In Defense of the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus

Anthony Costello
Flew: Yes, Yes, I think the unfalsifiability of unbelief is somehow a different problem from the unfalsifiability of a belief.

Habermas: But if you can’t falsify your own view, and there is no probable rejoinder to the resurrection, and you’re left with, ‘Well, I don’t want to believe it anyway,’ of course that’s your right. […]

Habermas: Would a resurrection falsify your belief? Could this be it? Could this be the data that would do it? I mean, in principle, the resurrection would falsify it, wouldn’t it?

Flew: Yes, I suppose I have an almost invincible disinclination to believe the whole resurrection story, yes, because it seems to me so wildly inconsistent with everything else that happens in the universe.

- from Did the Resurrection Happen?: A Conversation with Gary Habermas and Anthony Flew

I. Introduction

As far as we know, Anthony Flew never came to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, in spite of his late-life conversation to deism. While many Christians trumpeted the acceptance of a supreme being by the 20th century’s most beloved atheist as a sort of rallying cry for the Christian faith, there still remains no evidence that this great philosophical mind came to accept the most significant doctrine of that faith he had so staunchly opposed. This raises a question: “Why, after being so antagonistic to the existence of God for so long, only to come to accept that such a Being likely exists, would Flew not also accept that God has come into the world as Jesus Christ; preaching truth, enacting miracles, suffering, dying and rising again?”

It seems that after assenting to a transcendent creator God, that the rest of the story would simply be “good news.” While the problem of evil certainly lurks around the corner, still, what other reasons might prevent one, who rejects metaphysical naturalism, from accepting the bodily resurrection of a once dead man? In this paper I will first look at four lines of skeptical
argumentation against the bodily resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Then, I will conclude with one argument based on two lines of evidence that seem to make the bodily resurrection of Jesus the best explanation for the advent of the Christian faith. If the Resurrection of Jesus is reasonable to believe, then this should be foundational to coming to faith in Christ.

II. Objection 1: Of Dying and Rising Gods—Did Christians Borrow from Pagan Myths?

Did the authors of scripture, in particular the Gospel writers, appropriate prior pagan mythologies of divinized human beings, and synthesize them with Jewish culture and scripture in order to “invent” a new, legendary redeemer? Is the “Jesus of Faith” compared to the “Jesus of History” nothing more than a conglomerate literary figure of Greco-Roman gods, mythical heroes, and legendary kings? Robert Price seems to think the answer is self-evident, “We are not surprised to encounter stories in which a divine figure is shown being glorified and deified after martyrdom…such elements are common to the Mythic Hero Archetype and are thus embodied in tales all over the world and throughout history.”¹

Price, who proudly stands in the tradition of D.F. Strauss, Rudolph Bultmann, and the Religionsgeschichtliches Schule, or History of Religions school (e.g. Hermann Gunkel, Wilhelm Wrede), of 19th century German form criticism, goes on to say, “the kinship of New Testament narrative and belief with those of the adjacent cultures ought to be taken for granted to such an extent by serious bible critics…that the real issue of debate ought to be whether there was a historical Jesus at the core of all the mythology.”² While the scope of this paper does not permit a


²Ibid, 121.
detailed analysis of the specific analogies made between the likes of Osiris, Adonis, Apollonius of Tyana, Herakles, Romulus, Mithras or Krishna with Jesus of Nazareth, nevertheless we can look at some basic principles to help illuminate the fragility of this theory.

In their book, Reinventing Jesus, New Testament scholars Ed Komoszewski, James Sawyer, and Daniel Wallace summarizes five logical fallacies that proponents of this “mythicist” theory often make. First, there is the composite fallacy, which is made by skeptics when they fabricate a composite or aggregate mystery-religion out of various aspects and characteristics of numerous differing mystery cults, and then match this contrived historical conception with the Christian narrative. This allows for parallels to be made that never would have actually existed at any given time or place in history, but exist only in the mind of the historian.

Secondly, this is often coupled with the terminological fallacy, which allows for a redefining of terms in order to prove a point. Skeptics can employ Christian terms such as “baptism,” “lord’s supper,” “glory,” “salvation,” and for the purposes of this examination, “resurrection,” in ways that the original pagan cults would never have used or understood them. Thus, for example, when Osiris is murdered by his brother, and his coffin sunk into the Nile only to resurface later, or when he is then cut into fourteen pieces and glued back together again by his wife Isis, this can be deemed a “baptism and rebirth,” or even “resurrection.” These appropriations of terms strike one as being highly gratuitous.

The dependency fallacy is made when critics assume that some borrowing of terms, concepts, and even language, to describe an event or a concept is the same as borrowing the

concept itself. Borrowing forms is simply not the same as causal dependency. That the writers of scripture used Greek loan words (both in the Old and New Testament) or even pagan metaphors (e.g. the “hardened heart” of the Old Testament is borrowed from the Egyptian image of the “heart of stone”) does not mean that they bought into Greek or Egyptian beliefs about god, creation, the afterlife, or resurrection. As such, the German theologian, Adolph von Harnack, writing in the heyday of the History of Religions tradition, acknowledged this error:

We must reject the comparative mythology which finds a causal connection between everything and everything else….By such methods one can turn Christ into a sun god in the twinkling of an eye, or one can bring up the legends attending the birth of every conceivable god, or one can catch all sorts of mythological doves to keep company with the baptismal dove…the wand of ‘comparative religion’ triumphantly eliminate(s) every spontaneous trait in any religion.⁴

While much more could be said about this type of fallacy, there is another, perhaps more straightforward, error made by skeptics, namely the chronological fallacy.

The chronological fallacy relates to the dating of the relevant material. While it is certain that many mystery cults predate Christianity, e.g. the Mithraic cult existed in ancient Persia, before some of the Old Testament scriptures were completed, many of the particular parallels in Mithraism, however, postdate the advent of Christianity. Further, the fact that mystery cults were highly syncretistic, as opposed to the stricter exclusivism of Judaism and then Christianity, made them more apt to evolve, and integrate new ideas and practices into their systems. Hence, “if there is any influence between Christianity and the mystery religions, it must surely be in one direction: Christianity influenced the cults.”⁵ In other words the mystery cults were constantly in


⁵ Komoszewski, Sawyer and Wallace, 232.
flux, accruing new themes and concepts depending on where they cropped up; thus it is highly plausible that it was later Roman (not earlier Persian) Mithraism, or later Egyptian and Greek cultism that stole from the story of the Christ, rather than Christ being born out of pagan myths.

A final fallacy illustrated by the same authors and indirectly supported by Egyptologist, Jan Assmann, is the *intentional fallacy.* This fallacy suggests that when put side-by-side the nature and purpose of the mystery cults and the nature and purpose of Christianity are so fundamentally disparate, that any attempt at a substantive philosophical, theological, or even cultural comparison seems very thin indeed. Hence, Assmann’s incisive statement in the opening of his essay on Egyptian “resurrection:”

“Resurrection” is a Christian term and a Christian idea. To ask for “resurrection” in ancient Egypt smacks of heresy: of the heresy of reducing the Christian kerygma to just a variant of the Near Eastern myth of dying and rising gods…behind whose dying and rising we easily discern the rhythms of nature, such as the sprouting and fading of vegetation…The death and resurrection of Christ happened once and for all; it belongs to the course of history and not of nature, to linear not to cyclical time.

Having looked at the logical criteria for properly assessing the theory of mythical borrowing as the best historical explanation for the Resurrection, we conclude that it is reasonable to reject the resurrected notions of the 19th century School of Religions and maintain the testimony of a truly resurrected Jesus. However, even if borrowing had not occurred (at least, not substantively), that still does not dismiss the possibility that the apostles simply contrived the entire story out of whole cloth.

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6 ibid, 235.

III. Objection 2: Of Conspiracies and Conspirators—Was it all a lie?

In his essay, “The Plausibility of Theft,” Richard Carrier makes a case for the plausibility (and indeed likelihood) of a stolen body and a conspiratorial cover-up, “There is rarely any difficulty for one or two people to keep quite, especially when it means everything to them, and history hardly proves that such secrets tend to come to light.”

He goes on to indirectly counter the claims of Christian activist Chuck Colson, who had contrasted the inability of his fellow Watergate conspirators to maintain their own secrets for no longer than a few weeks with the supposed collusion of the apostles. Carrier considers this a faulty analogy, asserting that any comparison between the near-universally illiterate, superstitious, and low-tech 1st century A.D. Roman world with that of our modern, literate, and technologically advanced culture is unwarranted. For Carrier, the idea of a stolen body, covered up with various lies, rumors, and legendary fabrications is a far more acceptable solution than an actual resurrection.

However, is collusion and conspiracy really the better explanation? Probably not. Two facts underlie the argument against conspiracy: 1) the fact that many, if not all, of the apostles and early disciples suffered, were tortured, and died for their belief in the Resurrection and 2) the internal witness of the Epistles and the Easter narratives do not act as simple apologetics or vague testimonies about some “other” happening. First, apart from the martyrdoms of Stephen and James in the book of Acts, history attests to the violent deaths of Peter, Paul, James (brother of Jesus), Thomas and possibly even John. While there is not space to discuss in detail the varied accounts of early Christian martyrdom, we can nonetheless capture the human principle behind the unwavering devotion of these early believers:

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There could be no possible motive for such a lie. Lies are always told for some selfish advantage. What advantage did the ‘conspirators’ derive from their ‘lie’? They were hated, scorned, persecuted, excommunicated [especially from Judaism, their original faith], imprisoned, tortured, exiled, crucified, boiled alive, roasted, beheaded, disemboweled and fed to lions.

The idea of the Apostles, and other early Christians, willingly going to their death for what they would have known to be a lie simply pushes the limits of reason and human experience.

Furthermore, to consider the amount of mental, emotional, and physical effort undertaken on the part of the antagonists (especially the local Roman and Jewish authorities) in persecuting the early Christian movement, when a simple presentation of the dead Jesus could have squashed all belief; both stretch credulity. But this presents a different problem for the skeptic, an empty tomb: a problem, which we will soon examine.

Empty tomb aside, if the Apostles and early disciples had somehow colluded to invent a story of a risen Jesus, and then willingly committed to that lie, even unto the point of death, we still encounter another problem in the text of scripture itself. Nowhere do we see in either the four Easter accounts or in Paul’s references to the resurrection any evidence of an ulterior motive for claiming Jesus raised from the dead, be it political, social, or otherwise. Indeed the resurrection is essential to the Christians’ early belief in salvation, “Early Christians were less concerned with self-identity than with salvation...Jesus was more than the founder of their movement; he was the source of their salvation.”

Furthermore, “The events of Jesus’ history are

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were charged with all the history-making significance of the activity of Israel’s God.”

According to Cambridge scholar Richard Bauckham then, the motive that we discern in the scriptures themselves as to why men and women were willing to endure such foul treatment, was because they honestly believed that the God of their fathers had once again acted in human history, and that this historical act was necessary for their eternal salvation. The idea that inactivity by Yahweh would have caused the Apostles and other disciples to leave their faith, their families and travel to the ends of the Roman Empire to meet their death, seems, at best, spurious.

IV: Objection 3: The Resurrection as Metaphor—Spiritual Power or Risen Body

Bodily resurrection has nothing to do with a resuscitated body coming out of its tomb. And neither is bodily resurrection just another term for Christian faith itself. Bodily resurrection means that the embodied life and death of the historical Jesus continues to be experienced, by believers, as powerfully efficacious and salvifically present in this world.

For Jesus Seminar scholar, John Dominic Crossan, the Jesus of History and the Jesus of Faith only meet up in the realm of metaphor. The idea of a concrete historical occurrence, wherein the physical (yet strangely new) body of Jesus was raised through the power of God, is better explained as a metaphorical reference to a spiritually abstract event: an event which catalyzed in the hearts and minds of the grieving Apostles a renewed desire and a revitalized life, allowing them to continue on in the tradition and teaching of their beloved rabbi. Summarizing his view on the Easter narrative, Crossan consequently theorizes:

11 Ibid, 277.

First, the Easter story…reflects the struggle of Jesus’ followers to make sense of both his
death and their continuing experience of empowerment by him. Second, stories of the
resurrected Jesus appearing to various people are not really about “visions” at all, but are
literary fiction prompted by struggles…in the early Church. Third, resurrection is one-but
only one-of the metaphors used to express the sense of Jesus’ continuing presence with
his followers and friends.13

Crossan insists that his conclusions are not due to post-Enlightenment presuppositions14, but,
even if Crossan is not assuming anti-supernaturalism, are the Resurrection accounts merely the
use of metaphorical language representing intra-mental “spiritual” experiences?

First off, we notice an apparent contradiction in Crossan’s own reasoning, when in his
dialogues with eminent scholar, N.T. Wright, he clearly gives credence to the “visions” that he
earlier seemed to marginalize, “I am convinced as a fact that they [the apostles and others] had
apparitions. How you explain that is a separate issue, but it happened; they are not making it up;
it’s not hallucinations.”15 In Crossan’s own words then, the “visions,” even if they are only
spiritual ones, are neither lies, nor hallucinations. It only follows then, that they cannot be
literary fiction, since some external cause was part of their experience. Allowing some grace for
a possible evolution in Crossan’s thinking, I move now to Wright’s case on the possibility of a
spiritual understanding of resurrection within the framework of 2nd Temple Judaism and early
Christianity:

Granted that the early Christians drew freely on Jewish traditions, and engaged
energetically with the pagan world of ideas, how does it happen that we find
virtually no spectrum of belief about life after death…Let us be quite clear at this

13 John Dominic Crossan and Richard G. Watts, Who is Jesus?: Answers to Your Questions about the
Historical Jesus (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 121 as quoted in John Dominic Crossan and
Robert B. Stewart, The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N.T. Wright in Dialogue (Minneapolis:
Fortress Press, ©2006), 74-75

14 ibid, 28.

15 ibid, 33.
point: we shall see that when the early Christians said ‘resurrection’ they meant it in the sense it bore both in paganism (which denied it) and in Judaism (an influential part of which affirmed it.) ‘Resurrection’ did not mean that someone possessed ‘a heavenly and exalted status’; when predicated of Jesus, it did not mean his perceived presence’ in the ongoing church….It meant the bodily resurrection; and that is what the early Christians affirmed.\textsuperscript{16}

To attempt to summarize Wright’s work on the word \textit{resurrection} alone would be a fool’s errand in the scope of this essay. However, the exegetical and historical background evidence put forth in his tome on the subject is formidable. The case he mounts against Crossan’s “spiritual presence” followed by “metaphorical myth” explanation is overwhelming. However, Wright is not alone in his assessment.

Richard Bauckham, in his work on the reliability of oral transmission of the Gospel narratives argues, “No ancient reader who identified the Gospel as \textit{bioi} [biography] could have expected their narrative form to be merely a way of speaking of a risen, exalted Christ in his present relationship to his people. They would \textit{expect} the narratives to recount the real past and not to confuse this with the present.”\textsuperscript{17}

Finally, even if we disregard Crossan’s supposed pre-modern, metaphorical interpretations, we still might be left with a post-Enlightenment “spiritual re-birth,” that would like to leave Christ’s body dead and buried, but the fearful Apostles intellectually illumined. New Testament professor, Peter Lampe, however, gives a stern warning about “spiritualizing” Paul’s description of the risen Lord in 1 Cor 15:44, “For him, [Paul] the term ‘spiritual’ emphasizes that God’s Spirit is the \textit{only} force that creates the new body….that is all that Paul wants to convey with this term,” and “since God raised Christ from the dead…Christians (1 Cor. 15:23) will also

\textsuperscript{16} N.T Wright, \textit{The Resurrection of the Son of God} (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 209.

\textsuperscript{17} Bauckham, 276. [second emphasis mine].
be raised by God. The hope for resurrection is anchored exclusively in the Christ event.” And that, as Wright points out, is an objective, historical event upon which the Christian worldview, with all its symbols, practices, and stories was built.

In sum, Wright, Lampe, and Bauckham all agree that, while the spiritual body certainly possesses new properties that go beyond the original, still a material continuity between the physical and spiritual is clearly affirmed in the scriptures. That being said, however, there is one modern theory that we have yet to discuss. One that Crossan may reject, but that many others, to include German scholar, Gerd Lüdemann, feel is the best explanation for the rise of Christianity.

V. Objection 4: Grieving the Dead?—The Contagion of Post-Mortem Hallucinations

Unlike Crossan’s more nuanced language of metaphor referring to spiritual experience, Gerd Lüdemann follows the traditions of liberal historical criticism to their naturalistic ends, “For in historical study of the resurrection of Jesus or the belief of individual early Christians that they ‘saw’ Jesus after his death it is important in addition to use the methods of depth psychology.” For Lüdemann and other proponents of this “hallucination” or “vision” hypothesis it is the internal workings of a grieved human consciousness that produces the essential narrative and theology of the Resurrection:

If one assumed that the resurrection of Jesus were not a historical fact (so that

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19 Wright, 37-39

Jesus did not rise, and remained in the tomb…but was grounded in the vision of Peter and Paul, a new explanation would have to be given of whether in that case Easter can still be regarded as an experience from outside (extra nos) or whether it does not prove…to be a wish of the human spirit.21

Lüdemann’s thesis looks something like this: 1) Jesus is crucified on Good Friday, 2) at some point afterward Peter experiences Jesus visibly and audibly, likely due to his deep grief over losing both his friend, the hopeful messiah, and his own courage, 3) Peter’s vision proves “formally ‘infectious’” and spreads to the other Apostles and the women, 4) these visions then translate to the 500, and even to Jesus’ brother James, who was caught up in the “whirlpool” of emotion and subsequent visions. Finally, these visions were formalized in the continuation of pre-Easter rituals, e.g. the breaking of the bread, the sharing of common stories about Jesus, and eschatological proclamations about Jesus as the Messiah, all of which leads to Paul’s own vision and earliest confession of the risen Lord in the 1 Cor 15 formula.22 This recapitulation of the Resurrection tradition may be possible, but is it plausible?

Philosopher William Lane Craig, who debated Lüdemann over this very issue, argues that it is not. For Craig, much of Lüdemann’s thesis relies on two poorly evidenced assumptions: 1) that the empty tomb is a later, apologetic invention of the Gospel writers (itself based on a further assumption, viz. Paul’s ignorance of the empty tomb tradition) and 2) that visionary experiences alone would have caused the disciples to believe in a bodily resurrection rallying them to face real, physical danger (not to mention develop a sophisticated integration of Jewish theology with the imagined event).

21 ibid, 17.

22 ibid, 174-175.
While much of the debate regarding point 1 revolves around the proper exegesis of 1 Cor 15:3-5, and whether or not an empty tomb is implied, many of Lüdemann’s arguments against the Gospel narratives, however, seem like mere assertion:

First, if Joseph of Arimathea had buried the body, would it not have been possible that the best attack on Christianity was to show them where the body was in the first couple of days…Well, we don’t know when the Christians became an important movement. According to the Acts of the Apostles, they started to preach fifty days after the death of Jesus. And after fifty days, you wouldn’t see much left of the body.23

For Lüdemann anything seems plausible if the Apostle’s emotional grief and hallucinations were strong enough, to include their preaching a risen Jesus on Pentecost, in the middle of Jerusalem, even in light of visiting an occupied tomb with semi-decayed, partially unrecognizable, remains of their former rabbi! Lüdemann’s attempts to either deny the reality of the empty tomb or marginalize its significance in light of the apostolic visions seem desperate.

Craig, alternatively, appeals to two consensus facts about the empty tomb that lead to a far more likely conclusion. First, that the Joseph of Arimathea narrative is highly probable due to early independent sources and lack of legendary embellishment, and second, that the Gospel writer’s would never have invented female witnesses as the tomb’s discoverers (something that in light of historical research would have lent zero credibility to the Gospel testimonies). Both give credence to the Easter accounts, at least in regards to a core, historically recognizable event. Whether or not later theological gloss or polemic enhanced the core story is in this sense irrelevant. The core remains, and an empty tomb along with it.

Moreover, as to Paul’s understanding of the “spiritual body” in 1 Cor 15:42-44, Craig argues, “but notice that for Paul the spiritual body is a transformation of the body that is in the

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tomb...there is a historical continuity between the body that is interred and the transformed, spiritual resurrection body that inhabits the life to come.”

Michael Welker, differing with his German colleague, adds weight to Craig’s position:

The biblical texts clearly state that the stories for the empty tomb allow for different interpretations. Very realistic and extreme supernaturalistic versions are possible. However, they all have in common that Jesus Christ’s pre-Easter body is not available for an autopsy or physical inspection.

Thus, Lüdemann is left to argue that if there were a dead body, the power of the Apostle’s unconscious visions would have overridden even that demoralizing fact. Therefore, the last stone to be “rolled away” is the idea that visions alone could have been sufficient to overpower the presentation of yet another dead Jewish messiah.

In his earlier book on the resurrection, Lüdemann concludes that, “The man Jesus is the objective power which is the enduring basis of the experiences of a Christian,” and that “Jesus grasps me, makes me bow down, exalts me and makes me blessed, loves me.” Unfortunately, for Lüdemann, this belief in an objective power as opposed to an objective resurrection did not last, “and finally, what do you think it means to say that Christ died for our sins? Do you think that God sent his Son in order to let him die? What picture of God do we project when we say he sent his Son to die for us? I think this is a first-century myth that makes sense in its historical context but that doesn’t make any sense today.”

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24 William Lane Craig in *Jesus’ Resurrection: Fact or Figment?*, 57.


27 ibid, 182.

28 Lüdemann in *Jesus Resurrection: Fact or Figment?*, 67.
conviction, based purely on the emotional power of subjective hallucinations, was the sole requirement needed for them to drastically alter their lives, and proclaim the message of salvation even unto torture and death, has apparently not translated into his own life. That same power he proposes led to the rise of Christianity, seems to have led him only to skepticism and atheism.

Still, that is not proof against visions, per say, for as Habermas point out, “regarding any kind of hallucination hypothesis, whether grief-related or any other variety, probably no natural thesis is plagued by more difficulties.”29 In his debate with Flew, Habermas goes on to list some of the initial prima facie problems with hallucinations: 1) groups do not experience the same hallucination, 2) people don’t share the same mental images, 3) changing scenarios amongst the proposed “visionaries,” such as differing genders, physical locations, and varying levels of activity make the probability of purely mental images difficult to harmonize, and finally, 4) hallucinations don’t change lives, rather they are usually dismissed by the recipients as exactly that, once they have recovered emotionally or physically.30

Finally, from a redaction critical perspective, Grant Osborne states unequivocally, “Paul’s efforts to distinguish between visions and real experiences in 2 Corinthians 12 also makes it difficult to believe that the early church taught a visionary rather than a literal resurrection.


30 ibid, 40-41.
Nothing in the Gospel accounts or New Testament as a whole indicates the earliest witnesses did not believe in a corporeal resurrection.\textsuperscript{31}

Thus, we conclude that all four of these common objections to the risen Christ, the mythical hypothesis, the conspiracy theory, the spiritual resurrection, and the hallucination theory, all at some point fail, and fail decisively. If so, then what is our best explanation?

VI. Conclusion: “Glorified” Body and Empty Tomb Equals Resurrection

In his book, \textit{The Rise of Christianity}, sociologist Rodney Stark poses the key question, “Finally, all questions concerning the rise of Christianity are one: How was it done? How did a tiny and obscure messianic movement from the edge of the Roman Empire dislodge classical paganism and become the dominant faith of Western civilization?”\textsuperscript{32} While Stark remains agnostic toward miracles in his attempted answer, ultimately Craig seems to offer the most common sense rejoinder:

The principal historical basis for belief in the resurrection of Jesus consists in the evidence for the empty tomb, for the appearances of Jesus to the various witnesses and for the origin of the Christian Way in the disciples’ coming to believe in Jesus’ resurrection. If the evidence for these facts is strong and cannot be plausibly accounted for by alternative explanations, then the resurrection of Jesus from the dead would seem to be the historical hypothesis that most suitably fits the facts of the case.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{31} Grant R. Osborne, \textit{The Resurrection Narratives: A Redactional Study} (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, ©1984), 278. [emphasis mine]


Supporting this thesis of appearances plus empty tomb, Michael Welker drives a stake in the heart of those who would both reduce the empty tomb narratives as late inventions addressing the early church’s *Sitz im Leben*, and the idea that a spiritual body is something other than a “glorified” physical body:

By insisting on the aspect of palpability in the midst of appearances the biblical texts indicate and even emphasize that the resurrected body is not the product of mere imagination or fantasy….It produces a living cultural and canonic memory shaped by the life of the pre-Easter Jesus…This fact-that the cultural and canonic memory is shaped by Jesus’ pre-Easter life-allows us to affirm the objectivity of the transfigured body. It is indeed not the product of fantasy. It is not just a poly-individual and communal recollection.\(^{34}\)

Therefore, based on the available historical evidence and through the implementation of proper hermeneutical approaches, is is thoroughly reasonable to conclude that the best explanation for an actual empty grave of the crucified man Jesus of Nazareth and the multiple, varied and, textually substantiated “palpable” appearances of Jesus to his disciples, is that God raised Him from the dead. I would affirm, then, that the only reason to subsequently reject the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as a concrete, historical event is a presupposition against the possibility of miracles. Perhaps this is where deist Anthony Flew and others still find refuge in light of the evidence.

\(^{34}\) Welker in *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, 38.
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I was recently invited to write an essay on whether the resurrection of Jesus was physically and bodily or spiritually and mystical. This distinction is helpful: it makes clear that Christians have understood the meanings of Easter in different ways. But for more than one reason, including the common meanings of these words in modern English, I don’t like either option. I begin with the positive with what we can say with certainty about the meaning of Easter in the gospels and the New Testament. It is twofold: Jesus lives and is Lord. Both convictions are grounded in experience. Some of Jesus... 

Is it important that Jesus was resurrected in a physical body? If Christ’s body was not resurrected, we have no hope that ours will be (1 Corinthians 15:13, 16). In fact, apart from Christ’s bodily resurrection, we have no Savior, no salvation, and no hope of eternal life. As the apostle Paul said, our faith would be useless and the life-giving power of the gospel would be altogether eliminated. Because our eternal destinies ride on the truth of this historical event, the resurrection has been the target of Satan’s greatest attacks against the church. Accordingly, the historicity of Christ’s bodily resurrection has been examined and investigated from every angle. In his defense before Agrippa, Paul asked his Jewish audience: Why is it judged incredible with you, if God doth raise the dead? (Acts 26:8). There have always been those who found the concept of the bodily resurrection incredible, i.e., unbelievable, and their modern counterparts are appearing increasingly even in today’s church. False Ideas. The ancient Greeks disdained the notion that the body could ever be raised. (1) Paul persuasively pled for the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ on the basis of numerous eyewitnesses of the risen Lord, which, on one occasion, consisted of more than five hundred people (15:1-11). (2) The apostle maintained that the Lord’s resurrection is Heaven’s guarantee that we too shall be raised.