are read independently of each other, they could be seen as contradicting each other. The story of the empty tomb alone cannot prove anything about Jesus’ resurrection because we can draw the same conclusion that Mary did in John’s gospel.  

According to Matthew and Mark, the Jewish leaders created rumors that claimed the disciples had removed his body. Without his later appearances, this empty tomb would have been meaningless, whereas Jesus’ appearances could have been regarded as hallucinations without the empty tomb. Even the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance could be advanced, were it not for the empty tomb. Although most ancient people believed in visions and appearances of those who had died recently, their belief was not explained by the term resurrection.

Therefore, Wright concludes that both the appearances and the empty tomb must be considered together if we are to explain the rise of early Christian beliefs and the stories told of them. Even if each story by itself is not sufficient, they together provide a complete and coherent explanation of the rise of these beliefs.

2) The Origins of the Early Church

Wright argues that changes in the belief in Jesus’ resurrection found in early Christianity prompt us to ask why they had occurred. Referring to Ernst Troeltsch’s idea that the resurrection is not a historical matter because there is no analogy in history, Wright insists that there is no such analogy for the rise of the early church because the changes in early Christianity were neither expected nor acceptable in contemporary Judaism or the Greco-Roman world. Only the resurrection of Jesus can explain the changes in early Christianity and the rise of the early church. In this regard, Wright raises the following question and answers it as follows:

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90 RSG, 689.
91 Cf. RSG, 697-701.
92 Cf. SbH, 42-63.
Why did Christianity arise and take the shape it did? To this question, virtually all early Christians known to us give the same answer, “He was raised from the dead.” The historian must therefore investigate what they meant by this and what can be said by way of historical comment.93

Wright’s analysis of the use of anastasis in Greco-Roman texts reveals that resurrection in the ancient pagan world meant bringing the dead to life, “a coming back again into something like the same sort of life that humans presently experience.”94 Wright argues, however, that the pagan belief in life beyond death was not only very different from the belief in resurrection in the Jewish religious tradition but also that “several philosophers and writers throughout the Classical period and world declared that the dead were, basically, non-existent.”95 Likewise, “Christians was born into a world where its central claim,”96 Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, was considered false, despite the hope of resurrection in Judaism.

Therefore, the concept of resurrection in early Christian belief resulted from many changes in the ancient Jewish concept of resurrection, and applying a critical realist view of history for the analysis of such changes may explain the emergence of the early church.97

Summary

Throughout this chapter on the second research question, I have attempted to demonstrate Pannenberg’s and Wright’s proofs for the corporeality of Jesus’ resurrected body. Regarding Jesus’ resurrection as a historical event and corporeality as its historical element, they examine the metaphorical character of resurrection and relate this directly to the two kinds of Easter stories in order to explain the emergence of early Christianity.

According to Pannenberg, to the extent that resurrection as a metaphor reveals the

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94 RSG, 33. Within the ancient pagan world, “the word ‘resurrection’ in its Greek, Latin or other equivalents was never used to mean ‘life after death.’ ‘Resurrection’ was used to denote new bodily life after whatever sort of ‘life after death’ there might be” (SbH, 47).
95 RSG, 34.
96 RSG, 35.
97 Referring to Homer and Plato as the Bible of the ancient Hellenistic world, Wright argues, first, that Homer depicts the resurrection as impossible and, second, that for Plato the resurrection was ridiculous because life beyond death is something desired for the separation of soul and body. Cf. E. Ferguson, Background of Early Christianity (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 195. Cf. RSG, 49.
anthropological concept of the eternal destiny of humankind, the hope of resurrection is distinct from Greek idea of the immortal soul. The metaphorical understanding of resurrection was not necessary with respect to the immortal soul because it does not need a metaphor for the concept. Metaphor is necessary, because the resurrection is impossible to explain without metaphor. The resurrected body, therefore, is not about the immortal soul but the transformation of the body. It is emphasized that corporeality indicates the continuity between two bodies, despite radical and substantial change (cf. above A. 1). It means that the corporeality of Jesus’ resurrected body and two types of Easter stories give a plausible answer to the origin of early Christianity. Pannenberg insists on the separate investigation of the two strands of the Easter story and argues that disciples would not go back to Jerusalem unless seeing Jesus’ appearance, which could be contradicted by Jesus’ body decaying in the tomb (cf. above A. 2. 1, and 2). Therefore, the reality of Jesus’ appearance was not an illusion that arose from the disciples’ psychological need but a soma pneumatikon that can be understood in terms of an apocalyptic vision. For historians, with regard to the emergence of the early church, the reality of Jesus’ appearances should be examined in the light of the apocalyptic expectation of the resurrection (cf. above A. 2. 3).

Wright details the distinction between the Jewish and pagan concepts of hope for life beyond death. According to Wright, the hope of resurrection is impossible in the pagan world (cf. above B. 1), because the hope is strongly linked to the faithfulness of God who created the world good (cf. above B. 2). In relation to the Jewish faith in God, the creator, the hope of resurrection meant neither the restoration of a dead person as a continuance of his temporal existence nor the immediate procession to God’s final judgment. It was, rather, regarded as a symbol of the restoration of Israel and of the vindication of the dead who had died because of their loyalty to God. In the Jewish world, resurrection was a sign of the restoration of Israel (cf. above B. 3). So, if resurrection referred metaphorically to the restoration of Israel or, further, to that of the entire world that God created, even though there were no geographical changes, how can historians explain some changes that occurred in the early church, unless the two types of Easter stories are regarded as true? There was no restoration of Israel in a literal sense, but, in the modified form of faith of early Christians, Jesus’ resurrection referred to the restoration of Israel as well as a realization of the Kingdom of God. Wright explains this on the basis of the two types of Easter stories (cf. above B. 4).
Chapter Three

Conclusions

Jesus’ resurrection is at the apex of Pannenberg and Wright’s theology – not only because of its theological meanings but also because of its historicity. The latter defines its theological meanings, and these meanings are grounded in its historicity. That is the most significant feature in common between their arguments on Jesus’ resurrection. Only insofar as Jesus’ resurrection is regarded as a historical matter can we do justice to its theological meanings, and Jesus’ resurrection acquires obvious theological connotations only if it is a historical fact. Based on this conviction, many parts of their argument show great similarity.

A. Suggestions for the Compatibility between Faith and Reason

It is obvious that Pannenberg and Wright have developed some suggestions that result in, first, refocusing on the combination between faith and reason. Indeed, the compatibility or incompatibility of faith and reason has been the crucial issue in the debate on Jesus’ resurrection as a historical event. Some theologians see Pannenberg’s and Wright’s views as new versions of theological rationalism and accuse both of making Christian faith dependent on the results of historical investigation1 or, in other words, reducing faith to insight.

Nonetheless, our fundamental question about Jesus’ resurrection should be: Does its historicity really matter? Can the moral quality of a Christian’s personal life be motivated by Jesus’ resurrection without its historical confirmation? Dare we confirm the importance of Jesus’ resurrection without its actually having happened? Pannenberg’s and Wright’s serious response to this question is “No!” Anyone who answers “Yes!” comes, in their view, close to Docetism or Gnosticism. The point is that Pannenberg and Wright emphasize the combination of faith and historical reality. Neither intends to replace faith with reason, nor do


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they privilege reason or faith.

As Martien Brinkman states, Pannenberg holds that a Christian proclamation that is not convincing does not gain any credibility by appeal to the Spirit. 2 “An appeal to the Spirit can never replace an appeal to reason in one’s justification of the Christian message. Therefore such an appeal certainly needs a criterium, and that criterium is found in the Gospel.” 3 That is also true for Wright. 4 For Pannenberg and Wright, a fact is not hegemonic nor a psychological decision; rather, it belongs to history, which holds faith and reason in harmony because the fact is not simply an object out there. Pannenberg therefore says that the event itself, rather than the decision of faith, is the transforming power. When Pannenberg and Wright argue that faith must be confirmed by reason, they insist that the conception of reason be revised with a view to the God of the universe. Christian faith is not to be viewed as simply dependent on psychological preferences. It depends on historical events that can be known by reason. Events and their facticity are not to be underestimated, especially if Jesus’ resurrection is understood as a glass through which reality as a whole is to be seen. Pannenberg’s concept of the event as the transforming power challenges the simple concept of faith viewed as a matter of psychological preferences. Indeed, Pannenberg’s concept of “event as transforming power” contains a conceptual error because the word “event” here seems very idealistic. When he defines event as transforming power, what does he mean by “event” here? He must be referring to an event as such. But there is no event as such in history, as he himself has confirmed. Then the term “event as transforming power” becomes self-contradictory or meaningless because “event” already entails many things, even a worldview and interpretation. Therefore, the event alone cannot be the transforming power. This concept reveals a logical inconsistency in his argument. Pannenberg should have defined the Spirit as the transforming power at work in the process of faith-making as well as in that of event-making.

Not surprisingly, some critics hold that Pannenberg “minimizes the role of the Spirit

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3 Brinkman, 116.

in the epistemological process of grasping the revelation of God in history.”

McDermott argues that Pannenberg underestimates the obscurity of the object of faith because he neglects the dimension of divine mystery in historical events. Althaus also criticizes Pannenberg for “failing to give any place to the Holy Spirit in opening one’s eyes to accept revelation.” Pannenberg, indeed, “has not provided a clear analysis of what exactly is the relationship between the convincing ministry of the Spirit and truth.” It is true that the difficulty of correctly reading Pannenberg is caused by his denial of the intervention of the Spirit. Pannenberg should explain how a person comes to faith and resides in the mystery of human personhood that Pannenberg sees as a gift of God without receiving extra assistance from the Spirit. It is not easy to argue that theory precedes the Holy Spirit because even if the works of the Spirit entail reason, they transcend it too. Appealing to the reasonable faith in Jesus’ resurrection should not overlook the work of Holy Spirit in the process of interpreting the historical event as the redemptive event. The supernatural intervention of the Spirit does not exclude any possibility of acquiring knowledge along the usual paths.

Pannenberg’s ontological concept of reality could be strengthened by acknowledging the participation of the Spirit in the event itself as well as in its interpretation. To have a distant view of reality as a whole, it is necessary to stand at the end of the world and see the God of the world through Jesus’ resurrection. As the reality of the whole, the Spirit pours eschatological wisdom into us so we can see the new creation in Jesus’ resurrection. As Joel 27-28 says, the knowledge of God will be given by the Spirit and the pouring out of the Spirit will make sons and daughters prophesy, old men will dream dreams, and young men will see visions. And in view of the special link between creation with respect to the Hebrew verb bara’ and the eschatological event found in Numbers 16:30; Jeremiah 31:22; and Isaiah 48:7, we should not dismiss the fact that in those texts, bara’ means God’s unexpected and hence new acts in history. And, given that 2 Corinthians 5:17 also proclaims that anyone who is in Christ is a new creature re-created in Jesus Christ in an unexpected way,

9 *Reason for Hope*, 42.
even the notion of a new creation involves knowledge of the eschatological event.

Likewise, Jesus’ resurrection is an event of historical discourse, but it is also the event that breaks down the presuppositions of anthropocentric and idolatrous modern scientism. As William Dean has explained in connection with how historical views influence soteriology, any interpretation of history that does not imply the work of the Spirit can be regarded as Pelagian as well as Erasmian. Only the Spirit of comprehension can prevent us from perpetrating hermeneutical violence on the text and open our eyes to see the logos that actually subsists in the event. In this regard, Kevin J. Vanhoozer suggests that textual interpretation depends on the hermeneutical virtues of faith, hope, and love – which are not our own achievement but the work of the Spirit. Therefore, the necessary prayer for the interpretation is: “Veni spiritus interpres! Come interpreter Spirit!” God’s redemptive events need the Spirit for their special interpretation. Likewise, Pannenberg’s radical argument designed to combine faith and reason in relation to the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection sidesteps the matter of spiritual illumination. Pannenberg overlooks the special intervention in the believers’ interpretation.

Nonetheless, despite some conceptual errors, his intention should not be underestimated. A careful reading may lead to the conclusion that when Pannenberg generalizes the work of the Holy Spirit as the process of the interpretation of event, he does not place the intervention of the Holy Spirit outside of historical reality. Rather, he affirms that the enlightenment gained through the Holy Spirit mediates history and the blind knowledge of God. As previously discussed, for Pannenberg, faith and reason are not fundamentally opposite since both receive their source of inspiration from the future, a point that Brinkman summarizes as follows:

Since faith is more explicitly directed to the future than reason, faith can function as the criterium of the rationality of reason: it shows reason its own provisionality. With the help of some sort of enlightenment, the faithful can be open to historical knowledge without bias, which means, without prejudice in respect to the (im)possibility of certain events.

Pannenberg connects this enlightenment with the activity of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit liberates our knowledge. He does not appear as a third element between the Gospel and us, but he inspires us from the Gospel itself. The ecstatic structure of every living organism in general and of the human organism in particular is seen by Pannenberg as a sign of the activity of the Spirit.\(^\text{13}\)

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13 Brinkman, 115-6.
This is the point on which Pannenberg criticizes Barth’s concept of revelation and Bultmann’s concept of faith as the primary factor in existential decision making. Pannenberg is criticizing the fact that “[p]eople made a spiritual virtue of necessity, making up what the Christian proclamation lacked in power of conviction by a reference to the Holy Spirit.”  

Pannenberg has a point when he argues that the concept of direct revelation was developed in the modern age and that Christianity was forced into a defensive position in which assertions of transcendental intervention presuppose the existence of two layers of history, and hence seem to be arbitrarily omitting the possibility of the historical investigation of an event like the resurrection. Both Pannenberg and Wright rightly argue that an escape to faith cannot suffice to defend against historical criticism; rather, an overall revision of the theory of knowledge is the solution. Since the “enlightenment” of the Holy Spirit is contained in history, the Holy Spirit bestows on historical events a fully convincing power. No man comes to God by his own reason and ability without the enlightenment of the Spirit. For Pannenberg as well, it is the fully convincing power of the Holy Spirit that overcomes the prejudice resulting from lack of knowledge of God. Pannenberg does not deny the role of the Holy Spirit but only warns of the danger in separating the intervention of the Spirit from the reality of historical events. It is emphasized that Pannenberg attempts to link historical events to the work of the Spirit, a contingency that can be explained only by belief in God the Creator, to gain understanding of how the creator is active in the particularities of his creation, and reconcile contingent events in space and time with field theory. Pannenberg uses field theory to explain how God has worked actively in space and time since creation and how God is the cause of contingent events. According to this argument, the enlightenment by the Spirit cannot be separated from reason and the event. The Spirit does not work out of nothing but out of history, bridging the gap between our present knowledge and reality or between the event and faith.

The emphasis on reasonable faith does not mean that the authority of faith is

14 Creed, 130.
16 This also can be understood in Pannenberg’s application of field theory to the Spirit, that the Spirit not only works because of human sin but because of its attunement of humanity to the things of God and plays a role as the preserver of the world. John Polkinghorne, however, argues that considering all the physical entities of the universe to be excitations in a field would be quixotic because the notion of a field’s immateriality is not correct; see John Polkinghorne, “Fields and Theology: A Response to Wolfhart Pannenberg,” in: Zygon 36/4 (2001), 795-7. Cf. “God as Spirit,” 783-92.
dependent on confirmation by reason. The combination is necessary in Pannenberg’s view of reality as a whole. Reason alone is limited with respect to reality, and hence an alternative methodology is necessary, as Wright suggests. Only through Jesus’ resurrection can the end of the world and reality as a whole be seen and faith and reason challenge and confirm each other. Pannenberg recommends the reconsideration of God’s creation as the origin of the universe within the concepts of regularity and contingency. Belief in God as the creator underlies Pannenberg’s suggestion that faith and reason should be combined in the theology of nature.17

B. A Successful Model for Applying Critical Realism to Jesus’ Resurrection

Pannenberg and Wright place history at the heart of Jesus’ resurrection and demonstrate how a historical approach can be plausibly applied. Pointing to the erroneous presuppositions of the modern positivistic view of reality, Pannenberg and Wright contribute to the application of the critical realist view by balancing faith and historical facticity regarding Jesus’ resurrection. Though the term “critical realism” is rarely used in Pannenberg’s text, it can be applied to Pannenberg’s methodology of historical investigation for several reasons, which are elucidated as follows. (1) When Pannenberg defines reality as a totality, this implies coherence. Just as critical realism seeks coherence in argument, so Pannenberg’s concept of reality promotes unity and coherence. (2) Pannenberg’s concept of reality in anticipation accords with Wright’s argument that historians must remain open-minded due to the provisional character of our knowledge. According to Pannenberg, reality in anticipation is not fixed but changes throughout history. (3) Reality in anticipation does not deny the need for historical investigation since it posits that the reality we experience is a part of the reality of the whole. In this sense, reality in anticipation is historical, understandable, and amenable to a critical realist view that defines reality as historical. (4) Criticizing the positivistic view of reality, he does not fall into the category of postmodern skepticism because, for him, reality is objective but interacts with the observer. (5) Pannenberg criticizes the presuppositions of the observer and warns that we should be open-minded. As James S. Page

17 Olive, 34.
explains, “Critical realism can be described as a philosophy that emphasizes the importance of mind-independent reality, although recognizing that this mind-independent reality is mediated through individual and cultural perception.”

Pannenberg adds that, because reality is never grasped directly but always historically mediated, historians must be open-minded to different hypotheses. While Pannenberg’s concept of reality advocates a revision of historical methodology, Wright does indeed demonstrate a successful application of critical realism embracing an exploration of symbols, questions, praxis, and worldviews.

If, however, we see that “coherence” has a key functional role in the work of reason, we should note that the critical realist view does not have a monopoly on coherence. Indeed, even in the correspondence theory of the modern positivistic view of reality, correspondence to historical reality can be judged by coherence. Therefore, the postmodern challenge is understood not as one of coherence but as one involving the provisional character of reality and the presuppositions attached to general experiences. Licona touches the core of this in the statement below:

What are historians to do when a number of equally coherent hypotheses contradict one another? In this case, one would have to claim these hypotheses are equally true or that underdetermination prohibits warranting a specific hypothesis as the best explanation. Moreover, two hypotheses can be equally coherent, yet one is known to be false.

Thus, the real problem is not a matter of coherence but of the provisionality of reality. Only through this concept of reality do rival hypotheses “reveal ... the breadth of work that must be completed in a coherence approach.”

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18 James S. Page, “Critical Realism and the Theological Science of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Exploring the Commonalities” in: Bridges: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy, Theology, History and Science, vol. 10, no. 1/2 (2003), 73; http://eprints.qut.edu.au/3612/1/3612.pdf (accessed December 2012); hereafter Page. Page sees commonality between them especially in the following areas: “1) the program of revelation-as-history and the implications of this for a philosophy-of-history, 2) the view of the resurrection of Jesus as event, 3) the approaches to understanding Jesus in history, 4) the relationship of theology to philosophy-of-science, and 5) the understanding of God as the all-determining reality” (Page, 71).

19 McGullagh comments that correspondence theory is most widely accepted and naïve realism in our everyday context produces few false expectations. See C.B. McGullagh, The Truth of History (New York: Routledge, 1998), 27.


21 According to Pannenberg, we experience something as part of a whole, and hence do not know completely until everything as a whole is revealed at the end. For Wright, our historical knowledge is provisional because there is neither a pure event nor an objective observer.

22 Licona, 91.
evidence or a strong coherent counter-hypothesis exists.

Therefore, if we are concerned about the coherence of historical reality, provisionality should be considered the characteristic term of critical realism. As for the historical matter of Jesus’ resurrection, Pannenberg and Wright – with a view to provisionality – seek strong coherence in the emergence of the early church. They argue that, without affirming Jesus’ resurrection as a historical event, it is impossible to explain the transition from the Jewish hope of resurrection as the restoration of Israel, which was strongly linked to physical and political restoration, to that of the resurrection as the sign of the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Jesus’ resurrection has to be regarded as a historical event because no sign of either the political restoration of Israel or the established Kingdom appeared after Jesus’ resurrection. In this context, Pannenberg and Wright identify the two types of Easter stories as valuable historical resources.

C. Refocusing on Corporeality in the Two Types of Easter Stories

Since Reimarus, the two types of stories were believed to have been invented by the disciples or early church leaders to promulgate their religion. In 1828, H.E.G. Paulus theorized that Jesus did not die but merely fainted on the cross, and after he was set free from the tomb by an earthquake he appeared with his disciples. Similarly, F.E.D. Schleiermacher and K.A. Hase believed that Jesus possessed some mystical power that prevented him from dying on the cross and escaped to Galilee. Criticizing the above views as illogical, David F. Strauss applied the dialectic of Hegel to the life of Jesus, according to this paradigm: “contrasting the faith of the disciples (thesis), to the facts of Jesus’ life (antithesis), and arriving at a synthesis of myths about Jesus.”23 Visions of the exaltation of Jesus, in this view, were seen as the outcome of the dialectic between thesis and antithesis, and Bultmann saw the resurrection narratives as being written in conjunction with Jewish and Hellenistic myths. All such explanations about the two types of Easter stories could not satisfy Pannenberg and Wright, and they drew conclusions from the investigation of the commonalities in the two stories. The conclusion is that the two types of stories led to the early church and were not invented by the church.

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Indeed, for both Pannenberg and Wright, the true issue of the critical realist approach is the plausibility of the stories since the reality of the stories in the form of anticipation remains to be confirmed. In the critical realist view, it is not faith but their plausibility that confirms the authority of the two types of stories; the latter may prove the truth of Jesus’ resurrection. For Wright, analyzing the two types together provides strong evidence that they are true because the event described in one story is meaningful only in light of the other: only together with the stories of the empty tomb could the stories of the appearances be accepted and vice versa. Both scholars demonstrate that each story could be contradicted by the other story, and hence the two are interrelated. For Wright, the stories in the four canonical gospels seem to be very early accounts of Jesus’ resurrection since four strange aspects of these stories indicate that they reflect a very early oral tradition.

Pannenberg and Wright, however, appear to analyze the two types of stories from somewhat different perspectives. While Wright examines the two types of stories together to confirm their validity, Pannenberg verifies the story of the appearance independently of the story of the empty tomb. Arguing that the story of the appearances arose very early, close to the event itself, Pannenberg asserts that its validity is supported by 1 Corinthians 15 and Galatians 1:18 where Paul describes people who experienced the appearance of the resurrected Jesus. According to Pannenberg, absent the stories of the empty tomb, the appearances cannot be the only reason for disciples’ conversion to the worship of Jesus. The stories of the appearances themselves cannot be the answer to the emergence of the early church. But combined with the stories of the empty tomb, however, the stories of the appearances have striking power, if we acknowledge the serious problem that the early Christians in Jerusalem might have had in believing the proclamation of Jesus’ resurrection, since the rumors that Jesus’ body was decaying could have led to the denial of Jesus’ resurrection. Rumors of the body being stolen from the tomb would have been quashed because the Roman authorities and the Jewish opponents would have investigated them. Therefore, unless the two types of stories were genuine, they could not have survived in the era of the early church.

In this context, corporeality becomes the core issue of Jesus’ resurrection. As Norman L. Geisler rightly points out, the real question regarding Jesus’ resurrection is whether it is essentially material or immaterial.²⁴ Pannenberg and Wright reveal the true magnitude of the corporeality of Jesus’ resurrection. In contrast to the fact that this

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corporeality has not been treated as the main question, Pannenberg and Wright appeal to corporeality in order to explain the emergence of the early church. Pannenberg relates the concept of *soma pneumatikon* to hope beyond death while Wright defines the corporeality of the resurrected body according to the Jewish understanding of the hope of resurrection. Corporeality is the defining concept in the nature of Jesus’ resurrection and the two types of stories about Jesus’ resurrection.

Therefore, as Pannenberg and Wright insist, theologians who have isolated themselves from historians and scientists and who have separated the study of theology from the study of general history have not produced a persuasive alternative.

### D. Overcoming Dualism by Positing One General History

As to the corporeality of Jesus’ resurrection, it is meaningful that Pannenberg and Wright appear to overcome dualism by positing “one general history.” Both criticize the existential understanding of history that separates redemptive history from general history. As Fred H. Klooster points out, “The theologies of Barth and Bultmann tried to escape the consequences of the historical-critical method as exemplified in Troeltsch by appealing to nebulous areas of *Geschichte* beyond the reach of historical research.”²⁵ Pannenberg and Wright warn of the danger of this separation. Barth’s concept of revelation and Bultmann’s existential understanding of history strongly reveal their abandonment of general history, and hence the corporeality of Jesus’ resurrection is to be utilized in overcoming dualism. The danger of dualism arises when the historical Jesus is distinguished from the *kerygmatic* Jesus. Pannenberg and Wright argue that Christology then becomes nothing more than soteriology. Christoph Schwöbel correctly comments that Pannenberg believes that Christology becomes simply a “function of soteriology” when such approaches are applied. He warns of “the risk of being dominated by soteriological interests that all too easily turn into the Christological projection of human desires for salvation.”²⁶ The acknowledgement of this risk distinguishes Pannenberg from Moltmann who holds that, because the reality of Jesus’ resurrection cannot

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²⁶ Schwöbel, 182.
be found within the ground of history, it is solely a matter of faith. According to Moltmann, Jesus’ resurrection is an event that cannot be grasped by historians who exclude the miraculous.

The way followed by Pannenberg and Wright, however, is not to resort to faith by abandoning reason but to revise the methodology of historical investigation. Jesus’ resurrection is regarded as the most important event in history, and therefore the significance of its reality must not be taken lightly because “What Jesus means for us must be grounded in what he is, and what he is can only be established by starting from the past reality of the historical Jesus.” Hence, if the resurrection is, as Moltmann says, the event that makes history, then Jesus’ resurrection is the event that challenges historians’ presuppositions. Pannenberg and Wright thus endeavor to overcome the dualism of historical methodology suggested by Troeltsch and the positivists. Insofar as history is the revelation of God for Pannenberg and the field of God’s action where God’s creation achieves God’s plan for Wright, theology is firmly grounded in real history, and any attempt to divide faith and history is anti-theological. As such, there is no division between redemptive history and general history; there is only general history. One general history is not only the presupposition but also the confirmation of the corporeality of Jesus’ resurrection according to the critical realist view.

Therefore, it must be emphasized that if we interpret Jesus’ resurrection as an event of spiritual exaltation and deny the corporeality of Jesus’ resurrection as the point of the story of the empty tomb, we commit the Docetic and Sabellian error of believing that the corporeal logos was not truly human. The concept of resurrection was the re-embodiment of the dissolved body in the early tradition of theology represented by the Apostle’s Creed. Commenting on Luke 24:39, Tertullian emphasizes that Jesus stated: “Behold and see that it is I myself, for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see me have.” Following Tertullian’s

28 Schwöbel, 182.
29 *Theology of Hope*, 179.
30 The modern historical treatment of Jesus’ resurrection is not only affected by its methodological limitations but also its atheistic presuppositions, which they successfully denounce.
31 Corporeality is another important issue in the question of Christ’s deity and humanity, as the corporeality of the logos was the essence of logos Christology and incarnation. While Jesus’ humanity was denied by Docetism and Sabellianism, Chalcedon proclaimed in 451 AD that Christ is both true God and true man.
argument, denying the corporeality of Jesus’ resurrection accords with Marcion’s Docetism because this Gnostic view denies not only Jesus’ resurrection but the incarnation as well. In his epistle to the Philippians, Polycarp (65–155 AD) argued that denying the flesh of Christ is anti-Christian.33 Tatian argued that God would raise all from the dead “in consequence solely of the constitution of things under which men alone live, for the purpose of passing judgment upon them”34 when our periods of existence are completed. It is clear that the theological implication of the corporeality defines the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection as the essence of the question.

E. Wright’s Critique of Pannenberg’s Eschatological Realism

Despite their agreement regarding the necessity of historical research and use of critical realism as a methodology for examining historical reality, Wright criticizes Pannenberg for overemphasizing the limitations of our present knowledge of history and our epistemological understanding. Specifically, although they together criticize Troeltsch’s application of the principle of analogy and use critical realism as their method, a difference is found when Pannenberg argues that the event of Jesus’ resurrection cannot be fully explained in the same language used to describe most other historical events.

For Wright, Pannenberg’s argument that only the reality of history as a whole is revealed at the end of the world is dubious because his argument implies that we must await the final resurrection to affirm the reality of Jesus’ resurrection, and hence the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection can only be verified at the final judgment. Wright contests: “We did not have to wait for the second space flight before being able to talk, as historians, about the first one.”35 It is true that the historical affirmation of Jesus’ resurrection is a present and historical question and hence requires neither Troeltsch’s principle of analogy nor waiting until the end for the final judgment. Otherwise, according to Wright, no event – no matter how simple – could be affirmed.

Nonetheless, Wright seems to be criticizing Pannenberg unjustly because the latter

33 Polycarp, Epistle to the Philippians, ch. 8.
34 Tatian, Address to the Greeks, ch. 6.
35 RSG, 17. Wright emphasizes that early Christians “didn’t employ that future hope as an analogy from which to argue back that it had happened already in this one instance” (“Scientist”).

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maintains almost the same belief as Wright regarding the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection. Indeed, most opponents criticize Pannenberg for reducing faith to insight and denying “any role to the Holy Spirit in the event of revelation.” For Pannenberg, Jesus’ resurrection is not simply a matter of faith but of history. What that means for him becomes clearer when we remember why Pannenberg criticizes Barth’s concept of primary history. For Barth, Jesus’ resurrection occurred in a different realm of history and, as such, its historical confirmation does not come with the end of universal history but via a personal decision. In contrast, Pannenberg brings Jesus’ resurrection not only into theological dialogue but also into historical discussion by attempting to prove that Troeltsch’s view of history “rules out certain events in advance, on the basis of a set of provisional judgments which have improperly come to have the status of absolute laws.” For him, theology must follow history. Defining reality as the whole of history and emphasizing the provisional character of knowledge, Pannenberg argues that the historical knowledge of Jesus’ resurrection is provisional and that the ontological consideration of knowledge as a whole anticipates the final answer. As a critical realist, Wright also argues that historical knowledge is provisional and changeable, and thus knowledge is authoritative until evidence to the contrary appears.

Wright’s understanding of Pannenberg’s eschatological view of reality may be misleading, therefore. When Pannenberg describes Troeltsch’s principle of analogy as a very narrow concept of history and one influenced by modern scientism, Wright may expect Pannenberg’s extended confirmation of Jesus’ resurrection as a historical event. But when Pannenberg defines history as a whole and employs an ontology of the future, that might seem reluctant agreement to Wright. But, it is noteworthy that Wright does not appeal to positivism either, although he does speak of Jesus’ resurrection as an occurrence within general history. Even though he affirms a modern positivistic view of reality over the postmodernist view, he does agree that the reality and meaning of the world will only be fully revealed at the end. In this provisional sense, for the successful understanding of proleptic knowledge regarding the reality of Jesus’ resurrection, Pannenberg is arguing for the reality of Jesus’ resurrection in terms of the ontological priority of the future.

To repeat, Pannenberg’s argument is that, because reality is a totality, everything must await the end for final confirmation, including Jesus’ resurrection. Wright is not able to deny this argument. Unless the totality, and hence the openness of provisional knowledge to

36 Christian Theology, 324.
37 Christian Theology, 324.
the future, is emphasized, neither Troeltsch’s nor Barth’s applications of their historical methodology can be criticized. Unless eschatological realism is taken into consideration, historians can disregard the limitations of historical criticism and, as a result, do not have to remain open to the future. It is for this reason that, while Pannenberg follows a Hegelian view of history and redefines the concept of “anticipation,” he criticizes Hegel’s abandonment of eschatology in the dialectical understanding of reality. This is also the reason why, when Pannenberg defines reality as the whole of history, he focuses much more on the end of history in terms of the ontological priority of the future, an essential focus in critical realism. Combining Aristotle’s concept of reality and Hegel’s dialectical understanding of history, Pannenberg defines historical affirmation as anticipation in reality. In this form of anticipation, it is the future that has ontological priority for the real meaning, and the historical reality of Jesus’ resurrection represents only a part of reality. Only in this way can we discuss Jesus’ resurrection as a historical matter; otherwise, Wright’s attempt to bring Jesus’ resurrection into public discussion will not succeed since he seems to begin with the strong conviction that Jesus’ resurrection is evident, despite the critical realist’s questioning of the observer’s reliability. Pannenberg’s argument that it is the future, not the past or the present, that is the transforming power in the form of anticipation does not mean that he believes that there is no significant and decisive evidence of Jesus’ resurrection. Rather, he argues that, because we participate by our present experience in reality in the form of anticipation, the final conclusion regarding the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection must await the end of history. The historical considerations are plausibility and coherence. Here Pannenberg uses his eschatological realism. That is the answer to the criticism that Pannenberg reduces theology to history and abandons eschatology.

Therefore, although both Pannenberg and Wright seem to emphasize critical realism, it can be said that, while Wright applies a more positivistic view closer to modernism, Pannenberg leans slightly toward postmodernism. When Pannenberg argues that, because everything we experience presently is reality, we should await the final affirmation, he is thinking ontologically. Wright, on the other hand, is more epistemological when he argues that, because our experience is a matter of knowing in terms of coherence, we need not look at the ontological aspect of reality. And thus their disagreement displays a kind of tension between analytic philosophy and idealism.38 Despite their differences, however, both ask that

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38 On Wright’s citation of L. Wittgenstein, see Michael W. Nicholson, “Abusing Wittgenstein: The Misuse of the Concept of Language Games in Contemporary Theology,” in: *Journal of the*
Jesus’ resurrection be brought into public discussion, and neither denies that the corporeality of the resurrection supports the possibility of common experience.
Part II

Theological Implications of Jesus’ Resurrection as a Historical Event
Introduction

Since the rise of rationalism, theologians have given more weight to the theological implications of Jesus’ resurrection than to its historical facticity. Twentieth-century liberal theologians who did not regard Jesus’ resurrection as a general historical event continued to maintain that Jesus’ resurrection was the sign of the establishment of the Kingdom of God. In this case, theology and history were at odds with each other. We have seen already the gap between theology and history and how Pannenberg and Wright attempted to bridge them.

According to a critical realist approach to the Jewish metaphors of resurrection, Jesus’ resurrection is to be seen as a historical event that can be examined by historians. Theological meanings of the event are also involved here. The question is: What is the role of Jesus’ resurrection within the N.T. idea of salvation? That accords with my third research question that I will discuss in chapter four. The pressing research question that chapter five takes up is: How does Jesus’ resurrection define the nature of the realized Kingdom of God? In that chapter we will examine the nature of the Kingdom of God in relation to the question of “how to live as a Christian.” The sixth chapter deals with the last research question: What is the eschatological hope that is affirmed by the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection?

Before proceeding, it will be instructive to give an overview of the types of modern eschatology to get to the heart of our issue.

A. Types of Modern Eschatology

A review of modern theology demonstrates how the denial of the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection results in theological formulas. The hope of resurrection was indeed the eschatological hope in the Old Testament and the central theme of future eschatology in the New. But if Jesus’ resurrection and its historicity are not connected in any adequate way, this hope becomes unbalanced through emphasis on the presence of the Kingdom rather than on its future coming. Surveying the types of modern concepts of eschatology and the Kingdom of God assists in identifying how the concept of the Kingdom of God and Jesus’ resurrection are closely linked. When the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection is not taken into account, the
tension between the presence of the Kingdom of God and future eschatology is transformed into a new type of eschatology that is de-eschatologized. Jesus’ resurrection does appear not as a historical event but simply a myth that is to be demythologized.

1. The De-eschatologization of the Kingdom of God in Modern Liberalism

The Enlightenment reexamination of the historical Jesus attempted to interpret the eschatological dimension of his message and the Kingdom of God as a political and hence ethical program. Allan Powell argues that Reimarus saw Jesus as “an unsuccessful political claimant who thought it was his destiny to be established by God as king of the restored people of Israel.”¹ In that case, Jesus’ expectation of the Kingdom of God was regarded as a political and earthly one. Nineteenth-century liberal portraits of Jesus also continued to focus on the concept of the earthly Kingdom of God.

Eschatology was replaced by an ethical hope for the Kingdom of God in the course of history. That was the case with Schleiermacher (1768–1834) and Albrecht Ritschl (1822–1889)² for whom the concept of the Kingdom of God was indispensable for Christianity as the embodiment of the final end as intended by God. For Schleiermacher, “the Kingdom of God is the corporate human God-consciousness which is the existence of God in human nature and which comes into being as a result of Christ’s God-consciousness.”³ In his view, the Kingdom was already inherent in the corporate God-consciousness, and Jesus’ redemptive work only stimulated it and made it dominant.⁴ Ritschl attempted to explain how

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¹ Mark Allan Powell, *Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee*, Louisville (Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 13; hereafter Powell. For Reimarus, “the Kingdom of God” or “the Kingdom of Heaven” that Jesus spoke about refers “to a new political reality about to be established on earth” (Powell, 14). According to Reimarus, Jesus was executed because, believing himself to be the Messiah, he expected God would create a new and powerful Kingdom on earth where he himself would rule as king. But when he cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46), Jesus finally realized that God did not do what he had anticipated.


⁴ For Ritschl, however, Schleiermacher fails to justify the teleological nature of the Kingdom of God as the divine end. Ritschl’s refinement of Schleiermacher’s concept of the Kingdom of God stresses “the mutual relationship between this final end and the function of the Mediator.” See Perrin, 15.
redemption was brought about by Jesus Christ. According to him, redemption is the personal end of the individual Christian, and hence the Kingdom of God is “the moral organization of humanity through action inspired by love.” Thus, the Kingdom of God is another term for the (redeemed) human duty as obedience to God here and now, and redemption is the function of the redeemer, God. For Ritschl, in this relationship between redeemer and the community of the redeemed, the life of Jesus not only resulted immediately in redemption but also established the Kingdom and gave his disciples the moral task of building up the Kingdom. In this regard, the Kingdom of God, which exists in the present life of righteousness, had begun to be manifested in Jesus’ ministry and expands in the same way through human moral activities.

In a typical Ritschlian understanding of the Kingdom of God, Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930) combined religion and morality, stating that “religion may be called the soul of morality and morality the body of religion.” He applied his concept of religion to Jesus’ message regarding the realized Kingdom of God. Here the historical figure of Jesus is primarily a teacher of morality and the Kingdom of God is understood only as immanent, not otherworldly. Seeing the Kingdom of God as an ethical program means seeing the Kingdom as being in a gradual process of evolution.

Likewise, the modern liberal understanding of the Kingdom was inwardly directed rather than eschatologically (toward the future). The Kingdom of God as conceived by Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and Harnack was purely an ethical program. It was an ideal morality that was to be implemented by human effort. Therefore, eschatology is no longer a story of the end but rather the ethical hope of the expansion of the Kingdom of God in this world. Here, the question of Jesus’ resurrection and its historicity has nothing to do with the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

8 Perrin, 16.
9 Perrin, 13. Norman Perrin argues that, although Schleiermacher triggered the modern discussion of the Kingdom of God in Jesus’ teaching, he was not particularly interested in the concept as it is used in Jesus’ teaching. He just used the concept in connection the modern theological discussion. Ritschl as well brought the concept of the Kingdom of God to the center of current theological interest (Perrin, 13-6).
2. The *Thoroughgoing (Consequent) Eschatology*

In contrast to the Ritschlian understanding of the immanent Kingdom of God, Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) emphasized the otherworldliness and transcendent acts of God.\(^1^0\) Warning against the Ritschlian indoctrination of the modern concept of the Kingdom, Weiss presented three major arguments: (1) Ritschl did not do justice to the antithesis between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan; (2) despite Jesus’ emphasis on the Kingdom of God in the activity of God as King, Ritschl emphasized human activity in building up the Kingdom; and (3) Ritschl saw Jesus as only the beginning of what would develop into a moral organization of humankind, even though Jesus saw himself as signifying the end of the world.\(^1^1\) According to Weiss, although Jesus expected the impending Kingdom of God, it had not yet made its appearance.\(^1^2\) Referring to the Jewish concept of the Kingdom of God that distinguished between God as ruler and humans as the subjects of that rule, Weiss argues that, while Jesus’ teaching emphasizes the former, the Ritschlian concept of the Kingdom follows the latter.\(^1^3\)

The liberal interpretation of the Kingdom of God as represented by Ritschl seemed, to Weiss, quite foreign to the eschatological teaching of Jesus himself because while Ritschl argued that the Kingdom of God had already begun in Jesus’ ministry in his disciples’ ethical life, it was not something that could be built and developed by humans. It could only be given by God. According to this holistic view of the Kingdom, the power of Satan was broken only by the work of Jesus, which was inspired by Jesus’ messianic consciousness as revealed in the name “Son of Man.” According to Weiss, from his baptism onwards, Jesus began to believe that he had been selected as the Son of God and as the judge and ruler of the future Kingdom. Jesus believed that he would come again in a cloud of glory after his death to establish the Kingdom. For Weiss, however, because it seemed that the Kingdom of God had not been established yet, Jesus’ emphasis on the fatherhood of God is still worthwhile for the

\(^{10}\) Generally, this dividing line between these two different fashions was explained in terms of two world wars. Berkouwer sees a strong reaction against this Ritschlian, evolutionistic, and immanent interpretation of the Kingdom by Johannes Weis (1863-1914) even before World War I. See Berkouwer, 25.

\(^{11}\) Quoted in Perrin, 17.

\(^{12}\) D.P. Fuller, 64.

\(^{13}\) “The true background to Jesus’ teaching is to be found in that aspect of Jewish thought concerning the Kingdom of God where the emphasis is put upon God as ruler, and upon his Kingdom as the manifestation of his kingly activity” (Perrin, 18).
modern individual.  

Developing the holistic and transcendental view of Jesus’ expectation of the full coming of the Kingdom of God, Schweitzer also criticized the liberal interpretation of the historical Jesus and political aspects regarding the Kingdom of God. He concluded that the Kingdom of God in Jesus’ teaching is an apocalyptic and holistic future that can be said to be present only by its nearness. Jesus was connected with the Kingdom of God in a transcendental sense. Through this concept of the absolutely near Kingdom in Jesus’ teaching, Schweitzer interpreted Jesus’ ethical teaching as *interimsethik*, as valid only for a short time. That seems to be Schweitzer’s warning against the moral concept of the Kingdom in the process of evolution.

Schweitzer agrees with Weiss’ argument that Jesus saw himself as the designated Messiah who would be revealed as the “Son of Man” when the Kingdom came. According to Schweitzer, however, while Jesus believed that the Kingdom would be established before his disciples passed through all the towns of Israel, as described in Matthew 10:5-23, it was not: the “Son of Man” did not come, and the *parousia* did not happen. Jesus then realized that the Kingdom would not come unless he alone bore all the messianic woes of the Jewish apocalyptic expectations and thus resolved to force their fulfillment by his death in Jerusalem. Finally, when the apocalyptic end of the world did not come and the great wheel of history continued to turn, Jesus threw himself into it to stop it, but the end of the world did not come. He was crushed in the process and failed to stop the wheel of history.

At this point, we see Schweitzer’s interest rapidly turning away from the historical figure of Jesus:

The truth is, it is not Jesus as historically known, but Jesus as spiritually arisen within men, who is significant for our time and can help it. Not the historical Jesus, but the spirit which goes forth from Him and in the spirits of men strives for new influence and rule, is that which overcomes the world.

Without paying any attention to Jesus’ bodily resurrection as a historical issue, Schweitzer

14 D.P. Fuller, 66.
15 See Schweitzer, 354.
16 Schweitzer sees Matthew 10:5-23 as a remarkable text in that the first postponement of the *parousia*, the delay of the *eschaton*, gave Jesus’ work a new direction, and Jesus finally came to sacrifice himself to bring the Kingdom into this world (Schweitzer, 362-66).
17 See Schweitzer, 388.
18 Schweitzer, 402.
concludes that the Kingdom had not been established and only the spirit of Jesus as the new influence for the world is to be emphasized. Jesus’ spirit as “arisen within men” is distinctive in Jesus’ teaching: although Jesus expected the Kingdom of God to come in the immediate future, his main concern is the hope of the coming Kingdom, which is not a future hope but the absolute certainty of the nearness of the Kingdom and the fulfillment of that hope. Therefore, only Jesus’ self-sacrifice, even though it did not bring the true end, retains meaning for Schweitzer; Jesus took the great affliction upon himself in order to bring the eschaton into the present. That is the main point of Schweitzer’s “thoroughgoing eschatology.”

Here, however, although Schweitzer acknowledged Jesus’ expectation of the impending Kingdom of God, he did not see Jesus referring to his death and resurrection as the sign of the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Schweitzer interpreted Jesus’ resurrection only theologically and morally in the explanation of his death. Thus, Jesus’ resurrection could not be the guarantor of universal resurrection, and there was no place for future eschatology. Schweitzer’s thoroughgoing eschatology de-eschatologized Jesus’ sacrifice and resurrection. According to Schweitzer, our only concern should be to work in the spirit of Jesus to bring the eschaton into the present. It is here that Moltmann criticizes Schweitzer:

Schweitzer then abandoned his “historical Jesus,” the Jesus who had come to grief over his eschatological enthusiasm, and behind Jesus’ eschatology sought for his “moral will” and his hope for “the final moral perfecting of the world.” We can forget the imaginative eschatological imagery, but “we bow before the mighty will that lies behind it, and seek to serve it in our own time.”

According to Moltmann, Schweitzer abolished eschatology by transposing it into time. He

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19 Quoted in Perrin, 20.
20 “Thoroughgoing eschatology” is the term Schweitzer used for approving Weiss’ interpretation of the teaching of Jesus, as well as of his own interpretation of the life of Jesus Christ.
21 Liberal optimists believe that the Kingdom of God is gradually coming to perfection in history through a moral effort of the ethical community. Jesus’ proclamation about the Kingdom of God is nothing more than a program for human moral action.
23 He argues that someone who “imperiously forces’ eschatology into history has already abandoned it” (The Coming of God, 10). Indeed, Moltmann’s critical view of Schweitzer can be applied to Moltmann himself because, in his view, we cannot properly grasp the historical figure of Jesus without taking into account Jesus’ resurrection as historical. Moltmann does not believe that Jesus’ resurrection is a historical event.
insists that Schweitzer’s conclusion that Christian eschatology is impossible because of “the delay of the parousia” is a nonsensical conclusion. Schweitzer demythologized Jesus’ death into Jesus’ moral will to challenge and change the world.

Another, more serious, problem with Schweitzer’s historical figure of Jesus is that Jesus appears to be wrong in his expectation of the establishment of the Kingdom because the Kingdom did not come as Jesus had expected. Schweitzer should have noticed that, without Jesus’ resurrection, his death was an apparent sign that Jesus seemed to be wrong in the eyes of his contemporaries. Therefore, Schweitzer’s great project to fit Jesus into the first-century eschatological worldview fails because he did not concern himself much with the concept of resurrection as a historical event. Although Schweitzer opposes liberal eschatology in the sense of implying progress toward completion, his thoroughgoing eschatology turns out to be another form of ethical eschatology.

3. The Realized Eschatology of C.H. Dodd

Defining the Kingdom of God as an apocalyptic concept, C.H. Dodd (1884–1973) argued that Jesus’ eschatology was “realized eschatology.” Citing the view of Gustaf Dalman (1855–1941) on the Kingdom of God, Dodd argued in his contribution to the 1927 Canterbury Conference that both the rabbinical and prophetic-apocalyptic views of the Kingdom of God could be viewed against the background of Jesus’ teachings. And if Jesus’ ethical teaching exemplified the rabbinic belief that the Kingdom of God could be realized here and now through submission to the divine will, the prophetic-apocalyptic concept of the Kingdom

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24 The Coming of God, 10.
25 Cf. The Coming of God, 6-10.
26 See Gustaf Dalman, The Words of Jesus (trs. David Miller Kay; German orig. 1898; Edinburgh: Clark, 1902). Dalman defined the Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven as a kingly rule according to the translation of malkuth. Seeing a relationship between the manifestation of the sovereignty of God and the human confession of allegiance in his discussion of the Jewish usage of malkuth shamayim, Dalman stressed the rabbinic usage and interpreted Jesus’ teaching of the Kingdom of God “in terms of the manifestation of the divine sovereignty wherein men were to find their salvation in the most intimate relationship to God, and in full obedience to his will.” Dalman attempted to combine two views and to see the sovereignty of divinity within the progress through the renewal of the world. In this sense, Dalman was inclined towards the view held by Ritschl. See Perrin, 27.
27 C.H. Dodd, “The This-Worldly Kingdom of God in our Lord’s Teaching,” in: Theology 14 (1927), 258-60; hereafter Dodd.
concerned not the future but present reality. The distinctiveness in Jesus’ teaching was, according to Dodd, that there was no Jewish teaching proclaiming that the Kingdom has come.

In *The Parables of the Kingdom*, Dodd insists that the term *ephatasen* in Matthew 12:28 and Luke 11:20 and *engiken* in Mark 1:15 and Luke 10:9-11 are to be translated as “has come.” Regarding other terms that appear to refer to the future coming of the Kingdom of God, such those in Mark 9:1, Dodd also argued that the hearers would ultimately recognize that the Kingdom has already fully come in Jesus’ ministry. The future coming of the Kingdom, in his view, only represents the earthly manifestation of the realized Kingdom. The original form of the parables that seem to be describing Jesus’ second coming, such as the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30, the Parable of the Minas in Luke 19:12-27, and the Parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25: 1-12, do not describe future eschatology either but are intended to prepare Jesus’ listeners for the final world crisis that was approaching in his ministry. They were later modified to describe the expectation of Jesus’ second coming. Likewise, Dodd’s eschatology consistently remains “realized eschatology.” In this view, then, Jesus’ ethical teachings are the new law of the present Kingdom: not “interim ethics” but moral ideals of the new age in the presence of God’s grace and judgment, which has been decisively revealed.

Dodd’s “realized eschatology” thus allows for linking Jesus’ resurrection to future eschatology. In *The Coming of Christ* (1951), Dodd interpreted Mark 9:1 in terms of the resurrection, Pentecost, and the beginning of a new era as the manifestation of the power of the realized Kingdom: “The eschaton has moved from the future to the present, from the sphere of expectation into that of realized experience.” According to Dodd, Jesus’ resurrection as the manifestation of the realized Kingdom of God can be the guarantor of its completion, and by faith we know “there is more to come, since on earth nothing is either final or complete. The Christian life is always under tension between realization and

28 Quoted in Perrin, 58. See Dodd, 258.
29 Perrin 61.
31 “There are some of those standing here who will not taste of death until they have seen that the Kingdom of God has come with power” (quoted in *The Parables*, 53).
32 *The Parables*, 54; for Dodd’s comment on Matthew 8:11, see *The Parables*, 55.
33 *The Parables*, 146-53, and 171-4.
34 *The Parables*, 109.
35 *The Parables*, 50.
expectancy.” Hoekema, however, wonders if Dodd viewed the future of the Kingdom in terms of the Platonic concept of the ultimate reality beyond space and time. The problem lies in the differentiation between the coming of the Kingdom in history and the consummation beyond history. Dodd clearly did not place the beginning and completion of the Kingdom of God in history, apparently introducing instead a kind of Platonic notion into biblical thought, as manifested by his description of the comment regarding new wine in Mark 14:25 as “beyond space and time.”

Nonetheless, Dodd’s interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection as the manifestation of the realized Kingdom did bridge the gap between realized eschatology and future eschatology. Moreover the concept of Jesus’ resurrection as the manifestation of the realized Kingdom opens the door to historical investigation of it.

4. Transcendental Eschatology

After the First World War, a completely new type of eschatology emerged in the development of the concept of the *theology of crisis* initiated by Barth and Bultmann. For Barth, Christianity is wholly and absolutely eschatological because the term *eschatology* explains God’s power to bring salvation. In this sense, Berkouwer sees a new type of eschatology, namely a *timeless eschatology*, in Barth’s work. *Eschaton* for Barth is the point of “the transcendent breaking-in of eternity that plunges all human history into its final crisis.” He means that that moment is when Christ’s *parousia* occurs. Here, *parousia* is a timeless symbol of the endless seriousness of eternity in every existential situation. Eschatology concerns the presence of eternity in that moment, and hence eternity does not refer to the end time.

Moltmann, however, argues that at this point “eschatology has no longer anything to

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37 Hoekema, 296.
39 The *Parables*, 56.
40 Barth’s experience in the First World War led him to note the error of the nineteenth century’s optimistic view of the ethical Kingdom of God. See D.P. Fuller, 79.
43 Berkouwer, 27.
do with the future.”⁴⁴ According to Moltmann, the framework of Barth’s eschatology accords with the rabbinic usage of the Kingdom; obedience to the Torah means coming under “the yoke of God’s rule.” Since this rabbinic view presupposes the presence of God’s rule, the Kingdom of God is present for one who receives it like a child (Mark 10:15). The Kingdom of God is not coming from the future into the present, but from eternity into time.⁴⁵ Here future eschatology is denied.

Moreover, Barth denied any possibility of the historical exemplification of the life of Jesus except for his death. According to Barth, Jesus’ death shows that there is no possibility of inheriting the Kingdom in this world. On the one hand, Jesus’ death means God’s denial of the corporeality of the world. On the other, God’s saying “No!” in the death of Christ is accompanied by God’s saying “Yes!” in Jesus’ resurrection in which the knowledge of the Kingdom of God is opened.⁴⁶ This knowledge does not belong to the corporeality of the world but is transcendental. Jesus’ death proclaims that the present contrasts with eternity: his resurrection bridges two worlds. In this regard, Barth’s theology depends on the dialectical relationship between time and eternity. As Stanley Grenz comments, Barth’s dialectical eschatology presupposes an infinite distinction between time and eternity borrowed from Kierkegaard.⁴⁷ Here, history and faith cannot be reconciled and Jesus’ resurrection is not relevant to history. Even though Barth believes that the resurrection took place outside the

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⁴⁴ The Coming of God, 15.
⁴⁵ Moltmann sees a similarity between Barth’s vertical eschatology and Dodd’s realized eschatology: see The Coming of God, 15; cf. also The Parables, 61. Although Barth opposes optimistic eschatology in terms of an ongoing progress towards its goal and emphasizes the qualitative distinction between time and eternity, Moltmann sees the liberal legacy implied by Rabbinic theology continued in Barth’s vertical and transcendental eschatology. Barth began his critique of the nineteenth century’s optimistic view of history in the second edition of Epistle to the Romans. See Bruce L. McCormack, Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909-1936 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 129-323. According to McCormack, in The Epistle to the Romans (1922) Barth replaced his former view of process eschatology with the permanent dialectical view of time and eternity. The eschaton is the moment that eternity breaks into time. See CD, 634.
⁴⁶ D.P. Fuller, 82.
gates of Jerusalem in 30 AD, “the resurrection was the non-historical event *par excellence*.”\(^{48}\) For Barth, this means that the facticity of the resurrection does not depend on the determination of the empty tomb through historical investigation. Barth declares faith to be completely the work of God.

Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) saw the real meaning of the message of the gospels as not anchored in *Historie* but in *Geschichte*, which is God’s transcendent act of revelation in Jesus Christ. In this view, the Christ of *kerygma* is not identical with the historical Jesus. Bultmann did not believe the record of Jesus in the gospels to be historically factual\(^{49}\) but mythological. And, because a mythological view of the world is not seen as useful for modern humanity, he sees the Bible as meaningful only when it is demythologized. Here, Bultmann means that, although the New Testament presents the Christ event as historical and Jesus as a historical person, the Bible does not reveal the true Jesus\(^{50}\) but only a historically reconstructed Jesus. Jesus was God’s preexistent divine son only in a mythological sense. His resurrection was not a historical event but a myth.\(^{51}\) Even the crucifixion of Jesus, insofar as it was the salvation event in the New Testament, was a mythological event.\(^{52}\)

Gordon J. Spykman argues that Bultmann sacrificed on the altar of *kerygma* the very element of truth that might be regarded as the historical reality of God’s mighty acts in Jesus Christ, thereby repudiating the historical quest.\(^{53}\) In Bultmann’s paradigm of myth, it is the Christ of *kerygma* that remains after demythologization, and hence the kerygma is based only on faith, not on the historical Jesus. The meaning of the Kingdom of God is demythologized with respect to the existential state of authentic humans, and Jesus’ words become something to be existentially re-lived by people. Faith is not a theoretical position but a “new act,” or a “new obedience.” The word of God, which is the object of faith, cannot be accounted for

\(^{48}\) *The Epistle to the Romans*, 204.  
\(^{50}\) For Bultmann, the historicity of Jesus’ life or Jesus’ self-consciousness is not important because the significant works of historical figures were, in their view, neither the expression of their personality nor something through which their personality had achieved “form.” Rather, they were the cause to which they had surrendered their lives. *Jesus and the Word*, 9.  
\(^{51}\) *New Testament*, 32.  
\(^{52}\) *New Testament*, 33-4. “The Jesus Christ who is God’s son, a preexistent divine being, is at the same time a certain historical person, Jesus of Nazareth; and his destiny as a person is not only a mythical occurrence but at the same time human destiny that ends with crucifixion. The historical and the mythical here are peculiarly intertwined: the historical Jesus whose father and mother are well known (John 6:42) is at the same time supposed to be the preexistent Son of God, and alongside of the historical event of the cross stands the resurrection, which is not an historical event” (*New Testament*, 32).  
rationally. One meets Jesus not through the prophet of Nazareth but “purely through the kerygma, the ‘proclamation’ about Jesus, which did not announce facts, but demanded decision.” Eschatology as the doctrine of the last things is de-eschatologized into the last moment of rebirth as “authentic existence.” Bultmann replaced cosmological eschatology by advocating the eternal moment, seeking to bring the eschaton into the present. Eternity penetrates our existence through an existential decision and through the kerygma confronts people with the eschaton. According to Bultmann, this moment is the end of history for those who are called through the kerygma to understand themselves in the light of God. In this sense, the future comes in kerygma and ends the present life. Therefore, as Moltmann rightly comments, for Bultmann the future is not calendar time but an existential impending condition. In this context, Bultmann’s eschatology cannot be complemented by a futuristic eschatology. Barth and Bultmann parted ways on the question whether Jesus’ resurrection occurred but ultimately agreed in defining eschatology in existential terms.

The possible dangers of idealism and Docetism arise here because in their paradigms of the eschatological Jesus he is not grounded in history. Existential eschatology is an eschatology that forgets nature or is even hostile toward it. Forgetting history and nature implies forgetting that God is the creator of the entire world. Barth and Bultmann overlooked the fact that Christian eschatological hope concerns not only the individual soul but also the body. If eschatology is concerned with hope for the cosmos, Jesus’ resurrection is relevant.

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54 Meeks, 27. The concept of Heidegger’s “existence” was, for Bultmann, a sign of what the Bible aims at and stimulated existential interpretation. According to Bultmann, the Bible proclaims authentic existence.

55 If Jesus proclaimed the reign of God, his message was eschatological because the reign of God was eschatological. Rudolf K. Bultmann, History and Eschatology (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), 31; hereafter History and Eschatology. As Jesus’ message was an eschatological proclamation, his life was also directed toward the future. And a person’s genuine preparedness for the future was his own obligation. As a result, history is not simply to be tilted towards skepticism, for Jesus’ eschatological message encourages people to make decisions and to be “acting subjects” directed toward the future in the history of events, such as the field of human actions. See History and Eschatology, 140-4. Bultmann argues that only in this existential way did the early Christian community and Paul carry on the eschatological preaching of Jesus and enrich it.

56 We have to understand the questions that Bultmann and Barth wrestled with in the context of liberalism’s bold pursuit of the real historical Jesus. As Spykman describes the mood of that time, liberal hermeneutics was bankrupting the church spiritually (Spykman, 386). Bultmann endeavored to amend the bankrupt kerygma by redefining the meaning of “history.” Indeed, this redefinition of history itself developed an existential eschatology through demythologization. Cf. Rudolf K. Bultmann, Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate (trs. Reginald H. Fuller, New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 12-16.

57 The Coming of God, 19.

58 The Coming of God, 132. Eschatology is narrowed down to merely existential individuals, and effects on other historical facts are viewed as destructive.
since the resurrection can be the presentation of that hope.

5. The Emphasis on the Relationship between the Present and Future Kingdom of God

Norman Perrin mentions five British scholars, namely, C.J. Cadoux, H.A. Guy, A.M. Hunter, Vincent Taylor, and R.H. Fuller, who followed Dodd in seeing the realization of the Kingdom of God in Jesus’ teaching. They commented on certain elements of the future Kingdom of God. First, the word engiken in Mark 1:15 and Mathew 4:17 implied that the Kingdom was shortly to come, and, second, the phrase “Thy Kingdom come” in the Lord’s Prayer is a petition for the fuller advent of the reign of God, meaning that the Kingdom has not yet fully come. Hunter and Cadoux see the eschaton as God’s final purpose overtaking history, a process decisively initiated in Jesus’ ministry. At the same time, they see also the fuller coming of the reign of God within the resurrection, the coming of the Spirit, and the rise of the church.

Hunter described supra-historical predictions of the Kingdom of God in Jesus’ teachings. According to him, Jesus thought the day of the divine judgment lay beyond history. Based on his exegesis of God’s wrath over Chorazin and Bethsaida in Luke 10:12-15, the rise of the queen of the South condemning the men of this generation in Luke 11:31 and Matthew 12:36, and the parable of the Last Judgment in Matthew 25:31-46, Hunter argues that Jesus used the idea of the day of judgment to persuade people to respond to the reign of God as being decisively manifested in his person and mission. In the triumph of the Son of Man through the resurrection in Mark 8:31, 9:31, and 10:33f., as well as the coming of the Son of Man in Mark 8:38, 13:26, 14:62, Luke 12:40, 17:22, 26, and 30, and Matthew 10:23 and 25:31, Hunter argues, “Jesus predicted not only a coming in history – of which the resurrection and the advent of the Spirit were the reality – but also a coming in glory at the

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59 Perrin, 79-81.
consummation of the kingdom. “62 The resurrection, Pentecost, and rise of the apostolic church all apparently reveal Jesus’ coming in history with power and the parousia. Interestingly, Hunter imbues the elements of the future coming of the Kingdom of God with two conceptions: that of the coming into history with power and that of Christ’s glorious coming at the day of judgment outside of history, which will be the consummation of the Kingdom of God.63

Oscar Cullmann (1902–1999) studied the relationship between present and future eschatology intensively, arguing that the consummation of the Kingdom and Jesus’ second coming are not timeless entities but will occur in the same way that the first coming of Christ had occurred.64 For Cullman, God’s redemptive events were revealed in history through Jesus’ ministries, and, as fellow workers with Christ, Christians continue the work that God began for the salvation of humankind in Christ and that will be completed at the end time.65 Cullmann asserted that the great midpoint of history is defined by the incarnation, crucifixion, 

62 Hunter, 128.
63 Even if Hunter does distinguish between present and future eschatology, the two Kingdoms are not on the same timeline but rather “beyond space and time” as advocated by the later Dodd. But it is not clear that Hunter uses the phrase in the same Platonic way as Dodd: while he argues that Jesus’ second coming is not a coming in history, he does mention the consummating close of history and argues that the second coming will be like the first. See A.M. Hunter, Christ and Kingdom (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1980), 84-5.
64 Hoekema, 296. For Cullmann, Barth, as one of the outstanding representatives of “salvation-history” school of eschatology, is wrong in his presentation of eternity in terms of Plato’s conception of it as timelessness, qualitatively different from time. Oscar Cullman, Christ and Time (trs. Floyd V. Filson, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 61-8; hereafter Time. Cullman rejects Bultmann’s understanding of salvation history in time as only a “framework” to be stripped from the kernel in myth (Time, 30-1).
65 Oscar Cullmann, Salvation in History (trs. S.G. Sowers, New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 74-8; hereafter Salvation. For Cullman, the most central idea of the earliest stratum of Christian confession is Jesus’ lordship confirmed by his resurrection. Oscar Cullmann, The Earliest Christian Confessions (trs. J.H.S. Reid, Chicago: A.R. Allenson, 1949), 58. According to Cullmann, Romans 10:9 states that salvation is based on the confession that God raised Jesus from the dead. When the early Christians assigned the Greek word kyrios to Jesus, they took over the Old Testament meaning of the word that the Septuagint used for the Hebrew name for God, Yahweh. This equation of Jesus with God was caused by Jesus’ resurrection and exaltation. Therefore, Jesus’ resurrection was the sign that Jesus and his teachings were true and that he was the real Messiah or Christ. The Messiah is indeed, according to the Old Testament, an eschatological term. It was believed that God would save Israel through the Messiah at the end. According to Acts 2:22-36, Peter declares Jesus’ Messiahship to be proven by his resurrection. Paul also states that it is Jesus’ resurrection that confirms Jesus as the Son of God. His divinity, Messiahship, and Sonship are all related to Old Testament eschatology. God’s salvation of his people, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the resurrection of the body are all eschatological themes. Cullman therefore sees Christians looking forward to the “Day of Victory” with the certainty that Jesus’ resurrection won the ultimate victory. Time, 141, 145. Likewise, Jesus’ resurrection is regarded as the basis of Christian theology.
and resurrection of Christ, and these events will decide the future.\textsuperscript{66} Whereas Old Testament believers saw the midpoint of history in the future, New Testament believers saw it as lying in the past.\textsuperscript{67} Believers thus live in a new age in which the great eschatological midpoint lies in the past. Tension will exist between “already” and “not yet” until the \textit{parousia} occurs. According to Cullmann, although the tension remains, the former outweighs the latter\textsuperscript{68} because the decisive turn of events has already occurred in Christ as the midpoint. The future expectation is found only in faith in the final apparent victory. Therefore, since Jesus has come, his return is certain, and hence the delay of the \textit{parousia} was not problematic for the early Christians.

Cullmann was not the first to elucidate the relationship between the “already” and the “not yet.” According to T.F. Torrance, Calvin also described the two factors as existing within the Kingdom of God at the same time.\textsuperscript{69} Calvin argued that, because the Kingdom had already been realized wholly in Jesus Christ, “nothing remained to be done except its final manifestation in glory.”\textsuperscript{70} Hoekema points out in his article “Eschatology of the New Testament” that Geerhardus Vos (1862–1949) also sounds surprisingly Dodd-like in his emphasis on the realization of the Kingdom. Vos states that “Christianity in its very origin bears an eschatological character. It means the appearance of the Messiah and the inauguration of his work, and from the Old Testament point of view these form part of eschatology.”\textsuperscript{71} But Vos focused more on the tension between the “already” and the “not yet.” While Old Testament believers saw the distinction between this world and the world to come simply in terms of chronological succession, for Christians, the Old Testament distinction was no longer adequate since the Messiah had already come, and thus they live in both in the present age and in the age to come.\textsuperscript{72}

The views of Calvin, Vos, and Cullmann were elaborated in Dodd’s realized eschatology, but Dodd could not relate the realization to the end of the world. And it is also to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{66} \textit{Time}, 72.
\item \textsuperscript{67} Compare the two diagrams in \textit{Time}, 83.
\item \textsuperscript{68} \textit{Salvation}, 183.
\item \textsuperscript{70} “The Eschatology of the Reformation,” 58.
\item \textsuperscript{72} See Geerhardus Vos, \textit{The Pauline Eschatology} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1930), 36-7.
\end{itemize}
be noted that Cullmann’s concept of eternity as endlessly extended time, which has been criticized, is not such a serious problem in comparison to his significant contribution to the concept of the great midpoint of history in relationship to Jesus’ resurrection. It is noteworthy that he affirmed the apparent relationship between the two Kingdoms.

Pannenberg and Wright also emphasize the establishment of the Kingdom in which its completion is affirmed. They demonstrate the nature of the Kingdom of God between the already established and the not yet completed. The most important thing we will focus on is how the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection is related to its theological implications. How and in what sense Jesus’ resurrection can be the affirmative sign of the establishment of the Kingdom in the Jewish and the early church context are the key questions. We will have to infer the nature of hope from the historical context and find a place somewhere between Pannenberg and Wright to join all the theological facets of the modern types of eschatology.
Chapter Four

The Role of the Resurrection within the N.T. Idea of Salvation

This chapter will demonstrate how Pannenberg and Wright understand the role of Jesus’ resurrection within the N.T. idea of salvation. Pannenberg sees the resurrection as the proleptic realization of God Himself, and Wright sees the climax of both Israel’s history and universal history in Jesus’ resurrection.

A. Pannenberg: God’s Self-Disclosure Affirmed by Jesus’ Resurrection

The resurrection of Jesus is on the one hand, that is to say retrospectively, bound up with his earthly activity. On the other hand it points forward, being linked up with the eschatological expectation of the judgment and the transformation of all things.¹

Pannenberg derives theological meaning directly from the historical facticity of Jesus’ resurrection. First, Jesus’ resurrection reveals the end of history. It is the proleptically realized end and hence anticipates the end of the world. In other words, Jesus’ resurrection previews the end to which history is advancing. Second, Jesus’ resurrection as a historical event affirms the divinity of Jesus. According to Pannenberg, Christology should be a theology from below because Jesus’ resurrection confirms his words and life that were performed before his crucifixion and eventually affirms his divinity.

1. The Resurrection of Jesus as the Proleptic Realization of the End

Pannenberg bases his belief that the end of all history occurs proleptically in Jesus of Nazareth on two arguments. First, in the apocalyptic sense of the revelation of God, Jesus’ resurrection is the pre-realization of the end, an apocalyptic proclamation that at the end of

¹ Creed, 97.
the world God will resurrect the dead. Pannenberg’s basic premise is that if Jesus was raised from the dead the end of the world has begun. The Old Testament eschatological hope was indeed that of general resurrection. The apocalyptic tradition thought the universal resurrection would occur at the end of time.² Pannenberg finds it significant, however, that the early Christians related the Easter appearances of Jesus to the eschatological resurrection. The question of the relationship between the two forms of resurrection then arises inevitably because Jesus’ resurrection might constitute a certain eschatological hope of resurrection for his contemporaries. As McGrath explains, Pannenberg interprets Jesus’ resurrection as a “foretaste” of the general resurrection.

Indeed, according to Pannenberg, the universal resurrection of the dead, which was the Jewish eschatological hope, is expressed as an imminent event in Romans 8:29, Colossians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 15:20, and Revelation 1:5, showing us that Jesus is the firstborn of the dead and his resurrection the realization of that end. In this respect, the end of history is known in advance through Jesus’ resurrection even though history still endures. Pannenberg attempts to solve the problem of the time gap between the two resurrections by defining Jesus’ resurrection as the proleptic realization of the universal resurrection. The term “proleptic” implies that Jesus’ resurrection is a future event that can be foreseen in the present. Because the present is open to the future, according to Pannenberg, reality lies in the future, Jesus’ resurrection has revealed the end of history and the future is foreseen. Eschatological reality is precalculated. Jesus’ resurrection anticipates the end that will be completed by the universal resurrection. Jesus’ resurrection is thus the proleptically realized end of the world.

Second, “the Christian message of Easter saw in its content a confirmation of this claim and could thus proclaim Jesus as God’s final revelation already present and also as the source of present participation in salvation.”³ The resurrection of the dead expected at the end of history was believed by the early church to have been fulfilled in Jesus’ resurrection. According to Pannenberg, insight into the proleptic structure of the Easter message in the form of the anticipation of reality reinforces the sense of its appropriateness, since early Christians saw Jesus’ resurrection as the enacting event of the eschatological resurrection. For this reason, since the general resurrection of the dead and Jesus’ coming are future events,

² McGrath, 172 and cf. JGM, 62. Pannenberg suggests a reexamination of the phrase “the end of the world” in the light of Jewish apocalyptic hope and guides us toward the NT’s formula of the understanding of Jesus’ resurrection as the anticipation of the end.
³ SyTh I, 213.
the Christian Easter message can be disputed. To maintain that Jesus’ resurrection was the enacting event of the eschatological hope “implies a view of reality that rests on the anticipating of a fulfillment of human life and history that has not yet taken place.”4 In other words, the reality and the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus exist now as an anticipation of eschatological salvation that is not merely epistemological but also metaphysical. Similarly, since Jesus’ resurrection confirmed his authority as proclaimed in his words and earthly works, the reality of Easter presupposes the reality of the general resurrection in anticipation. In this context, Pannenberg understands Paul’s statement “If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised”5 to mean that the reality of the Christian message in the form of the proleptic aspect of Jesus’ resurrection remains in the future.6

Thus, Pannenberg argues that the fact that history has continued on its course since Jesus’ time does not signify an error on Jesus’ part in his announcement that the end of the world was close at hand. According to Pannenberg, “such doubt is only possible as long as one overlooks that the end anticipated by Jewish apocalyptic has already taken place in a human being, though, indeed, so far only in one man, Jesus of Nazareth, and that it took place in the event which became known to his disciples as his resurrection from the dead.”7 Here Pannenberg means that if Jesus has risen from the dead then “it has proved that the apocalyptic expectation was not an empty fantasy”8 because the expectation has already been fulfilled in Jesus.

Therefore, the appeal to the resurrection as the foundation for the Christological affirmation of Jesus’ divinity can be justified by the apocalyptic expectation of the end of history as the disclosure of the totality of meaning.9 The proleptic realization of the end means that the end is already an enacting event, even if history continues. For Pannenberg, the future of God, the saving future of God, has already dawned through the resurrection of Jesus,10 and that is what the Christian Easter message declares.

4 SyTh II, 351.
5 1 Corinthians 15:13. Quoted in SyTh II, 351.
6 Pannenberg agrees with Moltmann’s view “that for the Easter witnesses Easter was not a fixed and finished event of the past but a future event that in its ambivalent historical form underlay a universal and world-changing hope.” See the footnote 73 in SyTh II, 351.
7 F&R, 58.
8 F&R, 58.
9 See Schwöbel, 183.
10 SyTh I, 247.
2. Jesus’ Resurrection Affirms the Divinity of Jesus

Pannenberg argues that Jesus’ resurrection implies God’s confirmation of the pre-Easter activity of Jesus. In other words, the post-Easter Jesus is none other than the pre-Easter Jesus. The divinity of Jesus is based on Jesus’ resurrection because it confirms Jesus’ pre-Easter claims. Pannenberg states that “Jesus’ unity with God was not yet established by the claim implied in his pre-Easter appearance, but only by his resurrection from the dead.”

In the following sections I will discuss the argument Pannenberg develops about how the primitive Christians identified Jesus of Nazareth with the Son of Man only after the Easter event.

1) The Messiahship and Sonship of Jesus

If we look at Jesus’ execution by the Romans, it becomes clear that Jesus was regarded as a messianic pretender. According to Pannenberg, the concepts “Son of Man,” “Son of David,” and “Son of God” are all related to Jewish eschatology. In apocalyptic eschatology, the Son of Man had been expected to bring the universal resurrection of the dead and judgment. But Jesus’ Messiahship did not occur as expected but through his execution. That is why Pannenberg insists that the pre-Easter Jesus who proclaimed authority in terms of the messianic expectation could be identified with the Son of Man only through his resurrection.

According to Pannenberg’s interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus’ claim to have higher authority than Moses might have seemed blasphemous to the Jews. If Jesus has risen, however, this implies that Jesus’ “claim has been visibly and unambiguously confirmed by the God of Israel who was allegedly blasphemed by Jesus.” After comparing the texts of Jesus’ claim to authority, such as Matthew 10:32f., Mark 8:32, Luke 9:26 and Luke 12:8, Pannenberg concludes that “after Easter the eschatological judge would hardly have been distinguished from Jesus.” This is interesting, because, despite Jesus’ claims to authority, Jesus distinguished between himself and the Son of Man. According to Pannenberg,

11 JGM, 53.
13 JGM, 67. Here, Jesus’ death is understood in the light of the suffering of the prophets. Pannenberg argues that Jesus’ death was the result of his claim to authority.
14 JGM, 60.
the replacement of “Son of Man” in Luke 12, which is found in Q, with “I” in the texts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke 9 shows how the post-Easter community understood Jesus. The primitive Christian community clearly began to equate Jesus of Nazareth with the Son of Man – but only after the Easter event. Only Jesus’ resurrection confirmed his pre-Easter claim to authority in the context of the Son of Man, and this corresponded with the messianic hope.

Pannenberg acknowledges that only occasionally was the Son of Man connected with the messianic title. Nonetheless, he argues, because the Son of Man was believed to come from heaven, Jesus’ resurrection and return to the Father could probably bridge the gap between Jewish messianic expectation and his Messiahship. Since the resurrection confirmed the divine vindication of the Crucified to be the Messiah, the Messiahship of the Crucified as such is understandable in that paradoxical interrelation, since John’s gospel calls the crucifixion itself an exaltation (3:14; 8:28; 12:32f.).

And the reinterpretation of Jesus’ death as caused by his Messiahship is possible only in the light of the resurrection and the Crucified’s return to the Father. Therefore, Jesus’ Messiahship gains its full meaning in the light of his Sonship as confirmed by his resurrection.

Regarding Jesus’ Sonship, Pannenberg argues that neither the incarnation nor Jesus’ baptism is the starting point, since, before the confirmation of his divine Sonship through his resurrection, “the ideas of the basis of the sonship of Jesus in his baptism on the one hand, or his birth on the other” could not be maintained. Only after his resurrection do incarnation and baptism “not come into conflict either with one another or with the early statement that he was instituted into the dignity of sonship by his resurrection from the dead.” For that reason, Pannenberg argues that Jesus’ self-consciousness was related “not directly to the ‘the Logos’ as the second Person of the Trinity, but the heavenly Father.”

The divine Sonship of Jesus can be linked to the baptism or to the origin of his earthly life as the Son of God only in the light of the Easter event. But Pannenberg does not mean that “Jesus became something

15 SyTh II, 365.
16 SyTh II, 366. According to Pannenberg, each perspective on Jesus’ divinity in isolation from the others brings the three concepts of the origin of the divine Sonship of Jesus into competition so that they cancel one another out. For Jesus’ divinity and his unity with God, see JGM, 133-50.
17 SyTh II, 366.
18 JGM, 334. Pannenberg says it is difficult to decide if the saying “I and the Father are one” in John 10:30 belongs originally to Jesus himself. But, according to Pannenberg, it is true that Jesus understood himself functionally as one with God’s will. In Pannenberg’s view, this saying is also understandable as a functional, rather than literal, meaning.
that he previously was not”\(^1\) but that “the unity of the man Jesus with the eternal Son of God results rather only by the way of a *detour.*”\(^2\) By “way of a detour” Pannenberg means that because Jesus is recognized only by his messages and earthly works in the light of the resurrection, his Sonship can only be understood indirectly.

Accordingly, Jesus’ resurrection confirms the truth of his claims to authority, and hence Jesus’ pre-Easter claim to authority can only be understood as an anticipation of his unity with God as shown by the Easter event. The title “Son,” as a part of the name of Jesus, was reinterpreted after the Easter event in the sense of the suffering obedience of the Crucified. For that reason, Pannenberg states that Jesus’ resurrection has retrospective power and his claims an anticipatory character. Even if Jesus’ crucifixion seemed to confirm the death of an arrogant man with claims to divine Sonship, Jesus as the suffering Son of God and his resurrection demonstrated his Messiahship. Pannenberg argues that if Jesus’ exaltation to messianic dignity through his full exercise of divine Sonship (Rom. 1:4) is Jesus’ vindication, his exaltation through resurrection speaks to the charge against him that led to his condemnation and crucifixion, and forces us to reinterpret his death as the Son of God in light of the resurrection. Therefore, after the Easter event, the pre-Easter Jesus was identified with the post-Easter Jesus who would come again,\(^3\) and the Jewish messianic expectation came to be reshaped and newly qualified after the crucifixion in light of the resurrection of Jesus.\(^4\)

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19 *JGM*, 136. Pannenberg refers here to Ebeling who criticizes the emphasis on the resurrection. For Ebeling, a theology founded on the fact of resurrection is “pseudo-orthodox” because it “conceals the decisive point of view of true Christological orthodoxy: that Jesus did not become the Son of God after his death, but he, the historical Jesus, was and is God’s son” (G. Ebeling, *Theology and Proclamation*, Fortress Press, 1966, 63, n.39, quoted in *JGM*, 136). Pannenberg cannot accept this criticism, however, because the confirmatory character of resurrection theology does not deny that Jesus was previously one with God. “To this one must only add that it had only been on the stage from the very beginning because Jesus has been raised from the dead” (*JGM*, 137). For Jesus’ baptism as an act of adoption especially, see *JGM*, 137-41, and for the incarnation, *JGM*, 141-58. For the indirectness of Jesus’ identity with the Son of God, see *JGM*, 334-7.

20 *JGM*, 335.

21 Pannenberg refers to H.E. Tödt who showed that the identification of Jesus and the Son of Man in Q was already expressed in the earliest Christian community. See *JGM*, 68.

22 For the transforming and expanding of the messianic concept by the Crucified and suffering Son of God, see *SyTh* II, 312ff., and 322.
2) The Spirit and the Resurrection

According to Pannenberg, Israelite prophecy had promised that the Spirit, an eschatological term used by early Christians, would be poured out at the end of history. The Old Testament’s understanding of the Spirit is that of the power of life. In the eschatological context of the Old Testament, as in Isaiah 11:2, the Spirit of God was expected to fill the Messiah at the end of history, and guide him and be united with him continuously. Isaiah 42:1 proclaims that not only the Messiah but all of Israel will share in the Spirit of God at the end of history. Likewise, the outpouring of the Spirit of God on not only the Messiah but on all “flesh” was an eschatological hope of the Old Testament, while “the primitive Christian community experienced just this eschatological reality as already present in the gift of the Spirit.” In Acts 2:17ff., Luke’s declaration that Joel’s eschatological prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit to all “flesh” has been fulfilled implied that the outpouring of the Spirit meant the fulfillment of the Old Testament eschatological hope. Paul also connects the pneuma with the reality of the resurrection that appeared in Jesus and that Christians hope for.

Pannenberg argues that in the light of the Old Testament’s understanding of the Spirit as the power of life, this connection is not accidental. Jesus raised by the Spirit has the power of life, and “the life-creating principle of the Spirit of God has not only produced the resurrection life, but it is one with that life in distinction from the present, temporal life, and corresponding to the Israelite expectation that in the end of time the Spirit will remain upon men.” The Spirit is the one whose role is to bring forth the new life in the resurrection of the dead, just as he had raised Jesus from the dead. The Spirit who had already created the world as God’s mighty breath in his church and raised Jesus from the dead serves now to consummate his work in the world of creation. For this work, the Spirit dwells in the church so it can lead the world into the new creation: “The Spirit incorporates men into the worldwide body of Christ; he himself is the unity of the body composed of the bearers of the gift of the Spirit (1 Cor., ch. 12) and finally brings about the resurrection of the dead.”

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24 JGM, 169.
25 Cf. Romans 1:4; 8:2, 11; 1 Peter 3:18.
26 JGM, 171.
27 JGM, 173.
participation of the believers in the living Jesus Christ”\textsuperscript{28} when the resurrected Lord is absent from his community.

According to this characteristic power of the Spirit of life, the presence of the divine Spirit dwelling in believers is “a pledge of the promise that the life which derives everywhere from the creative work of the Spirit will finally triumph over death.”\textsuperscript{29} In the early Christian understanding of the Spirit, the working of the \textit{pneuma} in the community was an eschatological event. But

in primitive Christian testimonies the importance of the Holy Spirit in the event of final consummation is not so plain as the function of the gift of the Spirit as an anticipation of eschatological salvation. Yet it would be a mistake to conclude that the Spirit will have no decisive function any longer at the eschatological consummation itself. Instead, the gift of the Spirit can have for the believer’s present the significance of an anticipation and pledge of future salvation only because the Spirit is also the power of God effecting future salvation itself.\textsuperscript{30}

Therefore, the Spirit working in the community is related to the salvation event. The soteriological work of the Spirit as the anticipation of the Spirit’s eschatological outpouring “is defined as a gift by the fact that Jesus Christ has given him to believers, the eschatological future of salvation having dawned already in his own person and history, so that they are aware that the Spirit they have received is the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19; cf. Rom. 8:9).”\textsuperscript{31} Likewise, the Spirit is not only the guarantee of the future resurrection but also of the presence of the Kingdom of God as established by Jesus himself, even if it is still in the form of anticipation.

3) The Presence of Salvation in the Light of Resurrection

Jesus was aware that he was the Son who carried out God’s will. According to Pannenberg, Jesus’ distinctive humanity in his work and history was related to this goal, which was the salvation of the world (John 3:17). Pannenberg argues that the messianic character of the Son of God in light of his crucifixion and resurrection expanded Israel’s messianic hope to the entirety of the human race, according to the representation of the “Son” in John and Paul:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{28} \textit{JGM}, 173.
\item \textsuperscript{29} \textit{SyTh III}, 2. Cf. Romans 5:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16
\item \textsuperscript{30} \textit{SyTh III}, 622.
\item \textsuperscript{31} \textit{SyTh III}, 7.
\end{itemize}
“The Son of the heavenly Father, who is the Creator and Father of us all, came to save the world in the person of Jesus. Paul emphasized the universality of this event by calling Jesus the absolute eschatological man, a second Adam.”

His saving activity, which is plain in the gospels, was expressed in his pre-Easter proclamation and impact, and hence we should not separate Jesus’ soteriological function from his work and history.

As to the salvific hope, however, Jesus “attracts to himself all the different forms of this hope,” according to Pannenberg. First, with respect to Jesus’ message, “the salvation that he mediates consists of fellowship with God and the related life, which also embraces a renewal of fellowship with others … as we find this expressed especially in common table fellowship with Jesus.”

Second, in the apostolic messages, the resurrection of the Crucified is the basis for the hope of participation in the new life. For Jesus too, “the resurrection of the dead was already a constituent part of the salvation of God’s coming rule (Mark 12:27).”

Likewise, the Easter event, which achieved the overcoming of death, became the essence of the future of salvation; in other words, the affirmative sign of its presence. The future salvation of God is guaranteed by the present fellowship with the risen Lord by the Spirit.

Pannenberg defines two characteristic types of sōtēria, the New Testament term for salvation, as future and present fellowship, and explains that justification, redemption, reconciliation, and liberation by Christ are expressive terms for the present salvation in Paul’s soteriological conception. Pannenberg argues that, whereas Paul predominantly saw sōtēria as referring to future salvation at the judgment, this salvation was seen as already present by believers through Jesus Christ. Pauline theology relates the future and present divine rule in the message of Jesus and clearly distinguishes Jesus’ work of salvation in the present and God’s work in the future. Although the future does not yet seem to be present because salvation is linked to being pardoned at the future judgment, Pannenberg argues, this

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32 SyTh II, 397.
33 SyTh II, 397.
34 SyTh II, 398. The way of participation in the rule of God (Matt. 5:3 and parallels, 10; 19:14; Luke 6:20), and access to it (Mark 9:47; 10:14f., 23ff.; cf. Matt. 25:10; John 3:3) is of the very essence of salvation. According to Pannenberg, it is similar to the apostolic message in the central form of the fellowship with Jesus Christ, which is linked to the historical coming of Jesus as a guarantee of participation in the coming rule of God (Luke 12:8 and parallels).
35 SyTh II, 398.
36 For the concepts of reconciliation in the history of Christian tradition, see SyTh II, 404-16.
37 Romans 5:9; cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9f., etc.
future salvation “is mediated by the past event of the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Therefore, even if the present aspect of salvation is “not described as salvation but as the state of justification (Rom. 5:9; cf. 8:3f. etc.) or as peace with God,” this hope for salvation “rests on the fact that pardon in the coming judgment is pronounced already for those who believe in the crucified and risen Christ.” Although the glory of the new life as the content of sōtēria remains a matter of hope, it is guaranteed by reconciliation with God through the death of His Son and his resurrection. Ultimately, as in the case of Paul, reconciliation, justification, and deliverance in the coming judgment “belong to the form of an indissoluble whole.” The future of salvation and present participation are the same.

3. God’s Self-Disclosure in Jesus Christ

According to Pannenberg, the God of Israel was expected to be revealed as the only God of the universe in the tradition of Old Testament eschatology. And in the resurrection of Jesus the God of Israel is revealed as the God with power over all that happens in history and with love for us all. Jesus’ resurrection is, therefore, the manifestation of the God of Israel as the God of the universe, and universal history. Only at the end of all events can God finally be revealed in his sole divinity, as the only one who has power over everything.

In this sense, Pannenberg argues that if “[t]he God of Israel is revealed in the full sense only in Jesus,” the resurrection of Jesus is the only unique revelation of the deity of the God of Israel as the one true God. Then all earlier self-demonstrations of God by His actions are not a definitive self-disclosure and cannot be called God’s self-revelation in a strict sense. Thought on the divinity of Jesus can be derived from the fact that Jesus is the final disclosure of God because “all experience of the future is, at least indirectly, related to God himself.” The Hellenistic expressions of Jesus’ divinity, namely, the doctrine of

38 SyTh II, 400.
39 SyTh II, 400.
40 SyTh II, 400.
41 Rom. 5:10, cf. v. 18.
42 SyTh II, 400.
43 F&R, 58.
44 F&R, 60.
45 Wolfhart Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God (ed. Richard John Neuhaus,
incarnation, the doctrine of preexistence, and Logos Christology, have been paths leading to belief in the true divinity of Jesus as confirmed by the resurrection. Nonetheless, because these Hellenistic expressions may have loosened the connection between belief in the Son’s divinity and belief in Jesus of Nazareth as God’s historical revelation, Pannenberg argues that a certain path had to be followed to extrapolate Jesus’ divinity from his resurrection.

Therefore, examining the resurrection of Jesus apart from the view of universal history in the expectation of the end will not allow confirmation of his divinity. If Jesus’ resurrection is the anticipation and proleptic realization of the end, he reveals God because God will fully reveal Himself at the end. In this sense, we can speak of Jesus Christ being “the Word of God as the quintessence of the divine plan for creation and history and of its end-time.” Pannenberg states that “The event of revelation, as an anticipatory fulfillment of the realization of God’s historical plan and of the manifestation of God’s glory at the end of history, may itself be the content of a comprehensive idea of the Word of God.” Only this event can be called the Word of God in the full sense because only in Jesus’ resurrection are the end of all things, God’s glory, and God Himself already present. This event itself as the word of God reveals God himself, and in this sense only is Jesus the Word of God.

In addition, if Jesus’ resurrection confirms that Jesus acted on the Father’s authority, which was already present in his earthly ministry, “the kingly rule of the Father was indeed present in him.” According to Pannenberg, Romans 1:4 states that Jesus’ divine Sonship, which his resurrection assumes, confirms his earthly coming as the Son of the Father, namely the incarnation of the Son of God. In light of Jesus’ resurrection, not only his work and message but also his divine Sonship as proclaimed in his baptism by John, his public works,

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46 For one of the advantages of Logos Christology in relation to Hellenistic ideas, see JGM, 164. Pannenberg argues that the Logos theory successfully explains the role of the preexistent Son of God in mediating creation. Pannenberg sees a dogmatic weakness in this advantage, however, because the Logos who has gone forth from God may be understood as a being of subordinate rank in comparison to the Father who has no beginning. Cf. JGM, 164.

47 Cf. SyTh I, 264-5.
48 SyTh I, 257.
49 SyTh I, 257.
50 SyTh II, 365.
51 The idea of preexistence follows in this argument. Pannenberg holds that the path from the confession of the resurrection of Jesus to the idea of his preexistence with God was a short one. For the idea could easily arise “in view of its relation to Jewish notions of the preexistence of divine wisdom (Prov. 8:22ff.), or the Messiah (4 Ezra 12:33), or the Son of Man (1 Enoch 46:1ff.; cf. 48:6)” (SyTh I, 265).
and his incarnation confirm his divinity. That is why Pannenberg means that the Easter event has retroactive power, as McGrath explains:

As Revelation is the self-disclosure of God, there must be a real identity between the disclosed God and the disclosing Christ. The ordo cognoscendi therefore establishes the resurrection as prior to the incarnation, in that the doctrine of the incarnation can only arise through the acknowledgement of the historical nature of the resurrection, and its relation to the apocalyptic expectation of the future general resurrection of the dead at the end of the historical process itself. It is in this sense that Pannenberg refers to the “retrospective significance” (rückwirkende Bedeutung) of the resurrection: if Jesus had not been raised from the dead his identity with God would have been unrecognized.

Jesus’ resurrection confirms Jesus’ claim to authority, and, according to his claims, Jesus appears as the Son of the Father.

Herein lies the starting point of the history of the early Christian doctrine of the Trinity that arose in early Christology. In Pannenberg’s view, the resurrection of Jesus is the starting point of not only Christology but also the doctrine of Trinity as the divine confirmation of Jesus’ claim to be the Son of the Father whom he proclaimed. Pannenberg argues that “the sole meaning of the doctrine of the Trinity is to express the being of God revealed in Jesus’ resurrection.” Therefore, apart from the self-demonstration of the deity

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52 Cf. Mark 1:11.
53 Only in the retrospective view of resurrection does “the basis of Jesus’ sonship in his baptism on the one hand, or his birth on the other, not come into conflict either with one another or with the early statement that he was instituted into the dignity of sonship by his resurrection from the dead” (SyTh II), 366. Therefore, the three concepts of the origin of the divine Sonship of Jesus should not be taken in isolation.
57 F&R, 60. In Jesus’ announcement, God the Father is none other than the God of Jewish faith. Cf. Matthew 12:26–27 and, for the God whom Israel confesses in the shema of Deuteronomy 6:4; see Mark 12:29. According to Pannenberg, even if the OT seldom calls the God of Israel “Father,” and hence Jesus’ intimacy with God in the title Abba typifies his relation to God, it should not be set in antithesis to the Pharisaic invoking of God as Father. For adoption in prophetic texts, cf. Robert Hamerton-Kelly, 39ff. We might also adduce Psalm 103:13 and Deuteronomy 1:31; 8:5; 32:6; and Jeremiah 3:4 too. For the mother’s love for her children, cf. Isaiah 49:15; 66:10–11. For the Pharisaic use of individual and inward designation of God as Father and Jesus’ adoption, cf. E. Rivkin, A Hidden Revolution (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), 310; and J. Pawlikowski, Christ in the Light of the
of the God of Israel in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, there are no other means of speaking of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Thus, Pannenberg’s main questions concerning the concept of the trinitarian God are how the concept can be based on the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and how that concept explains the nature of the distinction between the Son and the Father. He notes that we find “neither in the message of Jesus nor in the New Testament witnesses any express formulation of the truth that the one God exists in the three persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” Even if scripture clearly refers to the deity of the Son and the Spirit separately, no passages clearly explain how the deity of the Son and Spirit relate to that of the Father. The relationship between Jesus’ message and work and the Father constitutes the Christian confession of the divine Sonship of Jesus in light of the divine confirmation by the Easter event. In Jesus’ earthly message, the heavenly Father whom Jesus proclaimed is closely related to Jesus’ own coming and work. Jesus always appeared as the Son in his subjection to the Father’s will, and, by so glorifying God, revealed God to be Jesus’ Father. “As a Son, Jesus both differs from the Father and is related to him.” This understanding of the relationship between Father and Son is the presupposition for the understanding of the Spirit as a third figure, as Pannenberg explains:

The Spirit as a third figure … distinct from both Father and Son and yet closely related in fellowship with them. It is true that the idea of the divine Spirit as a creative force emanating from God had been long familiar to Jewish tradition. But in Christianity the Spirit became a specific figure, distinct from the Father, on the basis of the understanding of Jesus as the preexistent Son, and in distinction from him.

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Jewish-Christian Dialogue (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 88. Pannenberg says that he owes this idea to L. Snidler’s conclusion that the word Abba occasionally occurs in the Talmud, which has roots in the 1st century BC. See Geza Vermes, Jesus the Jew (London: Collins, 1973), 210–1. Therefore, Pannenberg argues that we should qualify what Jeremias says about the uniqueness of the way in which Jesus addresses the Father. Prayers, 57, 62ff.

58 SyTh I, 301. Jesus calls the Father “greater” than he (John 14:28), rejects the title “good Teacher,” pointing out that none is good save God (Mark 10:17–18), and he distinguishes between the future of God’s rule and its presence in his own coming. “The fact that the basileia is inalienably future expresses the difference that Jesus always makes between himself and the one God” (SyTh I, 264). In the prayer of Jesus to the Father, Jesus self-distinction from God finds its clearest expression. In this distinction, Jesus, for all his subjection to the Father, “undoubtedly claimed that God is to be understood only as the heavenly Father whom he declared him to be” (SyTh I, 264).

59 “No one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Matthew 11:27); quoted in SyTh I, 264.

60 SyTh I, 305.

61 SyTh I, 305.
According to Pannenberg, Paul announces that “Christ was raised and instituted into divine sonship by the power of the Spirit (Rom. 1:4), and the God who raised up Jesus from the dead will by his Spirit, who dwells in believers, bring their mortal bodies also to eternal life (8:11).” The Spirit of God is, likewise, understood as the medium of the communion of Jesus with the Father. The fellowship of Jesus as Son with God as Father demands reference to a third as well, namely, the Holy Spirit, since the Spirit of God is the mode of God’s presence in Jesus, just as it is also the mode of God’s presence in the prophets and all creation. Therefore, “the involvement of the Spirit in God’s presence in the work of Jesus and in the fellowship of the Son with the Father is the basis of the fact that the Christian understanding of God found its developed and definitive form in the doctrine of the Trinity and not in a biunity of the Father and the Son.” The doctrine of Trinity has its ground in Jesus’ divinity as confirmed by his divine vindication through his resurrection.

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62 SyTh 1, 266.
63 SyTh 1, 268.
B. N.T. Wright: The Resurrection as the Climax of Israel’s History

This vision of the creator and covenant god underlies the ancient belief in the national and territorial hope, the emerging belief that the relationship with YHWH would be unbreakable even by death, and the eventual belief that YHWH would raise the dead…. It involves, not a reconstrual of life after death, but the reversal of death itself. It is not about discovering that Sheol is not such a bad place after all. It is not a way of saying that the dust will learn to be happy as dust. The language of awakening is not a new, exciting way of talking about sleep. It is a way of saying that a time will come when sleepers will sleep no more. Creation itself, celebrated throughout the Hebrew scriptures, will be reaffirmed, remade.64

Wright understands Israel’s eschatological hope according to the great story of God who would restore his people from all unrighteous things.65 Within the context of Jewish eschatology in the Second Temple period, the “day of YHWH,” the “Kingdom of God,” the “victory over evil and pagan rulers,” the “rescue of Israel,” the “end of exile,” the “coming of the Messiah,” the “new Exodus,” and the “return of YHWH Himself” were all different expressions for the same thing. The resurrection of the dead represented this as well.66 Wright insists, therefore, that all theological subjects are to be understood in the figure of interrelated expressions of Israel’s national hope for restoration. The time of restoration was expected to be the time of return from exile, the time of the forgiveness of sins, the time of God’s return to Zion, and the time of the resurrection – in other words, the Day of YHWH and hence the end of the world.67 The meaning of Jesus’ resurrection in this understanding of Jewish eschatological hope is hope for the restoration of Israel.

In the following section I will examine how Wright understands Jesus’ resurrection in terms of the great story of God as expressed in Israel’s hope. We will see how Wright

64 RSG, 127-8.
65 See chapter 9 of NTPG dealing with the beliefs of Israel.
66 Paul, 131-5. Wright says that the phrase “Kingdom of God” occurs only sporadically in texts of the Second Temple period, but it “functions, when it occurs, as a crucial shorthand expression for a concept which could be spoken of in an variety of other ways, such as the impossibility of having rulers other than Israel’s god, or the divine necessity of reversing the present political situation and re-establishing Israel, Temple, Land, and Torah. This complex concept picks up and joins together the whole social, political, cultural and economic aspiration of the Jews of this period, and invests it with the religious and theological dimension which, of course, it always possessed in mainline Jewish thinking” (NTPG, 303).
67 The resurrection was set in this “context of the continuing affirmation of the Jewish hope for restoration, for liberation from exile, persecution and suffering” (RSG, 121).
regards the term *apocalyptic* as the most appropriate term for expressing this Jewish hope.68

1. The Final Return from Exile through Jesus in Early Christian Belief

Through his exegesis of the Bible and reinterpretation of other Jewish writings, Wright demonstrates that first-century Jews believed that they were still in exile.69 The majority of Jews in this period remained in search of an end to the exile they still thought themselves to be living in.70 They employed “the imagery from the Exodus narrative … as a way of talking about the coming redemption in the great prophets and the psalms.”71 By such means, the end of slavery as God’s final redemption was conceived in terms of a new Exodus, as confirmed by the psalms’ claim that until the new Exodus happens, “the great story is not yet complete.”72 Wright claims that most first-century Jews “clung to the promise that one day the *Shekinah*, the glorious presence of her God, would return at last,”73 and saw the end of slavery in terms of a new Exodus.

Even though Israel had returned from Babylon, the exilic story was expanded to encompass the belief that the entire world would be brought under the kingship of the one creator God. Against this background, Wright argues that the book of Daniel anticipates this

68 This is why Wright urges us to view Jewish apocalyptic carefully as a very direct language of national hope.69 See NTPG, 299-301.


71 Paul, 2005, 134. Wright formulates questions that might be common to the Second Temple period. Waiting for the last chapter of their story to begin, first-century Jews might have been struggling with these questions: “If the creator had entered into a covenant with this particular nation, then why were they not ruling the world as his chosen people should?”; “If the world had been made for Israel’s sake, why was she still suffering?”; “What was the creator and covenant God now up to?”; “What should Israel be doing in the present to hasten the time when he would act on her behalf?” Wright believes that the answers were clear for first century Jews, when they considered the question “Where are we?” The answer was “We are still in exile,” even though they had returned from Babylon (NTPG, 268).

72 NTPG, 217.

73 NTPG, 269. Wright cites Isaiah 52:7-10; Ezekiel 43:1-2, 4-5, 7; 48.35; and Nehemiah 9:36f.
delay in fulfilling the promise of a return of order in one kingdom: “They had indeed come home from Babylon; but in a deeper sense their ‘exile’ would last not for a mere seventy years but for ‘seventy weeks of years’—in order words, seventy times seven, 490 (Daniel 9.24).”\(^{74}\) But, because “nowhere in the so-called post-exilic literature is there any passage corresponding to 1 Kings 8. 10f … nowhere in second-Temple literature is it asserted that this has happened,”\(^{75}\) the symbolic story of Israel in the Hebrew scriptures was “therefore inevitably read in the second-Temple period as a story in search of a conclusion.”\(^{76}\) According to Wright, there are crucial “texts whose reuse and appropriation in the post-biblical period gives us important clues to the viewpoints of the time: Deuteronomy 30 and Daniel 9.”\(^{77}\) The people of Israel expected that the God who had parted the Red Sea and led them with fire and smoke to Sinai would do the same again on an even grander scale. Under the same conditions, the passage of Ezekiel 37, “in which God’s renewal of the whole cosmos is in hand, opens the way for us to propose that the reference to resurrection is intended to denote actual concrete events.”\(^{78}\) It is this image of the return from exile in Ezekiel 37 that Jesus uses in the parable of the prodigal son:

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\(^{74}\) *SC*, 69.

\(^{75}\) Wright sees 1 Kings 8:10f. as referring to the return of YHWH to Zion, and to the Temple being filled with the glory of YHWH.

\(^{76}\) *NTPG*, 217.

\(^{77}\) *Paul*, 132. Wright explains further: “Deuteronomy 30 … is a narrative, a story about a long historical sequence of events which will come upon Israel: first blessing, if Israel keeps the commandments, then curses if Israel does not – and the final, ultimate curse is exile. Then, in exile, Israel will turn back to YHWH with a whole heart, and YHWH will restore Israel’s fortunes. The fact that this text was being used as a way of understanding where Israel still was in the last centuries B.C. indicates well enough that for those Jews at least the real exile, the oppression of Israel by the pagan nations, was not yet over even if geographically some of them had returned from Babylon and had rebuilt the Temple… In the post-exilic biblical books themselves there is a strong sense that, paradoxically, exile is not yet over after all. We are still slaves, declare Ezra and Nehemiah, even though we are in our own land. And what slaves need is of course an Exodus” (*Paul*, 132–3). Daniel 9 was also a very popular text in the first century. “In the fictive scene of Daniel 9, the prophet, still in Babylon, enquires of God how long the exile is to go on for. Jeremiah had said it would last for seventy years… The reply Daniel gets is hardly encouraging for someone during the actual Babylonian exile, but it was to prove not just encouraging but exciting for people in the last two centuries B.C. and the first two centuries A.D. The exile will last, Daniel is told, not for seventy years but for seventy weeks of years; that is, seventy times seven, a kind of ultra-jubilee. And there follows a cryptic prophecy about how the end would then come, through the work of an anointed prince, through the destruction of Jerusalem, the appearance of the abomination of desolation and the outpouring of great and terrible wrath. We know from several sources that this text was probed extensively for hints both of ultimate return from exile that was going to happen, and of what these events would actually look like on the ground” (*Paul*, 133).

\(^{78}\) *RSG*, 117. Wright argues that, even if Ezekiel 37 is very allegorical or metaphorical, in the early rabbinic period it was read as a prediction of a literal resurrection. See *RSG*, 120.
The parable of the prodigal son emphasizes twice that this is a story of resurrection: “this my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found.” This metaphorical use of resurrection, we note, has in Luke a clear concrete referent: Jesus is receiving sinners and eating with them, and, as far as these sinners go, this is a dramatic and vivid form of “life from the dead,” a real return from exile, in the here and now … the prodigal son is a vivid image.  

Israel’s return on the day of YHWH is the story that Jesus of Nazareth consciously told through his words, actions, and “supremely, in his death and resurrection.”

According to Wright, early Christians also understood that their true return from exile had already occurred in Jesus’ resurrection, although none thought the covenant would be fulfilled through Jesus’ death and resurrection. Wright argues that Paul also understood resurrection as a physical event: “[T]hose who have already died will, at some future date, be raised from the dead ‘in the same day’. ” In this sense, Paul took Jesus’ resurrection not only as a model for resurrection in the future but also as a symbol of an inaugurated eschatology: Christians as an already “resurrected people.” As such, the metaphorical usage of resurrection in Second Temple Judaism to refer to God’s restoration of Israel from exile is interpreted and modified by Paul to refer instead to an event that had already happened, despite the fact that none believed that Israel had been fully restored. When Paul proclaimed, “What Israel longed for, both resurrection and restoration, is already coming true in your lives in Christ, empowered by the Spirit,” he was speaking about Israel’s dying and rising in a metaphorical sense, even though none had either died or been raised physically. His metaphor instead refers to the concrete events of Jesus’ death and resurrection as metaphorical expressions for the final return from exile by the concrete event of Jesus’

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80 According to Wright, the so-called story of the prodigal son is an explosive narrative implying the story of Israel’s exile and restoration. See JVG, 125-44. Wright states that “the exodus itself is the ultimate backdrop: Israel goes off into a pagan country, becomes a slave, and then is brought back to her own land. But exile and restoration is the main theme” (JVG, 126).
81 SC, 66: “The story of Israel is the story of going away and coming back home again: of slavery and exodus, of exile and restoration.” For the pattern of this going away and coming back home again, see SC, 66-8.
82 RSG, 215. Cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11. For Paul’s point about the continuity between the present world and the future world, see the comment on Philippians 3 in RSG, 232-6.
83 Cf. RSG, 217, and 1 Thessalonians 5:4-8.
84 RSG, 218. Wright notes that 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 and 5:13 emphasize sanctification.
85 See RSG, 221. Cf. Galatians 2:19-20. Paul was following the Jewish concept of resurrection closely and did know that “the resurrection,” the long-awaited hope represented in later Jewish traditions, had not happened because neither Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the rest had been raised to new bodily life, nor, “in the metaphorical sense of ‘resurrection’, had Israel been liberated from her present position of oppression” (RSG, 275-6).
resurrection.

Wright argues that because the accounts of Jesus’ resurrection in the gospels largely agree with Paul’s, they are to be understood not as “the final product of a development of theological and exegetical reflection within the early church, but as something like the source from which that development emerged.”

Therefore, “the only explanation for these modifications is that they originated in what Paul believed had happened to Jesus himself,” that is, his resurrection.

2. The Coming of the Kingdom of God

According to Wright, Jesus clearly believed that “the days of preparation were over; Israel’s god was now acting in the way he had promised of old.” And he also believed that he himself was bringing in the new age very dramatically with his own work. Wright proposes reinterpreting several biblical texts. First, the word θέλει in Mathew 11:11-15 must mean nothing more than “breaking in,” not “has been suffering violence,” because the text is “not the announcement of a wholly future Kingdom.” It is affirmed by Luke’s use of the term εὐαγγελίζει in the phrase “the Kingdom is being preached.”

Second, εντὸς ἡμῶν in Luke 17:20-21 is to be translated as “within your grasp,” rather than as “within you” or “in your midst.” Translating the phrase as “within your grasp” means that the new reality of the Kingdom already at work could be grasped. Wright insists that this reading is backed by verses in Luke 17:22-37 that describe the Judgment as coming and the presence of the Kingdom as bringing benefits for those who listen to Jesus while they still have time.

These verses imply that although the Kingdom is already present, its presence is cryptic and hidden. Therefore, Luke 17:21 does not “support a simplistic ‘present kingdom’ viewpoint, but the more nuanced blend of present and future which we have seen to characterize Jesus’

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86 RSG, 211.
87 RSG, 276.
88 JVG, 467.
89 JVG, 468. Wright reads this verb in the middle voice and not in the passive one.
92 JVG, 469.
proclamation throughout.”93 Third, the story of Jesus’ exorcism “reinforces the sense of the kingdom as a present reality, in which people can share, but which still awaits some sort of final validation.”94 Jesus’ proclamation that “if I by the finger of God cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you”95 not only asserts that the Kingdom is present during the ministry of Jesus but also redefines the nature of that Kingdom. According to Wright, by his action Jesus defines the Kingdom “as the sovereign one through whom YHWH is even now defeating the enemies of his people.”96 In this sense of the Kingdom and its analogue with “inaugurated eschatology,” the Kingdom is clearly a present reality but at the same time looks forward to the final victory;97 Jesus is referring to the final affirmation that he will appear as the “royal” figure in his death and resurrection and with the Temple’s destruction.

In his approach to Jesus’ announcement of the coming Kingdom in his first period of ministry after John the Baptist has been arrested, Wright affirms that the Greek term engiken in Mark 1:14f and its parallel version in Matthew 4:17 imply that “Jesus’ public ministry was itself the true inauguration of the Kingdom which would be shortly established.”98 Translating engiken as “is at hand,” Wright argues that if Jesus defined the Kingdom as the end of the space-time universe and/or the establishment of the Jewish Kingdom under the direct rule of Israel’s God rather than the rule of Herod and Pilate then nothing had yet occurred.99 At this point, therefore, it does not matter to Wright whether the term engiken refers to the presence of the Kingdom or the imminence of the Kingdom because the Kingdom is being redefined by Jesus: “This Kingdom would reach its climax in the battle which he was going to Jerusalem to fight; within a generation there would be an event which would show that Jesus was right to claim all this.”100 Therefore, if engiken is translated as “has approached, has drawn near,” it does not mean that the Kingdom is not yet present but

93 JVG, 469.
94 JVG, 469.
95 Luke 11:20 and Matthew 12:28 in which “finger” is replaced by “spirit.”
96 JVG, 470.
97 All three accounts above are followed by the prediction of the coming Kingdom in relation to Jesus as king, as Messiah, and as “the ‘royal’ figure summoning his followers to come with him to the capital, where the Kingdom would have to be attained, and to be prepared in doing so for the possibility that they would meet a violent death” (JVG, 470-1).
98 JVG, 472.
99 Wright argues that the debate between many scholars as to whether this phrase indicates the presence of the Kingdom or the imminence of the Kingdom is “directly affected by what different scholars think the kingdom consists of” (JVG, 471).
100 JVG, 472. He also argues that lexical studies cannot solve the problem of this Greek word.
that the Kingdom is now approached by those to whom the Gospel is preached. Wright’s
point is that if the Second Temple Jews had understood the Kingdom to be the end of the
space-time universe, as Schweitzer argued, they understood *engiken* to mean that something
had obviously not yet happened. But Wright argues that inaugurated eschatology combines
present and future eschatology such that “the fact that the full revelation or dawning of the
kingdom remains in the future does not negate, but actually rather demands, that something
be already acknowledged as present, in this case the messiah-ship of Jesus.”

Inaugurated eschatology (or the Kingdom) in Jesus is affirmed by his resurrection, and that is expressed
by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 and Philippians 2-3, which also speak of the resurrection. Wright
continues: “Paul at least hints that the present time, a genuine anticipation of god’s kingdom,
is the kingdom of the Messiah, who is already ruling the world as its rightful lord. The future
kingdom will come when he completes this work and hands over the kingdom to god the
father.” Wright understands Paul to be speaking of the Kingdom of God that has been
already inaugurated as the Kingdom of the Messiah and whose completion was anticipated by
the early Christians:

For the first Christians, the ultimate “salvation” was all about God’s new world; and the point of
what Jesus and the apostles were doing when they were healing people, or being rescued from
shipwreck, or whatever, was that this was a proper anticipation of that ultimate “salvation,” that
healing transformation of space, time and matter. The future rescue which God had planned and
promised was starting to come true in the present.

Likewise, Wright defines early Christian eschatology in terms of an inaugurated
eschatology that affirms that the action of seeking the Kingdom’s full completion does not
negate but rather demands something already acknowledged as present.

### 3. The Resurrection and Apocalyptic Expectation of the End of the World

For the people of Israel in the Second Temple period, the glorious presence of God remained
in the future and their exile had not truly ended. But, because they believed that God who had
created the world and with whom they had made a covenant would not tolerate the

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101 Cf. footnote 93 in *JVG*, 472.
102 *JVG*, 472.
103 *RSG*, 566.
104 *SbH*, 211.
oppression of His people, they expected that “the covenant of God would act once more, bringing to birth the ‘coming age’, ha’olam ha-ba, which would replace the ‘present age’, ha’olam ha-zeh, the age of misery, bondage, sorrow and exile.”

This hope is strongly expressed in the characteristic language system, the so-called apocalyptic language: “[I]t is not easy to see what better language-system could have been chosen to articulate Israel’s hope and invest it with its full perceived significance.”

The fact that using apocalyptic language is the best way to express the strong hope based on the covenant of God implies that apocalyptic events should be read from the perspective of the nature of Jewish monotheism in its totality.

In this light, Wright points out several weak points in the general understanding of apocalyptic language, in which apocalyptic means catastrophic. He expresses his displeasure with the concept of a catastrophic end because it leads to the misunderstanding that Jesus and the church would be proved wrong. According to Wright, Schweitzer and others who believed that Jesus did not speak in apocalyptic language seem to have misread the text in a way that demolishes the historical figure of Jesus and the church. Wright comments,

Defining the general mistake as one of equating the term apocalyptic with the term dualistic, Wright insists on differentiating Plato’s cosmological dualism from the Jewish distinction between the creator God and the created world. Arguing that, although in Jewish duality “the material sense and performance are by no means to be despised or

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105 NTPG, 279.
106 NTPG, 283.
107 JVG, 365.
109 “Jews in general did not divide the world rigidly into the physical and the noumenal/spiritual” (NTPG, 255).
neglected,” classical dualistic interpretations of apocalyptic texts understand them only as predicting a coming cosmic catastrophe, he thus warns that the term must be used more specifically in dualistic readings of apocalyptic texts. Wright, however, holds that such a dualistic interpretation has resulted in *parousia* being used to refer only to the second coming of Jesus at the catastrophic end of the world.

Wright does not deny the early Christian expectation of the *parousia* as Jesus’ second coming, but he argues that *parousia* in an apocalyptic context does not directly refer to Jesus’ second coming. He explains that New Testament scholars’ belief that the Kingdom of God that Jesus and the early Christians expected was apocalyptic and hence eschatological, i.e. based on catastrophic eschatology. They link the Kingdom of God to its physical consummation at the end of history and assume the *parousia* was delayed. According to Wright, however, the argument that apocalyptic hope concerns the Kingdom of God that will come when the *parousia* occurs at the catastrophic end of the world with the second coming of Jesus is not convincing. Rather, apocalyptic hope has to do with the Kingdom of God but not the end of the physical world. The belief in apocalyptic hope as the catastrophic end of the world cannot possibly explain Jesus’ urgent message that everything is linked to the imminent Kingdom of God. This is why Wright urges us to redefine the concept of *parousia* and to revise our apocalyptic understanding of the Kingdom of God.

1) The Misunderstanding of the Apocalyptic End of the World

Since the publication of the works of Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer, it has been commonly assumed that the apocalyptic expectation of Jesus and his contemporaries was that of the imminent end of the present world. According to Wright, however, the more we grasp their understanding of the apocalyptic end of the world, the bigger the gap we encounter between the historical Jesus and the confessional Jesus. If Jesus had expected the end of the world in accordance with the typical view of the apocalypse (i.e., that history would end and a new age would follow a cosmic catastrophe), he would appear to have been mistaken and to have failed by any measure. For this reason, Wright insists that such an understanding of the apocalypse is wrong and has indeed been abandoned by most serious scholars.¹¹¹

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¹¹⁰ *NTPG*, 255.
¹¹¹ *JVG*, 33. For Wright, it is the old idea that apocalyptic language means the end of the space-
Such an understanding of the apocalypse also conflicted with that held by many Jews because they looked forward to a renewal of Israel and the world, not the abandonment of the world,\textsuperscript{112} believing that “the present world order would come to an end.”\textsuperscript{113} According to Wright, however, the present world order for Jews meant that the Gentiles were ruling over the people of the true God. Therefore, the end of the period implied “the inauguration of the time when this God would take his power and reign and, in the process, restore the fortunes of his suffering people.”\textsuperscript{114} Wright argues that this picture fits the map of Jewish eschatology of the Second Temple period as a whole.\textsuperscript{115} On this basis, Wright argues that Apocalyptic literature has been wrongly understood. To sum up, first, mentioning Weiss’ and Schweitzer’s contention that “Jesus and some of his contemporaries expected the end of the present world order,”\textsuperscript{116} Wright elucidates their misreading of apocalyptic texts. According to their reading, phrases such as the “kingdom of God” and “the son of man coming on the clouds of heaven” were literal predictions of events that would shortly take place, “which would close the space-time order.”\textsuperscript{117} In contrast, Wright argues: “The ‘kingdom of God’ had nothing to do with the world itself coming to an end. That makes no sense either of the basic Jewish worldview of the texts in which the Jewish hope is

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\bibitem{} time world. Wright says that, despite obvious evidence of “Hellenized future expectation, that is, a hope for a non-physical (or ‘spiritual’) world to which the righteous and blessed would be summoned after death,” “it would be a great mistake to regard a Hellenized expectation as basic” (\textit{NTPG}, 321).
\bibitem{112} Wright asserts that “there is almost nothing to suggest that they followed the Stoics into the belief that the world itself would come to an end.” (\textit{NTPG}, 333).
\bibitem{113} \textit{NTPG}, 333.
\bibitem{114} To Weiss’ and Schweitzer’s assumptions that Jesus’ announcement was eschatological and that he expected the imminent end of the world, Wright adds a further comment: it is not possible to adopt the idea that Jesus and his contemporaries expected the end of the present world order. The Jewish eschatological hope was not for something beyond earthly life (\textit{JVG}, 95).
\bibitem{115} According to Wright, there were many different expressions for the same thing, namely “the real return from exile,” “forgiveness of sins,” “return of the King,” “vindication of God’s people,” “the resurrection of the dead,” and so on. These expressions are not separate themes. The people of Israel were looking for the God of the covenant to return to fulfill His promise. Wright confirms that despite some texts that seemed to have been infected by the Hellenized idea of a shadowy afterlife, the hope for the resurrection was indeed “of renewal of the space-time world of creation and history” (\textit{NTPG}, 321). Wright insists that the natural literary meaning of texts, Daniel 12:1b-3; Isaiah 26:19; Ezekiel 37:1-14; Hosea 5:15-6:3, is the hope for the future restoration of Israel.
\bibitem{116} \textit{JVG}, 95.
\bibitem{117} \textit{JVG}, 96. Albert Schweitzer held that apocalyptic language referred to the catastrophic end of the present world. Wright argues that Schweitzer based his theories on the belief that the catastrophic end of the world was common to first-century Jews and that the expectation was driven by apocalyptic literature. According to Wright, Schweitzer took the concept of the catastrophic event from the Greek word \textit{parousia}, which is found in a few early Christian sources but does not belong in this sense to early Jewish writings.
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expressed” 118 because apocalyptic language is “an elaborate metaphor-system for investing historical events with theological significance.”119 Therefore, Wright asserts that Jesus should be seen as a successor to Jeremiah and his like in warning of a political disaster that would be brought upon Israel, and not seen in reference to the catastrophic end of the world.120

Second, Wright criticizes the view that, because there was no catastrophic end, Jesus’ death did not bring the apocalyptic end. Wright argues that Jesus’ death and resurrection should be seen as portents of the end within the category of the apocalyptic; in other words, they should be seen as bringing an apocalyptic end, even if not a catastrophic end, in accordance with Jesus’ belief that Israel’s history was drawing to its climax through his death. Wright argues:

Schweitzer was right to say that “apocalyptic” was central for Jesus, but wrong to think it meant the end of the world, and wrong to suppose that an eternally valid core of meaning could emerge from the failure of the world to end on time. No. Jesus went to Jerusalem to enact and embody the coming kingdom, in which YHWH would be king of all the world.121

Because God is the creator of this world in the Jewish monotheistic belief system, his “unmaking” of this world via a catastrophe would make no sense. Therefore, Wright argues that the common understanding of apocalyptic is strongly at odds with “covenant” theology. If Jesus’ death and resurrection had established the Kingdom of God, then the apocalyptic end has been realized.

Third, Wright argues that the belief that the space-time world would end is derived from “a dualistic belief in the unredeemableness of the present physical world.”122 This modern idea has been strongly fueled by the conviction that the great bulk of apocalyptic writings suggest that the space-time universe is evil and anticipate its end. Wright argues that this conviction is based on a Platonic universe rather than Jewish classical prophecy, which does not support a dualistic understanding of the end of the world:

118 NTPG, 285.
119 JVG, 96.
120 Wright argues that the misleading concepts of the catastrophic end can be traced not the first-century Jews but to the stoics “who characteristically believed that the world would be dissolved in fire” (JVG, 96).
121 JVG, 658.
122 NTPG, 285.
As good creational monotheists, mainline Jews were not hoping to escape from the present universe into some Platonic realm of eternal bliss enjoined by disembodied souls after the end of the space-time universe. ... Within the literary format of standard apocalyptic writings, then, we have found a linguistic convention, which traces its roots without difficulty back to classical prophecy. 123

According to Wright, even if this dualistic idea is also found in the distinction between an apocalyptic and a prophetic worldview, no remarkable examples of differentiation appear in standard apocalyptic descriptions of classical prophecy. Apocalyptic language makes excellent sense only within the context of creational and covenantal monotheism, in which we can see coherence between the terms “prophecy” and “apocalyptic.”

Fourth, in this light, Wright contests that the old contrast between the terms “prophecy” and “apocalyptic” never represented more than a glimmer of the truth 124 and was caused by a misreading of apocalyptic metaphors as literal predictions in twentieth-century Gospel studies. While “prophecy” has been regarded as referring to God’s actions in the present world, “apocalyptic” has been regarded as predicting the demolition of this world and the establishment of a world completely different from this world. Such a misreading of these terms, Wright argues, has depended on a demonstrably false view of Second Temple Jews and Paul. 125 While Wright acknowledges that apocalyptic literature is dualistic, he holds that it is dualistic only in an eschatological sense, i.e., stressing the differences between the present age and the age to come that was described by many biblical prophets and in many rabbinic writings: 126

So, too, in so far as the apocalyptic writings attempt to go further, and to speak of a great new act which this God will perform on the historical stage, they are in line with (for instance) Isaiah and Ezekiel. If they try to work out in great detail exactly when this will take place, that may mark them out (along with Daniel) as more given to speculation, but does not mean that they believed in a dualistic or deterministic world while Isaiah and Ezekiel believed in free will. 127

As many apocalyptic writers shared the quest of prophetic writers to determine the creator God’s actions within space-time history, many apocalyptic writings shared the common

123 NTPG, 286.
124 Paul, 50. “The sharp line that used to be drawn between the term ‘prophecy’ and the term ‘apocalyptic’ bears witness to a grain of truth and a large heap of misunderstanding” (Paul, 134).
125 Paul, 50.
126 For the common dualistic characters between prophetic and apocalyptic writings, see NTPG, 297.
127 NTPG, 298.
worldview of Jewish writings.

2) The Meaning of *Parousia* for the Early Christians

Wright defines the meaning of *parousia* as “presence” that is the state being opposed to *apousia*, “absence”; “hence it denotes the ‘arrival’ of someone not at the moment present; and it is especially used in relation to the visit ‘of a royal or Official personage’.”\(^{128}\) According to this understanding, we should not find its meaning in the notion of the end of this physical world. If its meaning was found there, this would mean that, first, we would not see the *parousia* that the gospels intend, and second, even if it refers correctly to Jesus’ second coming, we would pervert its real content.

Wright suggests that Mark 13 is a good example of the correct meaning of *parousia* in apocalyptic language\(^{129}\) – i.e. not as the second coming of Jesus – because Mark 13:4-6 is based on Isaiah 13:10, 34:4, and Daniel 7:13f. Wright criticizes Weiss, Schweitzer, and their successors for their use of the term *parousia* in the sense that Jesus was predicting the imminent end of the world. According to Wright, first, Daniel 7 is not talking about a human figure traveling downward toward the earth on actual clouds.\(^{130}\) While the Greek term *erchomenon* could mean either “coming” or “going,” in Daniel 7 it means “coming” from the earth toward “the Ancient of Days.”\(^{131}\) The LXX interpretation of Daniel 7:13\(^{132}\) is that the Son of Man came as the Ancient of Days, and thus the Son of Man is “the embodiment of the person of the Ancient of Days.”\(^{133}\) When Jesus speaks of “the coming of the Son of Man” in a Danielic sense, the “coming” refers first to the vindication of the Son of Man as “coming” to the Ancient of Days and second to YHWH himself. Therefore, it is to be concluded that “Jesus was announcing, and embodying, the return of YHWH to Zion.”\(^{134}\) The Danielic story

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128 *JVG*, 341.
129 Wright maintains that “Mark 13 has been badly misunderstood by the importation into it of ideas concerning the ‘second coming’ of Jesus” (*JVG*, 341).
130 *JVG*, 361. Wright says that it is true that there is an impressive array of evidence that was read as messianic during the Second Temple era, even though the “son of man” figure in Daniel 7 is not necessarily “messianic” in its original setting (*JVG*, 514).
131 *JVG*, 361.
134 *JVG*, 642.
was one of vindication and exaltation and was retold and understood by first-century Jews using apocalyptic language. In Mark 13:26 the disciples consider Jesus’ prophecy of the destruction of the temple as the announcement of his vindication. In this sense, the *parousia* implies two events: the defeat of the enemies of the true people of God and the vindication of the true people themselves, linked precisely to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Mark 13 refers directly to the destruction of the temple, which will be the sign of the vindication of Jesus who had prophesied it.

Second, the texts Isaiah 13:10 and 34:4, which are quoted in Mark 13 within an evidential form of apocalyptic language, refer not to the collapse of the present world but rather to cosmically significant events. Mark 13 states that “Jesus has been asked about the destruction of the Temple. His reply has taken the disciples through the coming scenario: great tribulation, false messiahs arising, themselves hauled before magistrates.” Jesus is proclaiming the ruin of Jerusalem, not referring to his second coming. Mark 13 presents the destruction of the temple as the sign of the vindication of Jesus, and presents no sign that “the space-time universe is about to come to an end, or that a transcendent figure is about to come floating, cloud borne, towards earth.”

Wright reinterprets the parables of talents and minas in Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 19:11-27, which have been understood as referring to Jesus’ second coming, not the coming of God Himself. Wright, however, understands those parables in the sense of the departure and return of a king or master. (1) In most cases, “the king or master stands for Israel’s god and the subjects or servants for Israel and/or her leaders or prophets.” (2) “[T]he idea of a king who returns after a long absence fits exactly into the context of the return of YHWH to Zion.” (3) The primary reference to minor parables in the gospels that speak of a master returning to his servants is linked directly to Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem – at least to the

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135 According to Wright, the word *erchomenon* was good first-century metaphorical language.
136 In the text, therefore, “all was focused on the central point, that the Temple’s destruction would constitute his own vindication” (*JVG*, 342).
137 *JVG*, 515.
138 Wright believes that in Jesus’ view, people in Jerusalem should not stand and fight but escape while they could. Otherwise, they would not get out alive.
139 *JVG*, 516.
140 Johnson has challenged the interpretation that those parables indicate the *parousia*. Wright argues, however, that the parables should be seen in the light of the theme of YHWH’s return to Zion. Cf. L.T. Johnson, “The Lukan Kingship Parable (Lk. 19:11-27),” in: *Novum Testamentum* 24/2 (1982), 139-59; hereafter “The Lukan Kingship.”
141 *JVG*, 634.
142 *JVG*, 634.
events that are predicted in Matthew 24 and its parallels – despite having been read as referring to the second coming of Jesus. (4) The idea of Jesus’ return is neither central nor major in, in any case, the Lukan corpus. (5) The Matthaean version of the parables does not support the assertion that they concern Jesus’ own return, as the parables in Matthew 25 are focused “not on the personal return of Jesus after a long interval in which the church is left behind, but on the great judgment which is coming very soon upon Jerusalem and her current leaders, and which signals the vindication of Jesus and his people as the true Israel.”

“[W]hen the ‘second coming’ is mentioned in early Christian writings, there is no suggestion – as there should be on the normal reading of the parable – of the condemnation of some within the church.”

(6) “[I]n Luke, the parable is told because Jesus and his followers are getting near Jerusalem, and disciples and crowds alike suppose that the kingdom of God is near.” More specifically, Wright explains:

If Luke, when editing his material, had wanted to stress that the kingdom (in the sense of Jesus’ own “return”) had not in fact come in A.D. 30 or thereabouts, he might be thought to be pushing on an open door. Luke’s point, however, does not concern timing, but effects. The thrust is not “no, the kingdom is not coming for a long time”; the point is “the kingdom is indeed coming – but it will mean judgment, not blessing, for Israel.”

In this light, the Kingdom of God does mean the return of God to Zion, but this will not be a celebration for national Israel because this return would occur in the judgment of Israel, and Jesus’ death and resurrection. Jesus “saw his journey to Jerusalem as the symbol and embodiment of YHWH’s return to Zion,” and the parousia meant God’s return to Zion as the true King, which would mean the inauguration of the Kingdom of YHWH, Israel’s return from exile, judgment of the enemies of God, and so on. Although Israel rejected

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143 JVG, 636.
144 JVG, 635.
145 JVG, 635.
146 JVG, 635-6.
147 JVG, 639; italics his.
148 According to Wright, G.R. Beasley-Murray widens the theme inappropriately, and T.F. Glasson simply applies it to the post-Jesus parousia doctrine. Cf. G.R. Beasley-Murray, Jesus and the Kingdom of God (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), part I and II, and T.F. Glasson, “Theophany and Parousia,” in: New Testament Series 34/2 (Cambridge: University Press, 1988), 259-70. Wright says there is clearly ample evidence “that most second-Temple Jews who gave any thought to the matter were hoping for YHWH to return, to dwell once again in the Temple in Jerusalem as he had done in the time of the old monarchy” (JVG, 623f.). Actually, “the hope for the return of YHWH belongs, obviously, very closely with the other two features of the kingdom-expectation, namely return from exile and the defeat of evil” (JVG, 623). “If YHWH was visiting his people, that would mean that the
YHWH by denying Jesus, Jesus’ resurrection and the destruction of the temple were the signs of his vindication and the affirmation that God has come to Zion as the real King.

In this sense, the parousia in relation to Jesus himself means, first, his royal presence in God’s new creation: “At the moment, by the Spirit, the word, the sacraments and prayer, and in those in need whom we are called to serve for his sake, the absent Jesus present to us.” 149 The parousia implies Jesus’ kingship, which means that Caesar is not the true king. God has established his Kingship in Jesus himself. Second, in this sense, it is only through Jesus’ presence as the real king with his people that the parousia can be linked to the divinity of Jesus and properly imply his second coming as well. Jesus as the rightful Lord did indeed “point forward to his eventual return as the rightful Lord of the whole world.” 150 The hope of the parousia as Jesus’ second coming was born out of this Jesus’ royal presence as the real King. 151

4. The Crucified One is the True Messiah

According to Wright, the word “Messiah” does not refer in the first-century Jewish mindset directly to a divine or quasi-divine figure: “[T]here was no one picture of ‘the messiah’ within the Judaism of Jesus’ day.” 152 To determine how the word “Messiah” came to be related to Jesus’ divinity, Wright instead demonstrates a direct link between Messiahship and kingship. 153 He argues that Jesus’ actions in the temple, at the last supper, and even his healings and table fellowship construe a symbolic enactment of the messianic banquet.

As for Jesus’ awareness of his Messiahship, Wright asserts that “Jesus applies to himself the three central aspects of his own prophetic kingdom announcement: the return

exile was over, that evil was defeated, and that sins were forgiven. Conversely, if those things were happening, it would be the sign that YHWH was returning at last” (JVG 148, 623-4). For the texts on the return of the king, see JVG, 615-53. “Israel’s rejection of YHWH will be acted out in her rejection of Jesus” (JVG, 639). For the other stories of the return of YHWH, see JVG, 640-4.

149 SbH, 136.
150 SbH, 139.
151 See below Chapter Six B. 3, and Chapter Seven C.
152 JVG, 482. Cf. John C. O’Neill, Who Did Jesus Think He Was? (Leiden: Brill, 1995). Criticizing William Wrede, Wright argues that “‘Messiah’, ‘son of Man’ and ‘son of god’ all meant much the same sort of thing, and, in particular, that they corresponded to what the early church came to believe about Jesus as a divine figure” (JVG, 478).
153 Since the time of the Maccabees up to the Herodian dynasties, “speculations about a coming king were speculations about someone who would replace these suspect dynasties with the true, god-given one” (JVG, 482).
from exile, the defeat of evil, and the return of YHWH to Zion,” and that “Jesus believed that he was embodying, and thus symbolizing in himself, the return of Israel from exile. As such, he believed that the fortunes of the people were drawn together on to himself and his own work. He believed, in short, that he was the Messiah.”

According to Wright, “Jesus was himself the leader and focal point of the true, returning-from-exile Israel. He was the king through whose work YHWH was at last restoring his people. He was the Messiah.” The resurrection affirmed his Messiahship in light of his actions.

Given this discussion, the following section will describe Wright’s attempt to define Messiahship in Judaism and early Christianity and retrace his development of the argument that Jesus’ bodily resurrection affirms his true Messiahship and divinity. Wright links Messiahship to kingship, in which the temple was central, and explains Jesus’ symbolic actions of healing, table fellowship, and temple intervention, and parables of the coming King in this light. As Wright reminds us, without his resurrection, Jesus would not be remembered as a Messiah, and the origins of the early Christian belief in Jesus’ divinity would remain a mystery. Jesus’ resurrection affirms his Messiahship and divinity only in light of his messages and actions before his crucifixion.

1) The Messiah as Israel’s Representative

The early Christians believed Jesus to be the Messiah through whom “Israel’s long history would at last reach its divinely ordained goal.” According to Wright’s understanding of Genesis 12, “the entire Old Testament as we have it hangs like an enormous door on a small hinge, namely the call of Abraham.” God intended the story of Abraham in Genesis 12, which “unwinds through a massive and epic narrative, from the patriarchs to the Exodus, from Moses to David, through the twist and turns of the Israelite monarchy, ending finally with Israel in exile,” to address the problems evident in Genesis 3, 6, 7, and 11. In this sense, Genesis 12 was God’s solution to the problems encountered in Genesis 1-11 and

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154 NTPG, 477.
155 JVG, 481.
156 NTPG, 477.
157 JVG, 482. Wright says that Zechariah 1-8 is the context of this hope.
159 Justice, 24.
represents Israel as God’s means to solve those problems.

Wright explains that Paul’s representative theology was developed within the tradition of Israel as well: 160

Abraham was seen as the divine answer to the problem of Adam. The descent into Egypt and the dramatic rescue under the leadership of Moses formed the initial climax of the story, setting the theme of liberation as one of the major motifs for the whole, and posing a puzzle which later Jews would reflect on in new ways: if Israel was liberated from Egypt, and placed in her own land, why is everything not now perfect? The conquest of the land, and the period of the Judges, then formed the backcloth to and preparation for the next climax, the establishment of the monarchy, and particularly of the house of David. David was the new Abraham, the new Moses, through whom Israel’s god would complete what was begun earlier. Again came the puzzle: David’s successors were (mostly) a bad lot, the kingdom was divided, the prophets went unheeded, and Judah eventually went to the ambiguous new beginnings (or were they false dawns?) under the Davidic ruler Zerubbabel and the high priest Joshua, and under Ezra and Nehemiah. The biblical period (normally so-called) runs out without a sense of an ending, except one projected into the future. This story still needs to be completed.161

In this grand narrative, Wright recommends seeing Isaiah 40-55 which is dated from the time of the exile and proclaims that the God of Israel remembers His covenant with His people. Wright declares that “YHWH’s servant, the one through whom YHWH’s purpose of justice and salvation will be carried out … is clearly Israel, or perhaps we should say Israel-in person, sharing the vocation of Israel and now sharing the fate of Israel, exiled, crushed, and killed.”162 In suffering and dying (Isaiah 53), this servant shares the fate of Israel in exile, which is aligned with death itself, as depicted in Genesis 3, and hence bears the sins of the many. It is in this light, Wright explains, that Paul understood Jesus’ Messiahship as the representative of Israel:

The one true God had done for Jesus of Nazareth, in the middle of time, what Saul had thought he was going to do for Israel at the end of time. Saul had imagined that YHWH would vindicate Israel after her suffering at the hand of the pagans. Instead, he had vindicated Jesus after his suffering at the hand of the pagans. Saul had imagined that the great reversal, the great apocalyptic event, would take place all at once, inaugurating the kingdom of God with a flourish of trumpet, setting all wrongs to right, defeating evil once and for all, and ushering in the age to come. Instead, the great reversal, the great resurrection, had happened to one man, all by

161 NTPG, 216.
162 Justice, 37.
himself.\textsuperscript{163}

At this point, the resurrection becomes the core issue of representative theology. As Paul had expected, if Jesus had been the Messiah whom Israel had expected, he would have had to fight Israel’s battles as David had\textsuperscript{164} and be victorious. But, since Jesus was executed by the enemies of Israel, he could not be regarded as the true representative of Israel, according to the traditional Jewish belief system during Jesus’ time. Nonetheless, despite his crucifixion, the early Christian movement had closely defined Jesus as the Messiah (\textit{Christos}). According to Wright, Paul proclaims that Jesus is the true Messiah because Israel’s history has reached its climax in Jesus’ death and resurrection:

Israel’s role is taken by her anointed king, and this Messiah has acted out her victor in himself, being raised from the dead in advance of his people. That which Israel had expected for herself, whether metaphorically or literally, has come true in the person of her representative, the Messiah.\textsuperscript{165}

Similarly, Jesus was the Messiah who did what God meant for Israel to do as the representative of Israel herself. Since Wright’s reading of Paul expiscated that Jesus was not simply an ethical representative of humankind but of Israel herself, Jesus’ resurrection can confirm Jesus’ Messiahship as the representative of Israel despite his execution.

2) Jesus, the Representative of True Humanity

Wright explains the development of the theology of representation in Paul’s Adam Christology.\textsuperscript{166} According to Genesis, the God of the covenant was expected to send a new


\textsuperscript{164} See the section below “Messiahship, the Kingdom, and the Temple,” David planned to build the Temple, whereas Solomon, his son, built it. Hezekiah and Josiah cleansed it and restored it. Rebuilding the Temple was thought by many messianic movements to be part of the post-exilic royal task. See JVG, 483-4, and cf. Haggai 2:20-3; Zechariah 4:1-10, 6:9-15; 2 Samuel 18:7-9; 21:11; and Psalm 110.

\textsuperscript{165} N.T. Wright, \textit{The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology} (Edinburgh: T&T Clark; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 28; hereafter CC.

\textsuperscript{166} Pauline Christology, with its Adam Christology, “offers a direct route to a theme which, again, will recur at various points, namely, Paul’s retention of ‘Messiah-ship’ as a major category within his theology, and the incorporative significance which he gives to it” (CC, 18).
Adam to fulfill his covenant and restore His creation. Israel took the place of Adam, being expected to do what God meant Adam to do. But “Israel was not just to be an ‘example’ of a nation under God; Israel was to be the means through which the world would be saved.”

In technical theological language, this concerns *election* and *eschatology*: that is, “God’s choice of Israel to be the means of saving the world; God’s bringing of Israel’s history to its moment of climax, through which justice and mercy would embrace not only Israel but the whole world.”

God created this world, but evil is present in it. Wright considers the question of the presence of evil to have been answered “by a wide range of Jewish writers from the redactor of Genesis to the late rabbis.”

One answer is found in a *midrash* on Genesis: “I [God] will make Adam first … and if he goes astray I will send Abraham to sort it all out.” Thus, addressing the problem of evil involves divine action within history: “Abraham and his descendants are, somehow, to be the means of God putting things to rights, the spearhead of god’s rescue operation.” It can be inferred that God called Israel to be His people “through whom he will act decisively within his creation, to eliminate evil from it and to restore order, justice and peace.”

Abraham’s people are called to be the means of undoing the primeval sin and its consequences within history. Although evil exists, God the Creator will restore all that He made. That is how Jews understood the calling of Abraham.

Against this background, the praxis that demonstrates Messiahship included the victorious battle against Israel’s enemies because the greatest problem during God’s election of Israel was that it was under pagan rule. According to Wright, Israel, who was called to be true humanity as God intended and to be Adam, was ruled by foreign nations like the animals over which Adam and Eve were to rule. Adam was embodied in Israel, and Israel was sent to do the same job as Adam, according to Wright’s understanding of representative theology.

Likewise, as the true Israel, the representative of Israel, Jesus is not the whole of Paul’s Adam Christology. While “the role traditionally assigned to Israel had devolved on Jesus Christ,” in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians Jesus is now the representative of not Israel but of true humanity.

According to Wright’s exegesis, in 1 Corinthians 15:20-57
Paul focuses on the nature of Jesus’ bodily resurrection in parallel with Adam. These verses do not draw on Gnostic or Philonic mythology but rather assert that, as seen in the analogy of the seed in vv. 36-38, those who belong to Jesus will share his spiritual body. Wright explains:

As the last Adam, the representative of the people of God in their eschatological task and role, the Messiah completes his work of obedience on the cross and, being raised up after death, enters upon a new mode of human existence, becoming in one sense the pattern and in another sense the life-giving source for the future resurrection life of those who belong to him. … The last Adam is the eschatological Israel, who will be raised from the dead as the vindicated people of God. … Jesus, as Messiah, is the realization of Israel’s hope, the focal point and source of life for the people of God.

Jesus was in the very spot where Adam and Israel, as the representatives of true humanity, had failed. God’s goal for humanity to save the world is accomplished by Jesus.

Wright’s exegesis of Romans 5:12-21 thus argues that Christ does not simply replace Adam but “had to begin where Adam ended, that is, by taking on to himself not merely a clean slate, not merely even the single sin of Adam, but the whole entail of that sin.” Therefore, “the work of Christ does not merely inaugurate a new race of humanity,” and “the last Adam was not merely to begin something new, but to deal with the problem of the old, not merely to give life, but to deal with death.” In this light, Jesus’ resurrection has given a new dimension to the Jewish apocalyptic background in which Israel is to be God’s true humanity.

Consequently, Wright argues that “the cause of this re-evaluation could only be the realization that God’s anointed had died on a cross, not as the result of a horrible accident but as the paradoxical and unexpected revelation of the righteousness of God.” I will cite Wright’s summary of his argument following 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 15:

175 Cf. CC, 26-35.
176 CC, 35: Although the later Rabbinic thinkers made connections, they would not be “‘interested in making Adam into a savior figure who has a personal involvement in the acts or results of the eschatological events.’ They do not need such a figure. For them, Adam has become embodied already in Israel, the people of the Torah, and in her future hope.” Wright here quotes R. Scroggs, The Last Adam, Oxford: Blackwells, 1966. 51 and 58.
177 CC, 37.
178 CC, 37.
179 CC, 38.
First … for Paul, Jesus stands in the place of Israel. To him, and to his people, the glory of Adam now belongs in the new Age which has already dawned. But, second, the fact of the cross compelled Paul to rethink the nature of God’s plan for his people. Jesus, although clearly Messiah because of the resurrection, had not driven the Romans out of Palestine. He had died a penal death at their hands. The resurrection forced Paul to regard that death as an act of grace, and hence not as a denial of Israel’s role in God’s purposes but as the fulfillment of that role and those purposes; which meant that God’s plan, and Israel’s role, had to be re-evaluated. Jesus, as last Adam, had revealed what God’s saving plan for the world had really been – what Israel’s vocation had really been – by enacting it, becoming obedient to death, even the death of the cross.181

To sum up Wright’s argument, Paul’s description of the first task undertaken by Christ as the last Adam is that of “the task by which the old Adamic humanity is redeemed, that is, that task with which Israel had been entrusted.”182 Jesus’ death is explained by Paul as the task in which the people of God have failed. As the representative of Israel, Jesus should perform his task on the cross as the last Adam.183 In this context, Jesus knew that the vocation given by the one he knew as “father” was “to enact in himself what, in Israel’s scriptures, God had promised to accomplish all by himself. He would be the pillar of cloud and fire for the people of the new exodus. He would embody in himself the returning and redeeming action of the covenant God.”184 But the second task of the last Adam, “in which there is the more obvious balance, is the gift of life which follows from Christ’s exaltation.”185 Through the last Adam as true humanity God will bring His created world to the goal of His divine purpose. Jesus is the life-giving spirit who, as the last Adam, becomes the true Christos,186 the Messiah confirmed through the resurrection. Jesus’ resurrection can be taken, therefore, as the symbol of the new creation of the world and the new Israel as the true humanity.

181 CC, 40. For this issue in Philippians 2, see CC, 56-98.
182 CC, 38.
184 JVG, 653.
185 CC, 38.
186 Contra J.D.G. Dunn who insists that, according to verse 45, Jesus became the last Adam at his resurrection, Wright maintains that the verse does not support Dunn’s view. Because “Paul does not write ‘Christ became the last Adam, a life-giving spirit’, but ‘the last Adam became a life-giving spirit’” (CC, 33). Cf. Dunn, “1 Corinthians 15:45 – Last Adam, Life-giving Spirit,” in: B. Kindars and S.S. Smalley (eds.), Christ and Spirit in the New Testament: In Honour of Charles Francis Digby Moule (1973), 140 and 127-41.
3) Messiahship, the Kingdom, and the Temple

In ancient Judaism, the Messiah was expected to be the King of Jews through whom God would restore Israel. “Messiah” meant, among other things, “King of the Jews” because “the king was the focal point of the dream of national liberty.”\(^{187}\) According to Wright, Zechariah 1-8 and John 6:15 describe Messiahship and kingship as tightly intertwined. The Zechariah text sets messianic figures firmly within the context of prophecies of national and cultic restoration, and that is “precisely the sort of context within which one can understand the crowd who wanted to seize Jesus and make him king”\(^{188}\) in John 6. Psalm 72 also expresses “the hope that one day there might be a true king, a new sort of king, a king who would set everything right. The poor will get justice at last; creation itself will sing for joy.”\(^{189}\) Likewise, the Jewish Messiah was expected to be the king who would be “the agent through whom YHWH would accomplish this great renewal.”\(^{190}\) A major problem with this equation of “Messiah” with “king of the Jews” in Jesus’ era was Herod the Great’s claim to the title of king of the Jews;\(^{191}\) if the title were applied to Jesus, he could be considered the coming king through whom God would replace Herod’s suspect dynasty.\(^{192}\) Given the “royal” connotations of the term “messiah,” the king would be the agent through whom YHWH would bring about a great renewal.

In this light, Wright argues, the expectation that Jesus would fight Israel’s battles is a crucial point in Jesus’ execution. Specifically, the reason his intervention in the temple caused his death is because the temple was central to messianic symbols that had “royal” connotations.\(^{193}\) Wright explains the relationship in detail:

David, the first great king, had the original idea for the Temple; Solomon, David’s son and heir, had built it. Hezekiah and Josiah, two of the greatest pre-exilic kings, had cleansed it and restored it. Rebuilding it was supposed to be part of the post-exilic royal task for the shadowy figures of Zerubbabel and Joshua son of Jehozadak. By cleansing it, Judas Maccabaeus founded a hundred-year priestly, and royal, dynasty. Rebuilding it was a central part of Herod’s claim to found a

\(^{187}\) JVG, 483.  
^{188} JVG, 483.  
^{190} JVG, 483.  
^{191} JVG, 482.  
^{192} Wright reminds us that speculations about a coming king were therefore speculations about someone who would replace these suspect dynasties, including the Maccabean, Hasmonean, and Herodian dynasties, with the true, God-given one (JVG, 482).  
^{193} For the “royal” Messiahship and the temple, see JVG, 483-6.
dynasty of his own. Menahem, one of the would-be messiahs of the War period, appeared in the Temple in royal robes, as though to signal the long-awaited coming of divine deliverance; Simon bar Giora appeared, royally appareled, in the spot where the Temple had stood. Bar-Kochba, as we saw, gave the rebuilding of the Temple such a high priority that he had it stamped on his coins. Temple and kingship went hand in hand.\textsuperscript{194}

The temple and the battle were the central symbols of a messianic vocation. Therefore, because Messiahship included the victorious battle against Israel’s enemies, a so-called messiah who was executed by occupying forces could not be a true Messiah.

Nevertheless, Jesus neither rebuilt the temple nor led a successful revolution against the Romans; rather, he was executed by them. According to Wright, however, it is paradoxically worthy of consideration that “[F]rom its earliest days, the community of Jesus’ followers regarded him as Messiah,”\textsuperscript{195} although this term had nothing to do with ontological trinitarianism but referred to the agency of God through whom God would restore Israel. There was no sign of the restoration of Israel, except the Easter event. As to the function of the temple in association with Messiahship, Wright describes the temple in Jerusalem as the signpost of the presence of God Himself, and as the place where, in theory, heaven and earth met. Thus, if Jesus represents the presence of God in himself, he is its reality, and if the reality is present, then the signpost is no longer necessary.\textsuperscript{196}

Therefore, by temporarily stopping the sacrificial system, Jesus had symbolically enacted the temple’s destruction. He demonstrated that he himself was the true temple where heaven and earth meet. According to the new Christian belief system, although we cannot be with Jesus physically, since he is no longer wandering around Palestine, he is indeed “with us” in a different sense. As Wright explains, “It has been central to Christian experience, not merely to Christian dogma, that in Jesus of Nazareth heaven and earth have come together once and for all.”\textsuperscript{197} Since Jesus, not the temple in Jerusalem, is the place where God’s space and our space intersect and interlock, “those in whom the Spirit comes to live are God’s new temple.”\textsuperscript{198} Given the declaration found in Romans and 1 Corinthians that “the living God will dwell with and among his people, filling in the river of life that flows from the city out to the nations,”\textsuperscript{199} Wright argues that those who are in Jesus are therefore both individually and

\textsuperscript{194} JVG, 483.
\textsuperscript{195} JVG, 486.
\textsuperscript{196} SbH, 117.
\textsuperscript{197} SC, 81.
\textsuperscript{198} SC, 110.
\textsuperscript{199} SbH, 117. Wright affirms that “it is historically spurious, though no doubt comprehensible
corporately the places where heaven and earth meet.

In conclusion, the “title” on the cross indicates the reason for Jesus’ execution, and Jesus’ action in the temple was the proximate cause of his death. His action here, which claimed authority over the temple, led to his death as the “King of the Jews.” Because the true king of Israel was the ruler of the temple, it is not difficult to see how his action in the temple led to his death for political reasons. Therefore, in association with his other symbolic actions, Jesus’ intervention in the temple spoke more powerfully than words about his royal claim over the temple.

4) The Resurrection Affirms Jesus’ Messiahship

Regarding early Christian belief in Jesus’ Messiahship, Wright regards the resurrection as the signpost of Jesus’ true Messiahship because, for several reasons, there was probably no way to insist that the executed man was the Messiah without the fact of the resurrection. First, as we have seen above, because the claim to be a messiah, for Jews, was equivalent to the claim to a political king, a messianic movement meant trouble for the court, “both from the Roman authorities (for whom Caesar was the only true king) and … from the other claimants to the title ‘king of Jews’, namely the Herodian family.” Indeed, “some of Jesus’ blood-relatives were put on trial by Domitian as though they were part of a royal dynasty.” Nonetheless, the messianic movement of the early Christian community, unlike other Jewish messianic movements, did not clash with those in authority and held to Jesus’ Messiahship despite no sign of the fulfillment of the national hope. Second, “a messianic movement without a

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200 Wright asks: “[I]n what way did the charge under which Jesus eventually died reflect his own agenda?” (JVG, 490).

201 “It was the king who had ultimate authority over the Temple. He would be its reformer, its re-builder. Since Jesus’ action was aimed at the judgment and reconstitution of this most central symbol, the entire incident must be seen as charged with an explicit messianic claim… Someone doing what Jesus did was indicating that Israel’s history had reached the point of decisive destruction and rebuilding, and that his own actions were embodying that moment”(JVG, 492).

202 JVG, 487.

203 JVG, 487.

204 Early Christians were Jewish to the core and knew that Jesus did not fulfill the Jewish messianic expectation.
physically present Messiah posed something of an anomaly, all the more so when the Messiah in question had died the death of a failed revolutionary leader.” It is strange, Wright argues, that, although the early Christians were keen on maintaining a messianic movement, they did not choose another Messiah to serve as the acknowledged leader of the Jerusalem church for the next generation. This is because they did not consider Jesus’ death an indication of his failure as a Messiah.

In this context, Wright criticizes the assertion that “all “messianic” material in the gospels must, ex hypothesi, be the invention of the early church.” Rather, such a hypothesis attests that Jesus’ resurrection was the messianic sign, and it was impossible for anyone to have conceived Jesus as the Messiah without the resurrection, especially when Jesus was not regarded as the Messiah before his death. According to Wright, knowledge about Jesus of Nazareth might function as the key to recognizing Jesus as the true Messiah only after the resurrection. On the other hand, without any knowledge of any messianic acts Jesus had performed before his death, the resurrection alone would not have convinced first-century Jews that Jesus was the true Messiah:

 Granted that the resurrection of Jesus would force his followers to re-evaluate the meaning of his crucifixion, it would not have given to him, his life or his death a “messianic” meaning had such a meaning not been in some way present already. It is this argument, more or less, that has increasingly forced scholars back to the conclusion that there was something at least about Jesus’ death, and quite possibly also about his life, that, however surprisingly, must be regarded as messianic.

With respect to Jesus’ messianic action before his death, specifically the meaning of Jesus’ intervention in the temple and his parables in relationship to the kingship of the real Messiah Wright reminds us: “Jesus’ action in the Temple constitutes the most obvious act of messianic praxis within the gospel narratives…. Within his own time and culture, his riding on a donkey over the Mount of Olives, across Kidron, and up to the Temple mount spoke more powerfully than words could have done of a royal claim.” While there is no doubt that Jesus died in the same way as all failed messiahs had, the resurrection allowed the early church to link Jesus to the final victory as the true Messiah.

205 JVG, 487.
206 JVG, 488.
207 JVG, 488.
The question is “What then actually happened?” “How could people go on talking about Jesus of Nazareth, as only a remarkable but tragic memory?” This question defines Wright’s perspective on the resurrection of Jesus because there was no category for a “failed” but still revered Messiah: “A Messiah who died at the hands of the pagans, instead of winning YHWH’s battle against them, was a deceiver, as the later rabbis (and Christians) said of Bar-Kochba.” If Jesus’ death was the end, it was the end of his Messiahship. In this sense, Wright explains how Jesus’ resurrection confirms that he was the Messiah:

Israel’s hope had been fulfilled. The promised time had come, as Jesus himself had announced during his public career; but it looked very different from what they had imagined. The eschaton had arrived. In the sense of ‘eschatology’ which seems to me to correspond best to what second-Temple Jews were hoping for, the long narrative of Israel’s history had reached its climax. “Resurrection” was a key part of the “eschaton”; if it had happened to one man whom many had regarded as Israel’s messiah, that meant that it had happened, in principle, to Israel as a whole. The messiah represented Israel, just as David had represented Israel when he faced Goliath. Jesus had been executed as a messianic pretender, as “king of the Jews,” and Israel’s God had vindicated him. … The resurrection therefore constituted Jesus as Messiah. … The resurrection means that Jesus is the messianic “son of God”; that Israel’s eschatological hope has been fulfilled; that it is time for the nations of the world to be brought into submission to Israel’s God.

Therefore, it was the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth that made the early church maintain a strong belief in the resurrection of the dead. In this messianic sense, according to Wright, Jesus’ resurrection must be considered a historical fact that all could have witnessed.

5. Jesus’ Divinity and the Jewish Monotheistic God

Although neither the traditional Jewish meaning of “Son of God” nor Messiahship had anything directly to do with an incipient trinitarianism, Wright argues, when early

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209 See JVG, 658.
210 JVG, 658. For Bar-Kochba’s Messiahship, see JVG, 627-9.
211 RSG, 726.
Christians reviewed Jesus’ resurrection in the light of his Messiahship, actions, and sayings, as well as what the Jewish Scriptures say of the redeeming and reconciling action of this God, they realized that this title did not only mean that Jesus was the true Messiah but also that “he was the personal embodiment and revelation of the one true God.” According to Wright, Paul puts God and Jesus together, with God as Father in relationship to Jesus the Son, but remains ever mindful of the resurrection because the resurrection affirmed Jesus’ true Messiahship and the truth of what he taught and proclaimed.

It does not mean, however, that Jesus became the Son of God through the resurrection; rather, it means that it was because of the Easter event that the early Christians came to confess Jesus’ lordship. Faith in Jesus’ divinity faces the question of the Jewish belief in monotheism, and Wright thus defines several theological ideas on monotheism – **creational monotheism, providential monotheism, covenantal monotheism** – to demonstrate that Jesus’ divinity is not the result of speculative metaphysical enquiry. He warns that many accounts of first-century monotheism are misleading because belief in monotheism was “but the battle-cry of the nation that believed its God to be the only God, supreme in heaven and on earth.”

In detail, Wright first argues that the God of Israel was believed to be the God who had created the world and did not remain distant from the world that He had created. It was believed that, as the creator of the world, God would not tolerate the evil of that time for long. Israel’s God, in association with the hope of national restoration, was expected to appear on the stage of history as the true and only God. Therefore, the fundamental Jewish eschatological hope was the direct result of the belief that Israel’s God was the true king who had created the entire world, despite Israel’s present desolation. As Wright explains, “The

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Segal. But “the origin of the church’s use of the term ‘Lord’ for ‘Christ’ is not to be found in the Hellenistic environment but in the original Hebrew ‘church’, as it was a feature of Jewish sectarianism before Christianity” (Segal, 304).

213 *RSG*, 731.
214 Cf. Romans 5:10; 8:14-17, 29, 32.
215 *NTPG*, 248.
216 This is why it makes no sense to view apocalyptic literature as dualistic like Zoroastrianism. For the types of dualism, see *NTPG*, 252-56.
217 See *NTPG*, 248. Wright sees three interrelated topics on which Jewish writers focused when they summarized what Jews believed: monotheism, election, and eschatology. Putting monotheism and election together immediately leads to eschatology because of the present state of the world and God’s people. Wright insists that Jewish belief in a creational God implies providential monotheism, and thus, providential monotheism automatically struggles with the issue of evil, and this problem is understood in covenantal monotheism. This is the context in which the monotheism of Israel merges into the belief of a creational God. For creational monotheism, see *NTPG*, 248-51; and for first-
one God of Israel made the world and has remained in dynamic relationship with it; and this one God, in order to further his purposes within and for that world, has entered into covenant with Israel in particular.”

Second, Jewish monotheism developed in the hope that the one God would act in Israel and the world. That is providential monotheism. Third, therefore, the covenant was fundamental to Jewish monotheism. Wright explains:

Covenantal ideas were therefore fundamental to the different movements and currents of thought within second-temple Judaism. The Maccabean crisis was all about the covenant. The setting up of Essene communities took place in the belief that Israel’s God had renewed his covenant at last (but secretly, with them alone). The book of Jubilees celebrated the special status of Israel in virtue of the covenant. The later wisdom literature, for all its borrowings of ideas and idioms from Israel’s neighbors, stressed the Jewish covenant if anything more strongly than the biblical wisdom tradition had done. The apocalyptic writings looked in eager expectation for their God to fulfill his covenant, and thus to vindicate Israel. The late rabbis examined ever more carefully the obligations through which Israel was to act out her part in the divine covenant. It was the covenant which meant that Israel’s oppression was seen as a theological as well as a practical problem, and which determined the shape which solutions to that problem would have to take…. Covenant theology was the air breathed by the Judaism of this period.

Jewish monotheism was a form of covenantal monotheism that proclaimed belief in only one God who had created the world. For early Christians, the resurrection qualified Jesus as the Messiah in the sense spoken of in 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 2; such texts indicate that Jews had been longing for the “Day of YHWH,” when God would come as a real King over all the earth. By affirming his true Messiahship (Romans 1:4), Jesus’ resurrection affirms a victory over death and the power of evil, a victory that God had promised to achieve by Himself alone. As such, God Himself coming in person to Zion was a distinctive element of first-century Judaism with respect to the coming of the Kingdom of God. Before his death, Jesus proclaimed that he was fulfilling this hope, and, hence, his resurrection affirmed him to be the

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218 Paul, 86. We can therefore see how monotheism itself has been developed in relation to other theological concepts.

219 NTPG, 260. Wright is sure that Sanders has shown quite conclusively that covenantal ideas were common and regular at this time. Cf. E.P. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 420. Wright states that Jewish monotheism of the sort that even Paul knew is a particular type of monotheism called creational and covenantal monotheism. Paul, 86.

220 NTPG, 261-2.

221 Wright states that first-century Jews looked not only to Daniel 7 but also to other biblical phrases referring to God sharing His throne with other persons, which was clearly denied in Isaiah 42:8. See JVG, 624-29

222 JVG, 653.
incarnation of the God of Israel, and thus the narrative of Jesus’ birth also became a
significant issue.223

To sum up, for Wright, the monotheism of Israel was not simply a metaphysical
subject but also a very practical subject that addressed the problem of evil within the world
that God had created. When the notion of Israel’s Messiah is placed in this context, Jesus’
affirmation as the true Messiah through the resurrection leads to the assumption of his
divinity because he fulfilled what God had promised to do himself.

Summary

Beginning with an overview of modern views of eschatology in relation to Jesus’ resurrection,
this chapter has summarized how Pannenberg and Wright understand the theological
implications of Jesus’ resurrection as a historical event. Understanding Jesus’ resurrection as
an eschatological event means viewing the resurrection as the affirming sign of the
establishment of the Kingdom of God. For Pannenberg and Wright, Jesus’ resurrection was
the obvious sign that the imminent expectation of the Kingdom had been fulfilled and that the
story of Israel had reached its climax.

In Chapter Four A, I described how Pannenberg sees Jesus’ resurrection as
manifesting the end pre-emptively in line with the basis of the concept of the apocalyptic
understanding of history. The resurrection is the language of apocalyptic hope, and hence
Jesus’ resurrection is the sign that the hope of the end has been realized pre-emptically.
Pannenberg demonstrates the pre-emptive realization of the end by examining eschatological
terms such as Messiah, the Spirit, and salvation in the Jewish context and the Old Testament.
Linking Jesus to his Messiahship and Sonship, Pannenberg argues that if Jesus is confirmed
as the Messiah by his words, death, and resurrection, then he is, without question, God’s only
self-revelation and His only Son. But he does not mean that Jesus acquired divinity by the
resurrection. Jesus’ divine Sonship must be based on his words confirmed to be true by the
Easter event because Jesus proclaimed that the divine reign of the heavenly Father was near,
and hence the resurrection connects Jesus’ pre-Easter proclamation of the nearness of the
divine reign with the early Christian confession of Jesus’ lordship. In the light of resurrection

SanFrancisco Publishers, 1999), 179-88.
as the confirmation of Jesus’ words, the presence of salvation as the eschatological promise of God can be understood as having been realized.

If the end of all history actually occurred with the actions of Jesus of Nazareth, then he is the revelation of God in the full sense of the word. Otherwise, “the God of Israel, ever producing what is not, would manifest himself in ever new ways by his deeds, even after Jesus and beyond him.”

Pannenberg thus argues that, as the revelation of God, Jesus Christ is the Old Testament eschatological expectation that can be fully understood in Jesus’ resurrection. Because eschatological consummation as the goal of God’s plan for history has already been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, expressions such as “the eschatological revelation of the deity of God, the revelation of his glory, the final manifestation of Jewish hope” are associated with end time events.

Chapter Four B surveyed how Wright interprets Jesus’ resurrection as the climax of Israel’s history. By placing Jesus and his resurrection within the story of Israel’s hope of national restoration, Wright expands this hope to the people of Israel remaining in exile and to the hope of a cosmic event in the form of the apocalyptic. Against this background, Wright places Jesus’ Messiahship within the Jewish map of national hope and, by analyzing apocalyptic texts, confirms that the language used to express the national hope of restoration was borrowed from the language used to express the Jewish belief in the end of the world, at which time God would return His people from exile. Wright thus redefines the meaning of “the end of the world” in terms of an apocalyptic expectation: not the end of the physical world but its recreation. In this context, Wright, not surprisingly, reinterprets the meaning of the parousia in the gospels. Although the day of YHWH or the establishment of the Kingdom of God meant the end of the world – an end not yet realized – early Christians appeared to believe that the promise that had been expected to be fulfilled at the end of the world had indeed been fulfilled. Thus, according to Wright, it can be inferred that, to early Christians, the resurrection of Jesus seemed to be the affirmation of the realized Kingdom of God: that is, the sign of parousia, God’s coming.

God’s means of restoration and the fulfillment of His promise were unlike what Israel expected, however. Examining Jesus’ Messiahship as the Crucified, Wright links Jesus’
works and messages to his resurrection, arguing that his resurrection affirmed Jesus’ Messiahship in association with the victory of God over the true enemies of Israel. Against the background of the entire picture of Messiahship in Judaism, bodily resurrection accords with the concept of representative theology. Acknowledging that the Kingdom of God exists in relation to Messiahship as well as the temple, Wright emphasizes Jesus’ intervention in the temple, which demonstrates Jesus’ understanding of himself as the representative of Israel within the royal connotations of the Messiah. It is no longer the temple that is the place where God’s space and our space intersect; this place is now claimed by Jesus, as confirmed by his resurrection.
Chapter Five

The Nature of the Realized Kingdom of God

As discussed in the previous chapter, Pannenberg and Wright maintain that it is an unequivocal truth that Jesus proclaimed the imminent Kingdom of God.¹ Using the “Kingdom of God” as the central term for examining Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection in relationship to the role of the Messiah of God² and defining the realized Kingdom as God’s kingship under Jesus’ lordship here, Pannenberg applies the concepts of “anticipation” and “eternity” to the unity between the Kingdoms under the lordship of the Son and the Kingdom of God the Father. Wright begins his argument regarding the inaugurated Kingdom of God by correcting the concept of the Kingdom and emphasizing that the language of the Kingdom is the language of kingship. According to the concept of kingship, the issue of “suffering” in God’s reign challenges Christians to be the real people under Jesus’ kingship in accordance with a new ethics that Wright refers to as “cooperative eschatology.”

A. Pannenberg: The Unity of the Kingdom of Jesus’ Lordship and the Kingdom of God the Father

Pannenberg argues that despite not being universally completed yet, the Kingdom was fulfilled by Jesus himself insofar as the eschatological reality of the resurrection of the dead appeared in him.³ The early Christians began to believe that the imminence of the future of God was believed to have already begun with Jesus’ resurrection. For Pannenberg, Jesus’ announcement of the Kingdom of God concerned not only the Christians but also the Jews. If the resurrection had not occurred as a historical event, the God of Israel would have no means

² Pannenberg states that the “resounding motif of Jesus’ message – the imminent kingdom of God – must be recovered as a key to the whole of Christian theology” (TKG, 53).
³ “[T]he Christian Easter message speaks of the mode of fulfillment of Jesus’ imminent expectation.” (JGM, 226).
of demonstrating that he is the God of the universe who holds the end of all things in his hands. But when Pannenberg refers to an anticipatory revelation of the end in Jesus’ resurrection, he is not referring to a mere preliminary disclosure of the future; rather, he is explaining that “the central factor in Jewish expectation, the coming of God’s kingdom, is already here a power that shapes the future.”⁴ In that case, Jesus’ resurrection is the event that confirms Jesus’ lordship in which the presence of the Kingdom of God is established. We can say that the imminent Kingdom of God in Jesus’ message was conveyed in the form of Jesus’ kingly rule in the office of kyrios,⁵ which had been established by his resurrection.

If the idea of the present Kingdom of God is present in Jesus’ kingship as kyrios representing God himself, then what is the relationship between Jesus’ lordship and the lordship of the Father that had been announced by the earthly Jesus? According to Pannenberg, the concrete form of the personal unity of the Son with the Father “was seen in the dedication of Jesus to the Father as Son. The effect, however, and highest expression of this unity is reached in Jesus’ exaltation to participation in God’s Lordship.”⁶ The first subsection below will demonstrate how Pannenberg defines the concept of the realized Kingdom in Jesus’ lordship.

The second subsection will introduce Pannenberg’s metaphysical concern with time and eternity: in a metaphysical relationship between time and eternity, Pannenberg acknowledges the identification of the Kingdom of the Son’s lordship with the Kingdom of God, the Father. He points to the steady erosion in the notion of the Kingdom of God in the dogmatic debate of recent decades. Pannenberg insists that the conventional understanding of the Kingdom of God by Kant, Ritschl, and the religious socialists as the goal to be achieved through human labor lacks an exegetical foundation.⁷ Such theologians focused on Jesus’ words regarding the presence of the Kingdom of God rather than the eschatology of Jesus regarding the concrete future of God’s coming. Here Pannenberg argues, “Where Jesus’ words about the future have a clearly temporal meaning, these were modified by means of Christological or anthropological interpretations.”⁸ The eschatological reality was not sought in the future, and God’s eschatological deed in Jesus was interpreted simply as an event

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⁴ SyTh I, 247.
⁵ For Paul’s transition from Jesus’ announcement of the Kingdom of God to the lordship of Jesus, see Philippians 2:6; and cf. JGM, 120f. For Jesus’ exaltation, Romans 1:4, for the office of kyrios, see Philippians 2:11.
⁶ JGM, 365.
⁷ TKG, 51.
⁸ TKG, 52.
opening up new possibilities for human existence.

Being alert to the possible danger of this anthropological interpretation, Pannenberg applies his concept of the Kingdom of God to the understanding of the church as the precursor of the Kingdom. The final subsection will explore this issue and show that Pannenberg emphasizes that the futurity of the Kingdom as conveyed in Jesus’ messages should be a primary concern. It should be noted that, for Pannenberg, to focus on the futurity, is to emphasize that the Kingdom of God as the eschatological future is brought by God Himself, not by humans. At the same time, God’s future is not simply an empty place, leaving people to do nothing but wait for its arrival. Rather, it is interwoven with the present. Jesus’ announcement of the imminent Kingdom can thus be understood in the present impact of the imminent future. Thus, Pannenberg argues that such an anthropological idea of the Kingdom of God, although simplistic or even dangerously naive, is correct in the sense that “where men comply with the will of God, there is the Kingdom of God.”

1. The Kingdom of Jesus’ Lordship

Sensing a certain tension between the expectation of a messianic Kingdom and God’s own eschatological Kingdom in Jewish eschatology, Pannenberg also argues that it is, at the least, not impossible to bring the two kingdoms together “in such a way that a period of Messianic Lordship preceded the actual eschatological Lordship of God.” Recalling the danger that Christ’s kingly rule would be viewed as replacing the thousand-year history of the Roman Empire, however – according to the interpretation of Revelation 20 in the chiliastic view – Pannenberg asserts that the central Christological idea of chiliasm as the chronological succession of the Kingdom of Christ and the Kingdom of God must be judged to be false.

According to Pannenberg, there should be “no competition between the Kingdom of the Son and the Kingdom of the Father … if the Son rules, he rules as the Son, and that means he rules in dedication to the Father and his Lordship.” In this sense, 1 Corinthians 15:28, which refers to the Son subjugating himself to the Father at the end, is not to be

9 TKG, 51.
10 JGM, 368. Pannenberg argues that a combination of this kind is found in Revelation 20:1-10.
11 JGM, 368-9.
interpreted as simply expressing the subjection of the lordship of Christ to the lordship of God. Paul expresses the essence of the lordship of the Son himself that is fulfilled here, just as the earthly Jesus dedicated himself completely to the Father in dependence on the Father in his mission.

If “the Kingdom of the Son is also that of the Father and vice versa,” in what sense, then, can Christians say that Jesus has established the Kingdom of God the Father? Pannenberg’s answer seems to be found in the concept of the Kingdom of God in anticipation, which is the only distinction between the lordship of the Father and the lordship of the Son. Jesus’ lordship is identical with that of the Father but in the sense that “Jesus leads all things into obedience to the Lordship of the Father that is distinguished from him because he is the Son.” The Son is identical with the Father only in the sense of self-dedication, and his self-sacrifice as the obedient Son lets the Father wholly and completely be God and Father. In this sense, God’s future can be said to be present in Jesus’ activity. We see here Pannenberg’s conception of the Kingdom of God in anticipation; the presently established Kingdom of God is distinguished from the Kingdom of God that remains hidden: both are identical but simultaneously distinguishable in their degree of fullness.

Likewise, “the present is not independent from that future. Rather does the future have an imperative claim upon the present, alerting all men to the urgency and exclusiveness of seeking first the Kingdom of God.” In Pannenberg’s conviction that the future has ontological primacy, the future Kingdom of God presents challenges for Christians:

Do Christians hope only for their future participation in the Lordship of Christ when it will be revealed in this world with his return in judgment? Or is the Kingdom of Christ already realized now in the church’s proclamation of Jesus’ Kingdom and in the Christians’ confession of him?

Therefore, since the future of the Kingdom of God determines the present Christian life, the present is an effect of the future. Since the eschatological future takes priority over our present life, only Jesus can serve as the source of knowledge and only in the lordship of Jesus is the future of the Kingdom of God established.

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12 JGM, 369.
13 JGM, 370.
14 TKG, 54.
15 JGM, 371.
2. Time and Eternity

Pannenberg’s identification of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Jesus’ lordship can be explained in association with his understanding of the relationship between time and eternity. For Pannenberg, eternity is the concrete manifestation of God’s infinity and holiness from the standpoint of time. When God’s infinity has to do with power and space, His omnipotence and omnipresence should be emphasized. Pannenberg does not define the term *infinite* as that which is without end but as that which is opposed to the finite as defined by something else. Therefore, God’s infinity means that God is not defined by anything but defines all else.\(^{16}\)

In this context, “eternity” is not to be defined as “timeless” but as the antithesis of time. According to Pannenberg, the phrase “from everlasting to everlasting” in Psalm 90:2 means “from the unimaginable past to the remotest future”; that does not imply timelessness. In consideration of the fact that Hebrew has no other term for “eternity” than “unlimited duration,” whether in the past or future, Pannenberg emphasizes that this does not mean that eternity is a process or a span of unlimited time because, in God’s sight, a thousand years is but as yesterday, as the Bible proclaims in Psalm 90:4. Distance in time is of no significance to Him. It is also noteworthy that Pannenberg defines *infinity* as “truly infinity only when it transcends its own antithesis to the finite.”\(^{17}\) Since God’s eternity transcends the gap between time and eternity, the notion of the futurity of God and his eternal Kingdom to be completed in the future does not “remove” God to the future; eternity indicates that the God of the future was in the past, is in the present, and will be in the future, unchangeably. God as the power of the future dominates the remotest past. According to Pannenberg, “We are accustomed to think of duration as present, but yesterday is the time that is complete before us, yet still present and not lost in the past. In the same way all time is before the eyes of God as a whole.”\(^{18}\) While we, as finite, may not experience these thousand years at the same time, this great span of time is currently being completed before God as the infinite.

Likewise, eternity is the antithesis of time but can be present in time, and God’s eternal Kingdom may be present in time. This present time maintains unity with the eternal.

\(^{16}\) Even if “infinity” is not a biblical term for God, Pannenberg argues that, given his concept of infinity, the infinite could become a description of divine reality as distinct from everything finite. See *SyTh I*, 397.

\(^{17}\) *SyTh I*, 400

\(^{18}\) *SyTh I*, 401
Kingdom. Of course, heaven as the dwelling place of God, which originally might have had a spatial significance, always indicated that the place of God’s throne and lordship is inaccessible to us. According to Pannenberg, however, it is different from the Platonic idea of time. Concerning the Jewish concept of eternity, Pannenberg refers to Plotinus, who defined “eternity” as the presence of life as a whole, and the presupposition of the understanding of time. While moments in time are separate in our experience, they are related to one another and to the whole. Augustine, however, adhered to the Platonic idea of time as a copy of eternity, insisting that there was no time before creation. For Augustine, eternity is not a condition for the understanding of time that was created by God and separated from God’s eternity. Reviewing the discourses on time and eternity, Pannenberg concludes that Boethius and Barth took up Plotinus’ concept of time and that Theodor Haering emphasized a true relationship between God and time.

Thus, if eternity is not timeless, the eternal Kingdom of God is so either. Hence, if it was thus natural to see heaven as the place where decisions are made about earthly events, and where, resolve and execution being the same thing for God, the future, and especially the future event of salvation, is already there for him, then heaven expresses the thought that all times are present for the eternity of God.

The God of the coming Kingdom must be eternal because He is not only “in the future of our present but has been also the future of every past age.” From everlasting to everlasting, from the remotest past, even before creation God has always existed unchangeably. Therefore,

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20 Pannenberg argues that, although Plotinus’ concept had succeeded the Platonic antithesis of eternity and time, the idea of time as a copy of eternity was abandoned.
22 Cf. Boethius De cons. phil. 5.6.4. For Boethius, eternity is the unending, total, and perfect possession of life. Barth understood the reality of God as an intrinsically differentiated unity so that the trinitarian life of God may be understood in the economy of salvation. For Barth, cf. CD II/1, 615. T. Haering, The Christian Faith II, London, 1913, 504. According to Pannenberg, however, Haering did not develop the tension of time and eternity as the theological concept of eternity. Barth was not the only theologian who attempted to revise the conception of time as being opposed to eternity, leading to widespread disagreement regarding the conception of eternity as timeless or as the endlessness of time. Pannenberg refers to Tillich, who argues that the divided moments of time are not separated in God. Cf. P. Tillich, Systematic Theology I (Chicago, London: University of Chicago, 1957), 274-6.
23 SyTh I, 402. It is Plotinus who understands eternity as the presence of the totality of time. For the history of the debate on time, see SyTh I, 401-9.
24 TKG, 62.
what becomes true in the future will appear as having been true all along since God “was in
the past the same one whom he will manifest himself to be in the future” and is present in
every moment. While Whitehead argues that the future is not yet decided, even for God, from
the viewpoint of the finite present, it is clear for Pannenberg that the Kingdom of Jesus’
Lordship and the Kingdom of God are identified with each other according to the concept of
eternity as the totality of time. If the God of the past is the same God of the future in every
moment of time, we could discern the unity between Jesus’ lordship and God’s Kingdom.

3. The Church as the Precursor of the Kingdom of God

Arguing that “the doctrine of the Church begins not with the Church but with the Kingdom of
God,” Pannenberg asserts that the Kingdom of God is the central concern of the church, as
well as the primary point of reference for understanding the church. The church as the new
people of God is justified only when it is related to the Kingdom of God. Because Jesus
Christ has already been recognized by the Christian community as the eschatological king
and Christians as the new people of God have been incorporated into the Kingdom of Christ
through the preaching of the church, the church may be easily regarded as the Kingdom of
Christ.

In the identification of the church with the Kingdom of God, however, “the loss or at
least the loosening of the eschatological tension that was characteristic for the primitive
Christian understanding of Jesus’ royal Lordship is expressed.” The concept of relation
between time and eternity may also apply to the church, according to Pannenberg. The church
belongs to the Kingdom of Jesus’ lordship, “but it is not yet the whole of this Kingdom and is
only its form of weakness. Its form of glory will only be revealed with Jesus’ return to
earth.” The church, therefore, must always “climb over the barriers of its own earthly form

25 TKG, 63.
26 TKG, 78.
27 According to Pannenberg, Augustine interpreted the thousand-year reign in Revelation 20 as
the time of the church between the resurrection and the return of Christ, and, “even the Reformation
did not distinguish in principle between the Kingdom of God and the church” (JGM, 373).
28 JGM, 373.
29 JGM, 373. Pannenberg comments on the danger of regarding the church as the Kingdom of
God, which was mainly “the Constantinian idea of the Christian empire as the earthly representation
of the heavenly royal Lordship of Jesus” (JGM, 373).
in anticipation of the eschatological Kingdom of God as its own future.” In this sense, the church is only a precursor of the Kingdom of God that is to be fulfilled in the future. As Pannenberg argues, “the message of Jesus is definitely not limited to the future of a community of believers” but points to the future of the world and all humanity. The church can be properly defined only in terms of its relationship to the world. In this relationship, the church is the precursor of the Kingdom of God, and “the expectation of the Kingdom of God explains the factual inseparability of the Church and world.” While arguing that “the rule of Christ is effected wherever man becomes aware of the coming Kingdom of God and lives in accord with that awareness,” which is expected to happen in the church, Pannenberg acknowledges that “the rule of Christ cannot be identified with the Church’s existence as an organized community in the world.” Due to its role as an anticipation of the new humankind, a humankind under the rule of God and his Spirit, “the existence of the Church is of utmost significance for all mankind, not simply for those who are members of the institution.” Because “[i]n the light of the futurity of God’s Kingdom, it is obvious that no present form of life and society is ultimate,” the church as a precursor of the Kingdom of God in a secular society must provide “the individual with an opportunity to participate now in the ultimate destiny of human life.”

Accordingly, Christians must remain aware that, because the church is only a provisional form of the Kingdom of Christ, “life under the Lordship of Christ in his world repeatedly leads Christians to a participation in the cross of Jesus.” The lordship of Christ in the life of Christians, primarily on the basis of Jesus’ cross, is not only a matter of vocation but of being itself, as the cross of Jesus was the consequence of his obedience as Son. Pannenberg concludes that “the community of Jesus Christ now shares in this mission by proclaiming the coming Kingdom of God as the Lordship of Jesus Christ who now exercises Lordship over the whole creation in hidden superiority (in heaven).” Therefore, there is no church outside of the world.

30 JGM, 373.
31 TKG, 73.
32 TKG, 73.
33 TKG, 77.
34 TKG, 78.
35 TKG, 74.
36 TKG, 80.
37 TKG, 86.
38 JGM, 375.
39 JGM, 375.
B. N.T. Wright: The Kingdom of God Calling the True People of God

The fundamental story on which first-century Jews based themselves was that of the Bible. In the first-century Jewish belief system, Israel constantly sought to live according to the covenant of the creator God who would liberate it from other oppressors, and finally “among the first meaning which the resurrection opened up to the surprised disciples was that Israel’s hope had been fulfilled. The promised time had come, as Jesus himself had announced during his public career.”40 But the eschaton that had arrived was very different from what Israel expected.

The following subsections describe Wright’s explanation of how first-century Jews nonetheless came to believe that history had reached its climax and how they understood themselves in relation to the Kingdom that had been accomplished.

1. The Kingdom of God as the Language of Kingship

In his examination of the Kingdom of God, Wright mentions misunderstandings to be addressed. First, “heaven” has been misunderstood as the place where God lives and where all people would reside after death. Indeed, the regular meaning of heaven is God’s dwelling place, but it refers to a different sort of “location” altogether. Nonetheless, according to Wright, the biblical writers did not believe that heaven was “God’s space as opposed to our space, not God’s location within our space-time universe.”41 Second, “‘heaven’ is regularly used, misleadingly but very frequently, to mean ‘the place where God’s people will be with him, in blissful happiness, after they die’.”42 According to Wright, “heaven” is not just a future reality but a present one. Wright states

“Kingdom of God” was not a vague phrase, or a cipher with a general religious aura. It had nothing much, at least in the first instance, to do with what happened to human beings after they died. The reverent periphrasis “kingdom of heaven,” so long misunderstood by some Christians to mean “a place, namely heaven, where saved souls go to live after death,” meant nothing of the

40 RSG, 726.
41 SC, 52.
42 SC, 52.
sort in Jesus’ world.  

For Wright, the heaven described in the New Testament in terms of the inheritance waiting for us, as in 1 Peter 1:4, 2 Corinthians 5:1, and Philippians 3:20, is not a heaven to which one goes.  

This “heaven” is rather the place where God stores up his plans and purposes for the future, not the place in which we enjoy the inheritance. Wright attributes the confusion to the fact that “the word offers a way of talking about where God always is, so that the promise held out in the phrase ‘going to heaven’ is more or less exactly ‘going to be with God in the place where he has been all along’.” Wright explains how such confusion has occurred over the ages:

In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus’ sayings about the “kingdom of God” in the other gospels are rendered as “kingdom of heaven”: since many read Matthew first, when they find Jesus talking about “entering the kingdom of heaven,” they have their assumptions confirmed, and suppose that he is indeed talking about “how to go to heaven when you die,” which is certainly not what either Jesus or Matthew has in mind…. The language of heaven in the New Testament does not work that way. “God’s kingdom” in the preaching in Jesus refers, not to post-mortem destiny, not to our escape from this world into another one, but about God’s sovereign rule coming “on earth as it is in heaven.”

According to Wright, the only reason that “heaven” was regarded as a destination and a final resting place for the souls of the blessed was its regular pairing with its assumed opposite, “hell,” in the earliest Christian traditions, and not because it was truly the final destination of the redeemed.

Likewise, the Kingdom of God is not a place somewhere in the universe where God dwells with his people after their death; it refers, rather, to God’s purpose. The phrase “the Kingdom of God” was simply the language of the national hope for restoration in God’s kingship, not a place or a destination after death. In this sense, the term “resurrection” and the phrase “Kingdom of God” carry theological connotations of Israel’s restoration, including a return from exile. Because “heaven” is “the appropriate term with which to designate the

43 JVG, 202.
45 SC, 53.
46 SbH, 25.
Wright argues that the language of “resurrection” must somehow be tailored to fit the Jewish concept of the Kingdom of God. Wright finds evidence in Daniel 12:1b-3 and argues that the concept of “resurrection” does not refer to a nonphysical “heavenly” existence after death. The resurrection verse is “to be read as a metaphor for the glory which will be enjoyed by those who are raised to everlasting life (which in Hebrew and Greek is ‘the life of the age’, i.e., the ‘age to come’, not simply unending life).” The phrase “Kingdom of God” is simply a Jewish way of talking about Israel’s God becoming king and hence denotes “the action of the covenant god, within Israel’s history, to restore her fortunes, to bring to an end the bitter period of exile, and to defeat, through her, the evil that ruled the world.” Wright defines this cluster of beliefs as Jewish eschatology.

Therefore, Jesus’ announcement of the Kingdom functioned as an “invitation” and a “welcome” to life for the true people of God. In this specified context of Jewish hope, the Kingdom corresponds to the hope of resurrection. The Kingdom story presents an image of gates opened wide for all who wanted to come and declare loyalty to Jesus. The announcement of the Kingdom of God was a calling to the people to be a new Israel as the salt and light of the world and an invitation to become the real people of God. The sociological challenge of the Kingdom of God for the present life cannot be grasped without this ethical, political, and ecological understanding of it. This understanding of the Kingdom, Wright argues, enlightens us regarding Jesus’ announcement of the imminent Kingdom of God.

47 SbH, 26.
48 “There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever” (Daniel 12. 1b-3). Italics Wright’s.
49 NTPG, 322.
50 NTPG, 307.
51 JGV, 297.
52 For early Christians, Jesus’ resurrection meant that Jesus, rather than Caesar, was the real kyrios. This political implication is proved in the usage of the phrase “Son of God” for Jesus. According to Wright, early Christians used this term obviously “in a sense which constituted an implicit confrontation with Caesar” (RSG, 729). Wright is convinced that even though the root of this phrase is firmly Jewish, “there can be no question that the title would have been heard by many in the Greco-roman world, from very early on, as a challenge to Caesar” (RSG, 729). “Saying ‘Jesus has been raised from the dead’ proved to be self-involving in that it gained its meaning within this counter-imperial worldview” (RSG, 730).
2. Inaugurated Eschatology and Cooperative Eschatology

Wright acknowledges that the present world’s continuing struggle with evil may make the present world appear to be irrelevant to the realized Kingdom. Then, inaugurated eschatology raises the issue of “how to live as a Christian.” Looking at the issue of the Christian life in connection with the realized Kingdom of God, Wright arrives at three conclusions. First, the concept of inaugurated eschatology is analogous to other Kingdom movements in Jesus’ time; second, Jesus’ resurrection is the firm foundation on which early Christian inaugurated eschatology rests; and third, Christians are the new covenant people called to be light and salt in this present world.

In this light, Wright cites Crossan’s concept of “collaborative eschatology.” Crossan sees Jesus as announcing that the Kingdom of God was not imminent but had already begun. According to Crossan, Jesus sent people out to collaborate in the establishment of the Kingdom. \(54\) In accordance with such an interpretation, which accords exactly with what Paul proclaimed, \(55\) Wright describes the likely appearance of early Christian eschatology:

> Because the early Christians believed that “resurrection” had begun with Jesus, and would be completed in the great final resurrection on the last day, they believed that God had called them to work with him, in the power of the Spirit, to implement the achievement of Jesus and thereby to anticipate the final resurrection, in personal and political life, in mission and holiness. It was not merely that God had inaugurated the “end”; if Jesus, the Messiah, was the End in person, God’s-future-arrived-in-the-present, then those who belonged to Jesus and followed him and were empowered by his Spirit were charged with transforming the present, as far as they were able, in the light of that future. \(56\)

Likewise, early Christian eschatology was not only concerned with the story of the end but also with the transforming power of that end in this present life.

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55 Stewart, 31.
56 SbH, 58.
1) The Meaning of Inaugurated Eschatology

For the early Christians, the resurrection was simultaneously the affirmative sign of the inaugurated Kingdom of God here on earth in Jesus Christ and the consummation of this Kingdom in the future. Despite their belief in the coming of the realized Kingdom when Jesus was alive, without his resurrection the Jews could not have continued to believe that the Kingdom had been realized. In this regard, speaking of resurrection in terms of “the arriving Kingdom” is “to summon up that entire narrative, and to declare that it was reaching its climax.”

Concerning other Kingdom movements in comparison to Jesus’ own understanding of the Kingdom of God, Wright argues that there is an analogy between Jesus’ announcement of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Bar-Kochba in that the presence of the Kingdom is sought in a final victory. He explains,

In Jesus’ own century, Judas the Galilean might well have told his followers that, by joining his movement, they were part of the new, and final, reconstitution of Israel, even though there was still the little matter of throwing off the Roman yoke to be settled. Bar-Kochba went so far as to have coins minted, numbering the years from “1,” including the beginning of his declaration of independence.

Jesus’ announcement of the inauguration of the Kingdom of God can be grasped in this context, and this form of inaugurated eschatology proves that people believed they were living in the time of the Kingdom, even though the final victory had not come. But Wright warns against misunderstanding the concept of inaugurated eschatology because, “if we concluded from this that they had no future hope, nothing left to aspire to, that their god had established his kingdom once and for all, we would be ludicrously wrong.” He argues that “once we think historically, the language of a kingdom present yet future, already established yet needing still to win its decisive victory, makes perfect sense.”

At this point, Crossan speaks of another possibility. According to Crossan, the resurrection occurred, but not in a bodily sense because Jesus’ disciples had experienced the

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57 SC, 86.
58 JVG, 467-8.
59 JVG, 468.
60 JVG, 468.
realized Kingdom before Jesus’ death and Jesus’ apparitions after death.\textsuperscript{61} In his objection to this argument Wright asserts that, first, the crucifixion might be the best denial of Crossan’s argument and, second, apparitions are evidence of death, even in the ancient world.\textsuperscript{62} Although the disciples had experienced the realized Kingdom before Jesus’ death, belief in the realized Kingdom would not have endured after the death of the so-called Messiah if it was a real apparition they experienced after Jesus’ death. Therefore, Jesus did truly die, but it was not the end;\textsuperscript{63} otherwise, belief in the realized Kingdom could not have lasted and that is why the resurrection is a physical event.

As we have already seen, Wright defines the first-century Jewish hope of resurrection in terms of the metaphorical language of returning from exile\textsuperscript{64} and the realized Kingdom of God. By doing so he reminds us that the early Christians told the story of the Kingdom as their own and acted “as if the Jewish-style kingdom of God was really present.”\textsuperscript{65} Moreover, “since the resurrection was both a metaphorical and metonymic way of referring to the great restoration of the long-awaited kingdom of the god of Israel, they declared that the kingdom had in fact arrived.”\textsuperscript{66} Nonetheless, the Kingdom seemed to have been split into two, as was the resurrection itself. Wright’s interpretation of Acts confirms that “in the earliest apostolic proclamation about Jesus of Nazareth, his death and resurrection were directly linked to two promises.”\textsuperscript{67} The Kingdom of God is already a reality in which

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{61} This is the crucial point of the dialogue between Wright and Crossan.
\item \textsuperscript{62} Crossan stresses that the story of apparitions was not made up but the story of the empty tomb in Mark is. They were real apparitions, not hallucinations. But he does not claim it was a bodily resurrection. See Stewart, 32-3. In Crossan’s argument, the empty tomb does not function sufficiently to prove the bodily resurrection, while Wright’s position is that the empty tomb is at the centre of the argument on Jesus’ appearances. As for Wright’s simple critique of the apparitions that Crossan discusses, see Stewart, 35-7.
\item \textsuperscript{63} Experiencing apparitions would prove nothing, according to Wright, because they would prove Jesus’ death, and hence that he was a failed Messiah. According to Wright, Crossan argues that apparitions alone do not prove the bodily resurrection. But Wright criticizes Crossan for dismissing the story of the empty tomb. Crossan puts the experience of the realized Kingdom where Wright puts the story of the empty tomb – with Jesus’ message in his life. For Wright, only when the bodily resurrection of Jesus is accepted does the early church’s belief in the realized Kingdom belief make sense.
\item \textsuperscript{64} See Chapter Four B.
\item \textsuperscript{65} Wright, “Christian Origins.” According to Wright’s summary, the redefined Kingdom language in early Christianity, despite some modification, also still appears to belong to “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the one true God of Jewish monotheism” (JVG, 215).
\item \textsuperscript{66} RSJ, 568.
\end{itemize}
the Messiah’s people partake, who “have already been created as ‘a kingdom, and priests’;” precisely through Jesus’ death and resurrection, even though the future hope, according to the covenant plan of the creator God, still remains.

Thus, according to Wright, the characteristic feature of the inaugurated Kingdom is that it belongs not only to the true God but also to the Messiah, as explicitly related in Ephesians 5:5 and implicitly in Paul’s teaching about Jesus in Acts. Interpreting phrases in Colossians 1:13, Peter 1:11, and 1 Clement 50:3 that proclaim that the Kingdom belongs to Jesus as the Messiah, Wright affirms:

> What we find across the board in early Christianity (ironically, in view of current debates) is a firm belief in the presentness of the kingdom, *alongside* an equally firm belief in its futurity, these two positions being held together within a redefined apocalyptic schema …. The early Christian rethinking has taken place because the crucified and risen Jesus has turned out to be the central character in the apocalyptic drama. The point of the present kingdom is that it is the first-fruits of the future kingdom; and the future kingdom involves the abolition, not of space, time, or the cosmos itself, but rather of that which threatens space, time, and creation, namely, sin and death.

The stories of the early Christians focused ceaselessly on Jesus’ death and resurrection to express their longing for the consummation of the world in the future while acknowledging their recognition that the new creation had already begun in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, in accordance with a cluster of eschatological beliefs that Wright called “inaugurated eschatology,” the future hope of the early Christians rested on Jesus’ resurrection as the affirmative sign of the inaugurated Kingdom of God whose consummation they continued to long for.

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68 JVG, 217.
69 JVG, 217.
70 Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:20-8.
71 For this reason, “[w]e should not deny the conclusion: the early Christians, all those for whom we have any actual evidence, really did believe that Jesus was raised from the dead” because “this is such a full and complete explanation of the otherwise puzzling data” (RSG, 568).
According to Jewish monotheism, the God of Israel is the God of the entire world and “Israel was called to be God’s promise-bearing people, the light to the nations.”\textsuperscript{72} Jesus informed his followers that they would inherit the whole worldly vocation as the salt of the earth and the light of the world. But the Jewish reading of the Bible dismissed the contention that the Jews had been chosen not for their own sake but for the sake of the whole world, and hence “they turn out to be part of the problem themselves.”\textsuperscript{73} The early Christians defined themselves as the true people of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, namely, the new Israel as the new group and a new movement of the creator of the world; “the people for whom the creator god was preparing the way through his dealings with Israel.”\textsuperscript{74} According to Wright, Paul narrates that Abraham’s true people are replaced by those redeemed in Christ.\textsuperscript{75}

In this regard, Wright emphasizes that it was not Jesus’ intention to found a church as the new Israel. There had already been a church: the people of Israel itself. Rather, Jesus’ intention was to reform Israel,\textsuperscript{76} even though he did not intend to bring the whole of Israel into his following. As such, Jesus’ retelling of Israel’s story as the redefinition of Israel does not mean founding a church but calling and challenging his hearers to live as the true Israel, the people of the new covenant. It implies that the belief in the realized Kingdom challenges the present life. Christians are called to live as the true people of God, not as enthusiastic Jews with swords in their hands. They are called, just like Jesus and his followers, to bear the scars of crucifixion for their persecutors. Since all hearers of Jesus were summoned to live as the people of the Kingdom, they were distinguished from other groups by their distinctive lifestyle in loyalty to Jesus’ message and Jesus himself.

Nonetheless, in becoming the people of the Kingdom, the new Israel cannot be “reduced to terms either of individual ‘ethics’ or of the individual response to grace.”\textsuperscript{77} The present responsibility cannot be overlooked by declaring that the world is currently so disordered that nothing can be done until the Lord returns. Holding such an attitude to be an affection of classic dualism, Wright argues that a proper grasp of the future hope, as

\textsuperscript{72} Justice, 31. See “People of the Solution, People of the Problem,” in: Justice, 29-35.
\textsuperscript{73} Justice, 24.
\textsuperscript{74} NTPG, 369.
\textsuperscript{75} Cf. Romans 5:1-11. “The privileges of Israel, have been transferred to Christ and hence to those who are ‘in Christ’” (CC, 36).
\textsuperscript{76} JVG, 275.
\textsuperscript{77} JGV, 277; italics mine.
confirmed by Jesus’ resurrection, leads rather directly to a vision of the present hope:

To hope for a better future in this world – for the poor, the sick, the lonely and depressed, for the slaves, the refugees, the hungry and homeless, for the abused, the paranoid, the downtrodden and despairing, and in fact for the whole wide, wonderful and wounded world – is not something else, something extra, something tacked on to “the gospel” as an afterthought. And to work for that intermediate hope, the surprising hope that comes forward from God’s ultimate future into God’s urgent present, is not a distraction from the task of “mission” and “evangelism” in the present. It is a central, essential, vital and life-giving part of it.78

Wright believes this ethical implication is also “the point of the resurrection … that the present bodily life is not valueless just because it will die.”79 Belief in the realized Kingdom of God and hope for the consummation confirmed by Jesus’ resurrection entail an ethical concern.

That is why Wright criticizes Schweitzer’s misreading of the ethical implications of Jesus’ redefined Israel. According to Wright’s interpretation of Schweitzer, “Jesus’ message was through and through eschatological (in the sense that he expected the end of the world very soon).”80 In this belief, Jesus does not appear to be concerned with a system of detailed “ethics.” Wright maintains that, in this view, only belief can be discussed because ethical teaching is irrelevant if life does not last very long. But “[i]t is important to see, and to say, that those who follow Jesus are committed, as he taught us to pray, to God’s will being done ‘on earth as in heaven.’ And that means that God’s passion for justice must become ours too.”81 Jesus’ teaching on the Kingdom of God is the premise of Christian ethics; “We are all invited – summoned, actually – to discover, through following Jesus, that this new world is indeed a place of justice, spirituality, relationship and beauty, and that we are not only to enjoy it as such but to work at bringing it to birth on earth as in heaven.”82 Wright claims that, according to the historical background of first-century Judaism, the context of behavior was the covenant, and for Jesus too “the context of behavior was the renewal of the covenant.”83 As such, Wright’s argument is that, according to the scriptural promises of

78 SbH, 204. Wright sees Paul also proclaiming in 1 Corinthians 15:58: “Therefore, my beloved ones, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain”; quoted in SbH, 205.
79 SbH, 205.
80 JVG, 279.
81 SC, 12.
82 SC, 79.
83 JVG, 280.
restoration and return from exile, “renewal of covenant and renewal of heart go together.” At this point, eschatology does not mean the end of the world: It means the rescue and renewal of Israel and of the world.

Wright hereby defines Christian ethics as “the God-given way of life for those caught up in this renewal.” Jesus’ purpose in delivering the Sermon on the Mount was to prompt his followers “to reflect into the world the love of the creator God, who gives sunshine and rain to Israel and Gentiles alike.” There Jesus, standing in the long tradition of the Hebrew prophets, saw the plight of Israel and taught people the true enemy of Israel; “The Israel of his day had been duped by the accuser, the ‘Satan’” because the “people of Israel had misread the signs of their own vocation, and were claiming divine backing for its perversion. The call to be the light of the world passes easily into a sense of being the children of light, looking with fear and hatred on the children of darkness.” In this way, Israel had been disloyal to YHWH himself. But by following Jesus, “by putting his agenda into practice, they can at last be true Israel.” This way was far from the one the Jews had followed. Wright firmly insists that because the Kingdom of God in Jesus’ announcement was the story of God returning to Zion, he was urging Israel to relinquish the hope of national, racial, and geographical restoration that could be achieved only by violence. Without racial and geographical limits, the community redefined by Jesus would be characterized by its loyalty to him and its observance of his ethical praxis, characterized by the renewed heart rather than by ethnicity. It was “what the Torah was really meant to produce.” Jesus’ followers, conceiving themselves to be the true Israel seeking the day of YHWH rather than an ethnic group, were challenged “to live as the people of the new covenant, those who were truly returning from exile, those for whom and in whom the prophecies were coming true at

84 For the biblical texts, see JVG, 282-3.
85 JVG, 283.
86 JGV, 279-80. Wright believes that it is also the apocalyptic hope. That is why he interprets the great vision of the lion and the lamb lying down together in Isaiah 13 as “a state of affairs in which justice still needs to be administered and the rights of the poor still need to be protected” (JVG, 209).
87 JVG, 444. Wright presents a broadly developed analysis of the Sermon in support of his argument. See JVG, 287-92.
88 JVG, 446.
89 JVG, 446.
90 JVG, 289.
91 The renewed heart is defined in terms of loyalty to Jesus. Cells of Jesus’ followers would be distinctive within their local communities by the adoption of Jesus’ teaching and praxis and loyal to him. “In a world where ‘private life’ was virtually non-existent, everybody in the village would know what praxis they were following” (JVG, 276).
92 JVG, 286.
In this light, Jesus’ followers regarded themselves as those who do God’s will through loyalty to Jesus in following his praxis, which elucidated the true way for Israel. Israel is now redefined by her loyalty to Jesus, not by her emotional or individual religious efforts but by the praxis implied in Jesus’ death and resurrection.

In conclusion, the early Christians as the new Israel believed that although they were still living in “the world that does not yet acknowledge this true and only god” and in which paganism still ruled, persecutions arose from outside, and heresies and schisms from within, Israel’s hope has been realized. The God of Israel has become the true God who has acted decisively to defeat the pagan gods and to create a new people. At the same time, through the new Israel as the light and salt of the world, God is to rescue the world from evil. There is room for Wright to adopt Crossan’s cooperative eschatology. A new people of God has been created through Jesus, the true King and Jewish Messiah, through his death and resurrection. The Kingdom has been established by God himself and still invites people to be the true people of God in loyalty to Jesus. There is Christian ethics as well as eschatology.

Summary

In this chapter we looked at how Pannenberg and Wright dealt with the issue of the Christian life in the realized eschatology by redefining the term apocalyptic. Based on their examination of the apocalyptic hope of resurrection, Pannenberg and Wright concluded that apocalyptic eschatology is to be understood within the context of the hope of the solution for the injustice in the world according to the hope of God’s reign. God’s coming and the establishment of his kingship was, therefore, the basis of apocalyptic eschatology. For Pannenberg and Wright, the concept of the resurrection is a primary characteristic of the God of the universe. The hope of resurrection was the embodiment of the Jewish belief in the universal creator God. Linking the hope of resurrection to the hope for the rule of the universal God, Pannenberg and Wright concluded that belief in God the creator leaves the question of God’s reign open. In accordance with the concept of the universal God, Pannenberg sees a unity between Jesus’ lordship and God’s lordship. Only in Jesus’ royal

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93 JVG, 277.
94 NTPG, 369.
95 NTPG, 370
lordship was identification of the church with the Kingdom of God possible for the early Christians in relation to the question of God’s reign. Pannenberg argues that Jesus’ lordship in the church is only a precursor of the Kingdom that awaits fulfillment in the future. He demonstrated the presence of the Kingdom of God in Jesus’ lordship according to the metaphysical structure of time and eternity.

Indeed, Pannenberg’s concept of the church as the precursor of the Kingdom parallels Wright’s conception of “collaborative eschatology.” As we have seen, Wright accepts this concept, first introduced by Crossan, in explaining the ethical implications of inaugurated eschatology. Since collaborative eschatology may provide answers regarding how a Christian life is to be lived, eschatological ethics can be considered the ethics of the new creation. Just as Pannenberg identifies the Kingdom of God with the Kingdom of Jesus’ lordship, so Wright explains the nature of Jesus’ lordship within collaborative eschatology (Chapter Five B). Jesus’ lordship calls his people to be the true people of God, and even if the Kingdom of God lies in the future, it is presented within the framework of Jesus’ lordship. The Kingdom of God is understood here in the sense of kingship. According to Wright, the presence of the Kingdom is defined by Jesus’ lordship as a power shaping the future, and the apocalyptic concept of resurrection as related to the God of creation is the key to resolving the question of suffering in the realized Kingdom of God. History cannot continue as it had before Jesus: the end has already come, and the new creation has begun. By understanding apocalyptic eschatology in relationship to suffering under God’s rule, we can speak of God’s lordship in Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God as established in Jesus’ lordship. In this sense, eschatology is not a theology of abandonment of this world. As Wright ceaselessly warns, maintaining a dualistic worldview leads to a belief in a non-ethical eschatology, just as it led to Schweitzer’s inability to explain Jesus’ ethical teachings and challenges.
Chapter Six

Our Eschatological Hope Affirmed by the Historicity of Jesus’ Resurrection

In general, eschatology, understood as referring to the end of the world, has been viewed as doomsday eschatology. It is doubtful if doomsday eschatology can be a theology of hope. Examining the resurrection of Jesus as a historical event requires examining its eschatological meaning in relation to the hope of theology. If God is history’s aim and Jesus’ resurrection is the event revealing the end, then the resurrection should be defined in terms of hope. Given that, the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection is not only the central theme of Jesus’ resurrection but also possibly the starting point of Christian hope. While Pannenberg and Wright broaden their argument via the concepts of proleptic and inaugurated eschatology, they acknowledge that the creation is good. Since Jesus’ resurrection is the event reaffirming the good creation, eschatology is not a theology of abandonment but one of re-creation and completion. Jesus’ resurrection is the sign of the hope of re-creation and its completion. Therefore, if Jesus’ resurrection is not a historical event, there is no hope in Christianity.¹

A. Pannenberg: The End of History as Unfolded in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

History is the most comprehensive horizon of Christian theology. All theological questions and answers are meaningful only within the framework of the history which God has with humanity and through humanity with his whole creation – the history moving toward a future still hidden from the world but already revealed in Jesus Christ.²

¹ 1 Corinthians 15:14, 17, 19.
² BQT I, 15.
1. The Apocalyptic Hope of the End

As we have seen, Pannenberg’s understanding of Jesus’ resurrection draws very much on Second Temple Jewish apocalyptic eschatology. According to Pannenberg’s concept of apocalyptic eschatology, reality as a whole was anticipated and the end pre-actualized by Jesus’ resurrection, in which human destiny was also revealed. According to Pannenberg’s apocalyptic concept of reality in anticipation, the reality of Jesus’ resurrection anticipates the end of world.

It should be noted, however, that when Pannenberg speaks of the futurity of reality – everything real will be confirmed in the future – he does not mean that the reality of Jesus’ resurrection has nothing to do with the present. Although the reality of all things is unveiled in the end, the end has already been unveiled in Jesus’ resurrection: “The end that stands before us and all things has already happened in Jesus as an event produced by Israel’s God. The destiny of all that is has already been fulfilled in him.” That accords closely with Jewish apocalyptic eschatology. Although many opponents criticize Pannenberg’s understanding of Jewish apocalypticism for its lack of exegetical support and argue that the idea of the resurrection of the dead was not prevalent in apocalyptic, as Mostert comments, “Pannenberg’s claim that there was in the time of Jesus a general expectation of the resurrection of the dead at the end of the age has good support.” As he rightly comments, Pannenberg demonstrated that Jewish apocalyptic ideas were recast in the light of Jesus’ resurrection. Indeed, the New Testament formula of the understanding of Jesus’ resurrection is the anticipation of the end in light of Jewish apocalyptic hope. Indeed, the universal resurrection of the dead, which was the Jewish eschatological hope, is expressed as an imminent event in Romans 8:29, Colossians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 15:20, and Revelation 1:5, which reveal that Jesus is the firstborn of the dead and his resurrection is the realization of that end.

In this respect, the end of history is realized in advance even though history continues to progress and has not yet ended. By viewing Jesus’ resurrection in terms of anticipation, Pannenberg can argue that his resurrection, on the one hand, is the fulfillment of the apocalyptic expectation of the end and, on the other, happens only to Jesus because the

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3 See Chapter Two A.
4 JGM, 130
6 Mostert, 49.
reality of Jesus’ resurrection still needs to be confirmed in the future while being simultaneously a preview of the end.

2. Human Destiny as Revealed in Jesus’ Resurrection

Just as Jesus’ resurrection revealed God’s plan for history, it also led to the realization of human destiny. According to Pannenberg, Jesus’ resurrection also confirms the modern anthropological understanding of humanity: “[T]he essence of man does not come to ultimate fulfillment in the finitude of his earthly life.” Resurrection is the destiny of human beings.

To confirm the validity of the hope of the resurrection of the dead in the modern world, Pannenberg appeals to its decisive relationship to human destiny. To this end, Pannenberg, looking at the individual hope of life beyond death, compares conceptions of this hope in early human cultures, namely, in the ancient Israelite, Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Buddhist, and Hindu cultures. According to his analysis, whereas “the real hope of Hindus and Buddhists is not fixed on reincarnation but on liberation from the cycle of reincarnation by the power of knowledge,” the root of the biblical belief in resurrection is the expectation of a better life in indestructible fellowship with God, which entails eternal life. Despite sharing some similarities with these conceptions, the characteristic view in the Bible is distinctively the hope of “restoring of the dead in their bodily form of existence in order to receive the consequences of what each of them has done.” Likewise, for Paul, resurrection means participation in the salvation of eternal life; that is the object of Christian hope.

7 JGM, 83.
8 SyTh III, 564. Pannenberg refers to John Hick, Death and Eternal Life, 373-8, 381.
9 SyTh III, 566. Pannenberg sees a similarity between the notion of karma and the biblical view in the interaction of deed and consequence in the transmigration of souls. In many cultures, Pannenberg insists, there is belief in ancestors exerting influence on the living, but Israel and Mesopotamians described the dead as only a shadowy form of existence. Cf. Leviticus 19:31, 20:6, and Isaiah 8:19. “Concepts of the dead as shades bears no traces of a hope for the hereafter.” SyTh III, 564. For Israel, even if Sheol is the place that is separated from the power of divine life, “the powerful presence of God reaches even into Sheol, so that even there no one can hide from him (Ps. 139:8)” (SyTh III, 564).

10 Pannenberg, citing two different ideas of resurrection – namely, resurrection to eternal life and resurrection to universal judgment – comments that the resurrection to life is not to be treated as a subsidiary form to the more general idea of a resurrection of the dead. If so, “inevitably expectation of resurrection loses its character as hope of salvation and takes second place to the thought of judgment.” SyTh III, 568-9. For the patristic discussion of the two different ideas, Pannenberg sees Athenagoras as well as Irenaeus as emphasizing the distinction. For Athenagoras, Pannenberg refers to Athenagoras, The Resurrection of the Dead, 18ff.; and for Irenaeus, book 5 of Against Heresies,
Paul’s equation of salvation and resurrection, Pannenberg argues, rests on the fact that believers share in the destiny of Jesus Christ, crucified and resurrected.

In a more detailed examination of Paul’s idea, Pannenberg points to Romans 5:19, in which Paul explains Jesus’ death as the obedience of one man to God so that many can become righteous. Because “the fulfillment of human destiny has been revealed in Jesus through his resurrection from the dead,” Paul used the terminology of the Jewish Adam to explain the destiny of humanity as revealed by Jesus’ resurrection, describing Jesus as the New Adam and the prototype of reconciled humanity. As such, Jesus is the representative of humanity before God, “bringing the destiny of men to fulfillment in his own person.” The idea of representation, according to Pannenberg, does not involve only Jesus’ death, which acquires vicarious significance for the reconciliation of the world to God only in the light of his resurrection. More specifically, “Jesus is the man well-pleasing in the eyes of God in the dedication to his office, in the obedient acceptance of his fate, and through his resurrection to a new life. Only for this reason can other men’s community with Jesus become the guarantee of their community with God, just as Jesus had claimed for himself.” In Jesus’ resurrection, therefore, the world may enter into the fellowship with God that all humans are destined to attain.

To sum up, through the experience of the Easter event and participation in the destiny of Jesus’ death and resurrection, early Christianity confirmed the significance of the hope of resurrection to human destiny, a hope confirmed precisely by the link between individual and universal fulfillment of salvation in the biblical hope for the future. Because the resurrection of the dead is common to all individuals as an event at the end of the age, we can connect our individual hope of salvation as resurrection with the universal eschatology as fellowship with God.

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11 Cf. Philippians 2:8 and Hebrews 5:8.
12 JGM, 196.
13 Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:45ff., 49.
14 JGM, 197.
15 JGM, 197.
16 For the fellowship with God as human destiny, see JGM, 191-5.
17 See SyTh III, 578.
3. The *Parousia* and the Completion of the Kingdom of God

Pannenberg links Jesus’ resurrection to the universal resurrection by means of four arguments. First, Jesus’ resurrection immediately confirmed his earthly mission and person by God, a confirmation that relates to the personal authority proclaimed in his message and work, as well as his exaltation to participate in God’s rule over the world. It was Jesus’ resurrection that forced early Christianity to link the figure of Jesus to the figure of eschatological expectation; this exalted Jesus confirmed as the Messiah is now expected to return as the risen Jesus. Second, Pannenberg argues that although the Jewish expectation of an eschatological resurrection did not portray the resurrection of one individual before the end of this age, early Christianity identified Jesus’ appearances after death with the eschatological resurrection, and regarded it as the beginning of end-time events. In this context, in spite of the delay of the *parousia*, belief in the enacted event of the resurrection of Jesus remained linked to the eschatological expectation of the resurrection of all the dead with the return of Christ (Acts 24:15; John 5:29; cf. Revelation 20:12ff.). For that reason, Pannenberg warns us, as part of the third step in his argument, not to detach “the conceptual content of the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus from the more general expectation of an end-time resurrection of the dead.” Only in this connection can the confirmation of Jesus’ earthly life and mission be proven by providing evidence that his appearances were neither mere hallucinations nor ghostly apparitions. Therefore, Pannenberg concludes, as the fourth step in his argument, that the Christian message of the resurrection of Jesus requires final verification through the event of an eschatological resurrection of the dead. As we have already shown with respect to his concept of reality as a whole, according to Pannenberg, the confirmation of Jesus’ divinity via his resurrection remains open to the future because the ultimate divine confirmation of Jesus’ divinity will occur only at his second coming. The uniqueness in the apostles’ understanding of Jesus’ resurrection is in connection to the end of the world. All statements regarding God’s revelation in Jesus and Jesus’ divinity confirmed by his resurrection always

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18 Pannenberg refers to Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, for a succinct summary of data on the link between the resurrection and exaltation claims in early Christianity; and *The Way*, 220f. Pannenberg argues that exaltation was an independent concept in Jewish tradition, but in the Easter tradition of Christianity it appeared to imply resurrection. According to Pannenberg, the same applies to the idea of rapture, i.e., of the sudden removal of the believer by the Lord to God, and the one who will one day return as Messiah (Acts 3:20f.). For Pannenberg, Moltmann does not deny that “raising” and “rising” are the original categories of interpretation for the appearance of Christ. Cf. *The Way*, 221.

19 SyTh II, 350.
contain a proleptic element.

The hope for the second coming of the risen Lord reflects Jesus’ earthly message as the central theme. Pannenberg warns us not to imagine the idea of the return of Christ “as a superfluous duplication of the hope of God’s kingdom.”

If Jesus’ resurrection confirmed his earthly claim to authority, the fulfillment of the eschatological future in his own person can no longer be denied. If the eschatological reality began with him and the reality of the future eschatological salvation has been acknowledged, we should “expect his return as the fulfillment of the eschatological saving future and to understand him as the bringer of the eschatological future.”

The historical proof of the hope for the return of Jesus, therefore, lies in the confession that the crucified and risen Lord is the Messiah. According to Pannenberg, the idea of divine rule in general is not common in apocalyptic eschatology, but “notions of the coming of a new aeon, of world judgment, and of the coming of the Son of Man to judgment” are. Therefore, Jesus’ resurrection, by confirming his Messiahship, would have led the early Christians to expect Jesus’ second coming as the judge and the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven. More specifically, Pannenberg explains,

Primitive Christianity proclaimed the risen Lord to be the end-time messianic King whom Jewish future expectation hoped for and whom God will send (Acts 3:20; cf. 1 Cor. 15:23ff.). In so doing it merged expectation of his return with Jewish expectation of the Son of Man who will come on the clouds of heaven (Mark 14:62; cf. Dan. 7:13) with great power and glory (Mark 13:26) to judge the living and the dead (Acts 10:42).

Pannenberg refers to the Jewish Eighteen Benedictions (specifically, the Eleventh) and the Qaddish Prayer to identify passages that reflect Jesus’ description of the coming of eschatological events and the hope of the rule of God. But he also argues that, despite the fact that both focused wholly on the future of God, Jesus found the content of God’s future in the coming of his rule – that is, that “the message of Jesus was essentially one of salvation” – whereas John the Baptist found the content in the imminence of judgment. In Jesus’ message,

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20 SyTh III, 608.
21 JGM, 367.
22 SyTh II, 326. With respect to the coming of the Kingdom of God as distinct from its establishment, Pannenberg refers to Norman Perrin, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 57ff.
23 SyTh III, 608. For the Jewish origins of the idea of the judgment by the Son of Man, Pannenberg refers to 1 Enoch 69:27; 45:3, and also Jesus’ parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31).
24 That is symbolically expressed, Pannenberg argues, in Jesus’ return from the desert of the Lower Jordan, where John had taught, to the fertile settlements of Galilee. SyTh II, 327.
salvation was not for the covenant people as a whole but only for those who set their hope wholly on the imminence of the future of God.

According to Jesus’ hope of the coming rule of God, salvation was already present and at work; since Jesus had already prepared the way for the lordship of God, the lordship of the risen Lord and its consummation could be attained at his return. Specifically, the Kingdom of God reflected in Jesus’ work on earth is indissolubly bound up with the Son who would come again in glory for its consummation. When Jesus spoke of the future judgment of the Son of Man (Luke 12:8), the early Christian community, according to Pannenberg, understood him as speaking of his own return as the Son of Man (Matt. 10:32–33). Likewise, the Christian community may have expected the return of Christ as the final judge, who was resurrected from the dead, and the final transition of time into eternity.

Pannenberg insists, however, that according to Jesus’ message regarding the coming of the Kingdom of God, it would not be observed through signs (Luke 17:20f.). The reality of the hope of his second coming is independent of particular deadlines. By stating that the Kingdom of God is “in the midst of you,” according to Pannenberg, Jesus meant that the Kingdom is imminent but not bound to a specific date. This argument is supported by the phrase in Luke that “they will say to you, ‘Lo, there!’ or ‘Lo, here!’ Do not go, do not follow them. For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of man be in his day.” Although the hope of Jesus’ second coming is not bound to any specific date, it “retains its validity as the inauguration of the openness to God of human existence independently of the delay of the date of the eschatological event.”

After looking at the issue of the delay of the parousia, Pannenberg argues that its significance lies not in the length of the interval between Jesus’ resurrection and the coming of the Son of Man but in “the matter of material correspondence of what happened in Jesus with the content of the eschatological expectation.” The delay of the end-time events does not have to be a refutation of the Christian hope or of the Christian perception of revelation. Since Jesus’ resurrection maintains the eschatological anticipation of the future, the future expectation of Jesus’ coming for a transformation of our world and of the resurrection of the dead would not be expected to collapse because of the delay of the parousia.

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26 JGM, 227.
27 JGM, 107. In the “Son of Man” saying in Mark 8:38, Pannenberg argues, the question how much time might elapse between two events is completely irrelevant.
B. N.T. Wright: Cosmic Transformation as the Nature of Eschatological Hope

1. The Resurrection and the New Creation

Wright understands the eschatological concept of resurrection in light of the concept of God’s creation. Since “God’s plan is not to abandon this world, the world of which he said that it was ‘very good’,” and the story of the Kingdom of God was not one of abandonment, resurrection should be placed within the context of a new creation. Indeed, when God fulfills his covenant, “this will of course constitute a new creation.”

According to Wright, Paul also saw this parallel in Genesis:

According to Paul, echoing Genesis of course, God intended that the created order should be governed by wise human beings reflecting God’s stewardly love into it. With human rebellion, this purpose was thwarted, and the earth brought forth thorns and thistles, not of its own will but because it had been subjected to futility against the day when humankind would be restored. Now, in the person of Jesus Christ, that restoration has happened; there is at last an obedient human being at the helm of the universe; and the heavens and the earth rejoice at the very

28 Wright introduces the hymn written by Maltbie Babcock, an American pastor, “This Is my Father’s World,” as a good example representing the theme of the new creation. This is quoted in SC, 185.

This is my Father’s world;
O let me ne’er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the ruler yet.
This is my Father’s world;
The battle is not done;
Jesus, who died, shall be satisfied,
And earth and heaven be one.

29 SC, 186.

30 Wright explains that the hope for resurrection is reflected even in the story of the creation of Adam in Genesis 1-3 and, hence, firmly linked to the new creation itself. To repeat, insofar as it is certain that Old Testament texts such as Malachi, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Daniel and so on, declare that God is going to do something for Israel when they return, geographically speaking, to their own land, it is natural to think that the same concept of creation in Genesis 1 is adopted by those texts to express the hope for their ultimate return from exile. Wright insists that Haggai also adopts the image of creation, in the form of an earthquake shaking the entire cosmos, as an expression of the time when the world is set right and Israel is purified. See Paul, 132.

31 Paul, 131.
In his retelling of Genesis, Paul presents an idea of the new universal creation that supports his belief that God’s fulfillment of his covenant is not limited to the story of Israel. According to Wright, both Daniel and Isaiah describe God’s intention as “not only to restore the tribes of Jacob, but to bring light to the pagan nations as well,”\(^{33}\) thus “holding out a vision of peace and hope, not only for Israel but for all the nations.”\(^{34}\) Isaiah describes this restoration as occurring “through the arrival of the ultimate king of Israel, the descendant of David”\(^{35}\) who is the Messiah, and “the rule of Messiah, then, will bring peace, justice and a completely new harmony to the whole creation.”\(^{36}\) According to Wright, in Romans 8 Paul links the imagery of the Exodus from Egypt to creation as a whole; creation is in bondage at this time (v. 21) and all of creation is longing for the day when God’s children are revealed (v. 19).\(^{37}\) Wright declares that “the very metaphor which Paul chooses for this decisive moment in his argument shows that what he has in mind is not the unmaking of creation, nor simply its steady development, but the drastic and dramatic birth of new creation from the womb of the old.”\(^{38}\) Likewise, Jesus’ bodily resurrection as the sign of God’s new creation reaffirms God’s good creation. The first subsection below will offer a summary of how Wright demonstrates that Jesus’ resurrection reaffirmed God’s good creation.

At this point, the theological meaning of the new creation continuously elucidates Jesus’ understanding of his true enemy; it is not Rome but the dark powers of death, the accuser in some Old Testament traditions. Wright argues that death as the great enemy was fully conquered by Jesus’ resurrection, and in this sense has become a “beaten enemy.” Therefore, Wright understands Jesus’ fight as not martial but cosmic in the sense of apocalyptic eschatology. According to his reading, Wright argues that several biblical texts and Jewish documents support the victory of God in the vindication of the Son of Man. We will explore this more closely in the second subsection below.

The last two subsections discuss how the Holy Spirit is related to the future hope because the final defeat of death is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit. While death is a conquered

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32 “Jesus the Risen Judge.”
34 \(SC\), 73. Cf. Isaiah 2:2-4.
37 See \(SbH\), 114-5. Cf. Romans 8: 19,21-23; 1 Corinthians 15.
38 \(SbH\), 115.
enemy, it still awaits its final defeat. According to Wright, the resurrection is an act of the new creation accomplished by the Holy Spirit,\textsuperscript{39} by whom the first creation was created as well. Wright argues that, according to Paul’s theory of the Spirit, which he always mentioned when preaching about Jesus’ resurrection and the final hope, the new creation has already begun and will be consummated in his day. In this regard it is said that the Spirit who began the new creation with Jesus’ resurrection is the guarantor of the universal resurrection, the final defeat of death.

1) The Resurrection as the Reaffirmation of God’s Good Creation

I have already mentioned that, according to Wright, even though the resurrection was believed to be an individual divine reward for martyrs, Christian ethics is not to be limited to individual hope. Resurrection was “not simply a special reward for those who have undergone special sufferings”\textsuperscript{40} but the eschatological expectation of a renewal of the present space-time order. This hope demonstrated that the God of creation would not abandon this world.\textsuperscript{41} Therefore, the impact of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is “by no means limited to its effects on those human beings who believe the gospel and thereby find new life here and hereafter. It resonates out, in ways that we can’t fully see or understand, into the vast recesses of the universe.”\textsuperscript{42} In light of Jesus’ resurrection as the affirmation of God’s good creation, Jesus’ incarnation also represents God’s promise not to abandon His good creation.\textsuperscript{43}

The incarnation affirms God’s good creation, just as the resurrection affirms God’s good and wonderful act of a new creation. Wright explains, “The coming of Jesus emerges as the moment all creation had been waiting for. Humans were made to be God’s stewards over creation; so the one through whom all things were made, the eternal son, the eternal wisdom,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{39} “Jesus’ Resurrection,” 615-35.
\item \textsuperscript{40} NTPG, 331.
\item \textsuperscript{41} NTPG, 332ff. Wright says that Israel’s dreams and aspirations as a whole would not turn into a large and smoking extension of Gehenna because Israel’s God would vindicate his people.
\item \textsuperscript{42} ShH, 108.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Wright’s position here can be understood in the same context in which Moltmann and Pannenberg criticize the existential understanding of the Kingdom of God. Individual eschatology dismisses the notion of the universe longing for the completion of the new creation.
\end{itemize}
becomes human, so that he might truly become God’s steward, ruler over all his world.” As such, if the resurrection affirms God’s creation of the universe – not simply humanity – good, then His salvific work is not a matter of abandoning this world but creating the new world. Wright explains:

If God who made the world out of free, boundless, energetic love now sees his world in rebellion, and his rescue operation flawed because of the people he has chosen to carry it out, what is he to do? He cannot now say that it was all a mistake. (The closest god comes to that is with the Flood in Genesis 6-8; but part of the point there is that God rescues Noah and the non-human creation, in order that things may start up again.) He will act from within the creation itself, with all the ambiguities and paradoxes that will result, in order to deal with the multiple problems that have resulted from human rebellion, and so restore creation itself. And he will act from within the covenant people themselves, to complete the rescue operation and fulfill its original purpose.

As the eschatological hope, resurrection was the hope of a new creation, Jesus’ resurrection was the affirmative sign, on the one hand, that it had been inaugurated and, on the other, that it will be completed by the universal resurrection. Since the resurrection is “the reaffirmation of the old creation, and liberation of it from everything that spoils, defaces and kills it,” the new creation will be completed by God’s free, boundless, energetic love. He will never abandon this world. Wright even sees a powerful affirmation of the goodness of the created order claimed by God in the confrontation of Jesus as the Son of God with Caesar. Jesus’ bodily resurrection supplies the groundwork for “the affirmation of the universe of space, time and matter, after not only sin and death but also the pagan empire.” This world, ultimately, does not belong to Caesar but to God the creator.

Accordingly, in Jesus’ lordship, therefore, the world defined as good but spoiled has been recreated and would not be abandoned. In this theological form of the new creation, the corporeality of Jesus’ resurrection is the central theme to remove any lingering doubt. This universality of the new creation also can be realized even when we consider the real enemy of Israel.

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44 SbH, 107.
45 SbH, 108.
46 SC, 66.
47 RSG, 335. Wright argues that it is true as far as Paul is concerned. Cf. RSG, 333-8.
48 RSG, 729.
49 RSG, 729.
2) Jesus’ Resurrection as Victory over Death

According to many passages in the Old Testament, the Day of YHWH expresses the hope of YHWH’s return,\(^{50}\) defeating His enemy. The day will be the Day of Judgment: God will return as a King and dwell among his people. For the argument concerning the Jewish eschatological hope of the judgment, Wright presents several exegetical proofs from apocalyptic literature. (1) The entire book of 2 Maccabees “is introduced with the reported prayer, from the time of Nehemiah, that God would gather the scattered people of Israel, punish the Gentiles for their arrogance and oppression, and plant his people in the holy place.”\(^{51}\) (2) 1 Enoch, “which is a composite work, dated variously during the last two centuries or so BC (with some parts possibly later still),”\(^{52}\) opens with a major judgment scene and “ends with a final judgment scene, in which the righteous are transformed as well as revivified.”\(^{53}\) (3) The Testament of Moses “speaks of Israel being exalted to the heights, and fixed firmly in the starry heaven, from where they will look on God’s judgments of those who have oppressed them.”\(^{54}\) (4) In the Sibylline Oracles 4. 179-92, Wright sees a similar message from roughly the same period.\(^{55}\) According to Wright, such apocalyptic texts connect the resurrection to judgment.\(^{56}\) Resurrection as the divine reward for martyrs will be given after the great tribulation,\(^{57}\) and God will finally defeat his real enemy at the Day of Judgment, and it will be the Day of New Creation.

According to Wright’s analysis of Jewish thinking on evil, the created order itself is not evil. Rather, evil arises through the performance of sinful acts, such as idolatry, and the resulting corruption, which is ultimately death. Death is the ultimate enemy to be defeated by God, because it is the unmaking of the creator’s image-bearing creatures:

It was the ultimate weapon of destruction: anti-creation, anti-human, anti-god. If the creator god was also the covenant god, and if the covenant was there to deal with the unwelcome problem that had invaded the created order at its heart and corrupted human beings themselves, it was this

\(^{50}\) For the biblical texts, see JVG, 616-21, and for the relevant Jewish literature, JVG, 621-4.
\(^{51}\) RSG, 153. Cf. 2 Maccabees 1:24-9.
\(^{53}\) RSG, 156. Cf. 1 Enoch 108:11-15 (Knibb).
\(^{55}\) RSG, 158. Cf. Charlesworth, 389.
\(^{56}\) For the comments on other apocalyptic writings, see RSG, 153-75.
\(^{57}\) NTPG, 331.
intruder, death itself, that had to be defeated.\textsuperscript{58}

Likewise, “‘resurrection’ was never a \textit{redescription} of death, but always its \textit{defeat}.”\textsuperscript{59} Jesus’ resurrection as God’s “salvation” work is the rescue of the world from death:

Easter is about the whole creation being set right at last, put back on track with the way it was supposed to be, and the way it had been longing to be. Rather, it is that his resurrection demonstrates beyond all cavil that on the cross he really did accomplish the defeat of the powers of corruption, evil and death. If he hadn’t done so, he wouldn’t have been raised from the dead; it’s as simple as that.\textsuperscript{60}

Wright argues that, even in the language of the redefined Kingdom of God, Jesus does not refer to the Roman Empire as the true enemy of God the creator and His people. Rather, “the battle against evil – the correct analysis of the problem, and the correct answer to it – was therefore of a different order from that imagined by his contemporaries.”\textsuperscript{61} In this context, “evil would be defeated, not by military victory, but by a doubly revolutionary method: turning the other cheek, going the second mile, the deeply subversive wisdom of taking up the cross.”\textsuperscript{62} Therefore, the “trials” of a wilderness and the crucifixion were not, for Jesus, simply the great test between him and his opponents but the climax of that larger cosmic battle. As stated above, Wright emphasizes that the final cosmic battle would not bring about the end of the world in the manner implied by Schweitzer’s conception of the \textit{parousia}: Jesus’ vindication and return did not imply the end of the world. These are the significant points in Wright’s reading of apocalyptic texts.

Accordingly, when Jesus was executed on Calvary in Jerusalem, YHWH finally returned to Zion and acceded to the throne to rule over the cosmic world. For early Christians, this meant that, through his death and resurrection, Jesus was vindicated and the real enemy defeated. They believed themselves to be a renewed Israel in the new covenant and believed that Jesus had fought the battle of Israel as the true Messiah and won the crown. Nonetheless, this battle did not take place as Israel had expected; instead, it was against death and evil. God, the creator, fulfilled His plan to deal effectively with sin and death in Jesus’ death and resurrection. Again, the ultimate enemy of Israel had been finally defeated, but it was not the

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{RSG}, 727.  
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{RSG}, 728.  
\textsuperscript{60} “Jesus the Risen Judge.”  
\textsuperscript{61} \textit{JVG}, 446-7.  
\textsuperscript{62} \textit{JVG}, 465.
end of either the Roman Empire or this physical world; instead, it was a new beginning for the world, a new creation. In this theological form of the new creation, it is worth our while to investigate the eschatological meaning of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.

3) Easter Day as the First Day of the New Creation Accomplished by the Holy Spirit

According to Wright, the language of the coming of the Holy Spirit is closely linked to that of the resurrection. The metaphorical meaning of the Holy Spirit and the resurrection retained a concrete referent: the return of Israel from exile. Wright interprets Ezekiel’s dramatic picture of dry bones in this light that the dry bones “coming together, being clothed with skin and flesh, and finally being animated by breath, was a rich allegory for the return of Israel from exile.”

According to Wright, Paul and the early Christians described the return of Israel from exile as having been fulfilled by referring to the Spirit.

But in Jesus’ redefined concept of Israel, it was not a geographically defined Israel that had returned from exile in another land but a people living by the Holy Spirit. Wright explains:

> Now Jesus has ascended to heaven, and sends the Holy Spirit to be the way of life for God’s redeemed people. This is the fulfillment of the Torah, the Law. But there is of course a difference. The original law was written on tablets of stone; the new law, the law of the Spirit, is written on human hearts. The original law could not give the life it promised, because it didn’t get to the root of the problem. The Spirit transforms the heart, so that we now want to obey.  

The people of God redefined by Jesus are those who have the new law, which is the law of the Spirit. Therefore, Wright insists that Pentecost is “the day of fulfillment and renewal for the two great Jewish institutions: the Law and the Temple.” Since both are signs of God’s presence, the coming of the Holy Spirit is the sign that God is now among his people. That means they neither needed to go to the desert to be baptized again nor to wait for another Messiah. Therefore, the story of the Spirit is the story of God’s new covenant and new world coming to birth.

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63 RSG, 202.
65 “New.”
As previously explained, the first-century Jewish eschatological hope for the resurrection appears even in the story of the creation in Genesis 1-3. Describing the resurrection as an act of new creation accomplished by the Holy Spirit, Wright suggests that we see John’s linking the Holy Spirit to the new creation by portraying God as breathing His own breath into the nostrils of Adam and Eve and Jesus as breathing on his followers. Referring to John’s description of Easter morning as the story of the new creation, Wright states that “the Spirit who brooded over the waters of creation at the beginning broods now over God’s world, ready to bring it bursting to springtime life.” John’s affirmation that Easter Day is the first day of the week reminds his readers that “Easter Day is the first day of God’s new creation.” In this context, Wright insists that on the first Easter morning the previous creation was completed and the new creation began and that the church lives “in the bright interval between Easter and the final great consummation.” The whole point of the new creation, therefore, is that “the End came forward into the present in Jesus the Messiah.”

Therefore, the Spirit, through which God is reclaiming this world while it still appears as the place of suffering and sorrow, is given to us to realize God’s future in the present. In this sense, we are called to be a part of that reclaiming through the Holy Spirit. This divine calling in the Holy Spirit implies that the new creation has begun and will be consummated on the Day of the Lord. The Spirit is the guarantee of the universal resurrection and the future consummation.

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66 “Jesus’ Resurrection,” 615-35.
67 The Challenge, 136.
68 The Challenge, 135.
69 Wright parallels the story of Genesis and the story of the first Easter day. He recalls what Mary thinks when she meets Jesus in the morning light. “She thinks he’s the gardener, as in one important sense he indeed is. This is the new creation. This is the new Genesis” (The Challenge, 136).
70 The Challenge, 137.
71 The Challenge, 137.
72 Cf. SC, 107. As to the belief in consummation, Wright is convinced that the timing was not a vital question in early Christianity. Wright states, “Jerusalem fell; the good news of Jesus, and the Kingdom of Israel’s god, was announced in Rome, as well as in Jerusalem and Athens. But there is no sign of dismay, in any of the literature that has come down to us from the period after AD 70, at the fact that Jesus himself had still not returned. Clement looks forward to the return of Jesus without any comment on its timing. Ignatius is worried about many things, but not that. Justin Martyr, in the middle of the second century, is as emphatic as anyone that the event will happen. He does not know when; but then, the key passages in the New Testament always said that it would be a surprise. Tertullian, at the end of the second century, looks forward to Jesus’ return as the greatest show on earth, outstripping anything one might see at the stadium or theatre. As far as the early Christians were concerned, the most important event – the resurrection of Jesus – had already happened. One did not need to worry about the timing of that which was still to come” (NTPG, 463).
4) The Holy Spirit as the Guarantor of Universal Resurrection

In his understanding of eschatological hope as “inaugurated eschatology,” Wright states that the concept of inauguration entails “completion” and that was most clearly represented by the eschatology of the early Christians. Wright sees the Holy Spirit as the guarantor of universal resurrection within the early Christian tradition:

God’s future has arrived in the present, has arrived in the person of Jesus. In arriving, it has confronted and defeated the forces of evil and opened the way for God’s new world, for heaven and earth to be joined forever … [but] not only heaven and earth, but also future and present, overlap and interlock. And the way that interlocking becomes real, not just imaginary, is through the powerful work of God’s Spirit.73

In Paul’s understanding of the Spirit, eschatology answers questions posed by the first-century Jews: “Who are we?” “Where are we?” “What is wrong?” and “What is the solution?” Wright summarizes Paul’s answers in the following passage:

[We are] resurrection people: a people, that is, formed within the new world which began at Easter and which has embraced us, in the power of the Spirit, in baptism and faith. Where are we? In God’s good creation, which is to be restored; in bodies that will be redeemed, though at present they are prone to suffering and decay and will one day die. What's wrong? The work is incomplete: the project which began at Easter (the defeat of sin and death) has not yet been finished. What’s the solution? The full and final redemption of the creation, and ourselves with it; this will be accomplished through a fresh act of creative grace when Jesus reappears, and this in turn is anticipated in the present by the work of the Spirit. What time is it? In the overlap of the ages: the “age to come,” longed for by Israel, has already begun, but the “present age” still continues.74

Here Paul refers to Israel’s subjugation and divine rescue in relationship to the promise of the Holy Spirit,75 who is intrinsically linked to “resurrection” in Paul’s letters. The resurrection and restoration for which Israel had longed was being realized in Christians’ lives in Christ and empowered by the Spirit. In Romans 8, Galatians 4, and 1 Corinthians 15:20-29, Paul adopts the well-known Jewish story of the exodus to describe God’s divine rescue through the work of the Son and the Spirit. The God who has broken the power of the

73 SC, 189.
74 RSG, 581
75 Galatians 3:14. See chapter 7 of CC. Cf. RSG, 219-5. Wright talks about the transformed fulfilment of the Jewish hope.
slave master and set the slaves free from bondage through the work of Jesus “assures his people of their own status as his children and heirs.” Therefore, the Spirit is “the gift that indicates what the future holds, here seen in terms of the ‘first-fruit’ metaphor, the first sheaf of harvest offered as a sign of the larger crop still to come. The Spirit thus again provides an inauguration of eschatological fulfillment, even in the present time.” Therefore, in Wright’s understanding of Paul, the Spirit not only strengthens our faith but also guarantees the present and future Kingdom. The Holy Spirit

plays the same role in our pilgrimage from Passover to the promised land — from Jesus’ resurrection, in other words, to the final moment when all creation will be renewed — that was played in the old story by the pillar of cloud and fire. The Spirit is the strange, personal presence of the living God himself, leading, guiding, warning, rebuking, grieving over our failing and celebrating our small steps towards the true inheritance.

Such an idea of the Spirit as the “guarantor” of what is to come leaves us with no doubt that the Spirit has a role in parallel with that of the resurrection in Paul’s eschatology. The Spirit guarantees the future hope, just as Jesus’ resurrection guaranteed the realized promise of the Kingdom of God, in which Paul believed he was living. Wright explains:

Paul believed, that is, in the future bodily resurrection of all the true people of the true God, and he cautiously explored, here and there, ways of referring to the intermediate state which was the necessary corollary of such a belief. He believed that Israel’s God, being both the creator of the world and the God of justice, would accomplish this resurrection by his Spirit, who was already at work in the Messiah’s people. At the same time, Paul believed two things which are only comprehensible as mutations within the Jewish worldview, not as combinations of a Jewish eschatology with something else. First, he believed that ‘the resurrection’ had divided, as a historical moment, into two: the resurrection of the Messiah in the first place, and then, at his ‘parousia’, of all his people. Second, he believed, and articulated in considerable detail, that the resurrection would not only be bodily (the idea of a non-bodily resurrection would have been as much an oxymoron to him as it would to both Jews and pagans of his day; whether you believed in resurrection or not, the word meant bodies), but that it would also involve transformation.

In short, according to Wright, Paul did not move away from the tension regarding the lack of fulfillment “towards the later Gnostic use of ‘resurrection’ language to denote a

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76 RSG, 221.
77 RSG, 258.
78 SC, 108.
79 RSG, 372
spiritual experience understood within an ontologically dualistic world view.” In his use of the language of “resurrection,” Paul assured his readers that “Christian life belonged within a historical narrative of all believers, and that the divine Spirit who accomplished the first would accomplish the second, and was even now at work to anticipate and guarantee that final event.” Wright’s interpretation of Paul casts light upon the tension between the realized Kingdom of God and the future completion, and upon the delay of the parousia as well. Jesus was raised by the Spirit, and in our current position between resurrection and resurrection – between Jesus’ and our own – the Spirit is the guarantor of our “inheritance,” of the final victory when Jesus “appears” again, as much as his resurrection was the victory over death at Easter.

2. The Nature of Hope

Comparing the eschatological hope of the early Christians with other optimistic views of the world, Wright concludes that the fundamental structure of Christian hope entails the grand narrative of the goodness of creation, the nature of evil, and the plan of redemption. In this light, when we speak of the nature of hope, we should “begin with the biblical vision of the future world – a vision of the present cosmos renewed from top to bottom by the god,” and not look first at the promise to the individual. According to Wright, when examining eschatology from the context of God as the creator and redeemer of the whole world, we are “able to speak of the ‘second coming’ of Jesus, and then of the bodily resurrection.” The following subsections discuss Wright’s conception of the nature of future hope in more detail.

80 RSG, 373
81 RSG, 373
82 Ephesians 1:14. Wright comments about “inheritance”: “So, when Paul speaks of the Spirit as the ‘guarantee of our inheritance’, he is evoking, as Jesus himself had done, this whole Exodus tradition, the story which began with Passover and ended with the promised land. He is saying, in effect, ‘You are now the people of the true Exodus. You are now on your way to your inheritance.’ But that ‘inheritance’ isn’t a disembodied heaven, nor is it simply now one small country among others. The whole world is now God’s holy land” (SC, 107).
83 Wright argues that there is no mention of evil in evolutionary optimism as represented by Teilhard de Chardin. As a result, optimism, the myth of progress is not able to stop evil, and fails to see the vital importance of the cross as God’s Yes to the world and his No to evil. For Wright’s understanding of Teilhard de Chardin, and the myth of progress, see SbH, 91-100. Cf. Ursula King, “Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre,” in: A. Hastings (ed.), The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 694-6.
84 SbH, 92.
85 SbH, 92.
1) Cosmic Transformation as We Await

As we have seen, both the Old and New Testaments express the hope of resurrection in the grand narrative of the new creation. Wright’s emphasis in his entire argument regarding eschatological hope is not the fate of the individual after death but the larger picture drawn by the Old and New Testament, which regularly insist “that the major, central, framing question is that of God’s purpose of rescue and re-creation for the whole world, the entire cosmos.”

According to Wright, the Gospel of Jesus in the New Testament reveals God’s purpose and the plan for the rescue of the world.

Colossians 1:15-20, as a good example of Jesus’ Gospel, expresses the eschatology in the grand narrative of the world: it describes creation, evil, and the plan of redemption revealed in action in Jesus Christ. That is why we cannot limit our interest in the impact of Jesus’ death and resurrection to those who believe in the Gospel. Rather, it should be seen in terms of cosmic transformation. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul takes the image of the “first fruits” from the image of the Jewish festivals of Passover and Pentecost in order to apply this image of the Passover to Jesus. By viewing Jesus as the first fruit of resurrection in 1 Corinthians, Paul articulates a theology of new creation with the image of victorious battle. Wright argues that Paul is expressing the belief that “every force, every authority in the whole cosmos will be subjected to the Messiah; and finally death itself will give up its power. In other words, that which we are tempted to regard as the permanent state of the cosmos – entropy, threatening chaos and dissolution – will be transformed by the Messiah, acting as the agent of the creator God.”

1 Corinthians 15:28 declares that God will be “all in all” as the purpose of history, and Romans 8 portrays “a further image deeply embedded within the created order itself: that of new birth.” This chapter in association with 1 Corinthians 15 can be clearly understood as proclaiming that the whole creation is standing on tiptoe with expectation, “longing for the day when God’s children are revealed, when their resurrection will herald its own new life.” Wright’s exegesis of Revelation 21-22 in which the final image of the new creation as that of marriage is found, confirms the belief that “it is not we who go to heaven; it is heaven that comes to earth.” That is also Paul’s main idea in Philippians 3 as well as in

86 SbH, 197.
87 SbH, 110.
88 SbH, 114.
89 SbH, 115.
90 SbH, 116.
the message of the Lord’s Prayer and Ephesians 1:10, which accords with the symbolic image of Genesis 1 “that the creation of male and female would together reflect God’s image into the world.”\textsuperscript{91} A new heaven and a new earth replace the old corruptible ones.

Eschatology does not therefore mean God’s abandonment of this world but his redemption and renewal of it, as promised and guaranteed by Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. This is what the whole world is waiting for.

2) \textit{Life after Life after Death} within the Transformed Body

In order to define the nature of eschatological hope, Wright recommends that we consider the implications of Jesus’ resurrection for the individual only on the grand scale of universal recreation. The hope of universal resurrection is the early Christian faith in the new body that was transformed. Wright comments on this hope: “[T]hough it would certainly be a body in the sense of a physical object occupying space and time, [it] will be a transformed body, a body whose material, created from the old material, will have new properties.”\textsuperscript{92} The concept of “salvation” was also not meant as “going to heaven after death” but as life after life after death. According to Wright, that is our ultimate hope. As he clearly explains, “[i]f, when we die, all that happens is that our bodies decompose while our souls (or whatever other word we want to use for our continuing existence) go on elsewhere, this does not mean we’ve been rescued from death. It simply means that we’ve died.”\textsuperscript{93} For Wright, resurrection as the eschatological hope for the end of the world can only mean the bodily resurrected life. The event of Jesus’ bodily resurrection can give a real answer to the primary question regarding individual hope: What should we hope?

Wright reminds us that the phrase “citizens of heaven” in Philippians 3:20-21 does not refer to the life that we will live in heaven after death. Rather, what Paul means by this is that Jesus will come from heaven to earth and transform our present humble bodies to resemble his glorious body. Paul says the same in Ephesians 1:19-20 and Philippians 3, in which he indicates that the human resurrection “will take place within the context of God’s

\textsuperscript{91} \textit{SbH}, 116.

\textsuperscript{92} \textit{SbH}, 55.

\textsuperscript{93} According to Wright, the place we are going after death is not the Kingdom of God but “paradise.” Kingdom is not “paradise.” Paradise is “the blissful garden where God’s people rest prior to the resurrection” (\textit{SbH}, 206).

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victorious transformation of the whole cosmos.” Paul emphasizes in 1 Corinthians 15 as well that the new body would be incorruptible. Therefore, the theological meaning of “resurrection” is “salvation” in terms of “rescue” from death, not escape from the present world. The nature of hope expressed in resurrection was that the new body would possess a transformed physicality that would maintain continuity as well as discontinuity with the present body. Wright likewise assures us that the promise of the new creation affirmed in the bodily resurrection of Jesus does not concern the elucidation of the concept of “life after death” but the reembodiment and transformation of the body after death:

Paul and John, Jesus himself, and pretty well all the great Christian teachers of the first two centuries, stress their belief in resurrection. “Resurrection” does not mean “going to heaven when you die.” It isn’t about “life after death.” It’s about “life after life after death.” You die; you go to be “with Christ” (“life after death”), but your body remains dead. Describing where and what you are in that interim period is difficult, and the New Testament writers mostly don’t try. Call it “heaven” if you like, but don’t imagine it’s the end of all things. What is promised after that interim period is a new bodily life within God’s new world (“life after ‘life after death’”).

In this sense, our eschatological hope for the completed Kingdom of God should not be the heaven we imagined, and our present bodily life, in anticipating its transformation, turns out to be significant. “Salvation,” then, according to Wright, is neither “going to heaven” nor just something we have to wait for in the remote future. Salvation is being raised to life in God’s new heaven and new earth, and “we can enjoy it here and now (always partly, of course, since we all still have to die), genuinely anticipating in the present what is to come in the future.” In this sense, this eschatological hope for “life after life after death” is linked to the church’s present mission:

94 SbH, 112.
95 SC, 186.
96 SbH, 52. For Paul on this theme, see Philippians 1:23; 3:9-11, 20-21. Cf. Luke 23:43; John 14:2. Wright says that, when Paul mentions the desire to depart and be with Christ, it is only the prelude to the resurrection itself. Wright believes that “the early Christians hold firmly to a two-step belief about the future: first, death and what ever lies immediately beyond; second, a new bodily existence in a newly remade world” (SbH, 53).
97 SbH, 210. Wright warns that “as long as we see ‘salvation’ in terms of ‘going to heaven when we die’, the main work of the church is bound to be seen in terms of saving souls for that future. But when we see ‘salvation’, as the New Testament sees it, in terms of God’s promised new heaven and new earth, and of our promised resurrection to share in that new, and gloriously embodied, reality – what I have called ‘life after life after death’ – then the main work of the church here and now demands to be rethought in consequence” (SbH, 209).
If we’re heading for a timeless, bodiless eternity, then what’s the fuss about putting things right in the present world? But if what matters is the newly embodied life after “life after death,” then the presently embodied “life before death” can at last be seen, not as an interesting but ultimately irrelevant present preoccupation, not simply as a “vale of tears and soul-making” through which we have to pass to a blessed and disembodied final state, but as the essential, vital time, place and matter into which God’s future purposes are now to be further anticipated through the mission of the church. “Life after death,” it seems, can be a serious distraction not only from the ultimate “life after ‘life after death’,” but also from “life after death.”

Wright’s emphasis upon the nature of hope as “the life after life after death” is to offer not only the best hope but the best-grounded hope that is rooted in the inauguration of the Kingdom that Jesus brought and that energizes our work in serving God’s Kingdom in our present world.

3. The Parousia as Jesus’ Second Coming and Transformation

Wright emphasizes that the parousia in its literal meaning does not directly refer to the second coming. As the language of royal presence, the parousia was related to the Jewish story of the Day of the Lord, the Day of YHWH, when YHWH would defeat all Israel’s enemies, especially death. Parousia was also the language of the Jewish story of salvation as God’s redemption of the whole universe and in the early Christian context Jesus’ resurrection was already regarded as the sign of the parousia, and Jesus as the Lord of the Christians “was already the true sovereign of the world.”

If we understand the parousia as Jesus’ second coming, this point cannot be dismissed.

In this sense, Wright warns against misunderstanding Paul in his full conviction of Jesus’ future as the proponent of “rapture” theology. Wright interprets two of the key passages, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 15:23, to demonstrate that the word parousia was used for the belief that, on the one hand, Jesus who was worshiped but absent in body would one day be physically present and that, on the other hand, Jesus as the absent but ruling Lord of the world would come one day and rule in person within this world. Whenever the parousia refers to Jesus’ second coming, Jesus’ present kingship is to be seen as the basic meaning. The concept of parousia was often applied to express hope for Jesus’ second coming, but it was derived from the belief that “[r]esurrection has happened already.

99 RSG, 567.
in one case, but is still to happen for everybody else.”

According to Wright, such phrases as “snatching up in the air” and “trumpet” in 1 Thessalonians 4 speak, not literally but metaphorically, of the same thing that is found in 1 Corinthians 15:23-27 and 51-54, and in Philippians 3:20-21. In 1 Corinthians 15:23-27 Paul “speaks of the parousia of the Messiah as the time of the resurrection of the dead, the time when his present though secret rule will become manifest in the conquest of the last enemies, especially death.” This text is clearly talking about the same event that Paul speaks of in 1 Thessalonians 4. We should then note that while 1 Thessalonians describes people presently alive being “snatched up in the air,” 1 Corinthians and Philippians 3:21 speak of the transformation of the present earthly body into one like Jesus’ glorious body. In this sense, the parousia was the language of the hope of transformation as the result of God’s all-conquering power. When Paul speaks of “meeting” the Lord “in the air,” he does not allude to a kind of rapture in which saved believers would rise from the earth but to the scene of people coming out to escort Jesus royally into his domain and then returning to their place again. The metaphors in these texts mean that “Jesus will be personally present, the dead will be raised, and the living Christians will be transformed.”

To repeat, Wright insists that the hope of the parousia as the second coming of Jesus “was born out of confrontation with the political authorities, out of the conviction that Jesus was already the true Lord of the world who would one day be manifested as such.”

Transformation will be completed at the end. That is the nature of Christian eschatology in the term parousia.

In conclusion, Wright argues that the delay of the parousia was not the primary issue for early Christians; this issue, as Schweitzer had assumed, never truly existed for them. Because the early Christians believed that the King would return one day to judge the world and this belief was deeply rooted in the conviction that Israel’s hope had been realized through Jesus’ death and resurrection, the delay of the parousia was not a problem at all. Wright concludes that there is no evidence that they were struggling to resolve the matter of the delay of the parousia at the end of a generation.

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100 RSG, 567.
101 SbH, 144.
102 SbH, 146.
103 SbH, 146.
104 See NTPG, ch. 15. As for the question of the delay of the parousia, Wright criticizes the typical understanding of apocalyptic that “the earliest and most Jewish Christians confidently expected the imminent end of the time-space universe, and that the development of Christianity was marked by the fading of this expectation” (NTPG, 342). Wright points to two major problems.
who had raised Jesus from the dead would finally complete the resurrection of the whole body of Christ.

Summary

In this chapter we have examined how Pannenberg and Wright define the theology of hope to address a primary eschatological question: If the realized Kingdom is confirmed through Jesus’ resurrection and this Kingdom challenges and invites Christians to be the true people of God, what is left to be achieved in the future and what can be called future eschatology? We have seen that Pannenberg and Wright agree that the presence of the Kingdom of God does not nullify its futurity but confirms its future completion.

Pannenberg explains the presence of the Kingdom in terms of anticipation in order to emphasize the ontological priority of the future. Although Jesus’ divinity was confirmed by his resurrection, his ultimate divine confirmation will occur only at his second coming. In the context of the proleptic form of the Kingdom, the second coming of the risen Lord is confirmed by the Kingdom that has already been acknowledged in Jesus’ lordship. The

addressed here. First, the hypothetical entity of this question depends on a misreading of Daniel 7, and another hypothesis about “apocalyptic Christianity” is caused by the same misreading. Second, “it is quite clear that the expectation of a coming great reversal, with Jesus returning as judge, continued unabated in the second century and beyond, with no apparent embarrassment or signs of a hasty rewriting of predictions” (NTPG, 34). Wright says there is “no sense that Christianity had changed its character, or been put in jeopardy, by the failure of Jesus to return within a generation of Easter” (NTPG, 34). Therefore, “a full reappraisal of the nature and place of eschatology within early Christianity” is strongly called for (NTPG, 34). Hope for the resurrection was “hope for the renewal of national life, in the land, life as the gift of YHWH the creator god” (RSG, 12). Wright continues to insist: “[H]ope for the bodily resurrection is what sometimes happens when the hope of ancient Israel meets a new challenge, which might include the threat of judgment, as in Hosea and Isaiah 24-7, and, more specifically, the fact of exile, as (in different ways) in Ezekiel 37 and Isaiah 53. Daniel 12 is best seen, in line with chapter 9, as reflecting an awareness of extended and continuing exile, focused now in suffering and martyrdom. Of course exile and martyrdom does not necessarily have this effect, otherwise we would find resurrection ideas in (for instance) Jeremiah and 1 Maccabees as well as in Ezekiel, Daniel and 2 Maccabees. But where a strong sense of exile as divine punishment for rebellion, disloyalty and idolatry was present (one wonders whether the story in Genesis 3, of Adam and Eve being expelled from the garden, was read in this period as a paradigm of Israel’s expulsion from the promised land, but direct evidence for this connection is lacking), then it was but a short step for that expulsion to be seen as ‘death’, life in exile to be seen as the strange half-life lived after that death, and return from exile to be seen as life beyond that again, newly embodied life, i.e. resurrection” (RSG, 122). He links the hope of the resurrection to Jewish monotheism: “When this strong faith in YHWH as the creator, the life-giver, the God of ultimate justice met the apparent contradiction of the injustices and sufferings of life, at that point there was… a chance of fresh belief springing up” (RSG, 108).
confession of Jesus’ second coming, therefore, was possible only by the confirmation of Jesus’ Messiahship through his resurrection. In this sense Pannenberg is certain that the delay of the *parousia* was not a serious issue for the early church because it was not a question of time but one of matter and evidence. The early Christians believed that Jesus would return as the bringer of the eschatological future, and the hope of Jesus’ second coming was dependent on the historical proof that the crucified and risen Lord was the real Messiah. The belief in Jesus’ second coming does not depend on a specific deadline. He will return to bring the final judgment and fulfillment of the new creation; the problem with the *parousia* was not one of the length of time between Jesus’ resurrection and his second coming but rather the material correspondence of Jesus’ resurrection and the theological content of the eschatological end. Jesus resurrection anticipates Jesus’ second coming as the judge for the transformation of the world.

For Wright as well, the second coming is affirmative, since he considers Jesus’ resurrection to be the sign that the completion of God’s work for this world has been inaugurated. Jesus’ second coming, which we await, will not bring the end of the world as generally imagined but the completion of new creation. The new creation has been inaugurated by Jesus’ resurrection as the victory over death. For Wright, therefore, our eschatological hope is not life in a heavenly place after death but rather for *life after life after death*. This is what the hope of Jesus’ second coming means. At this point, it should be noted that an apocalyptic expectation does not imply the expectation of a doomsday or the end of the world. Wright describes early Christian eschatology as looking back with joy to the great event of Jesus’ resurrection while eagerly looking forward to an event yet to come as guaranteed by the Holy Spirit.105 Observing what God as the creator did for Jesus on the first Easter day in a totally unexpected way, led the early Christians to grasp the hope for the consummation that God had promised for all who are in Christ, for all in whom the Spirit of Christ dwelled.106 Wright’s examination of the Holy Spirit leads him to conclude that eschatology always rests on belief in Jesus’ resurrection and looking forward to the future. Indeed, the authenticity of Jesus’ words and acts is beyond doubt because the resurrection demonstrates them to be true, and hence we may become assured of the future. Because Jesus

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105 Wright affirms that “what the creator God has done in Jesus Christ, and supremely in his resurrection, is what he intends to do for the whole world – meaning, by ‘world’, the entire cosmos with all its history” (*ShH*, 103).

106 According to Wright’s interpretation of John’s report, Easter day is depicted as the first day of the new creation as inaugurated by the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is the guarantor of the future consummation.
had been executed, his pre-Easter claims to authority could not have been confirmed without his resurrection. Therefore, Jesus’ resurrection manifests God’s faithfulness to the completion of his holy plan as well.

Retaining a belief in the realized Kingdom in Jesus’ lordship as seeking future completion, Pannenberg and Wright argue that Jesus’ resurrection confirms the good creation and God’s creative power in freedom, and reveals the purpose of the creation. The eschatological hope for the completion is strengthened by the belief in Jesus’ resurrection because that revealed the meaning and purpose of history. The resurrection was the reembodiment of the dead as a reward for those who lived according to God’s will. In this context, they argue that the eschatological hope is the reembodiment of the dead in this world and hence entails cosmic transformation as the final resurrection.

Understanding the nature of hope as the cosmic transformation defined by Jesus’ resurrection, Pannenberg emphasizes the unity and continuity between the body before and after its transformation despite the totality of this transformation. Examining the substantial dissimilarity between the Christian hope and that of other religions, Pannenberg concludes that the characteristic view of hope in the Bible is that of a bodily form of existence in accordance with the consequences of our actions, while the hope beyond death in other religions is not fixed on reincarnation but on liberation from the cycle of reincarnation. Participation in the salvation of eternal life as the object of Christian hope is expressed in the resurrection of the dead, the hope for which, for Pannenberg, is substantially different from the hope of salvation in other religions because of the eschatological body. According to Pannenberg, through the experience of Jesus’ resurrection, the early church could confirm the precedence of the hope of resurrection over the hope of life that Wright defines as the hope for “life after life after death.”

Despite the total transformation of the reembodied body, both Pannenberg and Wright do not hold corporeality as continuity to be less important than discontinuity between the two forms of the body. Pannenberg defines this hope as parallel to modern anthropological conceptions of humanity, and Wright describes the hope of resurrection as related to the continuing corporeality after death. Similarly, for both, one question

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107 Therefore, the delay of the parousia was not a problem for early Christians, according to Pannenberg and Wright. Jesus’ resurrection was identified with the eschatological resurrection, but as the beginning of end time events, could easily function as the signpost of his second coming for the completion. The parousia was not a question of time but of material. Because the Kingdom was realized by Jesus’ resurrection, the delay was not problematic. The completion was confirmed by Jesus’ resurrection.
concerning Jesus’ resurrection is that of the nature of the eschatological body in light of God’s good creation. Jesus’ resurrection confirms the hope of this world and its cosmic transformation. Eschatology is not the theology of the end but the theology of hope, challenging us to transform our present life in the expectation of the future consummation. Therefore, Jesus’ resurrection signals the victory of God over death, which, according to Wright and Pannenberg, is what we are waiting for.
Chapter Seven

Remaining Theological Issues

A. Jesus’ Resurrection as the Core Issue with Respect to the Realized Kingdom of God

The most significant contribution Pannenberg and Wright have made to the concept of the Kingdom of God is that they clarified the core questions on the realized Kingdom of God. Proposing a successful interpretation of the metaphorical and historical concept of resurrection in Jewish tradition, they traced how early Christians confirmed their belief in the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Indeed, the first step toward understanding the concept of the Kingdom of God is to investigate what the first-century Jews understood and expected concerning this concept. The concept and meaning of the Kingdom of God is essential for the discussion of the timing of the Kingdom of God. According to Pannenberg and Wright, in the first-century Jewish tradition the concept of the Kingdom of God was not viewed as spatial but as kingship or lordship. And resurrection was one of the representative metaphors for the eschatological hope of God’s Kingship.

However, it is not easy to understand God’s Kingdom as a kingship that penetrates this physical world, in particular for people living in a highly developed materialistic world. How can Christians be sure of the Kingdom of God if it is not spatial in the physical world here and now? Because of the difficulty here, even scholars who acknowledged the biblical usage of the Kingdom as God’s reign did not succeed in applying this concept to their theology of the Kingdom of God with respect to the timing of the Kingdom. And thus, spatial thinking regarding the Kingdom of God has always prevented scholars from understanding the Kingdom to mean God’s reign, and as a result Jesus’ resurrection is hardly regarded as the heart of the issue.

For example, C.H. Dodd, in his well-known work The Parables of the Kingdom
argued that Jesus never taught that the Kingdom would come within a short time. Rather, he taught that it was already present as an integral part of our realized experience. As Habermas sums up, “Dodd explains that Scripture utilizes traditional imagery in order to depict great theological truths like the Kingdom of God, the coming of the Son of Man, judgment, the millennium, and so on. This imagery includes ‘symbols of supra-sensible, supra-historical realities’ that actually find ‘their corresponding actuality within history’.” Here Jesus’ resurrection as a historical event is not considered to be the image or symbol of supra-sensible and historical realities that correspond to the actuality of the Kingdom of God in history, although it is the affirmative sign of the establishment of God’s coming as the real King who defeats the real enemy, “death.” In this light, Dodd was, on the one hand, correct in emphasizing the realization of the Kingdom in Jesus’ teaching but, on the other, failed to expand the application of the traditional symbolism of apocalypse to Jesus’ death and resurrection. As a result, Dodd could not see the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God in Jesus’ prediction of his death and resurrection but only Jesus’ eschatology as fully realized.

Most scholars nowadays do not follow Dodd because they hold that the realized aspect is not at the center of Jesus’ eschatological thought but only part of the imminent expectation of God’s Kingdom. Jeremias’ monumental work on the Jewish background also shows – indirectly but clearly – the difficulties of Dodd’s interpretation. As Norman Perrin commented, Dodd’s realized eschatology is an “unduly one-sided understanding of the eschatology of Jesus.” Jesus expected a kingdom, but he proclaimed that it was so near that it sometimes seemed to be already present, and hence Jesus left the question of time open.

Nonetheless, Pannenberg’s and Wright’s arguments lead us to the conclusion that, despite Dodd’s failure in understanding Jesus’ teaching about the imminence of the Kingdom, it is still noteworthy that he was right in his emphasis on the realization of the Kingdom. Pannenberg and Wright take up the issue where Dodd failed and successfully demonstrate how metaphors concerning supra-sensible and supra-historical realities were actualized in history through Jesus himself and his death and resurrection. In Jewish messianism and

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1 Cf. The Parables, 46-55, 197-207.
eschatological metaphors, it becomes clear that God’s reign was expected to arrive through the Messiah. If we accept that Jesus knew himself to be the Messiah, it becomes very clear that Jesus proclaimed a kingdom coming in himself and within his mission. Jesus’ resurrection revealed God’s reign as the true King with creative power. The realization of the Kingdom of God in history is confirmed through Jesus’ resurrection. History culminates within God’s raising of Jesus from the dead.

B. Jesus’ Resurrection as a Historical Confirmation of Jesus’ Divinity

Pannenberg and Wright lead us to conceive of Jesus’ resurrection as the means to resolve the gap between the historical and the theological Jesus. Modern historical criticism has always questioned whether Jesus understood himself as the Messiah. In the post-Enlightenment world, Jesus as the divine man was regarded as an illusion, so reports about him in the gospels were regarded as the products of the early church. Jesus himself was simply regarded as a moral teacher. Most ardent theologians have appealed to a “high Christology” or a theology “from above.”

But Pannenberg and Wright appeal to a theology “from below,” arguing that, if Jesus’ resurrection is not a historical fact, it is impossible to speak of Jesus’ divinity: without Jesus’ resurrection there is no way to confirm the truth of his words before Easter, even though Jesus’ resurrection does not directly affirm his divinity but the authority of his words and deeds. For example, Pannenberg notes the replacement of “Son of Man” in Mark 8:31 and Luke 12:8 by “I” in Matthew 10:32 and Luke 9:26 and concludes that the early church identified Jesus with the eschatological judge (Chapter Four A). Jesus also seemed to distinguish himself from the Son of Man and spoke about the future judgment of the Son of Man (Luke 12:8). According to Pannenberg, the early Christian community, however, interpreted Jesus’ speaking about the future of the Son of Man as a reference to his own return (Matt. 10:32–33). These texts represent the early Christians’ belief in Jesus’ second coming as the Son of Man who will come with power as the eschatological judge. Acts 24:15, John 5:29, and Revelation 20:12 demonstrate that the early Christian community clearly began to identify Jesus of Nazareth with the Son of Man who will return, bringing all the dead with him. Here Pannenberg interprets Mark 13 and Matthew 24 as references to Jesus’
second coming and the day of the final judgment.⁶

According to Wright, it is noteworthy that Jesus does not refer to the second coming but to the coming of the Son of Man, and those texts do not refer directly to Jesus’ second coming but to God’s return to Zion because referring to the Son of Man was how Jesus spoke of the coming of the Kingdom, using terms found in Daniel 7. When Jesus spoke of the “heaven” he was preparing his followers for “something that was happening in and on this earth, through his work, then through his death and resurrection, and then through the Spirit-led work to which they would be called” (ShH, 215). Seeing the Kingdom, which would be brought about by his own death and final journey to Jerusalem, Jesus describes the symbolic enactment of YHWH’s last return to Zion as the real King in order to judge and save humanity. It is the story of Israel’s God becoming king, not the second coming of Jesus. In this context, theologians and historians must refer to Jesus’ resurrection as a contingent, unrepeatable, spatial, and temporal event in order to speak of Jesus’ Messiahship, incarnation, Sonship, and divinity. Likewise, by arguing that Jesus’ resurrection does not directly refer to his divinity but to his vindication, Pannenberg and Wright introduce a historical approach to Jesus’ divinity.

For Pannenberg and Wright, God is known primarily in the events of general history, and it is not humankind but God who provides the key for interpreting the present world. History is the field in which God dwells within His people in time, and the world participates in the eternity of God. Therefore, on the one hand, history witnesses to God’s acts and, on the other, is the place into which God invites people into His eternity; that is the salvation that comes with God’s Kingdom. The future and the present are combined in the inaugurated Kingdom in tension.

C. The Parousia as the Coming of God in the Tension between

Already and Not Yet

Pannenberg’s and Wright’s significant contributions can also be found in the concept of parousia. Acknowledging that the mistaken understanding of the parousia came about through the misreading of apocalyptic eschatology as doomsday eschatology, Pannenberg

⁶ Even if he confirms that the parousia is not linked to a specific apocalyptic date (Chapter Six A. 3).
and Wright emphasize that it does not have to mean the second coming of Jesus directly but God’s coming as the King of the universe. What, then, if this view is right? Does this mean that future eschatology is to be abandoned? As Dale C. Alison Jr. criticizes, does Wright’s eschatology abandon future eschatology and disregard the second coming of Jesus? Because of his emphasis on the inaugurated Kingdom, Wright is misunderstood as denying Jesus’ second coming. Richard B. Hays, who denies that Jesus taught a realized eschatology, claims that Wright’s reinterpretation of eschatology “tends to focus on the claim that Jesus fulfilled everything through his death and resurrection.” For that reason, in his view, Wright’s eschatology seems to negate any element of future hope in Christian proclamation, and Wright’s way of reading riddles regarding the coming King in the gospels appears to be a sign of Wright’s disbelief in Jesus’ second coming. Johnson argues that the parables in Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 19:11-27 show evidence of the parousia as the second coming. Wright’s interpretation, however, may allow these texts to speak about Jesus’ second coming. We have already seen above (Chapter Four B. 2), that Wright uses the term parousia as a reference to YHWH’s return to Zion. If the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds with power and glory refers to the parousia, the parousia texts do not necessarily refer to Jesus’ second coming. Nonetheless, Wright’s different interpretations of the parousia texts cannot be criticized on the assumption that he abandoned future eschatology. Wright’s point is that, as an exegetical tool, the concept of the parousia as the second coming cannot be used as a theological presupposition. The parousia texts must remain open to other interpretations, such as the coming of the Son of Man in terms of Daniel 7, that elucidate them more fully. He clearly proves that he does not deny the existence of future eschatology by arguing that, in the coming of the Son of Man in such parousia texts, “coming” does not mean “coming down” but “coming high,” i.e. in “vindication.” For that reason, we should not conclude that Matthew 24 used parousia to refer to Jesus’ return in a technical sense. Indeed, Wright’s interpretation is linked to his understanding of apocalyptic eschatology in light of Daniel 7 and to the image of the suffering servant of YHWH in Isaiah 42, 49, 50, 52, and 53. According to Isaiah 13:10 and 34:4 and Daniel 7:13f., Mark 13:4-6 is to be interpreted as referring to the coming of the Son of Man in the light of YHWH’s return to Zion, not as the

9 Cf. Johnson.
11 SC, 75.
second coming of Jesus. The way of vindication introduced in Matthew 24 is: (1) Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, (2) the destruction of the Temple, and (3) the gospel of the Kingdom preached to whole world.\textsuperscript{12} If the text concerns a historical event such as the destruction of the Temple and events in relation to the metaphors of God’s coming and the Son of Man’s coming, this text can also confirm Jesus’ second coming as the fulfillment of the coming of God we are still waiting for. Since the event as God’s coming came true according to the various metaphors, Jesus’ second coming will also occur, as the same metaphorical words imply. Since, according to Matthew 24:31, God’s servant will gather his elect from one end of the heavens to the other, the vindication of Jesus and his people will finally occur with Jesus’ second coming. Wright’s interpretation is not an abandonment of Jesus’ second coming but an affirmation of hope for it. The inauguration of the Kingdom may be the reason for the hope of completion and answers the question about that hope. Therefore, as a calculated risk, Wright’s concept of \textit{parousia} cannot be used to argue that he has abandoned future eschatology.

To grasp the correct meaning of the \textit{parousia}, Pannenberg and Wright recommend a correct, non-spatial concept of the Kingdom.\textsuperscript{13} If we understand the Kingdom spatially, our eyes are set on a heaven that is beyond the world and not in the present life, and eschatology focuses on the notion of the interim or purgatory and the doomsday phenomena. Jesus’ resurrection thus has no real meaning for the Kingdom of God, and the \textit{parousia} becomes nothing more than a reference to Jesus’ second coming at the end of the world. Eschatology can be de-eschatologized on this basis, or the \textit{parousia} as the realization of God’s coming is disregarded. In other words, the inauguration of the Kingdom in history will not be explored and hence the Kingdom will be concerned only as the language of psychological decision, and Jesus’ resurrection will not be treated as a historical matter but will come to signify nothing more than theological implications such as the ability and possibility of religious awakening in human beings.

Regarding the hope of completion, Pannenberg and Wright do not understand the concept of the \textit{parousia} in temporal terms but as decisive evidence. Even though the \textit{parousia} does not refer directly to Jesus’ second coming, the confirmed exaltation of Jesus by the resurrection encouraged the early Christians to deal with the matter of Jesus’ second coming.


\textsuperscript{13} William J. Dumbrell also presents strong proofs of the longing for Israel’s God as the true King by analyzing of the final structure of the Old Testament. Cf. William J. Dumbrell, \textit{The End of the Beginning: Revelation 21-22 and the Old Testament} (Homebush West: Lancer, 1985).
That is what Pannenberg and Wright understand by the inauguration of the Kingdom. Just as Pannenberg sees the realized Kingdom of God under Jesus’ lordship, so Wright sees the parousia as the royal presence within God’s new creation under Jesus’ lordship. Similarly, just as Jesus’ second coming was not a temporal issue, so the delay of the parousia was not a concern for the early Christians. Consideration of the parousia as Jesus’ second coming cannot be separated from that of the present Kingdom affirmed by the parousia in Jesus’ lordship. James D. G. Dunn also emphasizes that kyrios is the main title of the exalted Jesus in the parousia texts in 1 and 2 Thessalonians.¹⁴

Given the above, Pannenberg’s concept of the proleptic realization of the end through Jesus’ resurrection and Wright’s interpretation of Israel as being in exile strongly support the concept of the parousia between the “already” and the “not yet.” The parousia in Jesus’ lordship can be understood in the concept of a guarantee of the future completion as found in the establishment of the Kingdom of God. With respect to the tension between the “already” and the “not yet,” since God’s promise and fulfillment are what constitutes history, God’s creative power between the inauguration of the Kingdom and its completion makes history the representation of God’s kingship the goal of history. The Kingdom of God is where or when God as the King of the world directs history in his sovereignty, despite the Kingdom’s current hiddenness. The Kingdom of God inaugurated in Jesus’ lordship is not something beyond history but the power that changes history. On the one hand, Jesus’ resurrection is the fulfillment and, on the other, another promise of the completion. I suggest, therefore, that the eschatological hope does concern the present situation and leads Christians to the renewal of life here and now. It is the hope that sees the fulfillment of God’s promises that are only seen at present in the form of anticipation.

As such, if we acknowledge that the end is not to be regarded simply as an empty place to which humans wait to go after death, we may see an interrelation between the end and the present. That is why we can call Pannenberg’s eschatology proleptic and Wright’s inaugurated. For Pannenberg, Jesus’ resurrection anticipates the aim of creation and proleptically accomplishes it, while for Wright it is the eschatological inauguration of God’s victory over death that contradicts the belief in God’s good creation. The concept of “inauguration” or “proleptic” describes how Jesus’ resurrection established the Kingdom of God as “the parousia already” and anticipates the completion as “the parousia not yet.”

God’s coming is inaugurated and still coming and will be completed at the end.

I thus see a possibility to interpret *parousia* as an existential moment. *Parousia* is the moment of God’s coming, and hence its tense is past, present, and future. As David Ferguson states, “The kingdom of God is to come, but yet it has already begun decisively with the appearance of Jesus.”15 The Bible shows that Jesus’ eschatological message confronts people with a significant moment to decide to repent and believe in the Gospel because God is coming. People who have expected the righteous King of judgment are requested to repent so they can enter God’s Kingdom which is already at hand.16 In this regard, in relation to the Jewish concept of the *parousia* as God’s coming, it is evident that the end is realized in Jesus’ resurrection, and people are called to be the people of the true King.

Therefore, eschatology should not be only the story of the end but also a dialectical explanation of the relationship between present and future as belonging to the nature of God’s Kingdom. The real meaning of the *parousia* does not allow the question whether this realized Kingdom is historical or other-worldly because, as Pannenberg and Wright argue, the *parousia* as Jesus’ second coming depends on the evidence of the historical facticity of Jesus’ resurrection. The fact that Jesus’ second coming has not yet brought the end of the world should not mislead us into regarding the *parousia* as a temporal problem.

### D. Not Doomsday but Apocalyptic Eschatology as the Nature of Hope

The Old Testament depicts the people of Israel as awaiting God’s final reign. Israelites expected the day of the Lord, in which all sufferings and injustices would disappear. This aspiration appeared in the form of apocalyptic, and apocalyptic expressed eschatological hope. That means, in order to understand the nature of the eschatological hope, we need a correct concept of apocalyptic eschatology. Wright calls our attention to the importance of the correct interpretation of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, which has previously been misinterpreted.17 It should be emphasized that the message of the Kingdom of God for Jesus’ hearers was not strange and difficult but simple and persuasive because they shared the

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16 “The Kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15).
17 See Chapter Four B. 2.
common apocalyptic hope in terms of the Kingdom of God.

But theologians have failed to reach a common understanding of apocalyptic eschatology. Pannenberg and Wright examined how different understandings of the apocalyptic hope of the end influence eschatological formulas. Apocalyptic eschatology has been regarded as catastrophic, and that conviction makes the establishment of the Kingdom of God nonsense. Pannenberg and Wright’s argument on apocalyptic eschatology begins at this point. First, as Allan Galloway explains, for Pannenberg the essential point about apocalyptic language is not its imagery, which describes particular characteristics of a specific time and place, but its correspondence to something universally human. Wright also argues that apocalyptic eschatology concerns God’s resolution of the ultimate problem of the world and the transformation of the world as the solution to death. In this view, resurrection as the embodiment of the apocalyptic hope was linked specifically to God’s final rewards for the just and judgment for the unjust. Because the early Christians believed that all promises linked to the coming of the reign of God had been realized, there would have been no means of demonstrating to them that the God of Israel is the God of universe without the occurrence of Jesus’ resurrection as a historical event.

Second, Pannenberg and Wright note that the term “apocalyptic” does not mean expectation of the catastrophic end of the world. Although apocalyptic eschatology does not predict a catastrophic end, it has been replaced by doomsday eschatology. If so, the testimony of the early church could be regarded as false. According to Pannenberg and Wright, one of the most distinctive reasons for misreading apocalyptic eschatology is a dualistic view of history derived from Greek thought. But, following the early Christian interpretation of apocalyptic hope as the story of God’s coming and the restoration of Israel, we may see the historical Jesus and his resurrection within the concept of the establishment of the Kingdom of God. In this light, apocalyptic language is not the language of the catastrophic but that of the eschatology of hope.

Nonetheless, the difficulty of understanding the realization of apocalyptic hope is apparent because there is still much suffering and even unrighteousness in Christians’ lives. The fact that the Kingdom of God does not seem to have been fulfilled in the same way as

18 Allan D. Galloway, *Wolfhart Pannenberg* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1973), 73; hereafter Galloway. As Galloway explains, Pannenberg’s interpretation of the universal validity of apocalyptic differs from Bultmann’s existential interpretation. For Pannenberg, the meaning of apocalyptic is not separate from its form as the expectation of the end of history. The apocalyptic should not be demythologized.
indicated in apocalyptic imagery creates a tension between the present Kingdom and the future consummation. Therefore, eschatology is not to be understood as doomsday eschatology. Weiss and Schweitzer’s understanding of apocalyptic eschatology was catastrophic, and hence they could not see the reality of the Kingdom that Jesus brought because of the continuation of this world. Even though they embraced a consistent eschatology by enhancing the spirit of Jesus, as Moltmann explains, for Schweitzer the continuing history cancels out eschatology, makes the Kingdom of God a subjective issue, and the second coming on the clouds becomes a product of early Christianity to solve the problem of the delay of parousia. But the continuing history does not cancel out eschatology; rather, eschatology finished and recreated history, according to Pannenberg and Wright’s redefined apocalyptic eschatology. The early Christian belief in Jesus’ second coming as the consequence of the inaugurated Kingdom of God does not conflict with apocalyptic eschatology.

Third, the tension explains the meaning of physical life here and now. If we ignore our physical life or fail to relate it to eternal life or the spiritual world to the physical world, we will not be able to grasp the nature of God’s Kingdom in the paradigm of apocalyptic eschatology. Indeed, without suffering and injustice, there is no way to confirm cosmological eschatology. Because of such existing problems, it is impossible to define eschatology only ethically, as modern theologians have done. The concept of the Kingdom of God should not stop us from dreaming of physical consummation. In apocalyptic hope, the Kingdom of God portrayed by the Bible targets the whole universe. That is the true meaning of apocalyptic eschatology, not abandonment.

Thus, if apocalyptic eschatology is to be regarded as cosmological eschatology targeting the whole universe, the meaning of Christian life is still subject to the suffering world and the mission of the church can be rightly understood in the present Kingdom under Jesus’ lordship. Therefore, summing up the content of the concept of apocalyptic eschatology: (1) the corporeality of the eschatological body is emphasized in relationship to the apocalyptic expectation of the end; (2) God created the world good and thus expresses the hope that He will address all worldly problems; (3) apocalyptic eschatology concerns the story of the new creation and the continuous completion of the creation; and (4) the early

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19 For Wright, even if the presence of the Kingdom is real, it is not completed yet. This inaugurated eschatology can be found in the form of Second Temple Jewish eschatology. Apocalyptic eschatology does not concern a catastrophic end but completion. Therefore, the end of the space-time universe, as Schweitzer understood it, was not the main issue of Jesus’ Kingdom message.
Christians saw its realization through Jesus’ resurrection.

**E. Christian Ethics Subordinated in the Kingdom of God under Jesus’ Lordship**

Pannenberg and Wright contribute to Christian ethics in relation to the Kingdom of God under Jesus’ lordship. In the Kingdom of God established under Jesus’ lordship, apocalyptic eschatology can be a theology that challenges and invites humanity to serve God. In this ethical understanding of eschatology, the Kingdom of God under Jesus’ lordship is the key to the ethical motivation.

Indeed, the concept of the established Kingdom under Jesus’ lordship does find support in the New Testament: Matthew 20:21; Luke 22:28-30, 23:42; John 18:36-47; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 1:12-14; Hebrews 1:8; 2 Peter 1:11; Revelation 11:15, and so on. 1 Corinthians 8:6, John 1:3, Colossians 1:16, and Hebrews 1:2, 10 even attest the mediatorship of Jesus in God’s creation. John 1:11 proclaims: “Jesus came to his own,” and 1 Corinthians 15:24-25 states that Jesus must reign until he hands over the kingdom to God the Father. Jesus Christ rules over the world as Lord until the end. Pannenberg has identified the Kingdom under Jesus’ lordship with the Kingdom of the Father. Therefore, the relationship between both, the Kingdom of Jesus and the Kingdom of God, or the unity between the Son’s (Jesus’) and the Father’s lordship are the key for Christian ethics. Otherwise, ethics and eschatology run along parallel lines without any intrinsic relation.

Pannenberg and Wright are not the first to use ethical language to interpret the Kingdom of God under Jesus’ lordship. Nonetheless, it is distinctive that they neither demythologize Jesus’ resurrection as Bultmann did nor separate it from history as Barth did. Rather, they believe that the fact that history is still waiting for its completion is the ethical motive with respect to the realized Kingdom of God under Jesus’ lordship confirmed by Jesus’ resurrection. In other words, the struggling world under Jesus’ lordship is the heart of the ethical motif for Christians to serve the Kingdom of God, and only in this sense has Christianity become the real ethics. The Kingdom calls people to live as the true people of God under Jesus’ lordship. The identity of believers, therefore, is fundamentally determined through Jesus’ lordship. That fits Cornelis van der Kooi’s thinking regarding the identity of Christians. According to Van der Kooi, the identity of Christians is hidden in this world; they
have, to use the language of Paul, citizenship in heaven; “This identity has a bearing on this present life and the way this life must be lived in times to come.” Then, one’s identity as a citizen of the Kingdom in this present life can be explained under the theme of the theology of the cross. Martin Luther proclaimed “Crux sola est nostra theologa” in his argument against scholastic theology in 1517. According to Walther von Loewenich, the cross in Luther’s thinking is “not only the subject of theology; it is the distinctive mark of all theology.” But is the cross still relevant today? As McGrath asks: “[H]ow could the cross function as the core of Christian theology in a world dominated by the insights of the Enlightenment?” What, then, is the conceivable justification for the concentration on the cross in this present world?

The justification is, as Pannenberg argues, that God’s revelation is indirect and concealed. As Loewenich states, it is because “God’s revelation is recognized not in works but in suffering … the manner in which God is known is reflected in the practical thought of suffering.” The cross is the sign of the suffering that is the way of God’s revelation and is reflected in the practice of Christian life. Therefore, the cross anticipates Christian ethics under Jesus’ lordship. Christian ethics is not to be understood as the means for expanding or establishing the Kingdom, as nineteenth-century theologians argued, but of serving the Kingdom in suffering. Christians are promised suffering, but not in the same sense as before Jesus’ resurrection. Now it is heavenly citizenship that is the very reason why Christians participate in Jesus’ suffering. People thus freely become new creatures, for, as Van de Beek states, “Those who believe in God, freely choose to do what is right because living by the Spirit of God suits their lives.” Inaugurated eschatology implies the dynamic life of God’s people living within the Spirit while waiting for the completion of the world. Even in suffering, and injustice, etc., Christians live under the calling to be the people of God.

In this sense, Pannenberg and Wright appear to combine individual eschatology and social eschatology by interpreting Jesus’ ethical teaching as the new way of life of God’s

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22 See Alister E. McGrath, *Spirituality in an Age of Change* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 75.

23 Loewenich, 22.

24 Cf. 1 Peter 4:12-13.

25 Van de Beek, 99.
people. According to Pannenberg, the realized Kingdom represents social eschatology and Jesus’ resurrection anticipates human destiny. Eschatology thus does not simply concern the individual but is tied to the corporate work of the new Israel in this present world. This tie has not been properly understood in modern eschatology in the way it was in nineteenth-century liberal theology. Because the individual aspect of eschatology “came to be narrowed to the belief in the immortality of the soul”\(^\text{26}\) and social eschatology did not require universal resurrection and judgment, Christianity was understood simply as a moral movement. Wright proposes combining individual and social eschatology into *cooperative eschatology.*\(^\text{27}\) Wright uses this term to explain that early Christian eschatology espoused not simply a belief in the end of the world but a belief in a power that would transform the world. As such, Pannenberg and Wright warn that when we separate this theological understanding of the calling to the new moral life of the true people of God from the realized Kingdom of God, Jesus becomes merely a moral teacher. It is even dangerous to believe that Jesus was simply a moral reformer or a preacher of an upgraded moral code, as were the cynics, or simply a wise teacher. His ethics does not presuppose the teaching of the Kingdom or the presence of the Kingdom.

Pannenberg and Wright contribute to Christian ethics in a distinctive way, but not by defining ethics as a human effort to establish the Kingdom and expand its territory. They did not abandon eschatology for the sake of secularizing the Kingdom of God. They acknowledge that eschatology does not nullify the need for social compassion but redirects it with a view to building a better world that reflects the eschaton. The world must reveal God’s justice in Jesus’ lordship which is expressed in the hope of resurrection and the apocalyptic hope. As confirming Jesus’ lordship, then, Jesus’ resurrection challenges this world to be loyal to the power of the Kingdom of God. To repeat, ethics is understood as the means of serving the Kingdom of God, and the church’s mission is, consequently, not expansion but to serve the Kingdom of God under the lordship of the cross. According to Pannenberg and Wright, it is not to be limited to believers but extended to all humanity. The Kingdom of God is the future of the whole world, and hence the church is only properly defined when it is

\(^{26}\) 20th Century, 191.

\(^{27}\) Wright borrows this term from Crossan to explain Pauline eschatology. Just as Abraham and his people replace Adam as the people of God, Israel is replaced by the new Israel defined by belief in Jesus. For Wright, it is the early Christians’ way of understanding the issue of Christian life in the inaugurated Kingdom. In focusing ceaselessly on Jesus’ death and resurrection, the early Christians longing for the consummation of the world in the future fastened themselves to the conviction that the new creation already began in Jesus Christ who was bodily resurrected.
related to the world awaiting its completion.

In this light, Pannenberg argues that the church exists because the Kingdom of God has been established for all humanity, as the precursor of the Kingdom of God. The vocation of the church in a secular society, therefore, is to participate in the Kingdom under Jesus’ lordship. Just as Pannenberg sees the church as the precursor of the Kingdom, Wright defines the language of the Kingdom as a challenge, invitation, and calling to be the true people. In this sense, the church serves as both the motivation for the internal ecumenical movement and external political participation. As such, the church is the very sign of the inaugurated Kingdom of God. The church’s mission combines the individual and social worlds. The true ethics are found in Jesus Christ.

Accordingly, God’s future is not simply an empty place, leaving people with nothing to do but wait for its arrival. Rather, it is interwoven with this world and challenges the present. We understand this relationship as the tension between the already and the not yet. But, when ethics are not seen as part of this tension between the inaugurated and cosmological eschatology, Jesus’ message regarding the future of existential and individual eschatology is distorted. While the ethics of Barth, Bultmann, and Dodd, who existentially abstracted the Kingdom message from Jesus’ words and acts and described them with respect to their present ethical impact, nullifies eschatology, Pannenberg and Wright’s eschatology highlights ethics. Insofar as apocalyptic eschatology does not expect a catastrophic end, eschatology does not make ethics a burden within the Kingdom of God. Rather, the reign of God brought through Jesus himself triumphs over the order of the world and drives history to the new creation and the end. Our eschatological hope has been anticipated in Jesus’ resurrection and experienced under Jesus’ lordship, and will be finally completed. The transformation and new creation of this world, not something beyond this world, is the basis of Christian ethics.

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28 See Chapter Five A.

29 Berkhof “finds in Christian missions an evidence of the power of Christ’s resurrection”; quoted in Hoekema, 34.
F. The Transformation of the World as the Goal of History

It is from Jesus’ resurrection that Pannenberg and Wright discover the aim of history. Indeed, we can see Jesus’ resurrection as the climax and the purpose of not only the history of Israel but the history of the world as well. Arguing that the dualistic view of Jesus’ resurrection is not able to explain the aim of present life and general history, they link the resurrection to the goal of universal history in light of creation. Creation and eschatology meet together in the goal of history.

As we have seen, Pannenberg and Wright link the concept of good creation directly to the nature of eschatological hope. Making Jesus’ resurrection the central theme of eschatology prevents apocalyptic eschatology from being confined to consideration of the “end of the world” but expands it to consideration of God’s purpose and of hope as the telos of God’s creation. Eschatology must be dynamically combined with creation, seeing the goal of history from creation and the end anticipated in the present. Although scholars distinguish between creation and eschatology, considering creation to be the story of the beginning and eschatology to be the story of the end, we should realize that God as the creator will achieve its end. The unity and continuity between history and its end is guaranteed by God the Creator. Creation and eschatology are strongly linked in the concept of the Creator God and his faithfulness, a faithfulness that eschatology must express. Since the end can be explained in terms of God’s creation, eschatology must concern God’s purpose in creation. The eschatological use of the word suggests that the eschatological act of God is the act of creation. God’s creation can be interpreted as the event of God’s imminent intervention, changing history, liberating the oppressed, and punishing oppressors.30 Jesus Christ is God’s eschatological act that ends history immanently.

Likewise, since God acts in unexpected ways, we can assume that he presents his Kingdom in an unexpected way in the here and now. Jesus’ resurrection is the story of the new creation, as Wright concludes upon examining John’s reconstruction of the Easter story according to Genesis. The unexpected means of God’s eschatological act is the act of creation. In this sense, we can read the stories of God’s creative work in Genesis as the eschatological act judging the darkness of the deep waters of chaos. We can read the metaphor of new creation already in Genesis. To the extent that creation and eschatology can be combined, so can inaugurated eschatology as the new creation and future eschatology as its completion.

30 Van de Beek, 93. See Chapter Three A.
Eschatology cannot be regarded simply as a reference to when and how the end will come. Jesus’ resurrection revealed not only the end but also the recreation of this world, affirming God’s purpose in creation. Only in this way can eschatology speak of the denial of the injustice in the world and the challenges facing the present world. Therefore, the theology of the Kingdom of God and the new creation cannot be isolated from general history.

Berkhof’s lament that the twentieth-century church of Christ “has not learned to view history from the perspective of the reign of Christ”\textsuperscript{31} may match the starting point of Pannenberg’s and Wright’s arguments. If theology is isolated from general history, the church becomes isolated from the world. Hoekema states the key point by arguing that for many centuries the church and her theologians barely noticed the historical material in the Bible – “material which could have provided her with a theology of history.”\textsuperscript{32} Thus, neglecting the historical material accords with neglecting the materiality of Jesus’ resurrection. Pannenberg and Wright criticize this dualistic view as Docetism that has been criticized throughout Christian tradition. As Athanasius proclaimed, “He was made man that we might be made God” (\textit{De Inc 54.3}),\textsuperscript{33} our eschatological hope is grounded in the fact that God became flesh; John 1:14 demonstrates that by the use of the Greek word \textit{sarx}. The Word became human so that humans could be deified. In this sense, if the incarnation is considered necessary for the salvation of the human being, so must the resurrection. It is here we can surmise the purpose of general history. In this context, incarnation and resurrection strongly demand the story of the empty tomb and appearances to be real for the salvation of mortal men.

I hereby argue that only against this background will eschatology not be distorted into the theology of a catastrophic end nor reduced to individual eschatology. As Anthony A. Hoekema states, the twentieth century witnessed a remarkable upsurge of interest in eschatology.\textsuperscript{34} Eschatology, which was previously regarded as a perfectly harmless chapter at the end of Christian dogma, became the “storm center” of twentieth-century theology.\textsuperscript{35} Nevertheless, eschatology was de-eschatologized during that time. When eschatology was

\textsuperscript{32} Quoted in Hoekema, 23.
\textsuperscript{34} Hoekema, 288.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{The Epistle to the Romans}, 500. For the modern types of eschatology, see the Introduction of Part II.
regarded as a reference to the end in terms of an expected doomsday, it was regarded as irrelevant to the present life. On the other hand, when it was demythologized into existential theology, people lost interest in the future as the completion of general history. In order to speak about eschatology as the theology of hope, it should be the theology of the future, for hope is not found in human reason, techniques, or moral effort but only in God and the future. Eschatology should be the story of God himself as the end of the world and the story inaugurated with Jesus himself because God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. Eschatology should talk about the present life being dynamically challenged by the future of God. The theology of the future concerns God’s goal for the history that will be completed. In order to be regarded as the theology of hope, eschatology should be the story of the future transforming the present as God’s purpose because hope only comes from God and from the future. That is the biblical view of the end. The Bible presents the *eschaton* as the *telos* of history, as the new heaven and new earth in Revelation 21 that history is heading for. In this paradigm of eschatology, the *eschaton* as the end of history is not simply placed at a certain point in time. Rather it transcends time. History, therefore, does not go from past to future, but, conversely, the future also comes into the present and the past. This is why eschatology is the theology of hope that speaks about the future that is *novum*, breaking in, and transforming the present. Therefore, not only the being and action of God but also the purpose of creation cannot be understood without reference to the final end that has been appointed for all nature and history. I agree here with David Fergusson who argues that “The doctrine of the last things is already embedded within any adequate Christian account of God and creation.”

In accordance with the biblical view of the end, this hope concerns the completion of God’s plan and hence for the goal of history (Eph. 1; Col. 1). Therefore, life after life after death can be the right expression for the theology of history. If the term “resurrection” expresses the final hope for the vindication of God’s people in the Old Testament, the final end of this world is not abandonment but transformation. The transformation of this world as the completion of history is the most significant eschatological hope. I declare that it is “resurrection” that strongly represents this type of eschatology.

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37 Ezekiel 37.
Recapitulation

To explore Jesus’ resurrection and its relation to history, I proposed five research questions and discussed responses suggested by Pannenberg and Wright. Pannenberg’s and Wright’s application of critical realist views of Jesus’ resurrection provide them with a clue for its theological meaning that is directly supported by the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection. Their contributions, which are not to be underestimated, link the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection to its eschatological meanings.

1) The Balance between Faith and History

Recognizing that the most important challenge facing theology of the resurrection today is to provide an “account for the Christian claim to identify the presence of the raised Christ as a religious object in present experience,” Pannenberg and Wright link Jesus’ resurrection to its historical reality and ground Christian faith in the historical reality of Jesus’ resurrection. In this theological and historical context, they have contributed in major ways to the redefinition of the reality of the resurrection as historical and to the application of the critical realism for the historical treatment of Jesus’ resurrection.

They redefine the concept of reality and challenge the presuppositions of the modern and postmodern realist view. Having analyzed the metaphysical structure of reality as a whole, Pannenberg insists on the ontological priority of the future since Jesus’ resurrection is the event that proleptically previews and anticipates the end. Wright argues that a critical realistic view can be applied to the historical examination of Jesus’ resurrection. In this context, history and theology are integrated, and Jesus’ resurrection can be examined by applying the critical realist view of reality. Thus, insofar as the Bible reveals one general history, there is no need for separation.

Therefore, a critical realist view integrates history and theology. The answer to the question of the compatibility between faith and reason, or faith and the historical reality of

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Jesus’ resurrection, does not lie in a separation but in a redefinition of the concept of reality arrived at through a reconsideration of the presuppositions of the methodology that modern historians adopt.

2) The Historical Examination of the Corporeality of the Resurrected Body

Pannenberg and Wright focused on examining the corporeality of Jesus’ resurrection in their analysis of its historical reality. They argue that the metaphorical concept of resurrection can demonstrate the corporeality of Jesus’ resurrected body. The *soma pneumatikon*, the spiritual body entails both discontinuity and continuity. Its continuity can be implied from the anthropological concept of hope beyond death, in the case of Pannenberg, and from the faithfulness of the God who created the world good, in the case of Wright. In this context, the two independent types of Easter stories must be used to tell the story of the origins of the early church. In very similar ways, Pannenberg and Wright argue that, because Jesus’ resurrection after his execution occurred in general history, modification of the Jewish hope for the end found in the early church can only be explained by the two kinds of Easter narratives.

They also attempt to bridge the gap between the historical and the *kerygmatic* Jesus. For Barth, Bultmann, and theologians of the post-Enlightenment world, it was not the historical Jesus but the theologized Jesus that was the issue. Because Reimarus’ Enlightenment successors and Schweitzer did not, indeed, accept Jesus’ bodily resurrection, in their view Jesus had failed. And consequently Jesus was to be reborn as a moral teacher rather than being resurrected, in order to become Christ for them. Separating Christ from the historical Jesus leaves us with a Christ who is not authoritative because there is no way to disprove Jesus’ death under God’s curse (Deut. 21:23; cf. Gal. 3:13). But the corporeality of the resurrection identifies the Jesus before with the Jesus after his execution. Only corporeality proves that Jesus’ resurrection really happened, and the related two types of Easter stories have something to say about the origin of the early church.
3) The Establishment of the Kingdom of God with Jesus’ Messiahship

Following Calvin, Geerhardus Vos, Oscar Cullmann, and G. E. Ladd,² Pannenberg and Wright argue that the Kingdom of God was established in history through Jesus himself. Concluding that only Jesus’ resurrection bridges the gap between the established Kingdom of God and the Kingdom to come, they maintain that Jesus’ resurrection affirms that the historical Jesus was conscious of his mission through which the Kingdom is established and his Messiahship and divinity. Pannenberg and Wright assert that the fulfillment of the Messiahship in Jesus himself proves the establishment of the Kingdom of God because the apocalyptic expectation of the end of the world did not entail the abandonment of the world. Explaining the establishment within his concept of “anticipation,” Pannenberg sees the proleptic realization of the end through Jesus’ divinity as affirmed by Jesus’ resurrection, and Wright argues that the dramatic story of Israel reaches its climax in Jesus’ resurrection. The establishment of the Kingdom of God, then, is linked to the issue of the Christian life.

4) Christian Life

Pannenberg’s and Wright’s redefined understandings of apocalyptic eschatology solve the problem of dualism. The view that apocalyptic eschatology reflected Persian dualism has led to its being treated as doomsday eschatology. By examining apocalyptic eschatology from a historical perspective, Pannenberg and Wright identified the question of the Christian life, which concerns the belief in God’s good creation, as the true issue. According to Pannenberg, eschatology must explain the divine completion of creation and hence be developed in the context of God’s creation.³ In this paradigm of redefined apocalyptic eschatology, Jesus does not appear as a failure in his expectation of the imminent catastrophic end of world.

In Barth’s dialectical eschatology, God is infinitely transcendental, being infinitely distinct from history and from this world.⁴ According to Pannenberg’s reinterpretation of

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³ Requoted from Reason for Hope, 192.
⁴ Sauter designates the theological line of Barth, Bultmann, Gogarten, and Tillich as dialectical theology. As far I understand it, the term “dialectical” is based on the idea that God is infinitely distinct from the world, and where they use the term eschatology, dialectical eschatology can be applied to them as well. Cf. Gerhard Sauter, What Dare We Hope (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1999), 68-97; hereafter Sauter.
apocalyptic eschatology, however, God’s transcendence and immanence are paradoxically possible, for God as the creator is absolutely transcendental and immanent in relation to his creatures. Pannenberg links this possibility to his concept of eternity. As Wright asserts, the incarnation is possible because the world is created good. In transcendental and doomsday eschatology, creation is not the primary eschatological question, whereas in apocalyptic eschatology the issue of Christian life is deeply related to faith in God’s good creation.

5) The Nature of Eschatological Hope

Pannenberg’s and Wright’s redefined concepts of apocalyptic eschatology also solve the problem of the delay of the *parousia*. Like Reimarus, present-day theologians skim over the eschatological material in the Gospel because the hope of the *parousia* does not accord with their views. When the apocalyptic is understood as the catastrophic end of the world, the *parousia* as the second coming of Christ concerns the problem of time. According to Pannenberg and Wright, however, the *parousia* does not directly refer to Jesus’ second coming but to the events by which the realized Kingdom of God is affirmed in power.

Therefore, in their redefined apocalyptic view, the Kingdom of God has already been inaugurated in history, and there is no need to determine the timing of the second coming nor any reason to doubt that it will occur. The early Christians experienced the inaugurated Kingdom of God under Jesus’ lordship and the *parousia* in Jesus’ resurrection and consequently could anticipate the *parousia* with his second coming. The eschatological hope, therefore, is anticipated in the historical event and experienced in our present life. That is transformation and the Kingdom of God – but as the new creation and not as creation’s destruction.

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5 While Cullmann attempts to align D-day and V-day for the Kingdom of God in a linear history, Pannenberg and Wright take a further step in explaining the Kingdom in relation to the issue of Christian life in suffering in apocalyptic eschatology.

6 Schweitzer, 23.
Summary

The actual, physical resurrection of Jesus has been confessed by Christians throughout the centuries. In the post-Enlightenment world, however, it is not easy to speak of it as historical event, and as a result its theological meaning has been the primary focus. The historical aspect was disregarded as an element of the Easter event. What is then the reality of Jesus’ resurrection, when its theological meaning can be assured, without mentioning it as a general historical event? Are the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection and its theological meaning inextricably connected? These questions are the focus of this study, which consists of two parts. In answering these questions, the thought of Wolfhart Pannenberg and N.T. Wright is central with respect to five aspects of these questions: (1) Is belief in Jesus’ resurrection compatible with historical reality? (2) What is the nature of Jesus’ resurrected body? (3) What is the role of the resurrection within the N.T. idea of salvation? (4) What is the nature of the realized Kingdom of God? (5) What is the eschatological hope that is affirmed by the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection?

In Part I we ask: Can Jesus’ resurrection be proven to be a historical fact? After a brief introduction on the discussion concerning the historicity of the resurrection, Chapter One explores the question of the compatibility between the belief in Jesus’ resurrection and historical reality. Critical of any attempts to deny the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection or to downplay its importance in faith, Wolfhart Pannenberg suggests a redefined concept of reality in which faith and historicity are combined. According to Pannenberg, reality is reality only when it is grasped as a whole at the end of history. In the present we only experience reality as it is anticipated. Jesus’ resurrection especially has brought the eschaton into the present, and in this sense his resurrection is the point where reality as a whole can be anticipated in the examination of its historical facticity. History, then, is the ground of faith. Jesus’ resurrection is not an event that can be confirmed only by faith, but the event that is transforming power. Pannenberg warns against Kantian dualism and the attempts by Ritschl, Barth, and Bultmann to separate redemptive history from general history. The separation of Christian truth from rational inquiry and salvation history from general history has been influenced by scientism, which is characteristically atheistic and anthropocentric (Chapter One A).
N. T. Wright is also critical of any attempts to reduce faith in Jesus’ resurrection to Gnosticism, as some existential interpretations have done. With respect to the reality of Jesus’ resurrection, Wright analyzes Marxen’s phenomenological view, Troeltsch’s empirical principle, the existential interpretations found in Bultmann, Lüdermann, and Crossan, and Frei’s presupposition that the resurrection is the epistemological ground of faith. Suggesting that the critical realistic view of reality be applied to Jesus’ resurrection, Wright argues for integrating history and theology and that the Jewish stories, symbols, praxis, and questions of that time be investigated in relation to the resurrection (Chapter One B).

Chapter Two takes up the question of the nature of Jesus’ resurrected body. With respect to the historical reality of Jesus’ resurrection, Pannenberg examines the metaphor of resurrection and concludes that resurrection did not refer to an immortal soul. The metaphor is necessary because the resurrection is impossible to explain; the immortal soul, on the other hand, does not require any metaphors. With respect to the nature of Jesus’ resurrected body, Pannenberg argues that, although two types of stories emerged independently, they nonetheless depend on each other for validation because only Jesus’ appearances after his death could explain why the disciples gathered together again, and if Jesus’ body was decaying in the tomb, his appearances could not say anything about eschatology, such as the realization of the Kingdom of God (Chapter Two A).

In applying critical realism to Jesus’ resurrection, Wright compares the Jewish hope of resurrection and pagan belief systems in which, according to Wright, there was no need for or possibility of resurrection. Resurrection hope is based on the faithfulness of God, the creator. In this Jewish hope, resurrection was the metaphor for the restoration of Israel and the vindication of God’s people. In this context, the two types of Easter stories give a plausible answer to the origin of the early church because, despite the lack of the political changes expected, the early Christians introduced some radical modifications with regard to the hope of resurrection. The two types of stories provide answers to the question of why (Chapter Two B).

In Chapter Three we draw some conclusions from the preceding discussion, applying their concepts of reality, Pannenberg and Wright propose a successful model for the compatibility of faith and reason and the historical examination of Jesus’ resurrection by refocusing on the corporeality of the resurrected body. Even if Wright criticizes Pannenberg’s eschatological realism, both do propose that Jesus’ resurrection is historical. As an alternative methodology for examining the historical reality of Jesus’ resurrection, critical realism can be
suggested as the term to describe Pannenberg’s and Wright’s attempts (Chapter Three).

In Part II we focus on the theological implications of Jesus’ resurrection as a historical fact. Chapter Four discusses the role of the resurrection within the N.T. idea of salvation. The modern concepts of the Kingdom of God and the existential emphasis on the eschaton have made eschatology a matter of values. Eschatology and the Kingdom of God were not directly linked to the historical facticity of Jesus’ resurrection. In their arguments on the realization of the Kingdom of God, however, Pannenberg and Wright presuppose the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection. For Pannenberg Jesus’ resurrection is the affirmation of God’s Self-Disclosure in history. That had been expected as the event of the end, the resurrection was the proleptic realization of the end, and hence it reveals Jesus’ divinity. Salvation is assured because of Jesus’ resurrection, and God disclosed Himself in Jesus Christ (Chapter Four A).

Wright sees Jesus’ resurrection as the climax of Israel’s history. According to Wright, the hope of resurrection concerned the hope of the final return of Israel from exile, the coming of the Kingdom of God, and the end of the world. Nonetheless, despite the lack of any political changes, the early Christians began to believe that the Kingdom had arrived. The misunderstanding regarding the realization of the Kingdom of God is the result of misunderstanding Jewish apocalypticism. Jesus and his contemporaries did not expect the abandonment of the world; they expected the renewal of Israel and a new creation. Acknowledging that the concept of parousia has been misunderstood by apocalyptic eschatology as doomsday eschatology, Wright emphasizes its primary meaning, i.e. God’s coming as the King of the cosmos. For the early Christians, Jesus’ resurrection was the sign of the parousia, of God’s coming: hence, the Kingdom of God had been realized. Even if God’s means of restoring Israel was not what Israel expected, i.e. its political fulfillment, Jesus’ resurrection confirmed what he taught and did as the Messiah (Chapter Four B).

If the end is realized, the Kingdom of God has come. For the correct meaning of the realized Kingdom of God, we should focus on its non-spatial aspect. In Chapter Five concerning the question on the nature of the realized Kingdom of God, Pannenberg defines the Kingdom of God as realized under Jesus’ lordship and the parousia as the presence of the King within God’s new creation under Jesus’ lordship. Concerning the metaphysical relationship between time and eternity, Pannenberg identifies the Kingdom under the Son’s lordship with the Kingdom of God the Father. He warns of the possible danger of anthropological interpretations of the Kingdom of God, emphasizes that the Kingdom of God
as the eschatological future is brought about by God Himself, not by humans. If the futurity of the Kingdom as conveyed in Jesus’ message is a primary concern, we should note that the Kingdom is not a goal that is achieved through human labor and that the church is only the precursor of the Kingdom (Chapter Five A).

Wright extends the concept of *parousia* to include the realization of the apocalyptic hope. The difficulty of understanding the realization of the hope and *parousia* is the existence of much suffering and injustice in Christian lives under Jesus’ lordship. But the Jewish concept of the *parousia* as God’s coming in Jesus’ resurrection may mean that people are called to be the people of the true King. That is the nature of God’s Kingdom in the paradigm of apocalyptic eschatology. Because of such sufferings, it is impossible to define eschatology in an ethical sense only. We should not stop hoping for the physical arrival of the Kingdom. In this sense, Wright combines individual eschatology and social eschatology by arguing that, in the realized Kingdom, the new Israel is called to live by a new ethics under Jesus’ lordship. Eschatology does not simply concern the individual but is tied to the corporate work of the new Israel in this present world (Chapter Five B).

What is then the eschatological hope for the present life that is affirmed by the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection? That is the question we deal with in Chapter Six. The tension between “already” and “not yet” as the nature of the realized Kingdom has to do with the relation between our physical life and eternal life. Pannenberg and Wright look at eschatology not as a matter of timing but as the aim of God the Creator. That does not mean abandonment of the future eschatology. Warning against the existential interpretations offered by Barth, Bultmann, and other nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars, Pannenberg defines the concept of the *parousia* not in temporal terms but as decisive evidence. The evidence of the *parousia* as the confirmative exaltation of Jesus through the resurrection also encouraged early Christians in dealing with the matter of Jesus’ second coming. Pannenberg’s concept of the proleptic realization of the end strongly supports the concept of the *parousia* in Jesus’ lordship between the “already” and the “not yet.” The “*parousia already*” can be the guarantee for the “*parousia not yet*.” Here, the term “apocalyptic” does not mean the expectation of a catastrophic end of the world (Chapter Six A).

As such, according to Wright, eschatology should not be regarded as doomsday eschatology, and the nature of hope in apocalyptic eschatology should be redefined. The people of Israel awaited God’s final reign, the day of the Lord, in which all sufferings and
injustices would disappear. This hope took the shape of apocalyptic. The aim of history can be derived from the apocalyptic hope of resurrection. The dualistic view of Jesus’ resurrection is unable to explain the aim of present life and general history, Wright sees the goal of universal history and creation in light of Jesus’ resurrection. Creation and eschatology come together in the resurrection of the body as the goal of history. Here the concept of the good creation links up directly to the nature of eschatological hope. The nature of eschatological hope is the transformation of the cosmos, and the hope of resurrection concerns the *life after life after death* in the transformed body (Chapter Six B).

In my reexamination of theological issues in Chapter Seven, it is emphasized that Pannenberg and Wright make Jesus’ resurrection the central theme of the realized Kingdom of God. Since the first-century Jews have understood the Kingdom of God in the sense of God’s reign, we must understand the Kingdom not in spatial terms but as lordship. According to the traditional imagery in Scripture with respect to God’s coming, Jesus’ resurrection is to be considered the historical actuality of a supra-sensible reality (Chapter Seven A). At the same time, the resurrection historically confirmed Jesus’ divinity. Pannenberg and Wright attempt to cross the gap between the historical and theological Jesus. That is the work that needs to be refocused in this post-Enlightenment world that regards a divine Jesus to be an illusion. Appealing to theology “from below” cannot be regarded as unbelief (Chapter Seven B). The concept of *parousia* as God’s coming redefines the tension between time and eternity and between the *parousia already* and *not yet*. It is to be reemphasized that the principle of Jesus’ understanding of *parousia* can apply to the interpretation of Jesus’ second coming. How *parousia already* guarantees *parousia not yet* can be seen in the paradigm of Jesus’ understanding of the Son of Man as coming on the clouds in power and glory. Within the *parousia already*, Christians are called to be the true people of God under Jesus’ lordship awaiting the *parousia not yet* as the completion of history (Chapter Seven C). In this respect, apocalyptic eschatology should not be understood as doomsday eschatology but as cosmological, targeting the whole still suffering universe (Chapter Seven D). Christian ethics, therefore, emerges in a different way as part of the realized Kingdom of God in Jesus’ lordship. Demythologization is not necessary to gain ethical insight from Jesus’ resurrection. The realized Kingdom of God confirmed by Jesus’ resurrection calls the church to be the precursor of the Kingdom of God (Chapter Seven E). The eschatological hope here is that this physical world will be transformed into God’s *telos* of creation. Therefore, it is not life after death but the life after life after death that is the eschatological hope that Jesus’ resurrection
reveals (Chapter Seven F). History and theology go together, and therefore, theologcial meaning of Jesus’ resurrection cannot seperated from its historicity. Jesus’ resurrection as a historical event reshapes and reemphasizes the nature of eschatological hope.

In a brief Recapitulation I try finally to reap the harvest of research as to the relation of faith and history (1), the corporeality of the resurrected body (2), the Kingdom of God and Jesus Messiahship (3), Christian life (4) and the nature of eschatological hope (5).
Samenvatting

Door de eeuwen heen is de opstanding van Jezus door christenen verdedigd als een historische gebeurtenis. Sinds de Verlichting wordt echter de historische feitelijkheid van de opstanding in twijfel getrokken en heeft de theologische betekenis van de opstanding alle nadruk gekregen. Men heeft in toenemende mate het historische aspect van de opstanding genegeerd. Is de opstanding van Jezus Christus dan werkelijk een historische gebeurtenis? Is er een onmisbare verbinding tussen de historiciteit van Jezus’ opstanding en haar theologische betekenis? Deze vragen zijn het uitgangspunt van deze studie, die uit twee delen bestaat. Deel I gaat in op het exegetisch en systematisch debat over de historiciteit van de opstanding. Deel II gaat op de theologische implicaties van een verdediging van die historiciteit in. Om een antwoord op de boven gestelde vragen te krijgen, wordt het denken van Wolfhart Pannenberg en N. T Wright centraal gesteld aan de hand van vijf vragen: (1) Is het geloof in Jezus’ opstanding te verenigen met de historische werkelijkheid? (2) Wat is de aard van Jezus’ opgestane lichaam? (3) Hoe bevestigt Jezus’ opstanding de komst van Gods Koninkrijk? (4) Wat is de rol van de opstanding binnen het Nieuwtestamentische heilsbegrip? (5) Wat is de eschatologische hoop die bevestigd wordt door de historiciteit van Jezus’ opstanding?

In Deel I wordt de vraag gesteld: Kan bewezen worden dat Jezus’ opstanding een historische feit is? Na een korte inleiding over de discussie rond de historiciteit van de opstanding, verkent Hoofdstuk Een de vraag naar de compatibiliteit tussen het geloof in Jesus’ opstanding en de historische werkelijkheid. Kritisch tegenover alle pogingen om de historiciteit van Jezus’ opstanding te ontkennen of het belang ervan voor geloof te relativiseren, stelt Wolfhart Pannenberg een herdefinitie van het begrip ‘werkelijkheid’ voor dat geloof en historiciteit samenbrengt. Volgens Pannenberg kan de eenheid van de werkelijkheid alleen maar gezien worden als een geheel aan het eind van de geschiedenis. In de tegenwoordige tijd ervaren wij het geheel van de werkelijkheid slechts als anticipatie. Jezus’ opstanding heeft het einde naar het heden gebracht, en in deze zin is zijn opstanding het punt waar de werkelijkheid als geheel geanticipeerd kan worden. Deze opstandingsgeschiedenis is dan de grond van ons geloof. Jezus’ opstanding is geen gebeurtenis die alleen maar bevestigd kan worden door geloof. Het is ook een gebeurtenis die transformerende kracht uitoefent.
Pannenberg waarschuwt tegen Kantiaans dualisme en de pogingen van Ritschl, Barth, en Bultmann om in het verlengde daarvan heilsgeschiedenis en algemene geschiedenis uit elkaar te halen. Het scheiden van de christelijke waarheid van het redelijke onderzoek en de heilsgeschiedenis van de algemene geschiedenis werd beïnvloed door het sciëntisme, dat typisch atheïstisch en antropocentrisch van aard is (Hoofdstuk Een A).

Opstandingsgelooíf is in de ogen van Wright veel meer dan wat gnostici ervan maken, zoals sommige existentiële interpretaties hebben gedaan. Wright analyseert de phenomenologische opvatting van Marxen, Troeltsch’s empirische principe, en de existentiële uitleg van Bultmann, Lüdermann, en Crossan, en de vooronderstelling van Frei dat de opstanding de epistemologische grond van het geloof is. Hij stelt voor een kritische realistische kijk op de werkelijkheid toe te passen. Dan wordt een integratie van geschiedenis en theologie mogelijk en kunnen joodse verhalen, symbolen, praktijken, en vraagstukken van die tijd onderzocht worden in verband met de opstanding (Hoofdstuk Een B).

Hoofdstuk Twee vraagt naar de aard van Jezus’ opgestane lichaam. Met betrekking tot de historische werkelijkheid van Jezus’ opstanding onderzoekt Pannenberg de metafoor van de opstanding. Hij concludeert dat de betekenis van de opstanding niet is uit te leggen zonder de metafoor van de opstanding uit de dood, dit in tegenstelling tot bijvoorbeeld de gedachte aan een onsterfelijke ziel die op zich geen metafoor nodig heeft. Met betrekking tot de aard van Jezus’ opgestane lichaam, argumenteert Pannenberg dat de twee soorten verhalen over de opstanding (die van het lege graf en die van de verschijningen) zich weliswaar wel onafhankelijk van elkaar ontwikkelden, maar niettemin toch van elkaar afhangen. Slechts Jezus’ verschijningen na zijn dood kunnen verklaren waarom de discipelen weer bij elkaar kwamen en zonder leeg graf zou geen eschatologische verwachting (geen hoop op een algemene opstanding der doden) mogelijk zijn (Hoofdstuk Twee A).

Bij het toepassen van het kritisch realisme op Jezus’ opstanding vergelijkt Wright de joodse hoop van de opstanding met heidense geloofssystemen waarin, volgens Wright, er geen behoefte aan of mogelijkheid voor opstanding was. De hoop op opstanding is gebaseerd op de trouw van God, de schepper. Binnen deze joodse hoop geven de twee soorten paasverhalen (het lege graf en de verschijningen) een plausibel antwoord op de oorsprong van de vroege kerk omdat de vroege christenen enige radicale wijzigingen met betrekking tot de hoop op de opstanding in verband met de kwestie van het gebrek aan verwachte politieke veranderingen moesten aanbrengen (Hoofdstuk Twee B).

In Hoofdstuk Drie trekken wij een aantal conclusies uit de voorafgaande bespreking.
In hun werkelijksheidsbegrip stellen Pannenberg en Wright een bruikbaar model voor de verhouding van geloof en rede voor en kiezen ze voor een nieuwe benadering van het historisch onderzoek naar Jezus’ opstanding door zich opnieuw te concentreren op de lichamelijkheid van de opgestane Jezus. Ook al bekritiseert Wright Pannenbergs eschatologisch realisme, beiden gaan er gezamenlijk van uit dat Jezus’ opstanding historisch is. Als een alternatieve methodologie om de historische werkelijkheid van Jezus’ opstanding te benaderen, kan het kritisch realisme nog steeds gezien worden als een bruikbaar concept om de pogingen van Pannenberg en Wright te beschrijven.

In Deel II richten wij ons op de theologische implicaties van Jezus’ opstanding als een historische feit. Hoofdstuk Vier bespreekt de rol van de opstanding binnen het Nieuwtestamentische heilsbegrip. Het moderne begrip ‘Koninkrijk Gods’ en de existentiële nadruk op het eschaton hebben de toekomstverwachting gemaakt tot een kwestie van waarden. De toekomstverwachting en de verwachting van de komst van het Gods Koninkrijk waren niet onmiddelijk verbonden met de historiciteit van Jezus’ opstanding. In hun argumenten aangaande de komst van het Koninkrijk van God gaan Pannenberg en Wright echter beiden uit van de historiciteit van Jezus’ opstanding. Voor Pannenberg is Jezus’ opstanding de bevestiging van Gods Zelf-Openbaring in de geschiedenis. Die werd verwacht aan het einde van de geschiedenis, maar de opstanding is nu al de proleptische verwezenlijking van dat einde. Het heil is zeker vanwege Jezus’ opstanding: God heeft zichzelf immers daarin al bij wijze van anticipatie geopenbaard (Hoofdstuk Four A).

Wright ziet Jezus’ opstanding als het hoogtepunt van Israëls geschiedenis. Volgens Wright heeft de hoop op de opstanding te maken met de hoop op de definitieve terugkeer van Israël uit de ballingschap, met de komst van het Koninkrijk en met het einde van de wereld. Ondanks het gebrek aan politieke veranderingen begonnen de vroege christenen te geloven dat het Koninkrijk was aangebroken. Het misverstand aangaande de betekenis van de joodse apocalyptiek. Jezus en zijn tijdgenoten hebben niet de vernietiging van de wereld verwacht, maar de hernieuwing van Israël en de hele schepping. Wright erkent dat het begrip *parousia* werd misverstaan door de apocalyptische eschatologie als “dag des oordeels-eschatologie” (doomsday eschatology) en legt de nadruk liever op de oorspronkelijke betekenis van het woord *parousia*, d.w.z., de komst van God als de Koning van de kosmos. Voor de vroege christenen was Jezus’ opstanding het teken van de *parousia*, van Gods komst. Dus, het Koninkrijk is al aanwezig.
Ook al herstelde God niet wat Israël spoedig verwachtte, het herstel van zijn onafhankelijke staat, toch heeft Jezus’ opstanding bevestigd wat hij leerde en deed als de Messias (Hoofdstuk Vier B).

Als het eind al proleptisch verwezenlijkt is, dan is Gods Koninkrijk in feite al onder ons. Hoofdstuk Vijf vraagt dan ook naar de aard van het reeds aanwezige Koninkrijk van God. Voor de juiste betekenis van het Koninkrijk van God moeten wij focussen op zijn niet-ruimtelijke aspect. Pannenberg ziet het Koninkrijk van God als verwezenlijkt onder Jezus’ heerschappij en de parousia als de aanwezigheid van de Koning binnen Gods nieuwe schepping onder Jezus’ heerschappij. Met betrekking tot de metafysische verhouding tussen tijd en eeuwigheid identificeert Pannenberg het Koninkrijk onder de heerschappij van de Zoon met het Koninkrijk van God de Vader. Hij waarschuwt tegen het mogelijke gevaar van louter antropologische (psychologische) interpretaties van het Koninkrijk van God en benadrukt dat het Koninkrijk van God als de eschatologische toekomst door God zelf wordt gebracht, niet door mensen. De nog uitstaande komst van het Koninkrijk is in Jezus’ boodschap van primair belang. Daaruit kunnen we concluderen, dat het geen doel is dat tot stand kan worden gebracht door louter menselijke arbeid. De kerk is slechts de voorloper van het Koninkrijk (Hoofdstuk Vijf A).

Wright breidt het parousia begrip uit om de verwezenlijking van de apocalyptische hoop in te sluiten. De moeilijkheid van het blijven volharden in de hoop en de verwachting van de parousia schuilt in het bestaan van veel lijden en onrecht in het christelijke leven onder Jezus’ heerschappij. Maar het joodse begrip van de parousia als Gods komst in Jezus’ opstanding zou kunnen betekenen dat mensen geroepen zijn om het volk van de ware Koning te zijn. Dat is de aard van Gods Koninkrijk volgens het paradigma van de apocalyptische eschatologie. Wegens zulk lijden is het onmogelijk om de eschatologie slechts in een ethische zin te definiëren. We moeten niet ophouden te blijven hopen op de tastbare komst van het Koninkrijk. Wat dit betreft, combineert Wright de individuele eschatologie en de sociale eschatologie door te argumenteren dat in het verwezenlijke Koninkrijk het nieuwe Israël geroepen is om te leven volgens een nieuwe ethiek onder Jezus’ heerschappij. Eschatologie heeft niet alleen met het individu te maken maar is ook verbonden met het gezamenlijk werk aan het nieuwe Israël in deze huidige wereld (Hoofdstuk Vijf B).

Wat is dan de eschatologische hoop voor het huidige leven, bevestigd door de historiciteit van Jezus’ opstanding? Dat is de vraag in Hoofdstuk Zes. De spanning tussen het “reeds” en het “nog niet” als de aard waarop het Koninkrijk aanwezig is, heeft te maken met

Als zodanig moet daarom, volgens Wright, de eschatologie niet opgevat worden als “dag des oordeels-eschatologie.” De aard van de hoop in de apocalyptische eschatologie moet opnieuw gedefinieerd worden. Het volk van Israël heeft op de uiteindelijke heerschappij van God, de dag van de Heer, gewacht, waarin lijden en onrecht geen plaats meer zullen hebben. Deze hoop nam de vorm aan van apocalyptiek. Het doel van de geschiedenis kan afgeleid worden van de apocalyptische hoop van de opstanding. De dualistische opvatting van Jezus’ opstanding waarin een scheiding wordt gemaakt tussen heils- en algemene geschiedenis, is niet in staat om het doel van ons huidige leven met de meer algemene geschiedenis te verbinden. Daarom ziet Wright het doel van de algemene geschiedenis en de schepping in het licht van Jezus’ opstanding. De schepping en de eschatologie komen samen in de opstanding van het lichaam als het doel van de geschiedenis. Hier sluit het begrip van de goede schepping onmiddellijk aan bij de aard van de eschatologische hoop. De aard van de eschatologische hoop is de transformatie van de kosmos, en de hoop op de opstanding heeft daarom ook alles te maken met het leven na het leven na de dood in het getransformeerde lichaam (Hoofdstuk Zes B).

Onze slotbeschouwing over blijvende, theologische vraagstukken in Hoofdstuk Zeven benadrukt dat Pannenberg en Wright Jezus’ opstanding centraal stellen voor de komst van het Koninkrijk van God. Zoals de joden van de eerste eeuw Gods Koninkrijk zagen als Gods heerschappij, zijn Pannenberg en Wright ook geneigd om het Koninkrijk te begrijpen als heerschappij en niet in ruimtelijke zin. Volgens de traditionele beeldspraak van de Schrift aangaande Gods komst, kan Jezus’ opstanding opgevat worden als de historische verwezenlijking van een bovenzinnelijke werkelijkheid (Hoofdstuk Zeven A). Tegelijkertijd
Heeft de opstanding Jezus’ goddelijkheid op een historische manier bevestigd. Pannenberg en Wright proberen de kloof tussen de historische Jezus en de theologische Jezus te overbruggen. Het begrip van *parousia* als Gods komst herdefinieert de spanning tussen tijd en eeuwigheid door te verwijzen naar het “reeds” en “nog niet” karakter van de *parousia*. Het moet opnieuw benadrukt worden dat Jezus’ verstaan van de *parousia* toegepast kan worden op de interpretatie van Jezus’ wederkomst. Hoe de *parousia reeds* de *parousia nog niet* garandeert, wordt duidelijk gemaakt in het beeld dat de Mensenoorst op de wolken van de hemel zal komen met veel macht en heerlijkheid. Dat is duidelijk een toekomstbeeld. Binnen de *parousia reeds* zijn christenen geroepen om het ware volk van God te zijn onder Jezus’ heerschappij terwijl zij de *parousia nog niet* verwachten als de voleinding van de geschiedenis (Hoofdstuk Zeven C). Wat dit betreft, moet de apocalyptische eschatologie, zoals gezegd, niet begrepen worden als dag des oordels-eschatologie maar als doelend op het hele heelal dat nog aan het lijden is (Hoofdstuk Zeven D). Christelijk ethiek komt voort uit het *reeds*-karakter van het Koninkrijk van God onder Jezus’ heerschappij. Demythologiseren (Bultmann) is niet nodig om ethische inzichten uit Jezus’ opstanding te halen. Het *reeds*-karakter van het Koninkrijk van God zoals ze bevestigd is door Jezus’ opstanding roept de kerk nu al op om voorloper van Gods Koninkrijk te zijn (Hoofdstuk Zeven E). De eschatologisch hoop is dat deze tastbare wereld zal worden getransformeerd als Gods telos van de schepping. Dus niet het leven na de dood maar ‘het leven na het leven na de dood’ is de eschatologische hoop die Jezus’ opstanding openbaart (Hoofdstuk Zeven F). Geschiedenis en theologie gaan samen. Daarom kan de theologische betekenis van Jezus’ opstanding niet gescheiden worden van zijn historiciteit. Jezus’ opstanding als een in onze geschiedenis plaats gevonden gebeurtenis hervormt en benadrukt de aard van de eschatologische hoop.
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N.T. Wright


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