

Strings, Squares and Hypercubes. Scientific Insights into the Nature of Reality and the Implications for the Resurrection of the Body

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Abstract

The bodily resurrection of Jesus has been seen as the foundational doctrine by the Christian Church. This investigation will begin with a review of the religious background to the Christian doctrine of the resurrection, and then will examine the how the gospel accounts of the risen Jesus impacted the development of the doctrine of bodily resurrection. The analysis will then move to Paul's exposition in First Corinthians, of the dual nature of the risen Christ and what that means for the hope of a future general resurrection for humanity. A brief review will then see how this dual nature of the resurrection body was incorporated upon in the writings of the Early Church Fathers, and became core Christian doctrine within the Christian Creeds. How the scholarly debates that have downplayed or rejected the concept of the bodily resurrection since the nineteenth century will be reviewed. The investigation will then move to focus on two modern scholars, Jürgen Moltmann and Paul Badham, who have exemplified this view. Their theological arguments of a non-physical resurrection 'event' that is beyond our space-time domain will briefly be covered and how they feed into scientific concepts explored in art by Salvador Dali and modern scientific research that is potentially demonstrating the existence of higher dimensions as conceptualised by String Theory. The basics of String Theory will be covered, and then the implications for the Christian doctrine of bodily resurrection explored.

(235 words)

Introduction

For centuries, the bodily resurrection of Jesus has been seen as the foundational doctrine by the Christian Church, on which all else stands, or falls. The Apostle Paul writes; “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.” (1 Corinthians 15:17, 19). Paul in his foundational treatise on the risen Christ and eschatological resurrection of humanity in the ‘last days’, described the Jesus’ risen state as dual in nature, being both a spiritual and a bodily resurrection. The bodily resurrection and the empty tomb narratives in the gospels seemed to be taken for granted by New Testament Christians and the Early Church Fathers onwards. However, there have been increasing attempts by theologians over the past two hundred years or so, to strip out the supernatural elements of scripture and Church dogma to make the Christian faith more appealing and ‘rational’ to a contemporary audience. Some of these attempts appeal to science in that such miraculous events could not have taken place in real world environment where all the natural constants are known. However, science in it’s quest to seek to explain all known physical phenomena in the universe (the so called ‘Theory of Everything’) has developed one possible candidate – String Theory, that if even proved partly correct, could reinstate the plausibility of the doctrine of resurrection of the body (and indeed other Biblical ‘miracles’) within a scientific, and therefore ‘rational’ worldview.

This investigation will begin with a review of the religious background to the Christian doctrine of the resurrection, and then will examine the gospel accounts of the risen Jesus and their impact on the development of the doctrine of bodily resurrection. The analysis will then move to Paul’s exposition in First Corinthians of the dual nature of the risen Christ, and what that means for the hope of a general resurrection for humanity at some future point in time. A brief review will then see how this understanding of the dual nature of the resurrection body was elaborated upon in the writings of the Early Church Fathers, and became core Christian doctrine within the Christian Creeds. An overview of the scholarly debates that have downplayed or rejected the concept of the bodily resurrection since the nineteenth century will then be undertaken. The investigation will then move to focus on two modern scholars, Jürgen Moltmann and Paul Badham, who have exemplified this view. Their theological arguments of a non-physical resurrection ‘event’ that is beyond our space-time domain will briefly be covered and how they feed into scientific concepts

explored in art by Salvador Dali and modern scientific research that is potentially demonstrating the existence of higher dimensions as conceptualised by String Theory. The basics of String Theory will then be covered, and then the implications of the existence of these higher dimensions for the Christian doctrine of the bodily resurrection will be explored. An explanation of how traditional understanding of the dual nature of Christ's resurrection, both physical and spiritual can be explained within a scientific framework of String Theory will then be offered. In conclusion, a tentative argument will then be put forth that rehabilitates the traditional Church doctrine of the bodily resurrection within a rational scientific worldview, that is in stark contrast to the modern scholars who only see the resurrection as a strictly transcendent event.

Religious background to the concept of bodily resurrection

The concept of a bodily resurrection was not one that can be easily be found or even hinted at in ancient pagan religious customs. There were rituals of eating with the dead, necromancy, and the celebration and cultic rituals relating to dying and rising gods (e.g. the Egyptian god Osiris). There were concepts of earning immortality and communion with the gods after death through sacramental worship in some of the mystery religions,¹ but none seemed to involve a bodily resurrection from the dead as described in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. When assessing the ancient pagan beliefs about life after death, Wright states that the road to the mythical underworld as set out in varying beliefs, only seemed to run one way.² While it was believed in the pagan world that many deities and spirits of the dead may had some vestige of appearance or interaction with the living world, they were still very much bound to the realm of the dead. The ancient world saw death as all powerful, final and inescapable and although they have various beliefs about life after death, the living world was always seen as more preferential. "The ancient world was thus divided into those who said the resurrection could not happen... and those who said they didn't want it to happen, knowing that it couldn't anyway."³

¹ Barret, C.K. Ed. *The New Testament Background* Revised Ed. (London: SPCK, 1996) p120

² Wright, N.T. *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (London: SPCK, 2017) p81

³ Wright, N.T. *ibid.* p82

Pre-Christian belief in bodily resurrection from the dead really only is represented within the Old Testament. Verses that infer resurrection include; “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side” (Job 19: 25-27). Further, Job 33:15-28 describes a soul being redeemed from going down to the Pit and his life seeing light again. Psalm 16:9-10 refers to saving the body from the grave, Ezekiel chapter 37 is the vision of the dry bones returning to physical life (a vision which has been open to a number of interpretations⁴).

However, it is in the book of Daniel, a writer of which gives the only really explicit affirmation of resurrection from the dead in the Old Testament; “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” (Dan 12:2). Along with these Old Testament references, there were also with statements on or alluding to the resurrection in apocryphal literature such as 2 Baruch 60; “And it shall come to pass after these things, when the time of the advent of the Messiah is fulfilled, that he should return to glory. The all those who have fallen asleep in hope of him shall rise again.”⁵ Also 1 Enoch 51:1 “And in those days shall the earth also give back that which has been entrusted to it, And Sheol also shall give back that which it has received. And hell shall give back that which it owes.”⁶ there are also further references in Psalms of Solomon and II Maccabees that resulted in a general belief of a future resurrection by many Jewish groups (notably the Pharisees but also the Essenes⁷), that the dead would be raised up, the righteous to eternal life (whether to a new life in this world or some other state is not clear) and the impious to some form of eternal torment.⁸

This formation of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead had by the time of the New Testament had “become so central to the belief of some groups, particularly the Pharisees, that it had become the touchstone of orthodoxy.”⁹ Scott elaborates on this particular doctrinal development in early Judaism as follows:

⁴ ‘Ezekiel’ by Hirsh E. et al. in *Jewish Encyclopedia* <https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5950-ezekiel> [Retrieved 28/11/2021]

⁵ Barret, C.K. Ed. *The New Testament Background* Revised Ed. (London: SPCK, 1996) p336

⁶ Charles, R.H. *The Book of Enoch* (London: SPCK, 1917) p32

⁷ Barret, C.K. Ed. *ibid.* p239

⁸ Rowland, C. *Christian Origins* 2nd Ed. (London: SPCK, 2002) p90

⁹ Rowland, C. *ibid.* p90

By the time of the New Testament, belief in in immortality and some form of resurrection seems to have been accepted by most Jewish groups (except the Sadducees) and the average Jews... Thus the second petition of the daily prayer (the Eighteen Benedictions) ends, "Blessed are you O Lord, who bring the dead to life." Clearly, immortality and resurrection were among the components of intertestamental religious thought.¹⁰

It is therefore clear that the concept of a bodily resurrection at the end of the age was extant in first century Judaism. So much so, that there were disputes by some of the early rabbis about whether the resurrection meant resuscitation of the physical body or the soul, or both.¹¹

This first century Jewish belief can be demonstrated in the New Testament in the declaration of Martha to Jesus about her dead brother Lazarus; "Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." (John 11:23-24). Further, Jesus himself is said to affirm the belief in the resurrection in his exchange with the Sadducees, see Mark 12:18-27, Matthew 22:23-33 and Luke 20:27-38.

However, this relatively vague eschatological belief in the resurrection by many Jews in the first century C.E., was radically transformed by Jesus' followers after his death and resurrection. So much so that it become the central tenant of the New Testament Church; "The conviction that God not only sent his Son into the world but also vindicated Him after His death upon the cross is fundamental to the Christian witness and the cornerstone of Christian Faith and theology." Furthermore; "it is a fundamental Christian belief that the Parousia or 'Second Coming' of Christ departed souls will be restored to bodily life and the saved will enter this renewed form upon the life of heaven."¹²

To examine this transformation of the Jewish understanding of the resurrection into the more defined central doctrine of Christianity, we need to return to the monumental events that are described on that first Easter. As Moltmann puts it,

¹⁰ Scott, J. *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books. 1995) , p281

¹¹ Barton, G. & Kaufmann, K. 'Resurrection' in *Jewish Encyclopedia*
<https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12697-resurrection> [Retrieved 28/11/2021]

¹² Livingstone, E.A. *Oxford Concise Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd Ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p491

“The first question regarding the reality of the resurrection of Christ will always be concerned with the fact which is reported and proclaimed by the Easter witnesses.”¹³

We will therefore now turn our attention to those accounts by those ‘Easter witnesses’ to help explain this transformation in the understanding of the meaning of the resurrection.

The resurrection in the Gospels

There is no account of the resurrection event itself as there were no eye witnesses during the period that Jesus’ body was in the tomb. Therefore, the descriptions of the mode, mechanism, or observable occurrences as the nature of the resurrection itself are entirely lacking. Therefore, the New Testament accounts in the gospels and letters can only pertain to the post resurrection experience and implications of the risen Christ. All four writers of the gospels record the aftermath of the resurrection of Jesus in similar narrative and chronologic styles. All record (with differing details) certain of the women disciples going to the tomb early on that first Easter morning. They subsequently discovered that the sealing stone had been rolled away, along with indications of an empty tomb and angelic messengers. The writer of Mark (generally accepted as likely to be earliest of the gospels) indicates that the body of Jesus had vanished;

As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. (Mark 16:5-6)

The writer of Matthew follows a similar formula of angelic visitations to a group of women who had come to the tomb. Unlike Mark, Matthew has the account of a Roman guard present at the tomb and an earthquake, along with the risen Jesus meeting the women on the way as they were hurrying to the disciples. The Lukan account differs from Mark and Matthew by having Peter, upon hearing of the story from the women, running to the tomb and looking in seeing it empty with only the linen grave cloths lying by themselves. The later Johannian text records a similar

¹³ Moltmann, J. *Theology of Hope*, (London: SMC Press, 1967) p172

account with both Peter and the “disciple that Jesus loved” rushing to the tomb after being informed by Mary Magdalene that Jesus’s body was missing;

Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; (John 20; 3-8)

This narrative is interesting because it adds details to the Lukan account of what the tomb contained. Clearly the body was missing, and the linen cloths used to wrap and embalm the corpse were just “lying there” (as also recorded in Luke 24:12). The one curious detail that is mentioned almost in passing, is that the separate cloth that had covered the head was “rolled up” and seeming placed separately from the rest of the grave cloths. Other translations render the word ‘rolled’ as ‘folded’ (e.g. ESV and NIV). The Greek work here is *entylyssō* meaning to wrap or twist. So the writer of this narrative draws a clear distinction and contrast between the bulk of the grave cloths that covered the body simply laying in place, and the separate deliberately folded or rolled head cloth. This very specific detail does not seem that this was simply made up, despite the fact that the gospel of John was probably the last of the four gospels to be written, possibly as late as 150 CE,¹⁴ rather it seems to indicate that it was a very specific detail that was observed, potentially by an eye witness (whoever that actual witness was).

After the experiences of the empty tomb by the women and disciples, Matthew only records one post resurrection appearance to his disciples in Galilee when he gives his followers to the so called ‘Great Commission’ (Matthew 28:16-20). The accounts of the post resurrection appearances recorded in Mark (Mark 16:9-20) are generally regarded as later additions and not part of the original text. These were added

¹⁴ Smalley. S ‘The Gospel according to John’ in Metzger, B. & Coogan, M. Eds. *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) p 375

possibly by later believers to resolve the unsatisfactory conclusion.¹⁵ Only the Lukan and Johannine accounts record the risen Jesus as showing his disciples the bodily scars of the crucifixion, appearing and disappearing at will and eating at different times. Luke reports the encounter of the two disciples of the road to Emmaus where Jesus seeming was able to prevent himself from being recognised. John records the Galilee encounter where he cooks breakfast for his disciples (we will revisit these latter Easter accounts later in the analysis). All of these seemingly confused and unconnected narratives are on the surface extraordinary and therefore perceived as unbelievable by some scholars throughout the ages. Indeed, Badham, Moltmann and others have argued that because the empty tomb narratives are so confused and unbelievable, that they cannot be not historical events. Rather, the accounts themselves are allegorised symbolism that points to the fact that the resurrection is transcendent and not directly experienced in human history, rather it is an event that transcends space and time.

However, others see that the disjointed and incoherent nature of the Easter accounts as in themselves gives credence that something way beyond the experience of any of the witnesses had indeed taken place. As Williams notes;

...what we have is a series of resurrection stories that are abrupt confused and unpolished...the untidiness of the resurrection stories is one of the main reasons for taking them seriously as historical reportage. What is going on is clearly people struggling to find words for something they had not expected.¹⁶

Further, Wright argues "History, I believe brings us to a point where we are bound to say there really was an empty tomb and there really were sightings of Jesus, the same yet transformed."¹⁷

In bringing this analysis of the 'Easter witnesses' accounts as recorded in the gospels to close, it can be seen that all four accounts agree on the fact of an empty tomb. Matthew, Luke and John record incredible accounts of the physicality of the

¹⁵ Tuckett, C.M. 'Mark' in Barton, J. & Muddiman, J. *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) pp921-22

¹⁶ Williams, R. *God with Us. The meaning of the cross and resurrection – then and now.* (London: SPCK, 2017), Kindle Edition, Location 796

¹⁷ Wright, T. *Surprised by Hope*, (London: SPCK, 2007) p81

risen Jesus that one hand bears the scars of the crucifixion, but can appear and disappear at will. Further, this disturbing fact points to the disciples both seeing and believing in the bodily resurrection of Jesus;

When every argument has been considered and weighed, the only conclusion acceptable to the historian must be that the opinion of the orthodox, liberal sympathiser and critical agnostics alike... are simple interpretations of the one disconcerting fact: namely that the women who set out to pay their last respects to Jesus found to their consternation, not a body but an empty tomb.¹⁸

And;

All the signs are that the first disciples really did believe that Jesus was bodily alive again – albeit in a new body which seemed to possess properties for which they were quite unprepared - and that the easily the best explanation for this is that were right.¹⁹

1 Corinthians 15 and the resurrection

We now move on to examining what is seen to be the key foundational Christian writing on the resurrection, the fifteenth chapter of Paul's first letter the Corinthians. In it, he set out his view of the core of the gospel message about the resurrection of Jesus and what this meant to believers; "For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures" (I Cor. 15:3-5). Paul then goes on to list the number of post resurrection 'appearances' of Jesus to the various disciples including over 500 at one time. Last of all, he records that he personally witnessed the risen Christ. All this was to provide clear proof to his audience that Jesus had really been raised from the dead. It should be noted here that Paul stresses that the resurrection was "of first importance", in essence, it was foundational to their faith. The 'proofs' were also set out to counter the prevailing belief among some in the Church that there was

¹⁸ Vermes. *G Jesus the Jew*, (London: 197) p41 quoted in Rowland, C. *ibid.* p189

¹⁹ Williams, R *ibid.*

no resurrection of the dead. For the next few verses, Paul goes on to point by point refute this view, because ultimately without the belief in the resurrection, it undermines the whole gospel message and in essence destroys Christianity.²⁰

Paul then goes on to make an emphatic statement that reinforces all that he has said previously; “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.” (1 Corinthians 15:20). Here then he restates with force that Jesus was raised from the dead, and then explains why this is so important for Christians by setting out the promise that Jesus’ resurrection was the first of more to come; “But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:23). Here Paul uses the term ‘first fruits’ as “the first instalment of the crop which foreshadows and pledges the ultimate offering of the whole. Because Christ has been raised from the dead, the resurrection of the rest of mankind ...is assured.”²¹

Further on in his discourse, he enters into what is probably the heart of his dispute with those Corinthians who reject the resurrection, the nature of the resurrection body²². He answers those detractors forthrightly; “But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.” (1 Corinthians 15: 35-36). He then goes on to use grain seed as an analogy, that seeds are dead (or inert), but when sown they seemingly ‘die’ but then grow into living plants. He further speaks of different types of seed that grow into different plant bodies. He then describes different types of animals all of which have different bodies, he further describes the different heavenly elements, stars, sun and moon, all of which have different radiant ‘glory’. “So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. (1 Corinthians: 15:42-44). Here Paul explains that resurrection means transformation, what body is ‘sown’ (seed being

²⁰ Barrett, C.K. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* 2nd Ed. (London: A&C Black, 1971)pp 348-9

²¹ Barrett, C.K. *ibid.* p350

²² Barclay, J. ‘1 Corinthians’ in Barton, J. & Muddiman, J. *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) p1131

inert, and in all intents and purposes dead) in death is corruptible, dishonourable and weak. But what is raised is a completely different kind of body, a vibrant immortal, glorious and powerful body, which then Paul summarises this discourse by simply stating that there is natural body and a spiritual body, and so answering his earlier question; “How are the dead raised?”

Paul then elaborates on the differences between the spiritual and natural bodies, firstly contrasting the first man, Adam in the creation story, who became a living mortal human, with Jesus whom he calls the “last Adam” who became a life giving spirit. Here Paul contrasts the nature of Adam as being the progenitor of the human race who had a natural mortal body that was subject to corruption and death. However, Jesus who did occupy the same natural mortal body, after the resurrection became a “life giving spirit.” Here Paul links the first Adam to Jesus who he declares as the “last Adam” pointing to a new creation that is beyond the mortal and that Jesus will be the progenitor of a new race, “the one new humanity” (Ephesians 2:15). For Paul, this new race is made manifest by the by the risen Christ and Jesus as the life giving spirit is not merely alive, but creatively life giving.²³ As Paul stated earlier in his letter; “for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:23).

For Paul, Jesus is not just the first example of this new race, but rather he is the one through whom the creator will accomplish this, “...because he is the one who as ‘life giving spirit’, will be performing the work of raising the dead.”²⁴ Paul then continues in his elaboration of the Adam - Jesus analogy, this time referring to Adam’s creation from the dust of the earth and in contrast, the ‘last Adam’ is from heaven. Paul then continues that just as the descendants of Adam bore his likeness, the likeness of mortal decay, the resurrected spiritual body will instead bear the image of the heavenly man.

The last section of Paul’s discourse on the resurrection is “a triumphant declaration of the hope on which the whole Christian faith depends a ‘mystery’ which makes

²³ Barrett, C.K. *ibid.* p374

²⁴ Wright, N.T. *The Resurrection of the Son of God* *ibid.* p355

sense of the present in light of the future.”²⁵ He brings the resurrection motif to a conclusion by tying some of the themes of his earlier arguments together in exuberant finale. He categorically states that flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of God (so ruling out resurrected corpses as some believed, and that the metaphorical vision of the valley of the dry bones becoming resuscitated bodies that Ezekiel seemed to describe) and so transformation of the physical body to the heavenly one was essential. This transformation Paul summarises in another letter; “He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.” (Philippians 3:21).

Paul then describes an eschatological ‘mystery’ of when those who are alive when Jesus appears and the dead arise, those who are alive ‘at the last trumpet’ (see also Matthew 24:31) are seemingly transformed in a ‘twinkling of an eye’ from the physical mortal form into the immortal heavenly body. “The impersonal statements ‘it is sown in a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body’, leave unclear whether the spiritual body is itself reused in the resurrection or whether the self gains a new body quite distinct from the old. This ambiguity matches Paul’s silence as to what happened to the body of Jesus and whether his tomb was empty.”²⁶

He then reiterates four times using slightly different wording, that the resurrected (or changed) body must become immortal and incorruptible to be able to enter into God’s kingdom. This multiple reiteration is to drive home the point to those detractors of the resurrection in the Corinthian Church. He then concludes the resurrection theme by appealing back to the Old Testament in loose references to Isaiah and Hosea about victory over death. Here, Paul links those prophetic utterances to their ultimate fulfilment of the defeat of death that will be made possible through the resurrection of Jesus, along with the promise of a general resurrection for all believers. Paul places himself at the end of history as it were, and mocks death as already defeated.²⁷

²⁵ Barclay, J. ‘1 Corinthians’ in Barton, J. & Muddiman, J. *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) p1132

²⁶ Barclay, J. *ibid.* p1132

²⁷ Barrett, C.K. *ibid.* p383

“Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:55-57).

In his concluding words on the resurrection motif, Paul briefly reminds his audience that the cause of death is sin and that through the law, sin had overwhelming power (Romans 7:7-14). However, Jesus invaded death’s domain and robbed it of its pain and suffering.²⁸ Paul in essence declares Jesus’ victory over sin in his sacrificial death, a death that he shared with all humankind. But in his rising, he gave a promise to draw the sting of death out from the human race. The victory is not yet complete, until the eschatological end of things, but Paul was categorical about the victory of Jesus’ over death that he declared victory in the present tense.²⁹

In his concluding remarks to this section of the letter, Paul encourages his audience that the stirring and hope filled message he had just delivered, should spur them on to be even more diligent in God’s work; “Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

The Creeds

The concept of the resurrection was not just intrinsically linked to the Christian faith, but was seen as absolutely foundational by the early Christians. This can be demonstrated in the elaboration of New Testament scripture about the resurrection into the development of the early Christian creeds which set out the basis and fundamental tenants of the Christian faith. For example, the Nicene Creed which was first adopted in 325 CE, is explicit in its exposition and reason for the resurrection:

...[Jesus] was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and

²⁸ Winter, B. ‘1 Corinthians’ Carson, D.A. et al Eds. *New Bible Commentary* 4th Ed. (Leicester; Inter-Varsity Press, 1994) p1185

²⁹ Barrett, C.K. *ibid.* p384

ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end... And we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.³⁰

The Apostolic Creed that was first seen in written form in a letter by St Ambrose in around 390 CE, also sets out the centrality of resurrection in the core statement of faith which is still used by Christians in the western churches today.³¹

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord who...suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in...the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen³²

Likely originating at some time in the late third century CE, the 'Athanasian Creed' again expounds the centrality of the resurrection to the Christian faith;

He suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, on the third day arose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead; at His coming all men have to arise again with their bodies and will render an account of their own deeds: and those who have done good, will go into life everlasting, but those who have done evil, into eternal fire.³³

The above extracts from these three early Church creeds, we see that the bodily resurrection of Jesus is fundamental tenant of the gospel message which then gives rise to the future hope of the bodily resurrection of believers at the second coming of Jesus that will usher in a kingdom that "shall have no end".

³⁰ <https://ccel.org/creeds/nicene.creed.html> [retrieved 23/11/20]

³¹ Livingstone *ibid*, p32

³² <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11049a.htm> [retrieved 23/11/20]

³³ <https://www.learnreligions.com/the-athanasian-creed-p2-542141> [retrieved 23/11/20]

The Early Church Fathers

The Early Church Fathers expounded and elaborated on the centrality of the doctrine on the resurrection for the Christian church and the nature of the risen Christ being both spiritual and physical which that was a precursor to greater harvest of souls in the 'last days'. The following brief extracts from the writings of three early theologians gives a snapshot of Christian theological understating of the resurrection of the body over the first three centuries of the church.

Ignatius, writing in to the Smyrnaeans in around 110 CE, laid out clearly his belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus and the physicality of his post resurrection body:

For I know that after His resurrection also He was still possessed of flesh, and I believe that He is so now. When, for instance, He came to those who were with Peter, He said to them, Lay hold, handle Me, and see that I am not an incorporeal spirit. And immediately they touched Him, and believed, being convinced both by His flesh and spirit. For this cause also they despised death, and were found its conquerors. And after his resurrection He ate and drank with them, as being possessed of flesh, although spiritually He was united to the Father.³⁴

Justin Martyr in his 'Dialogue' with Trypho the Jew, which was written somewhere between 155-160 CE asserted the belief by believing Christians that there would be a resurrection of the dead.; "But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem"³⁵

In his fragmentary treatise on the resurrection, Justin elaborates upon the uniqueness of the resurrection in the face of the varying pagan beliefs at the time, he asserts that when Jesus rose from the dead, that there was a bodily resurrection 'of the flesh', but there was also an integral spiritual nature as well;

³⁴ 'The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans' Chapter 3 in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0109.htm> [Retrieved 28/11/2021]

³⁵ 'Justin Martyr 'Dialogue with Trypho' chapter 80 in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/01286.htm> [Retrieved 28/11/2021]

“If He had no need of the flesh, why did He heal it? And what is most forcible of all, He raised the dead. Why? Was it not to show what the resurrection should be? How then did He raise the dead? Their souls or their bodies? Manifestly both. If the resurrection were only spiritual, it was requisite that He, in raising the dead, should show the body lying apart by itself, and the soul living apart by itself. But now He did not do so, but raised the body, confirming in it the promise of life. Why did He rise in the flesh in which He suffered, unless to show the resurrection of the flesh?”³⁶

Writing in the very late in the fourth century CE, Jerome, writing nearly two centuries later than Justin, argued that the resurrection of Jesus was both bodily and spiritual “In few words he shows the whole mystery of the resurrection, that is, both the reality of the flesh and the growth in glory.” He further made the stark statement; “I will openly confess the faith of the Church. The reality of a resurrection without flesh and bones, without blood and members, is unintelligible.”³⁷ Which indicates a bolder affirmation of the physicality of the bodily resurrection which was to counter the more allegorical non-physical Origenistic belief about the resurrection that had permeated parts of the Eastern Church at the time.

Denominational positions on the resurrection

This early belief in the dual nature of the risen Christ and the corresponding hope of a future physical and spiritual resurrection of the body for the pious, is carried through in the three main Christian denominations that formed and split during the medieval and early modern periods.

In Eastern Orthodox belief, the resurrection of Jesus is a central tenant of the faith, and is seen as a resurrection of both his physical and spiritual states as indivisible components of the event.³⁸ This dual nature of Jesus’ resurrection is also seen to be

³⁶ Justin Martyr ‘On the Resurrection’ chapter 9 in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0131.htm> [Retrieved 28/11/2021]

³⁷ Jerome ‘To Pammachius Against John of Jerusalem para.31 in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3004.htm> [Retrieved 07/11/21]

³⁸ John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* Book 4, Chapter 1 http://www.orthodox.net/fathers/exactiv.html#BOOK_IV_CHAPTER_I [Retrieved 01/12/2021].

an anticipation of a similar general resurrection of humanity at the end of the age which will reunite body and soul.³⁹

Roman Catholic understanding of the resurrection is very similar to the Eastern Orthodox belief in that the risen Christ had physicality in that his risen body was the same body that had suffered the crucifixion.⁴⁰ However, Christ also received a transformed spiritual body that is not limited by space and time.⁴¹ Catholic doctrine also includes a belief in a general resurrection at the end of time, in which humanity will be resurrected in the same dual nature as physical but transformed immortal spiritual bodies.⁴²

In the same way, Protestantism also subscribes to the dual physical and spiritual nature of the Christ's resurrection.⁴³ It also shares the belief that there will be a general resurrection of humanity at the end of the age that will unite their physical bodies and spiritual souls into a transformed state.⁴⁴

As can be seen, all three of the main Christian denominations generally agree that the resurrection of Jesus were both physical and spiritual in nature. They also concur that there will be general resurrection 'in the last days' in which humanity will also rise from the dead in bodies that will have the similar physical and spiritual characteristics. These central beliefs about the resurrection within the Christian church continued despite many early internal theological challenges during the first centuries of the Church's existence. Examples of such threats include; Docetism, Gnosticism, Origenism, Manichaeism among others. Along with these internal challenges, the doctrine of the resurrection, along with the Church itself faced external challenges through the following centuries by philosophical, political, social and scientific developments in the secular world and the corresponding growth of

³⁹ John of Damascus, *Concerning the Resurrection*, Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith Book IV, Ch. 27 <http://orthodoxinfo.com/death/resurrection.aspx> [Retrieved 29/11/17].

⁴⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Chapter 2, Article 5 Paragraph 2:645.

⁴¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Chapter 2, Article 5 Paragraph 2:645. https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P1S.HTM [Retrieved 30/11/21].

⁴² Maas, A. (1911). 'General Resurrection', in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12792a.htm> [Retrieved 29/11/2021].

⁴³ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 8:4 http://files1.wts.edu/uploads/pdf/about/WCF_30.pdf [Retrieved 30/11/2021].

⁴⁴ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 32:2 http://files1.wts.edu/uploads/pdf/about/WCF_30.pdf [Retrieved 29/11/2021].

rationalism. In the nineteenth & twentieth centuries these diverse internal and external challenges were synthesised by some Catholic and Protestant theologians who began to challenge the doctrinal orthodoxy, particularly on the resurrection and other supernatural events recorded in the New Testament.

Modern challenges to the bodily resurrection

Liberal Protestant theologians in the nineteenth century such as Friedrich Schleiermacher and Ferdinand Bauer and others, synthesised philosophy from the Hegel and Kant, along with early Biblical criticism and political liberalism and adopted more anti-supernatural interpretation of the Bible and tradition. To them and the supernatural events in the gospels, such as the resurrection symbolise the progress of humanity towards perfection.⁴⁵

Although there were more conservative and traditional scholarly reactions to this thinking. This particular liberal thought form was developed further by later theologians from both the Protestant and Catholic traditions.

An example of such a Catholic scholar is Hans Küng (1928-2021) who argued that the risen Christ was not a bodily resurrection, rather it involved a completely new mode of existence. He sees this 'new existence' as not temporal, but transcending space and time. Further, Küng argues that Jesus' resurrection was not an historic event that impacts our temporal universe, but as a transcending move from human death, into the dimension of God. It is a radical transformation in into a wholly different state that is not physical and cannot involve bodily continuity.⁴⁶ Here we see demonstrated the tension between some modern Catholic theologians, and the traditional dogma of the church.

Within the Protestant tradition, Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) sought to remove the myth of the supernatural stories of the New Testament and so make the gospel relevant in the modern world. However, he still viewed the resurrection of Jesus as crucial to the understanding of new life. However, his existential understanding of Jesus' resurrection was that it (along with other New Testament 'miracles') was

⁴⁵ Hebblethwaite, B. *The Christian Hope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) pp107-111.

⁴⁶ Hebblethwaite, B *ibid.* p158

mythological. It was a symbol representing the eternal and the move to an authentic life of faith.⁴⁷ Bultmann therefore dismissed the notion that the risen Christ included a literal bodily component. Rather, he believed that Jesus' resurrection was allegorised as the continuation of the Christian message after Christ's death.

Bultmann's thinking resonated with many liberal Protestant scholars into the twenty first century as can be exemplified by the late Bishop John Shelby Spong who wrote "Paul did not envision the Resurrection as Jesus being restored to life in this world but as Jesus being raised into God. It was not an event in time but a transcendent and transforming truth."⁴⁸

While there are numerous theologians who have to varying degrees dismissed or downplayed the physicality of the bodily resurrection of the risen Christ, we will only focus on two recent Protestant scholars, Jürgen Moltmann and Paul Badham as examples of the varying views of the bodily resurrection, as they have interesting similarities and differences that will help in elaborate this point of view.

Jurgen Moltmann (b.1926)

"Christianity stands or falls with the reality of the raising of Jesus from the dead by God"⁴⁹, however for Moltmann the nature of the resurrection is a question that demands an answer. One of the elements of the question is central is; "Is he risen in the sense of a reality that is accessible to 'historical science.'"⁵⁰

In his analysis, on the surface he seems to categorically state that Jesus' resurrection was an historical event; "The resurrection of Christ is without parallel in the history known to us. But it can for that very reason be regarded as a 'history making event' in the light of which all other history is illuminated."⁵¹ However, he does then go on to qualify this statement in saying that the raising of Jesus is historic, not because it took place within history, but rather that that it *makes* history. This is because the raising of Jesus, points to an eschatological future for all of

⁴⁷ Hebblethwaite, B *ibid.* p133

⁴⁸ Spong, J.S. *On The Resurrection* <https://www.wisdom2be.com/essays-insights-wisdomwritings-spirituality/bishop-john-shelby-spong-on-the-resurrection> [Retrieved 7 December 2021]

⁴⁹ Moltmann, J. *Theology of Hope* (London: SMC Press, 1967) p165

⁵⁰ Moltmann, J. *ibid.* p166

⁵¹ Moltmann, J. *ibid.* p180

human kind and the created order. Trying to see Jesus' resurrection as an historical event limits the meaning of the resurrection. Rather the resurrection should be seen as an existential revelation of faith and a future eschatological hope: "The resurrection of Jesus from the dead by God does not speak the 'language of facts but only the language of faith and hope, that is, the 'language of promise.'"⁵² Further, the Easter narratives, according to Moltmann, are not actually meant to be narratives of historical occurrence, but rather a proclamation to faith and the reality of the resurrection of Jesus is intrinsically bound with mission.⁵³

Moltman says that resurrection is not a return to this or any other mortal life, is it rather entry into eternal life. "Christ's resurrection is therefore not an historical event, it is an eschatological happening that took place to the crucified Christ and took place 'once and for all' (Rom 6.10)."⁵⁴

For Moltmann, the empty tomb stories are subservient to the 'appearances' of Jesus after his public trial and crucifixion. "Jesus was crucified in public, but at first only his disciples learned of his resurrection by God through the 'appearances' of Jesus."⁵⁵ And these appearances take on a visionary meaning that directly reflects the resurrection event itself, in that it makes visible the eschatological future hope that it points to, and causes us to search for the future revelation of this event.⁵⁶

This shifting of the focus of the theology of the resurrection to an existential experience of faith and future hope of universal redemption of course leads to the question; what about the empty tomb and physical body of the crucified Christ? To Moltmann, the witnesses to the empty tomb and Easter appearances of the risen Christ, experienced visions and not a bodily 'reality' of Christ in person;

"Resurrection of the dead" first of all excludes any idea of a revivification of the dead Jesus which might have reversed the process of his death. Easter faith can never mean that the dead returned to this life, which leads to death.... The symbol of "resurrection from the dead" means a qualitatively

⁵² Moltmann, J. *The Crucified God* (London: SMC Press, 1989) p173

⁵³ Moltmann, J. *Theology of Hope* *ibid.* p186

⁵⁴ Moltmann, J. *The Coming of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004) p69

⁵⁵ Moltmann, J. *The Crucified God* *ibid.* p166

⁵⁶ Moltmann, J. *Theology of Hope* *ibid.* p203

new life which no longer knows death and therefore cannot be a continuation of this mortal life.”⁵⁷

To Moltmann, it seems the physical body of the dead Jesus is no longer required theologically speaking, as his resurrection was a transcendent event beyond our space-time. “...his resurrection must then be understood not as a mere return to life as such, but a conquest of the deadliness of death...but also as the source of the risen life of all believers.”⁵⁸

Moltmann views the resurrection of Jesus as anticipating the future of creation. He sees the resurrection ‘event’ as being the imperative for the missional church in working for the liberation and transformation and improvement of human history. His view of eschatology is that there are no ‘last days’ or final judgement, except that this judgement being manifest in human beings; “The final judgment, in other words, will be anticipated in the present world through the Spirit-led work and witness of Jesus’s followers.”⁵⁹

He also understands that the post resurrection appearances to his disciples as being anticipatory visions of Christ’s future glory. “His Easter appearances have to be understood as the pre-reflection of his future; and what his disciples see at Easter is, correspondingly, the form taken by anticipating perception.”⁶⁰ These appearances to Jesus’s disciples for Moltmann, are not then literal events marked with bizarre physical happenings, rather they are visions of the future glory. They go even beyond Jesus himself, but rather are manifestations of the consummation of all things in a future glorious eternity.

Paul Badham (b. 1948)

Badham, like Moltmann sees the resurrection of Jesus as not historical, rather the resurrection of Christ was something beyond history. Badham exemplifies this stance by explaining that the empty tomb stories have the characteristics of myth, and that the corporal narratives of the post resurrection Jesus eating, being touched,

⁵⁷ Moltmann, J. *The Crucified God* (London: SMC Press, 1989) p169

⁵⁸ Moltmann, J. *Theology of Hope* *ibid.* p211

⁵⁹ Wright, T. *Surprised by Hope* (London: SPCK, 2007) p155

⁶⁰ Moltmann, J. *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (London: SMC Press, 1981) p85

yet passing through doors and walls are contradictory. "Hence I conclude that the traditions which imply that Jesus' corpse was raised from the grave should be rejected as internally incoherent."⁶¹ Badham therefore, does not believe the empty tomb accounts, rather he sees them as a later construct, and hypothesises that as a bodily resurrection of Jesus as described in the gospels was not a physical reality, it was rather a visionary experience by his disciples communicated by Jesus' immortal soul;⁶²

My conviction that Jesus really appeared to his disciples is necessary associated with the theory of Jesus' soul being his true self continuing to exist after the death of his body, and manifesting his presence to the disciples through a telepathic communication to their minds his disciples would have experienced Jesus's spiritual survival after death via his immortal soul and the 'appearance' of his ethereal post resurrection body was manifested through telepathic communication to their minds.⁶³

He then goes on to describe this telepathic communication as a 'vision'⁶⁴ (Moltmann in contrast, does not see the post resurrection experiences of Jesus's appearances as telepathic or any other type of projection.⁶⁵) However at the same time, he states that Jesus' resurrection was a real event which is open to historical enquiry and provides information that will help in the formulation of theories about the nature of reality.⁶⁶

Concerning the post resurrection appearances of Jesus, Badham refers to the work of C.E. Evans who argues that the Greek verb *opthe* that Paul uses here does not mean "he was seen by" rather "he let himself be seen", which is a meaning more related to religious visions rather than something that was physically seen. "This suggests, that for St Paul these should be understood as inwards events"⁶⁷

⁶¹ Badham, P. *Christian beliefs about life after death* (London: SPCK, 1978) *ibid* p38

⁶² Badham, P. *ibid.* p38

⁶³ Badham, P. *ibid.* p38

⁶⁴ Badham, P. *ibid.* p38

⁶⁵ Moltmann, J. *ibid.* pp85-86

⁶⁶ Badham P. *Christian beliefs about life after death* (London: SPCK, 1978) p145

⁶⁷ Badham. P, *Making Sense of Death and Immortality* (London: SPCK, 2013) pp42-43

Contrary to Moltmann's argument that the resurrection of Jesus was a manifestation of the future hope for all humanity, Badham postulates that any theory of a future new existence cannot be based upon information provided by Jesus' resurrection. He argues that belief in a corporal ascension into heaven after death, or a future hope of a resurrection from the dead into spiritual bodies are not coherent. Rather, that the concept of an immortal soul is central to a faith that affirms there is more than the physical; "...and that we can develop an identity that can ultimately transcend our bodily death"⁶⁸ (this is contrary to Moltmann's view that the Christian doctrine of resurrection of the dead automatically excludes the immortality of the soul⁶⁹).

Badham like Moltmann, sees that the empty tomb narratives are not to be taken at face value. This is because, Badham argues that the early church was unaware of the empty tomb accounts and similarly Paul's resurrection theology is devoid of the traditions.⁷⁰ As such "...the reason for the absence of the empty tomb tradition during the first three decades of the Church's life was that it lacked historical foundation and played no part in the original resurrection faith."⁷¹ So like Moltmann, we are left with the question, what about the physical body of the crucified Christ? In the same way that Moltmann understanding of the nature of the resurrection, essentially eliminates the need for Jesus' physical body, likewise Badham's theology has no place for Christ's natural body. Instead it is replaced with the metaphysical and visionary experiences of Jesus's Easter appearances and the hope of immortality being held in the mind of God. Again, the created order is subjugated to the greater spiritual experience of communion with God after death. The purpose of creation, in Badham's view has no further part in the resurrection experience.

As noted above, in Badham's view, there is a life after death in that God holds our existence in his mind. In this new world, God will be far more real to us than we can conceive now. He supports the theory offered by the philosopher Henry Price that we will continue after death in a purely mental existence with enhanced telepathic capabilities to commune with others in that state. Badham believes, similarly our

⁶⁸ Badham. P. *ibid*.pp23-24

⁶⁹ Moltmann, J. *The Crucified God* (London: SMC Press, 1989) p170

⁷⁰ Badham P. *Christian beliefs about life after death* (London: SPCK, 1978) p37

⁷¹ Badham P *Immortality or Extinction* 2nd Ed. (London: SPCK, 1984) p24

religious experiencing will similarly be enhanced and heightened. In this state of enhanced mental existence, God will become the most vital subject of our awareness and this experience will be similar to a beatific vision.⁷²

The Crucifixion, resurrection and Hypercubes

In contrast to Moltmann and Badham, Pannenberg has pointed out that the argument that the resurrection cannot have happened because it violates the cause of nature is flawed because part of the laws of nature are only ever known and "...in a world that as a whole represents a singular irreversible process, an individual event is never completely determined by natural laws." And;

...natural science expresses the general validity of the laws of nature but must at the same time declare its own inability to make judgements about the possibility of the impossibility of an individual event... The judgement about whether an event, no matter how 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.⁷³

It is was possibly similar understanding of the resurrection that drove Salvador Dali to paint "The Crucifixion (Corpus Hypercubus)". This strange representation of Christ, sees the Christ figure as suspended upon not a cross, but a hypercube, or tesseract. This advanced mathematical special concept represents a four dimensional cube in a three dimensional space.⁷⁴

⁷² Badham. P. *Christian beliefs about life after death* (London: SPCK, 1978) pp145-6

⁷³ Pannenberg, W. *Jesus, God and Man* 2nd Ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), p98

⁷⁴ Image; Macdonald, F. 'The painter who entered the fourth dimension', *BBC Culture*, 11 May 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20160511-the-painter-who-entered-the-fourth-dimension> [retrieved 25 May 2018]



The painting currently on display in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, describes the work as follows; “Dalí utilized his theory of "nuclear mysticism," a fusion of Catholicism, mathematics, and science, to create this unusual interpretation of Christ's crucifixion.”⁷⁵

Dalí's insight concerning the cross and ultimately the resurrection (there are no nails, wounds or anything holding the Christ figure to the hypercube indicating Christ moving beyond his physical suffering) is quite profound. Art critic Kelly Grovier said:

⁷⁵ Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, *Crucifixion (Corpus Hypercubus)*
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/488880> [retrieved 30 November 2021]

“The painting seems to have cracked the link between the spirituality of Christ's salvation and the materiality of geometric and physical forces. It appears to bridge the divide that many feel separates science from religion.” Further; “In Dalí's work, atomism and science appear to be the very fabric on which redemption and salvation are stitched,” says Grovier. “The tesseract crucifix would seem to extend beyond the dimensions of this world into planes unknown.”⁷⁶

String Theory

As noted above, the hypercube represents four dimensions in three dimensional space. It is fascinating to discover that recent scientific research indicates what we perceive as our temporal universal constants, (matter, gravity, light etc.) within our space-time domain, are not as constant as first thought. These discoveries have significant implications for those, as Grovier puts it; “planes unknown”.

Scientists John Barrow and John Webb published a paper in the February 2006 edition of *Scientific American* that demonstrated that the research in to the universal constants over the years, rather than becoming clearer as research continued, has in fact become more “muddled”. This has a number of ramifications for scientific orthodoxy; “One implication is that the constants we observe may not, in fact, be the truly fundamental ones. Those live in the full higher-dimensional space, and we see only their three-dimensional shadows.” Further, what we see and experience in our three dimensional space-time is in fact only a tiny part of a greater reality that exists outside in other higher dimensions. “The constants are a tantalizing mystery... They may be the superficial shadow of a structure larger and more complex than the three-dimensional universe we witness around us.”⁷⁷

Barrow and Webb's research feeds directly into an historical area of cosmological investigation that has been ongoing for decades, that is the search for the so called ‘Theory of Everything’ or the ‘Grand Unified Theory’. One of the main contenders of which is the so called ‘String Theory’. “String Theory is an attempt to unite the two

⁷⁶ Macdonald, F. *ibid.* <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20160511-the-painter-who-entered-the-fourth-dimension> [retrieved 30 November 2021]

⁷⁷ Barrow, J. & Webb, J. ‘Inconstant Constants’, *Scientific American*, 1 February 2006, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/inconstant-constants-2006-02/> [Retrieved 30 November 2021]

pillars of 20th century physics — quantum mechanics [at the sub-atomic level] and Albert Einstein's theory of relativity [cosmology]" with an overarching framework that can explain all of physical reality." This theoretic framework is seen as the 'holy grail' of science. String Theory proposes that particles are not simply incredibly tiny dots, but are actually one-dimensional, string-like entities (dubbed 'superstrings') whose vibrations determine the particles' properties, such as their mass and charge.⁷⁸ For these superstrings to operate mathematically, there must be more dimensions beyond the four dimensional (length, breadth, height and time) universe we can directly experience.

The theoretical framework of String Theory (also known as 'Superstring Theory' or 'M-Theory' ('M' meaning 'Multiverse')) posits that the universe exists in at least ten different dimensions (there are other String Theories that propose eleven, twenty six or even a higher number of dimensions, but most of the research seems to settle on ten or eleven dimensions). The three dimensions that we directly interact with, the fourth dimension of time which we experience and six other 'higher' dimensions. It is envisaged that these six dimensions are 'strings' that are curled up so infinitesimally small they can no longer be perceived or measured by our four dimensional universe. It is within these infinitesimally small six dimensions that would contain the different aspects, the fundamental forces of nature, and all the elementary particles contained within that would be needed to govern the formation of the universe from the very beginning, as well as to explain it's current existence and structure. In essence it is an attempt to reconcile all the conflicting theories about what makes up the universe into Grand Unifying Theory or the Theory of Everything. "In short, it is an attempt to explain how all known forces within our universe interact, and how other possible universes themselves might work."⁷⁹

At this point, it does need to be stated that String Theory is not proven and has it's skeptics,⁸⁰ and because of the flaws that some see in the theory itself, there are now other hypotheses that scientists are exploring.⁸¹ However, String Theory is

⁷⁸ Mann, A, 'What is String Theory', *Live Science*, March 20 2019, <https://www.livescience.com/65033-what-is-string-theory.html> [Retrieved 14/11/21] Dear

⁷⁹ Williams, M, 'A Universe of 10 Dimensions', *Universe Today* December 10, 2014 <https://www.universetoday.com/48619/a-universe-of-10-dimensions/> [Retrieved 13 November 2021]

⁸⁰ Lennox, J. *God and Stephen Hawking* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2011) pp49-59

⁸¹ Mann, A, *ibid* [Retrieved 21 November 2021]

currently the main ‘front runner’ for the aforementioned ‘Theory of Everything’ and has been supported and championed upon by among others, Brian Green Professor of Physicals and Mathematics at Colombia University and the late Professor Stephen Hawking.

Michio Kaku is a Professor of Theoretical Physics at City College of New York and has done much to popularise the understanding of String Theory. He explains String Theory in a story of when he was younger, when he looked into a shallow carp pond in Japanese Tea Garden in San Francisco. He imagined an intelligent carp in the pool would perceived it’s ‘universe’ of the shallow pool , with the carp limited to traveling forwards and backwards and side to side, with little room to move up or down. The carp had no concept of anything about the surface of the pool and imagined how an intelligent carp would react if he reached in and lifted it outside of it’s limited special ‘universe’. When it rained, he noted that the ripples of the surface of the pond caused by the rain drops would be perceived as shadows by the carp. So the third dimension beyond the pond surface is invisible to the carp except for shadows and ripples on the surface of it’s two dimensional universe. He goes on to elaborate what further what this story illustrates:

Today, many physicists believe that we are the carp swimming in our tiny pond, blissfully unaware of invisible, unseen universes hovering just above us in hyperspace. We spend our life in three spatial dimensions, confident that what we can see with our telescopes is all there is, ignorant of the possibility of 10 dimensional hyperspace. Although these higher dimensions are invisible, their “ripples” can clearly be seen and felt. We call these ripples gravity and light.⁸²

Squares, Spheres and the higher dimensions

A further illustration of conceptualising life in higher dimensions than our three dimensional space is the nineteenth century satirical fantasy novel called *Flatland: A Romance of many Dimensions* by Edwin A. Abbot (Abbot was a mathematician, teacher and an ordained minister of the Church of England). The story is set in a

⁸² Kaku. M, *Hyperspace and a Theory of Everything* <https://mkaku.org/home/articles/hyperspace-and-a-theory-of-everything/> [Retrieved 12/11/2021]

mythical two dimensional world inhabited by living beings who are geometric shapes, squares, triangles, circles etc. who believe that their reality can all be explained by length and width. The central character is a square who has a strange meeting with an unusual circle who suddenly appears out of nowhere in the middle of a room with closed doors. It begins as a dot, expands to a normal size as a circle and then starts to shrink back again to a dot then disappears. It turns out that the unusual circle is in fact a sphere that inhabits a third dimension that had been sent to interact with the two dimensional world. The square's life is for ever altered by the awareness of this previously unknown dimensionality to its universe. In one scene, the sphere takes the square on a journey to the third dimension and the square becomes a cube. So amazed is the protagonist with what he sees and experiences, he pronounced;

My native city with the interior of every house and creature therein, lay open to my view in miniature. We mounted higher and low, the secrets of the earth, the depths of the mines and inner most cavers of the hills, were bared before me. Awestruck at the mysteries of the earth thus unveiled before my unworthy eye, I said to my Companion, "Behold I am become as a god."⁸³

This illustrates the point that any hypothetical beings that operate in higher dimensions beyond our three spacial dimensions would seem to have supernatural god-like powers. Kaku goes on to explain that any hypothetical beings that occupy the six higher dimensions would be able to interact with us in almost astonishing ways. They could perform surgery without ever cutting the skin. Simply remove us from a maximum security prison into a higher dimension and then deposit us back somewhere else. "Higher dimensional people, therefore, would have powers similar to a god: they could walk through walls, disappear and reappear at will, reach into the strongest steel vaults, and see through buildings. They would be omniscient and omnipotent"⁸⁴

It is interesting that Badham does mention briefly the discoveries in modern physics may have, citing Karl Heim that there may be beings who exist in special dimensions

⁸³ Abbot. E.A , *Flatland: A Romance of many Dimension*, (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1885) p125
https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=R6E0AAAAMAAJ&pg=PA122&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false [Retrieved 15/11/2021]

⁸⁴ Kaku. M, *Hyperspace – A Scientific Odyssey. A look at the higher dimensions*,
<https://mkaku.org/home/articles/hyperspace-a-scientific-odyssey/> [Retrieved 14/11/2021]

that are inaccessible to us. However, Badham's view seems to be that the resurrection life may be experienced in these other dimensions that has no connection with our current world. He also goes on to consider a possibility posed by John Hick that there are a multiplicity of worlds (what is now turned the 'Multiverse') in which we may live multiple lives until we reach a final state of beatific vision.⁸⁵ He also considers the possibility that the resurrection of Jesus is suggestive of what would happen to us in another dimension of being.⁸⁶ But in his final analysis, all these conceptions, though potentially believable, run against "the well-founded assumptions of the naturalist world view built up in recent centuries."

However for Badham, the concept of a spiritual body that can materialise and dematerialize at will (and the other purported physical interactions Jesus undertook with his disciples after his resurrection) are purely visionary experiences and did not physically take place as the gospel narratives say they did. Therefore, as noted above, Badham sympathises with the view that the empty tomb accounts are not historic and therefore could not have taken place. However, as already noted, the problem with this analysis, is that the multiple accounts (although with conflicting details and timelines) from different authors, dozens of years, even decades apart, of the disciples physically touching and interacting with the risen Jesus, often with specific details of occurrences (e.g. details about how the grave cloths were laid) indicates that the gospel records cannot easily be dismissed.

This is now more especially the case as String Theory offers a 'naturalistic' theoretical framework to explain how the seemingly bizarre and paranormal post resurrection incidents were able to take place. This was because Jesus in his post resurrection state, potentially in the higher dimensions indicated by String Theory, was able to interact again with our four dimensional universe in some form. In perhaps a similar way as the eponymous sphere in Edwin Abbott's *Flatland* interacted with the square's two dimensional universe to such staggering effect on those that witnessed the sphere's entry that space-time domain.

⁸⁵ Badham, L. & Badham, P *Immortality or Extinction?* 2nd Ed. (London: SPCK, 1984) p122

⁸⁶ Badham, P *A Christianity that Modern Anglicans can believe in*
p13 https://anglicanism.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/believable_anglicanism_august_2013.pdf
[Retrieved 18/11/21]

If this hypothesis provides even a hint of what actually happened, then we suddenly begin to see that the seemingly irreconcilable post resurrection events recorded in the gospels may not be simply literary devices or visionary experiences. Rather they may have indeed been based upon some form of observed physical experience. Suddenly, those strange accounts of the women, and the disciples on the road to Emmaus encountering a post resurrection Jesus but were initially unable to recognise him, and suddenly were able to, becomes comprehensible. Further, it might give an indication as to why the empty tomb accounts and the immediate post resurrection appearances and occurrences of the four gospels caused such terror and astonishment in the witnesses. It also may be one of the reasons why the empty tomb accounts and Jesus' subsequent appearances are so disjointed and contradictory. For the average first century Judean citizen to experience interaction with messengers from these higher dimensions, and with a person who they had seen die and then buried would be shocking enough. But to appear and disappear, to mask his appearance and yet still bear the physical wounds of his crucifixion, and then while still not only be able to eat, but to carry out the mundane physical chore of food preparation (at least according to the account in John's gospel). With few intellectual reference points from which to draw, except for some of the miraculous stories in Jewish scripture, the witnesses to these events would have been staggered and over awed by coming face to face with a powerful overwhelming presence that originated from outside of their known experience. It is potentially little wonder then that the different witnesses mixed up the chronology of events, who was present at each appearance or simply forgot or misconstrued different details of their staggering individual and shared experiences.

It is worth pausing at this point to take a small step back to take some time to consider what these extra six dimensions potentially mean. According to String Theory, the fifth and sixth dimensions are possibly where other worlds begin to exist that are slightly different to ours and then with a whole plane of worlds that have started at different points, but with the same conditions as this one. It is within the fifth and sixth dimensions that time travel becomes theoretically possible. The seventh, eighth and ninth dimensions are where other universes with different conditions and laws of physics potentially exist with a dizzying array of infinite possibilities. But it is in the tenth dimension that omniscience, omnipotence and

omnipresence become conceptually possible; “In the tenth... dimension we arrive at the point in which everything possible and imaginable is covered. Beyond this, nothing can be imagined by us lowly mortals, which makes it the natural limitation of what we can conceive in terms of dimensions.”⁸⁷

It is worth taking some time to reflect on the wider implications of these theoretical extra dimensions. If String Theory is even part way correct, it can be postulated that the Biblical concept of heaven could possibly exist in some form completely outside of four dimensional universe. This possibility then, may be illustrated in a very limited way, by returning to Edwin Abbott’s fictional three dimensional world of the sphere. In this scenario the two dimensional of the square could be likened to our four dimensional space-time domain where the inhabitants live completely unaware of the higher dimensions and their occupants. These ten (or more) dimensional heavenly beings as described in the Bible (The triune God, cherubim, ‘living creatures’, angles etc.) Periodically interact with the occupants of our four dimensional world which results in staggering and overwhelming experiences that are recorded by humans as ‘miracles’ and encounters with divine entities that are capable of awe inspiring supernatural feats.

However, Jesus was different. Using Edwin Abbott’s *Flatland* to illustrate this hypothesis, Jesus was the sphere who did not simply interact with our space-time becoming a series dots and varying sizes of circles for a limited periods and then returned to his own space-time domain whenever he wanted. Instead the creator and king of both the three dimensional and two dimensional universe, divested himself of his spherical nature completely and became a circle of one size (Jesus of Nazareth) so that he could communicate with the inhabitants of this world on their level and ultimately be killed for his mission.

At the moment of that resurrection, the previously extinguished circle was returned to its life as a sphere (but still retaining the vestiges of his life a circle) forever changed and ‘ascended’ back to the three dimensional universe with the other inhabitants (spheres, cubes, pyramids etc.) and received back as king and redeemer of both universes. This event, changed the two dimensional world forever because the

⁸⁷ Williams, M. *ibid.* [Retrieved 21 November 2021]

resurrection was then a promise of redemption that all the squares, triangles circles etc. could now share in. Further, this event allowed for king of all the dimensional spaces to live (or commune with) within the all the two dimensional beings at once. So, rather than the previous limited interactions between the dimensions. The third dimension broke into the two dimensional universe forever and would now be able commune with all the two dimensional shapes on a personal level for the first time.

The *Flatland* analogy is only useful to a point, but it is helpful to at least illustrate how the divine can be potentially conceptualised as existing in these higher dimensions postulated by String Theory. Additionally, it demonstrates how the heavenly can interact with our space-time, and more importantly, how the life, death and resurrection changed both dimensionalities forever.

The resurrection of Jesus changed everything. It was nothing less than an event that shattered our four dimensional universe forever, death is defeated and the decay of our material universe can be transformed. While the Old Testament provided anticipatory promises, the resurrection appearances of Jesus were demonstrations (a down payment as it were - or as Paul describes the risen Christ; “the first fruits of those who have died” (1 Corinthians: 15:20) of the new creation).

If the resurrection is all about a decisive central moment about which the whole world pivots and turns in a new direction. Something has happened in history that has altered what is possible. Someone has made an irreversible breakthrough in the definition of humanity which can never be undone.⁸⁸

If this is the case (or at least something close to it) It also gives some further context to the prayer that Jesus uttered on the night of his betrayal as recorded in the gospel of John when Jesus prays to God, he asks his Father that he can once again be glorified as he was before he took on the mortal body; “So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed” (John 17:5) which harks back to the pre-existence of Jesus set out in start of the gospel “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.” (John 1:1-2). Indicating a pre-

⁸⁸ Williams, R. *ibid.* Location 919

existent state before the creation event where the Word and God existed in communion. In verse 3, we see that through and by the Word all creation was brought into being and “without him not one thing came into being” (more on the creative work of Christ later). Further, the Word brought life to the whole created order. We then see in verse 14 that the Word becomes flesh “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). It is at this point that the taking on of mortal flesh, that God directly ‘broke into’ this four dimensional world of men through the theophany of his son. The term “lived among us” in Greek is literally rendered ‘put up his tent among us’⁸⁹ which seems an apt description of the temporary nature of the Word becoming mortal flesh in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, and his subsequent death on the cross.

As Jesus - the Word, took on mortal flesh and physically entered our space-time domain, he also left the mortal body at his death and returned to the Father. As the writer of John records; “And now I am no longer in the world...and I am coming to you” (John 17:11). And again “But now I am coming to you...” (John 17: 13). Jesus throughout this particular prayer expresses the concept that he is going to return to communion with God in the same, or similar glorified state that he had before he entered our space-time domain.

However, the writer of the John’s gospel, also records, that Jesus’ post resurrection body has changed in that it still bears the scars of the crucifixion (John 20:20). It is also interesting to note that the writer of the book of Revelation describes the risen Jesus in the vision of the God’s throne room as the “a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered” (Revelation: 5:6) which while evoking the symbolism of the sacrificial Passover lamb⁹⁰, it also reinforces the idea that the post resurrection Jesus continues to intrinsically bear the crucifixion scars, even in his glorified state (Revelation 1:12-16).

⁸⁹ Keiffer, R. *ibid.* p963

⁹⁰ Bauckham, R. ‘Revelation’ in Barton, J. & Muddiman, J. *The Oxford Bible Commentary* *ibid.* p1293

The New Creation

Here then we see that the resurrection changed Jesus, but it also changed our whole four dimensional universe. It should be noted at this point, that while Paul in his exposition on the nature and impact of the resurrection of Christ in his first letter to the Corinthians, concentrates on the hope that Jesus' resurrection gives humanity. In his letter to the Romans, he widens the redemptive field of vision of the resurrection as being essential to the whole created order;

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8;19-23).

Paul's discourse here addresses the decline of the natural order brought about by human sin, (Genesis 3:14-19). This decline or decay is not just earth bound, according to the Old Testament, it was cosmological; “Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you endure; they will all wear out like a garment.” (Psalm 102:25-26) and “Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment...” (Isaiah 51:5-6)⁹¹. Here Paul ties the resurrection hope, the redemption of our human bodies along with the redemption of the cosmos that too is bound to decay and cosmological death. All this was made possible by Jesus's victory over death and points clearly to a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17 and Revelation 21:1 & 5)

⁹¹ It is interesting to note in light of these scriptures and that physicists have shown that the universe will at some stage in the future will suffer 'heat death' or complete dissolution through the process of entropy. “..the entropy of the universe is increasing: that is, more and more energy becomes unavailable for conversion into work. Because of this, the universe is said to be 'running down.' [or decaying]” Drake, G.W.F, 'Entropy', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, April 13 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/science/entropy-physics> [retrieved 14 December 2021])

In the letter to the Colossians, the author (probably Paul) further explains Christ's role in the created order;

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross (Colossians 1:15-20).

So here Paul intrinsically links the redemptive acts of Christ's suffering and death on the cross, and his resurrection from the dead, not just reconciling humanity to God, but redeeming the whole of the created order which has fallen into decay because of sin. As Torrance elaborates;

...the resurrection breaks redemptively through the framework of space and time as we know it in a fallen world, but it is necessary to see that the resurrection means the redemption of space and time, for space and time are not abrogated or transcended. Rather they are healed and restored, just as our being is healed and restored through resurrection.⁹²

The opening verses from Colossians quoted above, indicates why the cosmological redemption is so important; "in him all things in heaven and on earth were created...all things have been created through him and for him." Here, Paul explains that pre-existent Christ not just created the whole natural order (as noted above, the first chapter of the gospel of John, also describes the reincarnate Christ as the creative source of the heavens and earth), but further through Christ, "all things hold together" (In the Greek *synistēmi* also meaning 'consist', 'combining' or 'unite parts into one whole'), indicating that Christ did not simply set the universe in motion by a

⁹² Torrance, T. *Space, Time and Resurrection* Cornerstone Edition. (T&T Clark/Bloomsbury: London, 2019) p90

creative event in the past, but that he also continues to intervene and be active in our space-time domain by holding the created order together by his will. Although the universe is currently subject to decay, its creator will redeem his creation. “When God created the world, all things were made through his Word. He spoke and it was done. In the resurrection, it becomes revealed that Jesus Christ is none other than that almighty Creator-Word of God.”⁹³

This is why the historical doctrine of the bodily resurrection of Christ is so important theologically speaking. Because the Word of God became flesh and dwelt with his creation (John 1:14), he became an intrinsic part of his own creation that was originally pronounced as “good” (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18 etc.). Upon the creator’s death and resurrection, the creation is restored to ‘goodness’. The bodily resurrection of Jesus demonstrates that the creator remains an intrinsic part of his creation. The empty tomb and the Easter appearance stories are then, demonstrations of the original goodness of the physical creation and its renewal within Christ’s glorified body, but still bearing the scars of the old. As Polkinghorne succinctly explains; “The significance of the empty tomb is that the Lord’s risen and glorified body is the transmuted form of his dead body. Thus matter itself participated in the resurrection transformation.”⁹⁴ Wright further elaborates;

The whole point of the new creation...is that it is about the redemption and renewal of creation, not its abolition and replacement. Here the stories of Jesus’ bodily resurrection serve as a model as well as a source. And with this redemption and renewal, there goes the reaffirmation of the original.⁹⁵

Further; “In the resurrection of Jesus we see the saving act of God in the expiation of sin and guilt, in the vanquishing of death and all that destroys creation is joined to God’s act of creation. Redemption and creation come together in the resurrection.”⁹⁶

The resurrection and the created order are intrinsically linked, and Jesus’ physical resurrection from the dead is the embodiment of this linkage. If the bodily resurrection is denied as is suggested by the theology of Moltmann, Badham and

⁹³ Torrance, T. *ibid.* pp58-59

⁹⁴ Polkinghorne, J. *The God of Hope and the End of the World* (USA: Yale University Press, 2002) p113

⁹⁵ Wright, N.T. *History & Eschatology*, (London: SPCK, 2019) p198

⁹⁶ Torrance, T. *ibid.* p58

others, then where does this leave the created order? Without the physical nature of Christ being intrinsic within the resurrection event, the resurrection becomes a purely spiritual and metaphysical occurrence that happens outside of history and outside of nature. If this is the case then the created order itself becomes superfluous and severely wanting in its theological significance. Further, it gives weight to the argument of the Gnostics, Marcion and others that the created order is an inferior experience than the spiritual realm that humanity needs to aspire. The verses in both Romans, Colossians and Revelation which point to the redemption of the physical universe become lacking in intention and instead point to ethereal allegory that our four dimensional space-time domain is

The existence of these higher dimensions, allows for God to act in ways that our own perception and experience cannot conceptualise. It can allow for a transforming resurrection that impacts our lives moment by moment as the progress theologians understand, but also for an empty tomb. It can allow for the risen Jesus to be seen, heard and touched by his disciples, and yet pass through walls and appear and disappear seemingly at will. Badham's aforementioned belief that the physicality of the risen Christ is 'incoherent', can now be seen as potentially limited.

It is interesting to take this thinking further, if String Theory has some merit, then the resurrection was a historical event that took place within our four dimensional universe (length, width, height and time). However, at the same time it occurred *outside* of our four dimensional universe, so in this sense it was an act that was not historical, because it took place outside of our space-time domain. String Theory allows for this apparent paradox to exist. Although, he does not recognise these extra dimensions as such within his theology, Moltmann is can explain this dichotomy; "Anyone who sees the risen Christ is looking in advance into the coming glory of God. He perceives something which is not otherwise perceptible."⁹⁷ Elsewhere, Moltmann sees the resurrection appearances as an anticipatory experience of the coming glory of the kingdom of God, but at the same time, but at the same time those appearances, looked back to the crucifixion experience. "The

⁹⁷ Moltmann, J. *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* p85

future of the qualitatively new creation has already begun through the history of Jesus' suffering..."⁹⁸

Taking all these factors into consideration, due to the scientific framework offered by String Theory, it may now be a time to reasonably reassert that the resurrection of the risen Christ was and is indeed spiritual in nature, but at the same time overtly physical because in the latter, the hope of redemption for all of humanity and the created order is manifested; "In the risen one, incarnate, earthly, crucified one with all the saving benefits that result from being in the flesh, is present for us"⁹⁹

Conclusion

It can be seen that the Christian doctrine of the dual nature of the risen Christ as being both spiritual and physical, was a foundational doctrine from the earliest days of the church. The doctrine arose exclusively from its Jewish theological roots based on Old Testament and Apocryphal scriptures. However, it was the death and resurrection of Jesus that was the transforming event. The Jewish belief of a vague understanding of a resurrection for Israel in a future restoration of the kingdom by the Messiah, was transformed to become a central theme of a universal resurrection for all humanity where believers would obtain a spiritual and redeemed body in the Kingdom of God. This new resurrection belief was based upon the purported eyewitness accounts recorded in the gospels and the earlier exposition of the resurrection event and state of the risen body by the Apostle Paul in his First letter to the Corinthian church. The dual nature of the risen Christ of being both spiritual and physical became the foundational belief of the Church and Early Church Fathers, a belief that was staunchly defended in the face of various heresies that denied the resurrection of the body. However, there have been increasing challenges from modern scholarship arising within the Church that has sought to downplay or reject altogether the concept of bodily resurrection. As can be seen from the review of Badham and Moltmann's theology, they are recent representations of the body of scholarly opinion that rejects the physical nature of the post resurrection experiences as being against the laws of nature. Rather they allegorise those experiences as

⁹⁸ Moltmann, J. *The Crucified God* pp168-9

⁹⁹ Fuller, R 'Resurrection of Christ' in Metzger, B. & Coogan, M.Eds. *ibid.* p649

phenomena that have spiritual and philosophical implications not intended to be interpreted as actual physical historical occurrences recorded in the gospels. These conclusions are drawn to make the Christian message more 'rational' and acceptable to a contemporary audience who are versed in the scientific and known constants of our natural world. However, as can be seen by the review of String Theory, science itself is offering a framework of higher dimensions that potentially allow for the 'miraculous' and paranormal phenomenon. According to the theory, a resurrection that includes both spiritual and physical bodily aspects has now become a coherent possibility. Therefore, the highly strange experiences by the eye witness to the post resurrection interactions with Jesus, become more comprehensible and understandable. In turn, this gives increasing substance to the original Christianity doctrine of the bodily resurrection. String Theory then offers a rational scientific framework that rehabilitates the physicality of the risen Christ as well as reinforcing the metaphysical 'landscape' that Badham, Moltmann and others have expounded, namely the nonphysical implications of the resurrection and the meaning that it has for Christians now and into the future. The development of String Theory offers a coherent possibility of bringing together the modern theological arguments. One for purely a resurrection that has meaning and implication for believers beyond the Easter morning narratives and so beyond history and therefore our space-time domain. String Theory also provides a rational justification for the original belief by the early church of the physicality of the resurrection of the body (a stance that is also defended by other modern scholars). In essence (albeit tentative!) String Theory could possibly offer a theological equivalent to a 'Theory of Everything'. Wright's conclusions on the matter are therefore highly relevant; "What I am suggesting is that faith on Jesus risen from the dead transcends but includes what we call history and what we call science." These conclusions gives a greater meaning to the statement that the angel Gabriel said to Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist; "For nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).

(14,628 words)

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