Having looked at the rise of interest in the soul, it is now time to turn towards the body. Undoubtedly, the most spectacular religious doctrine regarding the body is resurrection. For Greeks and Romans this was an unthinkable idea. The terse observation of a character in Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* (648) that ‘once a man has died, there is no resurrection’, reflected a widely held feeling, and Christian apologists and theologians would spend an enormous amount of energy in explaining and defending this central part of their religion, beginning with Luke’s (*Acts* 17) presentation of Paul’s oration before the Areopagus in which the resurrection of Jesus guarantees, so to speak, the resurrection of us all. Yet, the resurrection has been an integral part of Christian doctrine ever since the Church began formulating the creed in compact form in the so-called *symbola* (the same word the Orphics used for their ‘passports’ to the underworld: Ch. 2.2). Naturally, in such a confession of faith, doubts and nuances yield to confident formulations. However, a historian of religion, whether a Christian or not, has the duty to go beyond such *symbola* in order to investigate the origins and development of this central Christian doctrine.

Although the problem of the resurrection of the dead has always attracted scholars, the contemporary student is especially fortunate in that he can enter into discussion with some recent works of the highest quality. In 1991 a historian of religion, Jonathan Z. Smith of Chicago, published a profound investigation of modern scholarly theories regarding the unique or, as he would rather say, not so unique position of early Christianity and its relationship to traditions involving the so-called ‘dying and rising’ gods of Late Antiquity. In 1993 a French research fellow of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Emile Puech, published a huge study of over 900 pages on Essene belief in the afterlife together with a thorough survey of their Jewish predecessors and early Christian successors. And in 1995 a well-known American feminist historian of the Middle Ages, Caroline Walker Bynum, brought out a study focusing on the metaphors used in early Christian and Medieval times to describe the resurrection. Obviously, one chapter cannot survey all the evidence Puech mustered in his massive work,
but it may be possible, I hope, to say something of interest on two topics. First, we will attempt to shed some light on the roots of Christian belief by taking a closer look at beliefs concerning resurrection of the dead in Qumran, among the Essenes (section 2), and in Zoroastrian literature (section 3). Secondly, we will look at the ways in which the Gnostics and late antique mysteries viewed resurrection of the dead (section 4). Let us start, however, with a brief look at the New Testament.

1. The resurrection in the New Testament

Any historical investigation into the earliest roots of Christian belief is greatly hampered by the fact that the chronology of the earliest Christian writings and their mutual relationship is hard to determine. In general, it is reasonably assumed that the gospels are later than the writings of Paul, but that both had recourse to older material. Matthew and Luke are often connected with an earlier source, called Q (the abbreviation of German Quelle, 'source'). Inevitably, some contemporary scholars lose sight of the fact that Q is not an existing text but rather a scholarly construct, and thus speak of differing traditions within Q and even of the congregations behind these differing traditions. Such investigations are usually highly ingenious, but in the end unverifiable. Anyone preferring not to build on sand will have to take account of the fact that the first century of Christianity can be reconstructed only in outline, not in detail.

What then does the New Testament say about the eschatological resurrection of Jesus’ followers? The subject has filled many volumes and here I have room for only a few, admittedly sketchy and schematic, remarks. The first observation we have to make is that such a resurrection is not frequently mentioned in the gospels. Apparently, the Christians of the last decades of the first century (the period at which the gospels were most likely written) did not possess many pronouncements made by Jesus himself regarding this subject. Because the early Christians had by that time already experienced the Neronian persecution, they would surely have preserved relevant logia, had they existed. However, Jesus had concentrated on the new aîon which he seems to have reserved for his generation but not for future resurrected ones, destined instead to see the Son of Man returning upon the clouds to judge mankind. When confronted, though, he did not shy away from the subject and in fact rejected the scepticism of the Sadducees, who questioned the eschatological resurrection of the dead. In this debate (which is reported by all three synoptic gospels) Jesus professed a faith in the resurrection but not, presumably, in the restoration of the old body, since the resurrected would be 'like angels' (Matthew 22.23–33; Mark 12.18–27; Luke 20.27–40). This belief then seems to conform to those currents in contemporary Judaism which rejected bodily resurrection."

Although the resurrection of the dead seems to have been of less importance
to Jesus himself, there can be little doubt that for the first Christians it became of the utmost importance through Paul. As he (1 Corinthians 15.16–17) stated, 'For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised. And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain.' And indeed, all four gospels reach their dramatic climax with reports of Jesus' resurrection. Paul seems to have been the first to present Jesus' resurrection as the beginning of the collective eschatological resurrection, whereas in traditional Jewish thought individual resurrection, as in the case of Jesus, had been typical only of martyrs like the Maccabees.' Both John (5.29) and Luke (Acts 17.31) combine the eschatological resurrection with the coming Last Judgement. This combination is also traditional and already found in Jewish apocalyptic circles in the second century BC.13

2. Pharisees, Qumran, Essenes

Where did belief in a resurrection of the dead at the end of time originate? Luke (Acts 23.6) firmly connects the belief with the Pharisees by letting Paul cry out before the Jewish Sanhedrin: 'Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.' This positive reference to the Pharisaic position, already found in the sources of the synoptic gospels, as we have observed, is corroborated by extrabiblical sources such as Josephus and rabbinical literature. In these passages, we can still see something of the debates which raged between leading intellectuals in the time of Jesus. The Pharisees are more than once contrasted with the Sadducees, who denied a resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees thus actually continued an approach to the afterlife with had older roots than the Pharisaic position (Ch. 1.3), and their views remained influential in Egypt and Judaea at least during the late Ptolemaic and early Roman periods."

We have known for a few years now that the Christians were not only heirs of the Pharisees, but also stood in another tradition. The Dead Sea Scrolls, which had already given us so many surprises, proved surprising here as well." In 1992 Puech published a text from Qumran that for the very first time explicitly mentions the resurrection of the dead (4Q521). He dubbed the text a 'messianic apocalypse', but the extant fragments show none of the characteristics of the apocalyptic revelation and it is impossible to be sure of the genre.18 In this text, which dates from the Hasmonean period and comprises 17 fragments, it is said:

And forever shall I cling to [those who hope, and in his mercy [...]] and the fruit of... not be delayed. And the Lord will perform marvellous acts (Psalm 7.3) such as have not existed, just as he said, he will heal the badly wounded and will make the dead live (cf. 1 Samuel 2.6), he will proclaim good news to the poor (Isaiah 61.1; Matthew 11.5) and [...] he will lead the [...] and enrich the hungry (Luke 1.53).
In addition we have a further fragment of the same text:

'And [they (the accursed)] shall b[e] for death, [...] lie who gives life to the dead of his people (1 Samuel 2.6). And we shall [give] thanks and announce to you [...] of the Lord who [...] and opens [...] and [...] lie reveals them [...] and the bridge of the abyss[es ...].'

Moreover, 4Q385, containing a second-century interpretation of the famous vision of Ezekiel 37, replaces the original national restoration with the promise of individual resurrection. Ezekiel's vision will engage us later (section 3), but here we may note that its original editors regarded the text as 'pre-Qumranian'. These are the only certain references to a resurrection found in Qumran, although an Aramaic text pertaining to a cycle of Daniel concludes with: '[...] in order to eradicate wickedness [...] those in their blindness, and they lie astray [...] then shall arise [...] the holy, and they will return [...] wickedness' (4Q245). However, the interpretation of these fragmentary lines remains highly uncertain.

Of these texts, the first passage is the most interesting in at least two ways. First, its use of the term 'good news' in combination with 'the meek' is a clear reference to Isaiah's (61.1) 'because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek', quoted in turn by Matthew's (11.5) 'the poor have the good news preached to them'. This succession of texts strongly suggests in fact that the first followers of Jesus adopted the Greek term ἀφοσία in order to translate a Jewish term and not from the contemporary use of ἀφοσία, rlie plural of the same term, in Hellenistic and imperial inscriptions; in any case, the close connection of the latter term with pagan sacrifice hardly supports the derivation of rlie Christian term from non-Jewish usage. Secondly, the passage shows that Matthew (11.2–5) and Luke (7.22), if not actually acquainted with our text, at least drew on the same tradition."

It is not easy to determine the tradition behind the tests we have just quoted. The library of Qumran contained not only actual writings of the community, such as the Rule of the Community (1QS) and the Damascus Document, but also works that predated the community, such as Tobit, Ben Sira, Jubilees and the Epistle of Jeremiah. Moreover, the precise origin of the community is still debated. I may perhaps be forgiven, when I suggest that the best answer in this direction is provided by the so-called 'Groningen Hypothesis' of my colleagues Florentino Garcia Martinez and the late Adam van der Woud. They have persuasively argued that the Qumran group originated in a rift that developed within the Essene movement during the priesthood of Jonathan (161–143/2 BC) and became definitive under the priesthood of John Hyrcanus (135/4–104 BC). The group loyal to the Teacher of Righteousness eventually established itself in Qumran. The Essenes, on the other hand, originated in the Palestine apocalyptic tradition before the revolt of the Maccabees, that is, at the end of the third or the beginning of the second century BC.
The texts we have quoted are certainly atypical of the writings of the sect, which have so far not given us any further references to resurrection. What about the Essenes proper, however, the spiritual ancestors of the Qumran sect? The fundamental disputes between the Essenes and the Teacher of Righteousness had been over the cultic calendar, the norms of purity regarding the Temple and the city, and halakhic relating to tithes, impurity and marriage statutes, but nowhere do we hear about major differences regarding eschatology. This suggests that the resurrection did not play an important role among the Essenes either. Nevertheless, there is an important difference between the reports of Josephus and those of the Church Father Hippolytus (ca. 170–2.35): whereas in his *Jewish War* (BJ 2.154–8) the former ascribes to the Essenes a belief in the immortality of the soul with a hereafter divided into a kind of Hades and Elysian Fields, in his *Refutation of All Heresies* (IX.27) the latter ascribes to the Essenes a belief in the resurrection of the flesh, a last judgement and the final conflagration of the world. How do we resolve this difference?

Puech dedicates a significant portion of his study to this problem, a question of the utmost importance to him. Having unpersuasively argued that the existence of a belief in resurrection can be found in a variety of Qumran texts, lie naturally tries to prove the reliability of Hippolytus over Josephus. The relationship between the two texts has often been discussed and two possibilities in particular have been canvassed: the modification of Josephus by Hippolytus or the dependence of both authors on a common source. However, detailed textual and stylistic comparison has undeniably clemonstrated that Hippolytus used Josephus as his source. Evidently unable to provide a detailed refutation of this thesis, Puech proceeds along a different route. He belabours internal contradictions concerning Josephus' reports on the Essenes and, having gathered all the (poor!) evidence regarding an Essene belief in the resurrection, concludes that Hippolytus' report is more reliable and, like Josephus, derives from an older source, which he is nevertheless unable to identify.

Puech's approach makes various methodological mistakes. First, if Hippolytus derives his observation regarding the Essenes from Josephus' report in the *Jewish War*, it does not matter whether Josephus makes mistakes or reports variant versions elsewhere in his work (this is a separate, although certainly not negligible, problem). Secondly, and more importantly, like many of his predecessors Puech has not sufficiently considered the ways in which Hippolytus proceeds in his work. Surely, a consideration of Hippolytus' report on the Essenes should take into account the manner in which the Church Father works in reporting the views of Greek philosophers, Christian heretics and Gnostic believers. Now, in this respect, recent years have witnessed much progress.

In his work Hippolytus claims that the Christian and Gnostic heretics, who are his principal targets, derived their views from the Greeks who in turn
derived theirs from the Jews. In order to prove this point, he did not hesitate to doctor his documents whenever this suited his aims and did not shrink from ascribing to his sources views utterly alien to their argument. A spectacular example is Hippolytus' treatment of Heraclitus (B 63 DK): 'thereupon those asleep rise again, and, fully awake, become watchers over the living and the dead'. According to Hippolytus (Ref. IX 10.6), Heraclitus speaks here of the resurrection of the flesh and 'knows' that God is the cause of this resurrection. Needless to say, the fragment says nothing of the kind. On the contrary. The watchers rise normally from sleep, but Hippolytus changes this to resurrection and, on the analogy of 'where there's smoke there's fire', reasons that God must be involved. Now it could be argued that Hippolytus had misunderstood his source here, but this is hardly possible in another instance. In his chapter on the Stoics, Hippolytus (Ref. 1.21) clearly attempted to demonstrate the affinities between Christian and Stoic doctrines. He stresses Stoic belief in the immortality of the soul, the ekpyrosis as purification (cf. Paul, I Corinthians 3.13) and . . . resurrection. There can be no doubt that here, as often elsewhere, Hippolytus has added an interpretatio Christiana. Hippolytus, then, not only copied his texts but also changed them when this suited his purposes.

In all fairness to Puech we should not neglect one other argument. He has rightly argued that Hippolytus (Ref. IX 28.5) also ascribes the expectation of conflagration to the Essenes and that assertion is dramatically confirmed by the thanksgiving hymns of Qumran, the Hodayot. This, though, is purely chance. That the idea of ekpyrosis, or at least the term itself, was already popular among the early Christians is already illustrated by 2 Peter 3.10: 'But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up'. Hippolytus' mention of this text, then, is really no argument for his reliability at all, but simply an illustration of the importance he attached to the combination of the resurrection and the Last Judgement.

Hippolytus thus not only doctored Josephus' report regarding the Essenes, but also attributed the idea of resurrection to the Pharisees, even though Josephus mentioned only their belief in the immortality of the soul. Mansfeld considers this interpolation another fraud comparable to Hippolytus' misrepresentation of the Essenes. This is not necessarily the case. Hippolytus must have been well acquainted with the notices in the New Testament regarding the Pharisees (above), and simply took his notice from that source. On the other hand, Hippolytus also attributed the ekpyrosis to the Pharisees, an attribution not supported by any other source. Rather than confusing Essenes and Pharisees, it is most likely that Hippolytus once again combined the resurrection and the Last Judgement.

What have we learned so far? Clearly, the resurrection was not an important doctrine in Qumran nor, apparently, did it play a significant role among the Essenes. Unless we consider the Essenes great religious innovators, we may
safely conclude that the rise of the resurrection as a living religious concept postdates the birth of the Essenes, Pharisees and Sadducees as separate currents within Judaism. In fact, this conclusion is supported by Daniel 12.2: ‘and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt’. This statement dates from the period around 165 BC when the Jews started their revolt against the Seleucids. The analogy with Christianity (section 4) is quite suggestive: the theme became popular because of the martyrdoms we find in 2 Maccabees. However, Daniel was not the first to record this belief. Rather, the publication of the Aramaic fragments of Enoch in 1976 showed that belief in resurrection was already current in the early second century BC (1 Enoch 22–27), although the Maccabean revolt certainly gave a great boost to the spread of the idea."

The Essenes and the community of Qumran kept to the older beliefs. Nevertheless, when belief in resurrection started to gain ground quickly in the first century BC, the first traces of this belief, not surprisingly, also became visible in the literature available to, if not necessarily written by, the community.

3. Persian influence?

Where did the belief in resurrection originate? Earlier studies of the concept of the resurrection betrayed few doubts in this respect. From the beginning of last century the so-called Religionsgeschichtliche Schule proclaimed with great gusto and overwhelming erudition the dependency of Israel on the Zoroastrian faith of the Persians.” Is this likely? We are faced here with enormous difficulties, and only recently have we begun to form a clearer picture. The study of Persian religion is not a subject that looks back to a long tradition. It was only in 1723 that an Englishman, Richard Colbe, deposited a fragment of the Avesta in the Bodleian Library, thus demonstrating that the holy book of the Parsees had not been lost. Here it was shown in 1754 to a young Frenchman, Abraham Anquetil-Duperron (1731–1805), who had learned his Oriental languages in Holland. He immediately decided to go to India where he acquired a copy of the Vendidad, and in 1771 he published his translation of the Avesta. This first attempt was premature, and our understanding of the language of the Avesta as well as its reception has since then grown only slowly. The geographical origin of the oldest part of the Avesta, currently dated to the period around 1000 BC, remains uncertain. The Avestan texts wandered gradually from (most likely) eastern Iran to the southwest, where they were finally fixed in writing by the Sassanian kings, a process perhaps already begun in the first centuries of the Christian era under the Arsacids.” However, our oldest Avestan manuscript dates from only AD 1288, and all extant manuscripts go back to a single Stammhandschrift of the ninth or tenth century.

In the course of their wanderings the texts were adapted to their new
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circumstances. This makes the Avesta extremely difficult to read, a difficulty not alleviated by its highly poetical and cryptic style. Older studies often had to rely on insufficiently understood texts, and real progress regarding the Old Avesta has only been made once again in the last few decades after more than half a century of stagnation. It is now clearly understood that we have to make a distinction between the Old Avestan texts, of which Zoroaster perhaps was not the author," and the Young Avestan texts, which probably are at least half a millennium later." Moreover, we should not presume that every Zoroastrian doctrine can be read back into the Iranian Urzeit. Zoroastrianism was a living religion subject to internal disputes and thus changed over the centuries. Nevertheless, its leading contemporary scholar, Mary Boyce, has consistently presented a static view – against all evidence and common sense:"

What then is our evidence for Zoroastrian belief in resurrection? Although earlier generations of Iranists have suggested the contrary,." an interest in resurrection is clearly not attested in the Old Avesta and any eschatology seems to be individual." In fact, it is virtually certain that Zoroastrian belief in resurrection does not belong to its earliest stages. A later date is supported both by the doctrine of the journey of the soul to heaven,"" and the fact that the Zoroastrians delivered their dead to dogs and vultures. This particular way of disposing of corpses was probably already current in pre-Zoroastrian times, since the method was also employed in eastern Iran and Central Asia," and in our texts it is first mentioned by Herodorus (1.140). The famous vision in Ezekiel 37 of the valley of dry bones is often also connected with Zoroastrian funeral usage, but the Jewish prophet lived in Babylonia at the beginning of the sixth century BC and that is precisely the problem. We simply do not know how widespread this particular manner of disposing of bodies had become in that area. We do not even know to what extent Zoroastrian faith had already conquered the hearts of the ruling Achaemenids, let alone those of the ordinary Medes and Persians? It is only in Sassanian times that later Zoroastrian practice became the general rule. The connection of Ezekiel's vision with Persian practices can therefore not be considered an established fact."

In the succeeding age the conception of the soul gradually changed," but the first and only Avestan text which undeniably mentions resurrection is Yast 19, a hymn of the Young Avesta that presumably dates from the time of the Achaemenids." The greater part of this hymn concerns the xvarnah, or the 'Light of Fortune' of the Persian king, ' who occupied the central position in the Persian religious system. This section is framed by two verses (11 and 89) which proclaim that the xvarnah will enable the saviour to make:

existence brilliant, not aging, imperishable, not rotting, not putrefying, enjoying eternal life, enjoying eternal benefit, enjoying power at will so that the dead will rise again, [so that] imperishability will be bestowed on the living, [and] existence will be made brilliant in value.

(tr. Humbach and Ichaporia)
These verses do not particularly thematise the rising of the dead. In their idyllic picture a final judgement is not mentioned and hardly has a place.

Proceeding in chronological sequence, we find our next passage in Theopompus' *Philippica* (*FGrH* 115 F 64a), quoted by the pagan (!) Diogenes Laertius: 'according to the Magi men will return to life and be immortal, and that the world will endure through their invocations' (1.9). This view was apparently reported by Aristotle's pupil Eudemus (fr. 89 Wehrli) as well. The fact that Theopompus also mentions that at the end of time mankind 'will not cast a shadow' (*FGrH* 115 F 65) seems to suggest a spiritual rather than the, more normally attested, material resurrection. Unfortunately, we do not know the exact date of Theopompus' work. Having lived for some time at the court of Philip of Macedon he eventually died in Ptolemaic Alexandria. It is therefore not unreasonable to assume that he collected his information from the Magi after Alexander's invasion of Persia: mere chance cannot explain the sudden increase in sources not just for Persian religion but also for Judaism in the last decades of the fourth century BC. Diogenes Laertius, it is significant to note, has Theopompus use the same word, 'return to life', that he employed for the reincarnations of Epimenides (Ch. 2.3), but the Christian author Aeneas of Gaza (ca. 450–525) tells us that 'Zoroaster prophesies that there will be a time in which a resurrection of the corpses will take place. Theopompus (*FGrH* 115 F 64b) knows what I say'. Aeneas has translated Theopompus' original words in typically Christian categories, and, characteristically, Mary Boyce quotes only Aeneas, not Diogenes Laertius.

Rather strikingly, no other mention of resurrection in Iranian thought can be found before the Sassanian period, when the belief in an afterlife and resurrection was evidently much discussed. It is against this background that we have to situate the well-known visions of the Sassanian chief priest Kirdir (ca. 280 AD). Why, though, would resurrection, mentioned only incidentally in the whole of the Old and Young Avesta, have suddenly risen to such prominence? Two possibilities suggest themselves. First, just as the belief in resurrection started to flower in Israel after the struggle against the Seleucids (section 2), Zoroastrian belief in resurrection may have become more prominent in the times after Alexander the Great's conquest of the Persian Empire. Persian religion must have been restructured after the disappearance of the king with his pivotal role, although we do not have any information in this regard, and in Theopompus' notice there is no longer a connection between resurrection and the king. A second and perhaps more likely possibility may be the influence of Christianity. We know that in the third and fourth centuries AD Christianity made great inroads in Iran. It may well be that the Zoroastrian leader Kirdir (above) decided to beat the Christians on their own terrain and 'upvalued' the resurrection as mentioned in the Young Avesta. Such a development would at least explain internal Zoroastrian discussions about resurrection. Had belief in resurrection been an age-old and respected Zoroastrian dogma, this phenomenon would be much more difficult to understand.
For the influence of Christianity in this period we probably also have another example. According to several Zoroastrian writings, the Greeks under Alexander the Great had destroyed not only a precious Achaemenid Avesta codex but also the other religious books, which had been written on 12,000 ox-hides. In fact, there is no trace at all of these writings in the Achaemenid period, and the tradition seems to have been created in order to explain the absence of a Persian holy book in contrast to those of the Jews, Christians and Manichaean. This lack of a written religious tradition seems to have been first seriously felt precisely in the same period in which resurrection became an issue.  

In the same period, we also find numerous works of an apocalyptic character. The nature and chronology of Iranian apocalypticism has recently been hotly debated. For many years it was virtually dogma that the genre went back to the earliest period, but it has recently been argued that the whole genre of Iranian apocalypticism is actually a fairly late genre – at least postdating Christian times." Admittedly, this tendency to 'deconstruct' the notion of Iranian apocalypticism may well be going too far," and not all arguments to discredit it are convincing. For example, when the Israeli Iranist Shaked wants to prove the authentic Iranian character of the Oracles of Hystaspes, one of the former key witnesses, he argues that the pseudopigraphic attribution of this work would hardly have taken place had there not already been such a genre in Iran. This argument overlooks the fact that the (probable) title of one of the Nag Hammadi treatises, Zostrianos, in no way guarantees the existence of (proto-)gnostic writings in pre-gnostic times!" However this may be, the debate clearly shows that we must be very careful in postulating influences from a genre which itself is very hard to reconstruct with any certainty. There thus is little reason to derive Jewish ideas about resurrection from Persian sources. Their origin(s) may well lie in intra-Jewish developments. Of course, this conclusion does not exclude the overall possibility of Iranian influence on Jewish religion." In this respect we have to keep an open mind, but any posited influence must be proven and each case should always be studied individually.

4. Late Antiquity

With the Persians we move into Late Antiquity, but they certainly were not the only ones interested in resurrection. During the first centuries of Christianity there was hardly a Christian author who did not mention the resurrection, and in all cases it is the resurrection of the whole body. The distinction between the body and the soul which, as we observed in Chapter 1, had developed in the Greek world, hardly played a role in the writings of earliest Christianity, still very much influenced by Jewish traditions. The Church Father Irenaeus (Adv. haer. 1.6.1), for example, explicitly stated that the soul was an intricate part of the body and not something to be released." In the course of the second century the resurrection became a major issue in the internal struggles of
Christianity against the Gnostics, and, as we can see from Origen's *Contra Celsum*, pagans now started to use the resurrection as an argument against Christianity. During these debates the 'resurrection of the dead' became even more sharply formulated as the 'resurrection of the flesh', thus leaving no doubt whatsoever about what kind of resurrection the Christians meant.\(^6\) I cannot of course discuss the whole of Late Antiquity in this final section, and we will limit ourselves therefore to some observations on the Gnostics and the thesis of Jonathan Smith that the birth of 'dying and rising' gods in Late Antiquity was not a case of genealogy, i.e. a pagan reaction to Christian beliefs, but of analogy: the two beliefs arose independently of each other out of similar backgrounds.

The struggle of orthodox Christianity against the Gnostics has of course long been known from the texts of the Church Fathers. Because the original literature of their Gnostic opponents had mostly perished, the struggle had always to be studied from the victorious Christian perspective. Fortunately, however, the discovery in 1945 of an extensive Gnostic library in Egyptian Nag Hammadi has also given us an original Gnostic discourse on the resurrection, *The Epistle to Reginos*.\(^6\) The second-century author gives a surprisingly Christian answer to the question 'What is the resurrection?', in which are lacking such typical Gnostic tenets as the rejection of the flesh.\(^6\)

The treatise also shows that we must be careful speaking about the Gnostics, since in this respect Gnostic view was not uniform.\(^6\)

The most original interpretation of the Gnostic view of the resurrection of Christ has been provided by Elaine Pagels. She argues that the orthodox teaching on the resurrection aimed at legitimising 'a hierarchy of persons through whose authority all others must approach God'. Her views have found acceptance by the well-known patristic scholar John Gager, who, drawing on Pagels' argument and Mary Douglas' approach to the body, has suggested that resurrection involving both material continuity and bodily integrity supports the power of ecclesiastical or moral hierarchy.\(^6\) In other words, the Christian doctrine of resurrection was a displaced discourse about status and hierarchy in the Church. What are the arguments for these innovative, if rather surprising, views?

In fact, Pagels supplies very little in the way of argument.\(^6\) The only text she quotes which actually mentions the resurrection in connection with hierarchy comes from Peter's words in the canonical *Acts of the Apostles*. Peter declares that to receive a share in the disciples' authority a new disciple must be chosen from those who were with Jesus all along: 'one of these men must become with us a witness to the resurrection' *(1.22; italics Pagels)*. But this text, rather than making a statement on the hierarchy within the Church of Luke's time, focuses on the importance of the resurrection to the early Christian movement. On the other hand, most of the other texts Pagels adduces have something to say on authority, not resurrection.

Curiously, Pagels also discusses the problem out of historical context.
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Nowhere is the reader told that the debates on the resurrection of the dead took place at a time when Christians were persecuted for their beliefs. The significance of resurrection for the early orthodox Christians in this respect is well demonstrated by a letter, which the church of Lyons sent to the church of Vienne in order to report on a persecution in AD 177. After the executions, the bodies of the martyrs were left unburied for six days. Their corpses were then burned and thrown into the Rhône in order as they themselves [i.e., the Romans] said, that they might have no hope in the resurrection in which they put their trust when they introduce this strange new cult among us and despise the torments, walking readily and joyfully to their death. Now let us see whether they will rise again, and whether their God can help them and rescue them from our hands."

The passage is highly significant, since it shows that the pagan community had already noted the great importance Christians attached to resurrection and apparently concluded that this could not take place without a proper burial – something which is not thematised in the Christian reports of the martyrs' deaths.

The Gnostics, on the other hand, did not think it necessary to die for their faith. Given the absence of martyrdom, it is therefore hardly surprising that they did not insist on the bodily resurrection of Christ. For the Christian martyrs, the prospect of resurrection was a major incentive to hold out. And, as so often happens in history, the future belonged to the hardliners, not to those unprepared to die for their cause.

Finally, we have suggested that the impact of the Christians stimulated the Zoroastrians to thematise the resurrection. Did the resurrection influence other cults as well? This problem is the subject of one of the most stimulating studies that has appeared in the history of religion in recent years: *Dvudgey Divine* by Jonathan Z. Smith, perhaps the most erudite historian of religion at work today. In his book Smith argues that Christian scholars, particularly Protestant ones, have overstressed the uniqueness of the 'Christ-event' and the genre of the gospel in order to render these themes immune to historical criticism. Moreover, Protestants have favoured apostolic Christianity for its purportedly 'Protestant' characteristics, whereas the mystery-religions have been treated as essentially Catholic. There can be no doubt that this is a shrewd observation. It fits in well with the fact that Protestants played the most important roles in the initial decades of the history of religion as an academic discipline." In other respects, though, Smith's study is more debatable – in particular regarding his remarks concerning the resurrection.

Smith's point of departure is indeed an amazing turn in the study of the religions of Late Antiquity. Whereas in the beginning of last century scholars tended to postulate an archaic pattern of 'dying and rising deities' such as
Osiris, Tammuz (Dumuzi: below), Adonis and Attis (among whom the more adventurous also included the death and resurrection of Christ), "more recent scholars have reversed the pattern, claiming that the pagan cults adapted themselves to Christianity. Smith reproaches contemporary scholars of Christian beginning as follows:

ignoring their own reiterated insistence, when the myth and ritual complex appeared archaic, that analogies do not yield genealogies, they now eagerly assert what they (the scholars) hitherto denied, that the similarities demonstrate that the Mediterranean cults borrowed from the Christian. In no work familiar to me, has this abrupt about-face been given a methodological justification."

This statement demands comment. First, the reproach is rather curious. It lumps together virtually a century of scholarship. Why should scholarship not change over such a long period? Given Smith's many criticisms of Protestant scholars, one should also not overlook the fact that it was a Catholic, the Fleming Pieter Lambrechts, who initiated this reversal of the fortunes of many a Late Antique cult. Second, Smith has completely overlooked the fact that Walter Burkett provided at least the beginning of an explanation for this turning of the scholarly tables, since his discussion of these gods clearly shows that the basis for the views of Frazer and his contemporaries has been completely undermined by the continuing publication and analysis of the materials of the Ancient Near East. For example, in 1951 a tablet was discovered with the hitherto missing conclusion of the Sumerian myth of Inanna and Dumuzi: instead of his expected resurrection Dumuzi is killed as a substitute for Inanna. Moreover, a steady trickle of new inscriptions, archaeological monuments and artefacts has enabled scholars to construct a much more sophisticated view of Late Antiquity than was possible for their colleagues at the beginning of last century. There is then no reason not to see this reversal for what it is: a normal example of progress in scholarship.

Subsequently, Smith goes on to observe that the notion of Christian 'dying and rising' is the 'product of a complex developmental process' and that its developmental aspect is more interesting than its origin. One may or may not agree with this point of view, but it certainly does not follow from it, as Smith seems to think, that we must now see the development of this notion in Christianity and other contemporary religions as 'analogous processes [italics his] responding to parallel kinds of religious situations, and that we should no longer continue to construct genealogical relations between them, whether it be expressed in terms of the former "borrowing" from the latter, or, more recently, in an insistence on the reverse.' And, it most certainly does not lead to the conclusion that

if an increased focus on the 'dying and rising' of the central cult figure
and some notion of a relationship between the individual cult member and the destiny of the deity is a parallel innovation of the late second to fifth centuries, in both the Late Antique cults of Attis and Adonis and (italics Smith's) of Jesus, rather than a 'survival' of an archaic element in these cults, then the issue becomes one of analogy (possibly even of shared causality) and no longer one of genealogy.84

This perverse line of reasoning leads one to wonder about the hidden agenda of Smith's own book. Clearly, if the Protestants from the beginning of last century attempted, against all evidence, to isolate early Christianity from its environment, Smith now tries, again against all evidence, to isolate pagan cults from their Christian environment. If accepted, Smith's proposition would force us to see religions in Late Antiquity as isolated phenomena developing without any interrelationship. This is a curious position, considering that in Late Antiquity there was great competition among religions. In fact, there are well-attested cases where religions influenced one another;85 recently, it has even become increasingly clear that Jewish and/or Judaising groups had an important influence on the pagan cult of Theos Hypsistos.86

Smith's part prisc is well illustrated by his discussion of Attis. This Phrygian mythological figure received a cult only in the second century when it was maintained that his body suffered no corruption after he was killed by a boar, and it is only in the fourth century that he is said to have been resurrected.87 Smith argues that the idea of resurrection was always latent in the Attis tradition, and that we can thus exclude Christian influence. Now the idea of a theme being 'latent' is a fruitful one and could perhaps be applied to the prehistory of the Jewish resurrection in the light of texts from Hosea 6, Isaiah 26 and 53, and Psalms 73 and 84.88 Eventually, however, for the potentiality to materialise, there has to be a stimulus such as the Seleucid persecutions in Israel during the second century BC. Smith, on the other hand, does not indicate what stimulus the Attis cult acted on. We may note that around 300 AD Christianity had already made vast inroads in the Roman Empire.89 A Christian influence on the development in the Attis cult is thus more than likely.90

Smith also fails to discuss the problem of Christian influence on the cult of Mithras,91 although in the period 150–200 AD at least two references to Mithraic details strongly point in that direction. Both Justin and Tertullian note the presence of Eucharist-like bread in Mithraic rites, and the latter even mentions an imaginem resurrectionis.92 Moreover, in the second-century Mithraic inscriptions under the Roman Church of Santa Prisca we find the line: 'And you (Mithras) [s]aved us after having shed the [. . .] blood', which strongly suggests the saving blood of Christ.93 It seems, then, that Christianity had inspired early Mithraism.

In light of the most recent insights into the origin of Mithraism this conclusion is less surprising than it might seem at first sight. Whereas formerly the origin of the cult of Mithras was located in Persia or in neighbouring
countries, both the chronology of the first references and the location of the first inscriptions have gradually persuaded many scholars that Mithraism in fact was founded in Rome in the second half of the first century AD, although an influence from Commagene cannot be excluded. Because Christianity took hold in Rome very early and had even made enough converts to be blamed for the notorious fire of 65 AD, there seems to be no reason to a priori exclude Christian influence from the formation of the Mithraic cult.

The reference in Tertullian is not specific enough to enable us to understand what he meant exactly with the imaginem resurrectionis. There can be no doubt, though, that the resurrections of Jesus himself and his resurrecting of others made a great impression on the pagan world. References to an apparent death and resurrection already start to proliferate in pagan novels from the Neronian time onwards, and a recent investigation therefore concludes that the genre was probably influenced by the Christian Gospel narratives. In the second century, pagan magicians start being credited with the power to resurrect, and in the third-century biography of the pagan 'saint' Apollonius of Tyana there occurs a detailed description of the resurrection of a girl. A reference in a Mithraic cult, however isolated perhaps, could thus fit a growing contemporary fascination with resurrection.

5. Conclusion

It is time to come to a close. Taking our start from Christian belief in the resurrection of Christ, we have attempted to trace the roots of this belief in its Jewish environment. We have also tried to show that the strength of the early Christian belief in the resurrection of the body cannot be separated from its context, viz. the persecutions by the Romans. Finally, we have argued that the success of Christianity also influenced other religions either to revalue their belief in the resurrection (the Zoroastrians) or to copy the belief (Mithraism, Attis). Success stimulates imitation – not only in economics, but also in the market of symbolic goods."

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