

The Debate About the Resurrection Around 180 CE and the 'Hellenization' of Christianity

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1 Introduction

1.1 Research Question

The Greek philosopher Celsus (ca. 180 CE), when he was confronted with the Christian idea of the bodily resurrection, put his disgust in unvarnished words: “This is simply the hope of worms! What kind of human soul would still long for a rotten body?” (ἀτεχνῶς σκωλήκων ἢ ἐλπίς· ποία γὰρ ἀνθρώπου ψυχὴ ποθήσειεν <ὄν> ἔτι σῶμα σεσηπός; Or. *Cels.* 5.14). The idea of resurrection is not the only off-putting and irrational belief conservative Greek intellectuals like Celsus thought Christians had. They considered the religious association of the Christians disruptive for society, mainly because Christians broke with the traditions of their ancestors. The fact that Christianity appeared on the radar of Greek intellectuals as a group worthy of refutation reflects the growth of the movement in the second century CE.¹ As more and more well-educated people joined Christianity, the rise of apologetics on their part could not stay away, as is attested by the works of Justin Martyr, Tatian, and Athenagoras among others. The main purpose of defending Christianity was to ward off persecution and to show that Christians were innocent and harmless. The political defence involved the challenge to present the reasonableness of Christianity over against the dominant philosophical ideas. At the same time Christians had to deal with diversity within their ranks. This situation resulted in direct and indirect interaction between Christianity and Greek philosophy.

In order to better understand the shaping of early Christian thought by the intellectual interaction with its historical and cultural matrix, this thesis will investigate the treatise *On the Resurrection* of Pseudo-Justin as part of the resurrection debate around 180 CE. How is the view on the resurrection of this treatise related to the dominant intellectual discourse of Hellenistic philosophy and what is its place in the development of Christianity?

The assumption of this research is that there was a ‘debate’ around 180 CE about the Christian idea of resurrection. In general the resurrection is discussed in writings from the later second century to the early third century CE. The rationale for the limitation to the period around 180 CE is that three texts can be dated plausibly around this year. Pseudo-Justin’s *On the Resurrection*, defending the resurrection of the flesh, is recently dated in 178.² Other texts will be brought into the conversation with Pseudo-Justin, of which I mention especially two: the *Epistle to Rheginus* (dated before 180³), which propagates a resurrection

¹ Estimations of the growth in the second century diverge from several tens of thousands (with a relatively low estimation of the total population) to a growth from circa 7500 to over 200,000 Christians (with a population of 60 million). Eginhard Meijering, *Geschiedenis van het vroege Christendom: Van de jood Jezus van Nazareth tot de Romeinse keizer Constantijn*, [Amsterdam] 2004, 450.

² Martin Heimgartner (ed.), *Pseudojustin – Über die Auferstehung: Text und Studie* (Patristische Texte und Studien 54), Berlin 2001, 222.

³ Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 195. Cf. Malcolm L. Peel, *The Epistle to Rheginos: A Valentinian Letter on the Resurrection*, London 1969, 179-180: last quarter of the second century.

without flesh, and Celsus' *True Doctrine* (dated in 177⁴), quoted above. Martin Heimgartner even claims that Pseudo-Justin is responding to the other two writings.⁵ All three texts are associated with Egypt in modern research. They will be introduced more elaborately elsewhere in this thesis. For historical reasons, I will look back to the roots of the discussion, but later developments will remain largely out of view.

The research question has two focal points. First the development of Christianity in relation to philosophy. The theoretical questions and the history of scholarship on this point are discussed in the next paragraph. The second focal point is the history of ideas about life after death, especially the history of the idea of resurrection. The history of the theology of the resurrection has been studied with regard to the unfolding of the proto-orthodox trajectory⁶, with regard to the development of the resurrection of the flesh⁷ and in relation to community and self-definition.⁸ Pseudo-Justin's *On the Resurrection* is quite recently edited by Martin Heimgartner, whose study provides many useful insights.⁹ I will by comparison pay much more attention to the outside perspective on resurrection of several Greco-Roman authors.

1.2 *The Development of Christianity and 'Hellenization'*

The relation of Christianity to Greek thought is often characterized as a process of 'Hellenization', a term that in recent decades is criticized because of its vagueness and suggestibility for various purposes. In this paragraph the term 'Hellenization' will be evaluated in order to set the stage for looking at and describing more precisely the dynamics of the development of Christianity in the ancient world.

The term 'Hellenization' was minted in its modern sense in the nineteenth century. Especially in theological discourse it functioned as an undefined vehicle for different ideological purposes.¹⁰ 'Hellenization' could be used either as endorsement of a development from backwater beginnings towards the eternal rational truth of Christianity or as deprecatory predicate of the supposed departure from the pure and simple teachings of Jesus. Hellenism and Judaism, Hellenistic and Palestinian Christianity were thought as clearly separate entities. The apostle Paul for instance could be interpreted as either a Hebrew thinker or as someone who Hellenized a Jewish sect, depending on the viewpoint of the scholar. In the last decades

⁴ Celsus, *On the True Doctrine: A Discourse against the Christians* (transl. R. Joseph Hoffmann), New York 1987, 32-33. Cf. Chadwick in Origen, *Contra Celsum* (transl. Henry Chadwick), Cambridge 1953, xxviii: 177-180 CE.

⁵ Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 169-170, 195.

⁶ Katharina Schneider, *Studien zur Entfaltung der altkirchlichen Theologie der Auferstehung* (Hereditas 14), Bonn 1999.

⁷ Horacio E. Lona, *Über die Auferstehung des Fleisches: Studien zur frühchristlichen Eschatologie* (BZNW 66), Berlin 1993.

⁸ Claudia Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body in Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Doctrine, Community and Self-Definition*, Boston 2004.

⁹ Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*.

¹⁰ Christoph Marksches, *Does It Make Sense to Speak about a 'Hellenization of Christianity' in Antiquity?* (Dutch Lectures in Patristics 1), Leiden 2011, 8.

this simplistic divide is laid to rest and more attention is given to the composite nature of cultures and individuals.¹¹ Martin Hengel argued in an important study that Palestinian Judaism had undergone Greek influence, more than previously thought.¹²

Generally speaking, apart from the specific context of the study of Judaism and Christianity, it is questionable if ‘Hellenism’ should carry a special meaning other than the period of dominant Greek influence. Cultural contact and influence of a conquering culture is not surprising, because cultures transform and coalesce anyway. But terms like ‘Hellenization’, ‘Romanization’ and ‘acculturation’ often carry more assumptions with them: they are criticized for their imperialistic, one-sided perspective, disregarding the responding cultures and assuming that cultures are clearly delineated.¹³ Instead, terms as ‘interculturalization’ and ‘cultural receptivity’ emphasize the dynamics of the receiving culture and the openness of and diversity within cultures.¹⁴ David Mattingly criticizes Romanization and Hellenization as “unhelpful constructs”, “used to describe *both* process *and* outcome, so that they have become their own explanation.”¹⁵

Another aspect of the discussion of the terms ‘Hellenism’ and ‘Hellenization’ is how they were used in the ancient world. The relevant details in our case are, firstly, that with regard to the Maccabean crisis the author of 2 Maccabees minted Ἑλληνισμός as a term for treason and the adoption of foreign customs (ἄλλοφυλισμός; 2 *Macc.* 4.13). In later Christian sources Ἑλληνίζειν is used as a negative qualification for paganism and the worship of multiple gods.¹⁶ On the other hand, emperor Julian, who identified with Hellenism and therefore is an important voice in the matter, described a real Hellene as someone educated in rhetoric and philosophy and accordingly behaving virtuously and rationally.¹⁷

All in all, the term ‘Hellenization’ on itself is too unspecific to be explanatory. Especially in the study of early Christianity the term implies often a positive or negative value judgement. A recent proposal to avoid dropping the term altogether and to define the term ‘Hellenization’ in a useful analytical way is from Christoph Marksches. He chooses to delimit it, in line with the definition of the real Hellene by emperor Julian (see above), to the educational institutions of early Christianity. Marksches then defines the ‘Hellenization of Christianity’ as “a specific transformation of the Alexandrinic educational institutions and of the academic culture that was developed in these institutions in the theological reflection of

¹¹ Dale B. Martin, “Paul and the Judaism / Hellenism Dichotomy: Toward a Social History of the Question”, in Troels Engberg-Pedersen (ed.), *Paul beyond the Judaism / Hellenism Divide*, Louisville, Kent. 2001, 29-61.

¹² Martin Hengel, *The ‘Hellenization’ of Judaea in the First Century after Christ*, London 1989.

¹³ David J. Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire*, Princeton 2011, 203-207.

¹⁴ Sylvie Honigman, “King and Temple in 2 Maccabees: The Case for Continuity”, in Lester L. Grabbe and Oded Lipschits (eds.), *Judah Between East and West: The Transition from Persian to Greek Rule (ca. 400-200 BCE)*, London 2011, 91-130, here 103-105.

¹⁵ Mattingly, *Imperialism*, 207.

¹⁶ Marksches, *Does It Make Sense*, 23-24.

¹⁷ Marksches, *Does It Make Sense*, 28-29. He refers to the definition of Hellenistic identity discussed by Jan Stenger, *Hellenische Identität in der Spätantike: Pagane Autoren und ihr Unbehagen an der eigenen Zeit* (Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 97), Berlin 2009, 28-29.

ancient Christianity.”¹⁸ In other words: the shaping of early Christian thought by the academic culture that was marked by the Greek/Hellenistic curriculum. Marksches develops his definition especially for Origen and his school, so that its application to the second century is problematic. However, ‘Hellenization’ defined in this way points to the shaping of Christian theology in the matrix of a world where Greek philosophy was the dominant intellectual discourse. In this sense I used ‘Hellenization’ in the title of this thesis, but with quotation marks to show that term is problematic.

The development of Christian thought in the second century was a process of carving out an own identity. Or rather, various Christians worked out diverse identities in which they took up multiple identity factors in different ways. As we will see, some of the writers of Christian apologetic literature identified as Christians, but also as philosophers. They substantiated that factor of their identity by deliberately trying to show the reasonableness of their Christian persuasion. But that does not necessarily mean that they assimilated their beliefs with one of the current Greek views: the process of rationalizing their beliefs contributed to the shaping of an identity that exhibited difference, a (partly) ‘descrepant’ identity.¹⁹ The belief in the resurrection of the flesh is one example of an inharmonious idea that nevertheless is provided with an intellectual defence by Pseudo-Justin. Other Christians, like the author of the *Epistle to Rheginus*, did not like philosophy, but their understanding of and writing about the resurrection is obviously marked by Greekness. The discussion about the resurrection is therefore a suitable subject to illustrate the process of how early Christians worked out their beliefs in the light of Greek thought.

1.3 Outlook

Having set out some lines for looking at the development of Christianity in the second century, I want to give an outlook on the following chapters. In the next chapter is broadly described and analysed which ideas about the body after death existed in the Greek world, in Judaism, in first century Christianity and finally in the Christianity of the second century CE.

Chapter 3 is devoted to the outside perspective, namely non-Christian views on the resurrection in order to show why especially intellectuals found the idea of resurrection objectionable and why the Christian idea of resurrection became a matter of contention. Special attention will be paid to Celsus’ *True Doctrine*, because he also has an opinion on the intellectual respectability of Christians.

Chapter 4 turns to views that are related to Valentinian Gnosis and post-Pauline trajectories, especially in the *Epistle to Rheginus*. The resurrection of the body/flesh in its straightforward sense is rejected and therefore these views fall outside the proto-orthodox trajectory.

¹⁸ Marksches, *Does It Make Sense*, 29.

¹⁹ Cf. for descrepant identity Mattingly, *Imperialism*, 213-217.

Chapter 5 begins to discuss Pseudo-Justin's *On the Resurrection*. After an introduction of the writing, the history of the relationship between Christianity and philosophy is discussed and subsequently the attitude of Pseudo-Justin with regard to truth and evidence, which is compared with the attitude in the *Epistle to Rheginus*.

Chapter 6 discusses the main arguments that Pseudo-Justin's treatise wants to refute: resurrection is impossible, the flesh is not worthy of resurrection and it has no promise of resurrection. With regard to the first argument Pseudo-Justin engages in 'worldly reasoning' which will be compared to philosophical sources. Then attention is paid to how the author argues with creation theology about the human being as created with a body and a soul. Further the Christological basis of the resurrection and finally the development of Christian identity in relation to the resurrection is discussed.

The thesis will end with a conclusion.

2 The Body After Death: From Plato to Justin Martyr

2.1 Greek Ideas About the Body After Death

The story goes that when Pythagoras saw someone beating a dog, he said: “Stop, don’t beat it, because it has a human soul. It is a friend of mine, for I recognized him when I heard him howling” (thus Xenophanes in Diog. Laert. 8.36). This ironical anecdote about the Pythagorean idea of metempsychosis illustrates one of the ways the Greeks imagined life after death. As is well known, some Greeks did not imagine that: Epicureans for instance believed the atoms of the soul would simply dissolve. In what follows I will pay the most attention to the Platonic tradition, because the main discussion partners of Christianity in the second century seem to have been Middle Platonists.

To begin with, Plato sketches in his *Timaeus* a cosmogony in which the deity brings order in the chaos out of his goodness. This cosmos had to be the image of the perfect and was therefore not only provided with reason and soul (*Tim.* 29-30), but also with living beings (39e). The creation of mortal beings was delegated to the created gods, but the father of the universe made immortal souls, one for each star (41b-d). He also put laws in the souls, such as that human beings should be the most pious of all living beings. Only the immortal soul of the righteous who passes the test of life will return to the blissful life in his star, but who fails will return at his second birth as a woman or, yet worse, as an animal (42b-d).²⁰

That reincarnation is not simply assumed but in Plato’s view also is accompanied by a moral aspect is clearly illustrated by the myth of Er at the end of *The Republic*. This myth, perhaps not accidentally reminding of the heavenly journeys in the later apocalyptic literature, is about the experiences of the hero Er, who returned to life after twelve days (*Resp.* 614b). He told that the souls of deceased people came to a place with access to heaven and Hades, and judges sent them to their respective place. After a while they came back to choose a new destiny in life. The best chance of a righteous life was to choose a life between the extremes. After their choice the souls drank on the plain of Oblivion from the lake Without Worries and returned by means of a falling star in a body (614-619).

Plato’s *Phaedo*, staged as the last dialogue of Socrates on death row, contains Plato’s view on death and the soul. Death is the salvation of the soul from the body and the natural way is that a corpse (νεκρός) dissolves, decomposes and is blown away by the wind (*Phaedo* 80c). Of all people the philosopher has the most contempt for the body, because distance from the filth of the body is necessary to come nearer to true knowledge (65c-d). The goal of philosophy is the purification of the soul by separation from the body: only philosophers escape the cycle of reincarnation and can be received among the gods (81c-82c). In a story

²⁰ By the way, the immortal soul is only a part of the human soul (*Tim.* 69c-70a). And Plato’s *Phaedrus* 245c-e has the view that the soul falls into a body by loss of contact with the divine, while in the *Timaeus* at least the first incarnation is viewed as a test.

Plato's Socrates imagines that human beings after a positive judgment may go from the earthly prison to the real, ethereal earth, which lays as a sort of second floor upon our earth. By means of philosophy one can attain a yet better place in a bodiless existence. It is only a story, Socrates says, but a story by which one should be enchanted (113d-114d).

The Platonic view on metempsychosis, then, can be summarized as follows. The immortal and supernal soul drops into the prison of the body. The only escape from the cycle of reincarnation is to live virtuously and to strive after real knowledge in order to be received among the gods. Without doubt this view has had a lot of influence, but it was not 'the' Greek view on life after death. Plato himself admits that most people believed that the soul at death evaporated and spread like breath or smoke (*Phaedo* 70a). As mentioned above, the Epicureans thought that the soul's atoms simply disintegrated at death (Diog. Laert. 10.124-126). The Stoics had the view that the soul was a bodily *pneuma* which after death survived until the conflagration of the world. According to some Stoics this happened only to the souls of the wise (Diog. Laert. 7.156-157).

What is striking about the myths in *The Republic* and *Phaedo*, where the imagination has more playing field than in other parts of the philosophical discussion, is that the souls of the deceased are still imagined in some bodily form. This is matched by the picture emerging from the Greek funerary inscriptions, which give a look at the views on life after death among larger sections of the population.²¹ In general, the soul was thought as returning to its home with the gods, but the manner in which this blessed life is depicted is sometimes very anthropomorphic. In an inscription for a young woman, Mikkes, the soul is described as the unperishable body that now is received among the pious in the Elysian Fields.²²

The difference between popular imagination and philosophical thought is nicely illustrated by Plutarch at the end of his biography of Romulus (Plut. *Rom.* 27-28). He rejects the myth that Romulus was taken up in heaven in a heavy storm, because that is unnatural and would mix heaven and earth. His own view is that a soul only can return to the gods when the soul is completely separated from the body and without flesh. The dryer the soul, the quicker the returning process. First the soul ascends to the heroes, then to the demons, then to the gods, the most blissful completion.

The idea of a gradual ascension along several levels of being shows an important aspect of the ancient worldview(s). The ancients did not have a dichotomous view on the world, divided in a (material) natural and (immaterial) supernatural realm, but thought about the world as a "hierarchy of essences."²³ This view implies that matter is 'heavier' on earth and 'finer' in the higher realms. It also implies – an implication of significance with regard to the resurrection – that the 'stuff' of a body can be construed variously.

²¹ Imre Peres, "Sepulkralische Anthropologie", in Michael Labahn and Outi Lehtipuu (eds.), *Anthropology in the New Testament and Its Ancient Context*, Leuven 2010, 169-182.

²² Peres, "Sepulkralische Anthropologie", 178-179.

²³ Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, New Haven 1995, 11, 15.

2.2 Judaeon Views on the Body After Death

Among the Judaeon views on life after death one can easily find ideas that are congenial to Greek views. On the one hand, the author of *Ecclesiastes* is in line with the traditional concept that there is no blissful afterlife (*Eccl.* 3.18-21). On the other hand, in writings like the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the works of Philo of Alexandria and in the description of the Essenes by Josephus (*Bell.* 2.55-156) the predominant view is that the soul after a virtuous life will go to God or a heavenly realm. Another way of expressing the expectation of life after death is to talk about rising up from the sleep of death: resurrection.

“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” (*Dan.* 12.2-3 NRSV)

Often this idea is combined with the soul’s intermediate stay in heaven, for example in the following part of the quite philosophical speech that Josephus puts in his own mouth at the moment when he and his men are in hazardous conditions in a cave in Jotapata: “The souls remain pure and obedient after they have obtained a very holy place in heaven, whence they after the turn of the ages again become inhabitants in undefiled bodies (ἀγνοῖς σώμασιν)” (*Jos. Bell.* 3.374).²⁴ Note that the resurrection bodies have special qualities. Often the resurrection is envisioned as a bodily transformation to an angel-like, heavenly existence.²⁵

The concept of resurrection, therefore, should not be viewed as completely separate from the concepts of afterlife that take the soul as primary vehicle. The astral resurrection of the wise in Daniel resonates with the return of the philosophical soul to its star in Plato. The difference is that the image of rising up involves the body. (The term ‘bodily resurrection’ is actually a pleonasm.²⁶) But it is not right to put too much weight on the exact bodily language with regard to resurrection. For talking about resurrection takes place at the ‘mythical’ level (like the myths in Plato) and is therefore not the object of extensive reflection. But even then it should be noted that in the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint and early Jewish texts the term ‘flesh’ appears rarely to express the idea of resurrection. In general, ‘flesh’ means the body or, in the expression ‘all flesh’, all people. This idiomatic use of the word ‘flesh’ does not have the weight here as it has in later Christian discussions.

²⁴ Cf. *Jos. Bell.* 2.163 about the view of the Pharisees: “They say that every soul is unperishable, but that only the ones of good people move to another body (εἰς ἕτερον σῶμα).”

²⁵ *Pseudo-Phocylides* 102–104; *The War Scroll* 4Q491 11.13, 14, 18; *1 Hen.* 104.2, 6; 39.5 (cf. also *2 Hen.* 22.8, 10); *Mk.* 12.25.

²⁶ Johannes Tromp, “‘Can These Bones Live?’ Ezekiel 37:1-14 and Eschatological Resurrection”, in Henk Jan de Jonge and Johannes Tromp (eds.), *The Book of Ezekiel and its Influence*, Aldershot 2007, 61-78.

Anyhow, the bodily implications of the metaphor of rising up from the sleep of death marks a difference with the dominant intellectual view of the Greek world, where the soul is the main vehicle for life after death. The view that the final blissful state in the afterlife for virtuous people is a life in a new body would have sounded weird at least to some Greeks.²⁷

2.3 *The Body After Death in First Century Christianity*

Christians shared the view of some currents of Judaism that at the end of times a resurrection would take place, at least of the righteous. And at the heart of the Christian faith was the belief that Jesus was taken up into heaven after his death, which was most often expressed with resurrection language.

The earliest discussion of the eschatological resurrection is found in Paul's letter *I Corinthians* (55 CE). The famous chapter 15 is the starting point of the Christian reflection on this topic.²⁸ What is the problem? Some people in Corinth say that there is no resurrection of the dead (πῶς λέγουσιν ἐν ὑμῖν τινες ὅτι ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν οὐκ ἔστιν; *I Cor.* 15.12). At the same time they seem to have had no problem with the resurrection of Christ. Probably they envisioned Christ's fate after death in the line of the ascension of special people to heaven, like Romulus discussed above. Paul argues that the resurrection of Christ is closely linked to the eschatological resurrection, as the first-portion (ἀπαρχή 15.20) is representative of the harvest. Therefore, the denial of the resurrection is absurd, because it undermines the basis of the Christian salvation (15.1-34). Having established that, Paul moves on to what was probably the sticking point for some of the Corinthians:

Ἀλλὰ ἐρεῖ τις· πῶς ἐγείρονται οἱ νεκροί; ποίῳ δὲ σώματι ἔρχονται;

“But someone will say: How are these corpses raised? With what kind of body do they appear?” (Paul, *I Cor.* 15.35)

This concern reflects the resistance the concept of resurrection could cause among Greeks who were familiar with (popular) philosophy. One group in Corinth emphasized their present salvation and freedom as spiritual people (πνευματικοί), although in Paul's eyes they were complacent and ‘carnal people’ (σαρκικοί 3.1-3; cf. 4.8, 18-19). These Corinthians may have thought that the resurrection implied that buried corpses would walk around again and that the problem of such an idea was that aspects of lower status would participate in the privileges of the higher aspects of the human being – just like Plutarch rejected the bodily assumption of

²⁷ The idea of resurrection is not completely foreign to the Greeks as is attested for instance by the story of Alcestis who returned from death to her physical body. Cf. Stanley E. Porter, “Resurrection, the Greeks and the New Testament”, in Stanley E. Porter, Michael A. Hayes and David Tombs (eds.), *Resurrection* (JSNTSS 186), Sheffield 1999, 52-81.

²⁸ Cf. for the following interpretation of the line of Paul's argument H.W. Hollander, *I Korintiërs: Een praktische bijbelverklaring*. Vol. 3, *I Korintiërs 12-16*, Kampen 2007.

Romulus because that would mix heaven and earth.²⁹ Other Corinthians, humble folks (οὐ πολλοὶ σοφοὶ κατὰ σάρκα 1.26), may have readily accepted the idea of resurrection.

Paul discusses the how of the resurrection and the nature of the resurrected body in order to counter the objections arising from a too crude understanding (15.35-58). The language of resurrection was apparently indispensable for Paul. For that reason he goes to great lengths to make an embodied afterlife plausible to the Corinthians. The earthly body is related to the resurrected body as the seed to the plant. Paul differentiates between the perishable earthly and the imperishable heavenly, spiritual body (σῶμα ψυχικόν versus σῶμα πνευματικόν 15.42-49). Before describing how at the end of times the change from the perishable to the imperishable will happen (15.51-54), Paul repeats that there has to be a change:

σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα βασιλείαν θεοῦ κληρονομηῆσαι οὐ δύναται οὐδὲ ἡ φθορὰ τὴν ἀφθαρσίαν κληρονομεῖ.

“Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.” (Paul, *1 Cor.* 15.50 NRSV)

The expression ‘flesh and blood’ refers in this context to the perishable aspects of the body. (*Matt.* 16.17, *Gal.* 1.16, *Eph.* 6.12, *Heb.* 2.14 use the expression to contrast mortal humans with higher beings. In *Sir.* 17.31 σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα stand for the mortal human who thinks about evil. In Paul, the flesh is often seen as the part on which sin seizes, for example in *Rom.* 8.3. Compare Epictetus *Disc.* 1.3.5, who states that man has δύστηνά σαρκίδια “unfortunate bits of flesh” which lead to mischief.) In this context the moral aspect of ‘flesh and blood’, although their susceptibility for sin is related to mortality, recedes to the background, because Paul is discussing the nature of the body: in 15.39 σὰρξ is used for the earthly body, while in 15.44 the words ψυχικός and χοϊκός are used to describe the perishable body. According to Paul, then, the resurrected body only consists of the incorruptible aspects of the human being, it sheds the mortal aspects of the soul and flesh and blood.³⁰ For Paul the *pneuma* is the highest part of the human mind with which it communicates with God.³¹ One cannot help but notice the similarity between the σῶμα πνευματικόν of Paul and the Stoic view that the soul is our natural breath (τὸ συμφυὲς ἡμῖν πνεῦμα), which is a σῶμα and survives death (*Diog. Laert.* 7.156). But this Stoic bodily *pneuma* eventually perishes, while Paul puts emphasis on the bodily character of the imperishable part of mankind. Paul’s reflection of the resurrection body, then, has the purpose of mediating between the language of resurrection, regarded as essential, and Greek sensibilities about the inferior nature of the body.

²⁹ Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 108, 112-116, 122.

³⁰ Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 128.

³¹ George van Kooten, “The Anthropological Trichotomy of Spirit, Soul and Body in Philo of Alexandria and Paul of Tarsus”, in Michael Labahn and Outi Lehtipuu (eds.), *Anthropology in the New Testament and Its Ancient Context*, Leuven 2010, 87-119.

It takes until the third century that Christian authors begin to give comprehensive consideration to Paul's relatively sophisticated reflection on the resurrection body.³² Before that the use of Paul scarcely rises above the level of prooftexting. Especially the defenders of the resurrection of the flesh do not mention Paul's view, but others show no real interest in it. About forty years after *1 Corinthians* was written, *1 Clement* brings up the certainty of the resurrection in a context where the nature of the body was not an issue (*1 Clem.* 24-26). The author certainly knew *1 Corinthians* 15. He alludes to *1 Cor.* 15.20 and takes up some of Paul's examples from nature (*1 Cor.* 15.36-41), but these are not used to explain the resurrection of the body: the author sees natural phenomena like day and night as pointing to the future resurrection. Another proof of the resurrection follows by prooftexting the Jewish Scripture. In this context, the author quotes *Job* 19.26: "And again, Job says: "And you shall raise this flesh of mine (τὴν σάρκα μου ταύτην) which has endured all these things" (*1 Clem.* 26.3). This version of the text of *Job* (the *Old Greek* has τὸ δέμμα μου, "my skin") does not fit well with Paul's view on the flesh. But it is not likely that the author wanted to make a particular statement about the resurrected body. 'Flesh' means the body here.³³

In the *Gospel of Mark* (ca. 70 CE), the empty tomb story conveys that Jesus' body is translated to heaven (*Mk.* 16.1-8). It is possible to read Jesus' dispute with the Sadducees about resurrection (*Mk.* 12.18-27) as a clue to the understanding that the author of the earliest gospel viewed the resurrected body as a heavenly body like that of angels. The *Gospel of Matthew* agrees on this point. Noteworthy is that it avoids the term σῶμα for the resurrected Jesus.³⁴ These two gospels are very close to the Pauline understanding of the resurrection.

In the *Gospel of Luke* (GLk) and the *Gospel of John* (GJohn) a slightly different view on the corporeality of the risen Jesus comes to the fore, at least in one story. Both gospels have similar appearances of Jesus from heaven to the disciples.³⁵ In GLk, they think that he is an unsubstantial ghost (πνεῦμα), but Jesus shows his recognizable hands and feet: "A ghost does not have flesh and bones" (πνεῦμα σάρκα καὶ ὀστέα οὐκ ἔχει. *Lk.* 24.36-40). In GJohn, Jesus shows to them his hands and his side with the marks of crucifixion, and again to Thomas a week later (*John* 20.19-29). Moreover, in GLk, as a second piece of evidence, Jesus eats some broiled fish (*Lk.* 24.41-43). This is paralleled in GJohn, when Jesus shares bread and fish with the disciples (*John* 21.9-14). The meaning of this motif is twofold: 1) it was really Jesus who appeared, and 2) he had a resurrected human body. It was not merely a mirage of him without a body. Unlike Paul, these two gospels portray the resurrected body as showing the marks of

³² Andreas Lindemann, *Paulus, Apostel und Lehrer der Kirche*, Tübingen 1999, 308-309. Cf. R. Joseph Hoffmann, *Marcion: On the Restitution of Christianity; An Essay on the Development of Radical Paulinist Theology in the Second Century*, Chico, Ca. 1984, 235-280.

³³ Cf. *1 Clem.* 49.6. Lona, *Über die Auferstehung*, 30-31.

³⁴ Jürgen K. Zangenberg, "'Bodily Resurrection' of Jesus in Matthew?", in Wim Weren e.a. (eds.), *Life Beyond Death in Matthew's Gospel: Religious Metaphor or Bodily Reality?* Leuven 2011, 217-231, here 231.

³⁵ Michael Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium* (HNT 5), Tübingen 2008, 788 and François Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas: Lk 19,28-24,53* (EKK 3.4), Neukirchen-Vluyn 2009, 580-583 point to the similarities between Luke and John. Wolter thinks John used Luke, but Bovon argues that both gospels share a fixed tradition.

crucifixion and capable of taking in normal food. Luke even states explicitly that it has flesh and bones. However, there is no clear indication that these authors polemicize against a spiritual understanding of resurrection or that Luke wants to make the particular point that the flesh is resurrected.³⁶ They make a statement against *no* resurrection and the view of the appearance as a mirage or coming from a demon, a ghost from the underworld.

2.4 *The Body After Death in Second Century Christianity*

The second century of Christianity has been aptly described as the “laboratory of Christian theology.”³⁷ The problem of the study of this century is the lack of sources, especially for schools and their propagators whose teachings and writings did not pass the test of later orthodoxy. There is regrettably little known about most of them, but that fact should not eclipse their importance. In a descriptive, historical approach all currents of Christianity are viewed as part of the evolution of the early Christian movement. In the last half century the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library has stimulated the abandonment of the anachronistic traditional division between orthodoxy and heresy, to which the (proto-)orthodox sources easily had given rise.

The next chapters will show that with regard to the resurrection the dominant Greek thought exerted pressure on Christian ideas to develop in strongly divergent ways. The development of the early Christian schools of thought and the trajectories in early Christianity which they represent, should not be viewed as an isolated phenomenon. The different currents did not only develop in interaction with each other, but they were in the first place deeply embedded in the wider Greco-Roman culture. But first an overview of the developments in Christianity in the course of the first half of the second century will be given in this section.

The first indication of a shift of views is the controversy in the letters attributed to John (later included in the New Testament), which likely were written in the beginning of the second century CE. They show a specific interest in the flesh of Jesus: it is mandatory to confess that Jesus is the Christ who came in the flesh (*1 John* 2.18-27; 4.2; *2 John* 7). This is not linked to the resurrection however³⁸, but to his appearance on earth. The term ‘flesh’ expresses the bodily, earthly existence. Who the opponents are in these Johannine letters is not certain. One candidate who is frequently suggested by commentators is Cerinth (ca. 100 CE), because he likely propagated a separation Christology with a radical distinction between

³⁶ Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 789-790. According to Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, 586, Luke corresponds to the tendency, which consolidates from the end of the first century CE, to speak about the corporeality of the resurrection more and more with the vocabulary of the flesh.

³⁷ “Laboratorium der christlichen Theologie.” Christoph Marksches, “Kerinth: Wer war er und was lehrte er?” in *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 41, Münster 1998, 48-76, here 49.

³⁸ Unless the appearance story in the *Gospel of John* (20.19-29) is connected with the contention of the author of *1 John* that “we declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life” (*1 John* 1.1 NRSV).

the earthly Jesus and the heavenly Christ.³⁹ This separation is most plausibly explained as one development from the tension in the *Gospel of John* between Jesus as human being and divine Son of God. In any case, the views ascribed to Cerinth may give an impression of the nature of the views of the opponents in the Johannine letters.

Ignatius of Antiochia (ca. 110 CE) is the earliest Christian author who emphasizes very definitely that the resurrection is in the flesh. His main concern is the salvation through Jesus Christ mediated by real communion with him: “The Eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour” – this salvation was established by his suffering for the sins as a human being and by the resurrection in order to let this atonement take effect (Ign. *Sm.* 7.1). Without Jesus in the flesh there is no salvation (cf. the confessional statements in *Sm.* 1-2; *Tr.* 9). As a further proof that Jesus was in the flesh and belonged to the sphere of this world, not only seemingly (τὸ δοκεῖν), Ignatius points to his belief that Jesus was also in the flesh after his resurrection:

“For I know and believe that even after the resurrection he was in the flesh (ἐν σαρκί). And when he came to those who were with Peter, he said to them: Grab, touch me and see, that I am not a bodiless demon. And immediately they touched him.” (Ign. *Sm.* 3.1-2a)

The reason of Ignatius to cite this tradition (common with, but probably independent of the *Gospel of Luke* and the *Gospel of John*; see §2.3) is that if Jesus was in the flesh after his resurrection, it follows that he was also in the flesh before his death when he suffered for the sins. Ignatius, then, takes over the resurrection apologetic as in the gospels, but uses it to counter the view that Jesus was only seemingly human.⁴⁰ The resurrection in the flesh is a corollary of Christ’s suffering in the flesh. This is then transferred to the general resurrection: “In the same form (κατὰ τὸ ὁμοίωμα) the Father [of Jesus Christ] will raise us too” (*Tr.* 9.2; Ignatius obviously takes up Paul’s *Rom.* 6.5 and the Pauline idea that the resurrection of Christ and those in Christ are related). But this conclusion is only stated in the margin of Ignatius’ argument.⁴¹

It appears, then, that the first step to the insistence that the general resurrection definitely involved the flesh originates from the insistence on the real humanity of Jesus Christ, which led to emphasizing that Jesus was in the flesh even after the resurrection – a view that on its turn built upon earlier resurrection apologetic. The opponents of the Johannine letters and Ignatius had some sort of ‘docetic’ view on Jesus: that the heavenly saviour was clothed with Jesus’ body and gave up that body at the crucifixion (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 8.10.7). The term ‘docetism’ however is an umbrella term for positions that from the perspective of (proto-)orthodox theologians did no justice to the full unity of the saviour Jesus Christ in death and

³⁹ Marksches, “Kerinth“, 71-72.

⁴⁰ William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* (Hermeneia), Philadelphia 1985, 227-229.

⁴¹ Lona, *Über die Auferstehung*, 40-41 and 260-261.

resurrection.⁴² It is perhaps better to say that the reflection on the relation between Jesus as the divine Son and as a human being led to a spectrum of views, of which one end placed the unity of the divine and human aspects of Jesus Christ in the foreground and the other end was drawn to separation between the divine saviour and the human Jesus. This development could build on the separation of Jesus Christ and sin already present in Paul (*Rom.* 8.3), but answered also to Greek concerns about the relation of the divine and the flesh, as we will see.

The general resurrection of the flesh in Ignatius' letters follows from Christ's resurrection in the flesh, and the opponent group which stated that Jesus Christ only seemingly had suffered and seemingly was resurrected probably had a more spiritual idea of the general resurrection – if they used that term at all. But a less fleshly view on resurrection does not necessarily imply that the real humanity of the saviour's existence was denied. For instance, one of the opponent groups of the Pastoral Epistles (*1-2 Tim.*; *Tit.*; ca. 100 CE) most probably can be accommodated under the umbrella of early 'gnosis' (cf. *1 Tim.* 6.20-21). This group reinterpreted the resurrection as already happened (*2 Tim.* 2.17-18) and thus promoted a realized salvation, but there is no sign of denying the humanity of Jesus Christ. A similar, but more complicated case is represented by Marcion (ca. 140 CE?). He is known for his rejection of the Creator God and the Old Testament; instead, the Christ of the Alien God would have brought real salvation.⁴³ The body belongs to the Creator God and therefore cannot be saved (*Tert. Adv. Mar.* 5.6.11). The resurrection only involves the spirit: Marcion would allow *solī animae salutem* (*Tert. Adv. Mar.* 5.10.3), while the flesh is the body of death of which one should be freed.⁴⁴ At the same time, the reality of Jesus' humanity and suffering on behalf of the creation was important for Marcion, be it that Jesus' flesh presumably was not thought to be of the material from the Creator God.⁴⁵ The main motivation behind Marcion's view on the general resurrection, then, is not Christological, but rather his concern for the salvation from the evil, created world.

Around the middle of the second century CE the resurrection of the flesh begun to be an established feature within the proto-orthodox trajectory. In the *Epistula Apostolorum* the same argumentation as in Ignatius becomes visible: the disciples observe that Jesus was resurrected in the flesh (*Ep. Ap.* 11-12[22-23]) and from that it follows that they also will raise in the flesh, which will become unperishable (19[30]; 21[32]). The author shows anthropological interest: at the resurrection the soul and the spirit will be in the flesh (24[35]) and the perishable nature of the flesh will not constitute a problem for the power of God (21[32]; 24-25[35-36]). These considerations are a further step in the reflection about the resurrection of the flesh.⁴⁶ The first time that the term 'resurrection of the flesh' appears in early Christian literature, is in the writings of Justin Martyr (he died in 165 CE). "We know for certain that a

⁴² Cf. Christoph Marksches, "Doketai", *Der Neue Pauly*, 2006.

⁴³ See Hoffmann, *Marcion*.

⁴⁴ Hoffmann, *Marcion*, 218-220.

⁴⁵ Hoffmann, *Marcion*, 222-223.

⁴⁶ Lona, *Über die Auferstehung*, 79.

resurrection of the flesh (σαρκὸς ἀνάστασις) will happen” (Just. *Dial.* 80.5) in contrast to fake Christians like Marcion who say that there is no resurrection of the dead, but that their souls will immediately go to heaven after death (80.4). An important aspect of Justin’s ideas is his view on the special position of the human body, which he took over from Hellenistic Judaism, in particular Philo.⁴⁷ The distinctive value of the body is shown in that it is the dwelling place of God’s spirit and that the image of God is expressed in the human body (Just. *Dial.* 40.1; 62.1-3). But this anthropological tradition is not integrated in his position with regard to the resurrection.

Justin is the first Christian we know of who directly argues with Platonic views (see 2 *Ap.* 13) and therefore a fitting closing of the circle of this chapter. But as a final consideration I would like to point to the importance of Justin’s recourse to Jewish ideas about the body. In the context of the hierarchal ancient worldview (see §2.1) the Middle Platonists developed a tripartite anthropology: “For the mind is better and more divine than the soul as much as the soul is superior to the body” (νοῦς γὰρ ψυχῆς ὄσω ψυχῆ σώματος, ἄμεινόν ἐστι καὶ θειότερον. Plut. *Mor.* / *De fac.* 943a). Platonists, Jews and Christians share common ground in this respect, be it that Jews and Christians under the influence of Genesis usually changed νοῦς in πνεῦμα (cf. Paul, *I. Thess.* 5.23).⁴⁸ In sources related to the Christian teacher Valentinus (ca. 140-160 CE) the tripartite anthropology is an important model for the division of people into three categories. The lowest category of material/corporeal people will perish, while the psychic and pneumatic elements will be saved.⁴⁹ Although Justin and later defenders of the resurrection of the flesh share the hierarchical perspective on the tripartite man, their view on the body as the work of the Creator contributed to their opinion about the salvation of the flesh/body.

In summary, the first half of the second century CE is characterized by several opposing trajectories with regard to the resurrection. Some Christians supported a realized view on the resurrection, others had a spiritual understanding of it or restricted salvation to the spirit, because in their view they should be saved from the material world. Some Christians tried to distance the divine saviour from bodily existence. In reaction to this view, which was regarded by proto-orthodox writers as invalidating the salutary function of the suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ, his existence in the flesh was emphasized and substantiated by the belief that he was in the flesh also after the resurrection. The general resurrection, then, would also be in the flesh, i.e. in strong continuity with the present bodily existence. In the middle of the second century this view was expanded with anthropological reflections.

⁴⁷ Lona, *Über die Auferstehung*, 92-96, 99-103.

⁴⁸ Päivi Vähäkangas, “Platonic, Sethian and Valentinian Views of the Tripartition of the Human Soul”, in Michael Labahn and Outi Lehtipuu (eds.), *Anthropology in the New Testament and Its Ancient Context*. Leuven 2010, 121-134, here 126-127.

⁴⁹ Vähäkangas, “Platonic, Sethian and Valentinian Views”, 126, 129.

3 The Outside Perspective: Celsus and Others

3.1 *Celsus*

This chapter discusses Greco-Roman intellectual commentary on (mainly) the Christian idea of resurrection. The key witness is Celsus, but also the views of others are of importance: the views which are expressed by the opponents of Minucius Felix (§3.2) and the criticisms of Porphyrius (§3.3). These Greco-Roman views on resurrection come to the fore from the second half of the second century onwards, but may be already (implicitly) supposed to be present in essence as a selection pressure in the earlier development in the views on the resurrection among Christians.

The second century non-Christian views about which we are best informed, are those from Celsus, whose *The True Doctrine* (ἀληθῆς λόγος) is partly preserved in Origen's *Contra Celsum*. The most plausible candidate for identifying this Celsus is a friend of Lucian who lived in the second half of the second century in Egypt and the best guess for dating *The True Doctrine* is 177 CE.⁵⁰ Celsus' overarching thesis is that Christians disrupt society by abandoning the traditions and that they think irrationally in the light of the true doctrines of the philosophers, especially Plato. Before turning to the specific question of the resurrection of the body, attention will be paid to the intellectual status of Christians in the eyes of Celsus.

Celsus' (probable) friend Lucian mocks in one of his writings the vainglorious Peregrinus, who for some time was a leader of a Christian group in Palestine (Luc. *Peregr.* 11-13). Christians are according to him simple folk (ἰδιῶται ἄνθρωποι) who are prone to charlatans, because they receive all sorts of ideas without any precise arguments (ἄνευ τινὸς ἀκριβοῦς πίστεως, 13). According to Celsus, Jesus is precisely such a charlatan, a sorcerer who deceived people (Or. *Cels.* 2.49, 55, 79) and took advantage of their gullibility, just as happens in the cults of Cybele, Mithras and Sebazius (1.9). And Christians do not follow his advice to follow reason with regard to doctrines:

“Some, because they do not want to give or receive a reason (λόγος) for what they believe, use expressions like ‘Do not examine (ἐξέταζε), but believe’ and ‘The faith will save you’.” (Or. *Cels.* 1.9)

“[Christians say:] Wisdom in this life is bad, but folly is good.” (1.13)

“[Christians] drive away every wise man from reasoning about their faith, but invite only unintelligent and slavish people.” (1.18; cf. 3.44, 50)

⁵⁰ Celsus, *On the True Doctrine* (transl. R. Joseph Hoffmann), 32-33. Cf. Chadwick in Origen, *Contra Celsum*, xxviii: 177-180 CE. For the Greek text see the edition of M. Marcovich (SVC 54), Leiden 2001.

The ideas of Christians are barbaric and if there is some truth in it, the Greeks have much better versions (1.2). The ethical teaching of Christianity contains nothing new in comparison with other philosophies (1.4; cf. 5.65). The Greeks have their doctrines better expressed, even without calling upon a superhuman authority, like Plato who was ready to give reasons and to be honest about the provenance of his ideas (6.1, 10). So much for Celsus' regard for the intellectual value of the Christian cult.

Among Celsus' many objections the relation between God and the perishable is a returning subject. The idea of a divine saviour who takes on the flesh, is problematic for Celsus. "[God] is by nature not able to love a perishable body" (οὐ πεφυκῶς ἐρᾶν φθαρτοῦ σώματος) and therefore he did not have sexual relations with Jesus' mother (Or. *Cels.* 1.39). The stories about Jesus are used to show that his body was completely inappropriate for the body of a god: his body was born as a result of rape, his body ate normal food and his voice and method of persuasion were not of the divine kind (1.69-70). Jesus as god is not compatible with his birth in a mortal body, with flesh more corruptible than gold, silver and stone and prone to abominable weaknesses (3.41-42). A body with a divine πνεῦμα would have differed from other bodies, but Jesus' body is reported as "little and ugly and without class" (μικρὸν καὶ δυσειδὲς καὶ ἀγεννὲς ἦν, 6.75). In fact, God is by nature perfect and if he comes down to earth, "he needs a change, but a change from good to bad" (μεταβολῆς αὐτῷ δεῖ, μεταβολῆς δὲ ἐξ ἀγαθοῦ εἰς κακόν), a change God by nature is impossible to undergo (4.14). Or he does not change but only seemingly (δοκεῖν), deceiving those who look at him, but that is also wrong (4.18).

The reason that God and the human body do not go well together is taken from Plato: the immortal soul is the work of God, but the body is no different than other animals, "for the matter (ὕλη) is the same, and their perishability is the same" (4.54; cf. Plato *Tim.* 81d). "No offspring of matter is immortal" (Or. *Cels.* 4.61). Following Plato, Celsus mentions three possible reasons how life in the prison of the body came to be: due to the administration of the world, or for a punishment, or because the soul is pulled down by desires (8.53). The body may as well be called a corpse (7.45), it is a source of defilement (μίασμα, 6.73). It is therefore ruled out that Jesus could rise with the body, because God would not have received him then (6.72). The resurrection of Jesus, by the way, is unbelievable not only for this theoretical reason, but also because it is not clear why we should believe the stories about him and not about countless others and because he did not prove his resurrection in public as would be fitting for a god (2.49-79).

From Celsus' views thus far we should expect not one positive word about the general resurrection. And that is indeed the case. I quote him in full about this subject:

"It is also foolish of them to believe that when God, as if he were a cook, will apply the fire, the Christians themselves will remain, while the rest of the human race will all be

thoroughly baked. And not alone those Christians who are alive at that time, but also those who died long ago, rising up from the earth with the same bodies (σάρκες).

This is simply the hope of worms! For what sort of human soul (ψυχή) would still desire a rotten body (σῶμα σεσηπός)? Since this opinion is not even shared by some of you (Jews) and some of the Christians, it is easy to show that it is very abominable and nauseating and impossible at the same time. For what sort of body, completely and utterly destroyed, could return to its original nature and to that same first constitution (σύστασις) from which it was dissolved? Because they cannot answer, they flee to an extremely absurd refuge, that everything is possible for God. No! God cannot do what is shameful, nor does he want what is against (his) nature. If you were to desire something disgusting according to your wickedness, even God would not be able to do this, and you must simply not believe that (all your desires) will be (fulfilled). For God is not the author of excessive desire or wandering disarray, but of a right and just nature. And he could provide eternal life to the soul, ‘but corpses (νέκρες),’ says Heraclitus, ‘deserve more to be thrown away than dung.’ So God neither would nor could make bodies (σάρκες) – full of things about which it is not even nice to speak – eternal, contrary to reason. For he himself is the reason (λόγος) of all that exists. He is therefore not able to perform something which is against reason or against himself.” (Or. *Cels.* 5.14)

In the first part of this section Celsus explicates the idea of resurrection in a ridiculing manner. Although Celsus makes fun of the God who destructs humanity, he does not elaborate on the contrast between the destruction of the world and the salvation of the Christians, as ‘Caecilius’ and Porphyry will do later (see below). In the contrast between Christians and the rest of humanity another criticism is implicit: elsewhere Celsus points to the absurdity that Christians value the body but that bodies of the damned are delivered to eternal punishments (8.49).

Celsus’ terminology for the earthly body reflects his concern to emphasize its corruptibility: ‘flesh’, ‘rotten’, ‘corpses’, ‘full of shameful things’. In the light of Celsus’ views on the incompatibility of God and the corruptibility and change of matter, it is no wonder that he doubts the soundness of an immortal soul that desires again a body of flesh. He thinks he can show that the resurrection is both ‘very abominable and nauseating’ and ‘impossible’. It is worth noting that Celsus underlines his confidence by the fact that some Jews and Christians reject the resurrection of corpses and in this way already prepared his criticisms. His knowledge of several Christian schools of thought is attested elsewhere when he notes explicitly that Marcion evades some of his criticisms, but not all (6.74). One of the criticisms that could pertain to Marcion is Celsus’ rejection of the idea that Christ only seemingly belonged to the changeability of this world (see above). But possibly Celsus has, among others, Marcion in view with regard to the rejection of resurrection. This implies that Celsus’ arguments could be derived from Jewish and Christian sources. That would prove that

the rejection of the idea of the descent of the divine into the material world and the inclusion of the body in salvation is rooted in a common ground between those Jewish and Christian groups and Greek philosophy (at least the philosophy of Celsus).

The argumentation of Celsus proceeds as follows. First he states the problem of the reconstitution of the dissolved body. Then he claims that God is not the solution, but the problem. For God does not want that, because it is shameful, and God cannot do that, because making the abominable body eternal in addition to the soul would go against reason and thus against his own nature.

Later in his work Celsus returns to the resurrection in the context of the alleged Christian misunderstanding of true knowledge about God. According to Celsus, Christians think that God had to become human because otherwise he would not have been knowable (6.69). And he thinks that the resurrection is necessary for the same reason:

“[Christians] accept that they will see God with the eyes of their body and will hear his voice with their ears and will touch him with perceptible hands.” (7.34)

“Again, they also will say: ‘How will they know God if they not detect him with the senses? How is it possible to learn without the senses?’” (7.36)

These alleged views of Christians give rise to Celsus’ judgement that Christians are “bound to the flesh” (7.42) and cannot understand God in the right way. In his view, only the mind (νοῦς) and the eye of the soul can know God when they turn away from the flesh. It is therefore impossible that the mortal senses can experience God (7.36). He thinks that Christians have misunderstood Plato in this regard. For they ask: “Whither shall we go? And what hope do we have? [...] To another earth, better than this one.” This is similar to the concept of the Elysian Fields. “And Plato, who thinks that the soul is immortal, calls the region where it is sent openly a land” (7.28). Then Celsus cites the part from Plato’s *Phaedo* about the ethereal earth (see §2.1). His conclusion is: “They have misunderstood the doctrine of reincarnation” (Or. *Cels.* 7.32). Celsus’ interpretation of the resurrection as an unsophisticated form of reincarnation is not as strange as it may appear. For instance, Josephus describes the view on life after death of the Pharisees as the transition of the immortal soul from one body to the other (Jos. *Bell.* 2.163) – a description that shows affinity with the concept of reincarnation.⁵¹ In any case, Celsus thinks that the inclination towards the body is irrational. He is only on speaking terms with people who in one way or another affirm that their mind or soul will be eternally with God (Or. *Cels.* 8.49).

Celsus’ view on the incompatibility of the body and the perception of God is shared by his Middle Platonist contemporaries. For instance, Maximus of Tyre stated that knowledge of God is furthered by using the human intellect and taking distance from the body and this

⁵¹ Steve Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees: A Composition-Critical Study*, Leiden 1991, 165, 170.

world (Max. Tyr. 11.9-10). The life in the body is a dream and hinders the soul to receive knowledge of the divine (9.6; 10.1).

3.2 'Caecilius' (*Minucius Felix*)

The irrationality of the resurrection is also thematised in the dialogue *Octavius* of Minucius Felix (ca. 200 CE). This dialogue gives another impression of the purport of non-Christian objections to the resurrection.⁵²

The antagonist Caecilius gives voice to his criticism by relating two subjects to each other: the destruction of the cosmos and the resurrection of the body. As an example of the strange and terrifying things Christians invent, he points to their announcement of the burning of the whole world, which is contrary to the eternal order (*aeternus ordo*) of nature (Min.Fel. *Oct.* 11.1). Moreover, Christians add old wives' tales to that by contending that they will revive after death (*renasci post mortem*, 11.2). These ideas are absurd and turn things upside down:

Anceps malum et gemina dementia, caelo et astris, quae sic relinquimus, ut invenimus, interitum denuntiare, sibi mortuis extinctis, qui sicut nascimur et interimus, aeternitatem repromittere!

“It is a two-headed misfortune and double madness to declare destruction to heaven and the stars, which we leave in the same condition as we found them, but to promise eternity, after the dead are vanished, to ourselves, who die like we are born.” (11.3)

Next Caecilius turns to the problem of the restoration of the body. He does not understand why cremation is rejected, because the body decays anyway (11.4). He wants to know if the resurrection is with a body, and if so, with which kind of body one will arise. When the old body is decayed, it is not available any more, and a renewed body is not a restoration of the old being. But resurrection without a body is also not an option: “That would, as far as I know, implicate: no mind, no soul, no life” (11.7). In other words: if you want to talk about a *resurrectio*, there has to be a body that resurrects, otherwise the mind and the soul cannot find their place.

3.3 Porphyry

Porphyry, who lived in the third century CE, is worth mentioning here, although strictly speaking he falls somewhat outside the chronological scope of this thesis. Moreover, it is not certain that he authored the fragments referred to below, commonly gathered under the title

⁵² For the Latin text I consulted the edition of T.R. Glover and G.H. Rendall (LCL 250).

Against the Christians.⁵³ However it may be, the fragments quoted by Macarius Magnes (fourth century CE) were probably composed at the beginning of the fourth century. For the sake of convenience I refer to the author as Porphyry.

Just as Minucius Felix's character Caecilius, Porphyry objects to the old wives' tales of Paul that the world would pass away. For that implies that the world of the Creator is bad and needs change (Macarius Magnes, *Apocriticus* 4.1).⁵⁴ To link the destruction of the whole, an action not suitable for an immortal being, to the resurrection of those who are destroyed long ago, seems irrational (ἄλογον) to him. Porphyry asks why God would intervene in the natural course of events: "[T]hat which pleases God is fitting that it exists forever" (4.24).⁵⁵

The resurrection itself is "a matter full of silliness" (μεστὸν ἀβελτηρίας πρᾶγμα). For if bodies are absorbed by other bodies or otherwise annihilated, "[h]ow then is it possible that those bodies should return? [...] How is it possible [...] to return to its former substance (ὑπόστασις)?" (4.24).

Then he rejects, just like Celsus, the pretext that everything is possible by God:

"Not everything is possible for him (οὐ γὰρ πάντα δύναται). [...] If God cannot sin or become evil this is not because of divine deficiency. [...] God is by nature good (ἀγαθὸς εἶναι πέφυκε) and is not prevented from being evil. Nevertheless although he is not prevented, he cannot become evil."

And does resurrection indeed contradict God's good nature? Porphyry continues:

"And now consider a further point: How illogical (ἄλογον) it is if the creator stands by and observes the heavens melting (although no one has thought of anything more wonderful in respect to its beauty), and the stars falling, and the earth perishing – and yet he will resurrect the rotten and corrupt bodies (τὰ σεσηπότα καὶ διεφθαρμένα σώματα) of men?" (4.24; transl. Berchman)

Finally Porphyry has the practical objection that, even if God could raise bodies in a beautiful shape, the earth could not possibly contain all the resurrected people who lived since the creation of the world.

⁵³ Robert M. Berchman, *Porphyry Against the Christians*, Leiden 2005, 192-193. R. Joseph Hoffmann, *Porphyry Against the Christians: The Literary Remains*, Amherst, N.Y. 1994, 22-23 sticks to the view of Harnack that Macarius Magnes quotes Porphyry. For the Greek text of the fragments I consulted Adolf von Harnack (ed.), *Porphyrius "Gegen die Christen", 15 Bücher: Zeugnisse, Fragmente und Referate*, Berlin 1916.

⁵⁴ Fragm. 195 Berchman = fragm. 34 Von Harnack.

⁵⁵ Fragm. 210 Berchman = fragm. 94 Von Harnack. Translation of Berchman.

3.4 *Summary of the Arguments*

Obviously Porphyry's arguments are based on earlier anti-Christian arguments of Celsus and others, among them the people who are answered in the apologetic dialogue of Minucius Felix. The resurrection is a returning point of demonstrating the absurd ideas of Christians. The main arguments are as follows:

1. The weakness and perishability of the body is something to turn away from, not to long for. For God and the corruptibility of matter are not compatible.
2. The resurrection of rotten bodies is inconsistent with the destruction of the whole world.
3. Making eternal what is perishable and destructing what is eternal makes no sense.
4. It is impossible that a dissolved body returns to its original state.
'Caecilius' and Porphyry add some sub-points to this:
 - a. A renewed body is not a restoration;
 - i. If people are resurrected with perfect bodies the earth would be too small to contain everyone.
 - b. A resurrection without a body is no resurrection.
5. God does not want to resurrect perishable bodies, because that is against the natural course of events.
6. God cannot resurrect the flesh, because he cannot go against his own rational nature.
7. Resurrection is a misunderstanding of reincarnation by people who are bound to the bodily senses.
8. Even some of the Jews and Christians reject the idea of resurrection.

4 Resurrection as a Present Possession

4.1 *The Gospel of Philip*

What has become clear from Celsus' *The True Doctrine* is that he was not the first to launch an attack on one of the characteristic doctrines of Christians: even some Christians did not subscribe to the notion of resurrection. This is already true for Paul's Corinthians (see §2.3), but also for the followers of Marcion with their aversion to the created world (see §2.4) and for the various currents characterized as 'Gnosis': they sought spiritual knowledge which would enlighten them in order to be freed from the material world.⁵⁶ In this worldview there is no place for resurrection of the earthly body. As already discussed, the school of Valentinus, the most Christian type of gnosis, subscribed to a tripartite division of humanity, in analogy to the tripartite man consisting of mind/spirit, soul and body (see §2.4). The way of salvation was to turn away from the world of the body to the world of the mind. The body was shed off in the final salvation. A view almost identical with the Platonic views discussed in the previous chapter.

But that is not the whole story. The sources show often a more complex reality than the theoretical mapping can comprehend. At least two writings from the Nag Hammadi collection talk about resurrection in a positive way, but at the same time in a vastly different manner than usual in the trajectory of proto-orthodoxy. The first I want to discuss shortly is the *Gospel of Philip* (GPhil), because its view on the resurrection remarkably close to that of the *Epistle to Rheginus* (see §4.2). GPhil is not really a gospel but a collection of various short texts of which the dating is unclear. Nevertheless GPhil shows a relatively coherent worldview and can be tentatively assigned to the period after 170 CE.⁵⁷

Resurrection in GPhil is closely linked to the sacraments. By baptism and, more important yet, ointment with the Holy Spirit the Christian possesses the resurrection (*G.Phil.* 76; 92; 95). This eternal life starts before death. Therefore, the Lord first rose and then died, not the other way around (21; 90a). In GPhil 23 the understanding of the general resurrection is at issue.⁵⁸ The resurrection as resuscitation of a corpse is rejected and the fear of being 'naked' in the resurrection (cf. Paul, 2 *Cor.* 5.3) is refuted by calling those who are in the flesh actually 'naked'. In line with 1 *Cor.* 15.50 (see §2.3), quoted by GPhil, the human flesh is denied the eschatological inheritance. But surprisingly the flesh and blood of Jesus belong to the ultimate salvation. Elsewhere GPhil explains that the resurrected Lord has 'true flesh' in contrast to our flesh which is only an image (72). In the second place, the author substantiates with a quote from the *Gospel of John* (6.53, 63) that the Lord's flesh and blood are his Word

⁵⁶ R. van den Broek, *Gnosis in de Oudheid: Nag Hammadi in context*, Amsterdam 2010, 20.

⁵⁷ Lona, *Über die Auferstehung*, 253, 256.

⁵⁸ I follow largely the interpretation of Lona, *Über die Auferstehung*, 246-253.

and the Holy Spirit. Who participates in this way in his flesh and blood in the Eucharist, participates in the resurrection of the flesh. The author rebukes ‘others’ who think that only the spirit and the light can resurrect. He contends that those aspects cannot exist apart of the flesh and that therefore it is necessary to resurrect in this flesh. This argument is similar to that of ‘Caecilius’ (see §3.2) that a resurrection without body would leave the mind and the soul without place. However, GPhil applies this to an understanding of resurrection in this life, before death. ‘Resurrection in this flesh’ is the experience of and participation in the true flesh and blood of Christ by means of the sacraments. Whether ‘in this flesh’ refers to the true flesh of the Lord or the earthly flesh is not clear – I think it refers to the existence in the flesh before death.⁵⁹ The material flesh is not plainly bad, but ambiguous (62-63a). The final salvation, in which the flesh is annihilated, is called ‘rest’ (ἀνάπαυσις, 63a).

Although some details are difficult to interpret it is clear that the author/editor of GPhil mediates between two positions: the eschatological resurrection of the flesh and the eschatological resurrection of the spirit. By creatively interpreting a word of the Lord and the apostle Paul he manages to retain the term ‘resurrection of the flesh’ but applies that to the participation in salvation before death in this flesh, while granting that the earthly flesh will be annihilated in the ultimate rest. The material world is not painted as completely bad, as many currents of gnosis held, but as an ambiguous place. This view of GPhil is closer to the ‘normal’ Greco-Roman view on the material world. The view that in the final salvation one pulls off the flesh would have pleased Celsus. In one instance GPhil uses an argument against spiritual resurrection that is also used by the antagonist of Minucius Felix’s *Octavius* (see §3.2) and probably could be subscribed by proto-orthodox Christians too: resurrection is only possible in the body/flesh.

4.2 *The Epistle to Rheginus*

A similar reinterpretation of resurrection is found in the *Epistle to Rheginus* (Rheg).⁶⁰ The interesting thing about this letter is that it is (probably) the first Christian writing completely devoted to the resurrection. According to the author, resurrection is something necessary (ἀναγκαῖον), “a basic matter” as Layton translates it (*Rheg.* 44.7).⁶¹

The *Epistle to Rheginus* (also known as the Nag Hammadi *Treatise on the Resurrection*) was originally written in Greek by an unknown Christian author to his pupil Rheginus, who inquired about the resurrection also on behalf of his Christian community (see part F below). The first editors argued for the authorship of the school leader Valentinus himself⁶², but that

⁵⁹ Cf. however Lona, *Über die Auferstehung*, 251.

⁶⁰ See for a comparison of GPhil and Rheg: Lona, *Über die Auferstehung*, 253-256.

⁶¹ Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, Garden City, N.Y. 1987, 320.

⁶² Michel Malinine e.a. (eds.), *De Resurrectione (Epistula ad Rheginum)*, Zürich 1963, xxxiii.

hypothesis is rejected by most.⁶³ But because the letter presupposes Valentinian teachings (although it lacks a typical Valentinian complex of ideas⁶⁴) the *terminus post quem* can be placed around 150 CE. The absolute *terminus ante quem* is the date of the Nag Hammadi manuscript, i.e. mid-fourth century CE. Due to its content (discussion about the resurrection of the flesh) and other considerations (many Nag Hammadi texts are originally from the second century CE) several scholars date Rheg in (the second half of) the second century CE.⁶⁵ If we accept the thesis of Heimgartner that Pseudo-Justin's *On the Resurrection* is dependent on Rheg, the *terminus ante quem* would be about 178 CE.⁶⁶ The provenance of the letter is unknown, but Egypt may be a good guess.⁶⁷

Rheg can be considered as an original contribution to the discussion about the resurrection in the 170s CE. What follows here is an interpretative analysis of the argument of Rheg. Some passages in the letter are rather obscure and some are essential for the view on the resurrection of Rheg. These passages will be discussed more elaborately. (N.B. The cited Greek words are loan words in the Coptic and almost certainly reflect the original Greek text.)

A. Introduction (*Rheg.* 43.25-44.12)

The author begins by taking a stance on the people who apparently caused confusion about the resurrection for Rheginus. They seek answers for unsolvable problems. The proper route however is first receiving salvation ('rest') through Christ, which leads to knowing the truth (43.25-44.3). But because knowledge about the resurrection is necessary (ἀναγκαῖον) and Rheginus asked kindly, the author will explain it to him (44.3-12).

It is interesting that the author writes about standing in 'the Message (λόγος) of Truth' (43.34), in other words: *The True Doctrine* (λόγος ἀληθείας). Does this usage reflect an ongoing debate about the truth in the common environment of Celsus and Rheg? In any case, the right understanding of the resurrection is a matter of great importance for the author and Rheginus.

B. Exposition about the theological basis of the spiritual resurrection (44.13-46.2): The theological underpinning of the author's understanding of the resurrection is accomplished in three steps: (1) Christology; (2) Christ's resurrection; (3) Salvation by incorporation.

(1) The first part of the letter starts with an exposition about Christology. The Saviour lived in the flesh in the material realm and taught about the fate of natural things (44.13-21). He

⁶³ Peel, *The Epistle to Rheginos*, 156-167; Lona, *Über die Auferstehung*, 218.

⁶⁴ Hans-Martin Schenke, "'Der Brief an Rheginus'" (NHC I,4): (Die Abhandlung über die Auferstehung)", in Schenke e.a. (eds.), *Nag Hammadi Deutsch*. Vol. 1, NHC I,1-V,1, Berlin 2001, 45-52, here 48.

⁶⁵ Peel, *The Epistle to Rheginos*, 179-180: last quarter of the second century. Hans-Martin Schenke, "'Der Brief an Rheginus'", 46-47: the second century.

⁶⁶ Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 195. Of course, the dating of Pseudo-Justin in 178 CE is also a hypothesis.

⁶⁷ Schenke, "'Der Brief an Rheginus'", 47. He also points to the possibility that *Rheg.* 44.18-19 ("[the Lord] walked about in the place where you dwell") may mean Palestine as the place where Rheginus is. But the place meant here is most likely the material world, cf. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 318.

was both human and divine: Son of God to conquer death and Son of Man to bring about the return (ἀποκατάστασις) to the Fullness (πλήρωμα) (44.21-33).⁶⁸ He was able to do that, for originally he existed as a seed of the Truth from above (44.33-38).

This Christology presupposes a particular, Valentinian-like cosmology of an original Fullness, from which the world emanated. In the world reigned the law of nature, death, and the Saviour had to conquer death to make the return to the Fullness possible. At the same time the author uses many motifs that sound not very different from proto-orthodox views. Lona expressly notes the influence of the Johannine Son of Man Christology.⁶⁹

(Excursus) The author apologizes for the difficulty of the explanation. In essence it is all about the destruction of evil and the manifestation of who/what is valued, the elect (44.39-45.13).

(2) The author focuses on Christ's resurrection: Rheginus should take note of the important fact that the Saviour raised himself and changed the corruptible world for the incorruptible eternity, giving the way to immortality (45.14-23).

(3) The author cites 'the apostle' (namely [Pseudo-]Paul, a composite quotation from *Rom.* 8.17 and *Eph.* 2.5-6⁷⁰) to incorporate the believers in the work of Christ (45.24-28). In imaginary language: they are beams of the Saviour and, after being surrounded by him until death, are drawn upward to him: the spiritual resurrection (πνευματικὴ ἀνάστασις, 45.28-46.2). This resurrection swallows up the 'psychic' (ψυχική) and the fleshly (σαρκική) resurrection. What this means exactly is not elaborated at this point in the letter.

Obviously intertextuality with *1 Corinthians* 15 is at work here. The 'psychic' and the spiritual body of Paul's account are taken up in the framework of a threefold resurrection. Moreover, Paul's statement about wearing the image of the heavenly man (in the future: φορέσομεν, *1 Cor.* 15.49) is taken up by the assertion that who participates in Christ's resurrection in this world is "wearing him" (φορεῖν, *Rheg.* 45.30).⁷¹ Also, talking about 'swallowing up' and '(im)perishable' reminds of Paul's description of the situation at the resurrection (*1 Cor.* 15.54).

C. Instruction about the relation between faith and intellect (*Rheg.* 46.3-47.3): The account continues about the theme of faith and philosophy. This does not answer a specific question yet, but instructs Rheginus in general about the way he should approach the issue of resurrection in intellectual discussions about this topic. The fact that the author also touched this subject in part A (see above) shows that he was very concerned about it and wanted to bring forward a particular epistemological structure, grounded in his view that knowledge of

⁶⁸ Ignatius, *Eph.* 20.2 has a similar interpretation of the titles Son of God and Son of Man.

⁶⁹ Lona, *Über die Auferstehung*, 224.

⁷⁰ Peel, *The Epistle to Rheginos*, 18-19. Cf. Lona, *Über die Auferstehung*, 224.

⁷¹ Lona, *Über die Auferstehung*, 225 draws attention to this allusion.

the truth follows from belief. The relation between faith and reason will be explored further in the next chapter.

The resurrection belongs to the domain of faith, not of persuasion (46.3-46.8). But it is not excluded that the philosopher (φιλόσοφος) believes (46.8-10). The rest of this passage is rather unclear, but seems to say that a philosopher who rejects belief in favour of reasoning is wrong (46.10-13).⁷² Anyway, one is resurrected because of faith, which consists of knowledge of the Son of Man and of belief that he arose from among the dead (46.14-20).

But the fact that faith has priority does not mean that the intellect is discarded. On the contrary, the author states that the immortality of the believers is situated in their intellect/mind (νοῦς, 46.20-24). They are chosen for salvation and set apart from ignorance (46.25-32). The truth that they know cannot be dissolved, because it is part of the mighty structure of All, the elect (46.32-47.1).

Conclusion: Rheginus should never doubt the resurrection (47.2-3).

D. Answer to several problems with regard to the resurrection (47.4-49.9): It is my understanding that the author after having given a theological basis (B) and a general instruction about the epistemological structure of the discussion (C), only here begins to address specific questions of Rheginus. The particle γάρ (47.4) indicates that he will get to the point. However, it is difficult to discern what exactly the author puts in the mouth of the imaginary interlocutors and what belongs to his own view. When the text is read as a lively diatribe, the author clearly denies the flesh/body immortality, which corresponds to several clear statements about leaving the body (47.34-35) and fleeing from the bonds of the flesh (49.11-16).⁷³ If as most text as possible is regarded as expressing the view of the author, a more complicated and obscure picture emerges where the really living aspects of the flesh will participate in eternity, only in a glorified state.⁷⁴ On balance, I choose to take the clear statements as the starting point and therefore to interpret as the questions Rheginus brought to the table only the parts that seem to be at odds with those clear statements.

(1) Question: Why do you not take the flesh with you when you return to the realm of eternity (47.4-8)? As a preliminary answer the author underscores that cause of existence of the flesh is something better (47.9-10) and implicitly puts the flesh in its proper place.

Follow-up question: Is not the flesh yours (47.11-13)? The author objects (ἀλλά) that the flesh is subject to corruption. Especially at old age the absence of it will be a gain (cf. Paul, *Phil.* 1.21-22), because you separate from the inferior element (*Rheg.* 47.14-24). Although nothing saves from existence in this world (47.24-26), the believers should remember that they are the All and thus are saved (47.26-30).

⁷² Perhaps some words are omitted here, cf. the translation of Schenke, ““Der Brief an Rheginus””, 50.

⁷³ See for ascribing much of the text to the imaginary interlocutors Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, 322-323.

⁷⁴ See for this interpretation Lona, *Über die Auferstehung*, 225-228.

The question in the background is anthropological: what constitutes the human being? Is the flesh not an inalienable part of that? The author rebuts that old age reveals that the flesh is of as much worth as an afterbirth. In my view the most straightforward reading is that he indeed denies the flesh a bigger place than to serve as the temporary abode of the elect.

(2) Question: Is salvation immediate after leaving the body (σῶμα, 47.30-36)? No doubt (47.36-37). The visible members will not be saved⁷⁵ and only the living members will arise (47.38-48.3).

Follow-up question: What then is the reality of the resurrection? The question in the background seems to be the already encountered problem that a resurrection without a body is not really a resurrection (see §3.2 and 4.1). According to the author, resurrection is the disclosure of those who have arisen (48.3-6). In support (γάρ) the author mentions the appearance of Elijah and Moses in the gospel (48.6-11). Resurrection is not an illusion (φαντασία). Rather the world is an illusion: everyone dies and everything changes (48.12-30), while the resurrection is the truth and stands firm (48.30-33). The author concludes with describing the resurrection in several metaphors (48.34-49.9).

E. Exhortations (49.9-36): Rheginus should now have a full understanding and flee from the bonds of the flesh and from the people who live according to it (49.9-15). He then will already possess resurrection: for if what will die knows that it entered death already, why does Rheginus not see that he entered resurrection already (49.15-24)? The fact that Rheginus lives as if he will die is forgiven because of his lack of training (49.25-30). Training is necessary in order to be released from the body (49.30-36).

F. Epilogue (49.37-50.16): The author has taught what he received (cf. Paul, *1 Cor.* 15.3) and he will offer more explanation to the congregation of Rheginus if necessary (*Rheg.* 49.37-50.8). The teaching should be shared among them (50.8-11). Greetings (50.11-16).

In summary, Rheg claims that resurrection is a present possession, just as GPhil, but Rheg avoids the term ‘resurrection of the flesh’. For only the mind/intellect is the object of spiritual resurrection. According to the in my view most plausible interpretation of Rheg and GPhil, both texts imagine death as the moment when the flesh/body is shed off and final salvation begins. At the same time both texts are not completely dismissive about the flesh, although it has only limited value as a perishable entity. Rheg does not speak about ‘true flesh’ like GPhil, and also counters the objection that resurrection requires a body slightly different. GPhil pointed back to the present resurrection in this flesh, but for Rheg the reality of the spiritual resurrection is of another category in relation to which the world appears to be an

⁷⁵ Schenke, ““Der Brief an Rheginus””, 51 conjectures that the first part of this statement is a question. In that case, it would be a follow-up question for clarification.

illusion. Rheg hints to some sort of a bodily existence in the resurrection, for the author points to the glorified appearance of Moses and Elijah as proof of its reality.

In the light of the criticisms of the Greco-Roman philosophers discussed in the previous chapter, Rheg is immune to a certain extent. Rheg represents the view that is known to Celsus, but not attacked by him, namely that resurrection has nothing to do with corpses. Just as Celsus points to the mind as the faculty to know God, in Rheg the mind is resurrected and that resurrection swallows the flesh and the soul (*Rheg.* 45.16-23; 47.21-24). The denial of the survival of the flesh and the exhortation to flee its bonds is another parallel.

Given these parallels, it is noteworthy that Rheg rejects ‘persuasion’ and philosophy as a proper way to approach the subject of resurrection. In the next chapter this is discussed more elaborately in the context of the assessment of Pseudo-Justin with regard to this topic.

4.3 Resurrection as Present Possession and the Development of Christianity

The denial of salvation for the flesh (in the straightforward sense of the word) is of course at odds with the proto-orthodox trajectory represented by Christians like Justin and, as we will see, Pseudo-Justin. At the same time, both GPhil and Rheg take the tradition very seriously. This is not only explicitly noted at the end of Rheg (49.37-50.8) but also demonstrated by the reference to ‘the’ apostle (45.24) and the reception of various Johannine and Pauline motifs. Both texts can be plausibly regarded as the heirs of the opponents of the author(s) of the Pastoral Epistles who battled about the right interpretation of Paul. These opponents claimed that the resurrection already had happened (see §2.4), just like Rheg and GPhil. Rheg represents a new step in the development of the Pauline tradition of which earlier steps already can be seen in the (Pseudo-)Pauline writings *Colossians* and *Ephesians*, where the resurrection is connected with baptism or even only with belief.⁷⁶ Marcion may be viewed as another branch of the tree of Pauline tradition.⁷⁷

The Valentinian or at least Valentinian-like outlook of both texts does not contradict the observation about an early Christian trajectory that viewed itself as heirs of Paul. Valentinus was said to be the pupil of Theodas, a pupil of Paul (Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 7.17). At the same time, the non-gnostic elements in Rheg which can be located in developments of the Pauline tradition have a very dominant presence in comparison with typical Valentinian ideas. This situation is interpreted as the result of an underdeveloped Valentinian gnosis or alternatively as a development away from Valentinianism.⁷⁸ The problem is that it is not certain how Valentinian Valentinus himself was and how his school developed. However it may be, Rheg is a fascinating example of the incorporation of Pauline and Valentinian traditions into a rather coherent whole.

⁷⁶ Lona, *Über die Auferstehung*, 231-232.

⁷⁷ Hoffmann, *Marcion*, 76.

⁷⁸ Peel, *The Epistle to Rheginos*, 179.

5 Pseudo-Justin About Truth and Belief

5.1 Introduction to Pseudo-Justin's *On the Resurrection*

After the outside perspective on resurrection of Celsus *cum suis* and the Gnosis-inclined views of the *Gospel of Philip* and the *Epistle to Rheginus*, this chapter starts to address a proto-orthodox voice in the debate: Pseudo-Justin's *On the Resurrection*. This treatise is the earliest writing that is devoted to a (quite fully fledged) defence of the resurrection of the flesh in the straightforward sense. After an introduction to this writing in this paragraph the rest of the chapter discusses its views on truth, evidence and worldly reasoning by putting this view of Pseudo-Justin in the context of the intellectual development of Christianity.

The traditional attribution to Justin Martyr of the surviving fragments of the treatise *De resurrectione / On the Resurrection* (Res) is severely contested. Although the agreements between Justin and Res have always prompted scholars to defend the authenticity of the attribution, the question is mostly regarded as undecided.⁷⁹ Recently Martin Heimgartner has made a thorough and interesting case against authenticity, proposing Athenagoras as the more probable author of Res. He argues that the treatise on the resurrection which Athenagoras announced (*Legatio* 36.3-37.1) is probably not Pseudo-Athenagoras's *De resurrectione*, while Pseudo-Justin's treatise corresponds very neatly with the announcement of Athenagoras. Other arguments are that there are several common features in style and content between Athenagoras and Pseudo-Justin, which distinguish them from both the real Justin and Pseudo-Athenagoras. Decisive is that in several cases where Pseudo-Justin disagrees with Justin, Pseudo-Justin has close parallels in the *Legatio* of Athenagoras. Therefore, Res was probably written by Athenagoras.⁸⁰ I am inclined to accept this hypothesis, but I will stick to the name Pseudo-Justin (abbreviated Just. Res.) in order to prevent confusion with the other treatise *De resurrectione*, which since the tenth century CE was attributed to Athenagoras⁸¹, but should probably be dated to the late third or the fourth century CE.⁸²

As to the date of Pseudo-Justin's *On the Resurrection*, scholars have dated it between 150 CE and the seventh century. The *terminus post quem*, established on the basis of the date of the used sources, is probably 161 CE.⁸³ The *terminus ante quem* of Res is established by its use in Theophil of Antioch's *Ad Autolycum* (ca. 182 CE, 185 CE at the latest).⁸⁴ If

⁷⁹ Schneider, *Studien zur Entfaltung*, 161.

⁸⁰ Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 203-221.

⁸¹ William R. Schoedel (ed.), *Legatio and De Resurrectione*, Oxford 1972, xxv; Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 226-230.

⁸² Schoedel, *Legatio and De Resurrectione*, xxvii-xxviii points to Gregory of Nyssa and Methodius of Olympus as the likely contemporaries of Pseudo-Athenagoras.

⁸³ The year 161 is the earliest possible date of Celsus' *The True Doctrine*. A more certain *terminus post quem* is ca. 153 CE, the date of Justin's *Apology*. For details see Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 157-158, 169-170.

⁸⁴ For details see Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 75-76. Cf. also its use in Irenaeus (idem, 77-82), possibly in Clement of Alexandria and certainly in Tertullian and Methodius of Olympus (idem, 83-96).

Athenagoras is accepted as the author, the treatise has to be dated soon after the *Legatio* (177/178 CE), possibly in 178 CE. At this time Athenagoras was presumably a teacher in Alexandria.⁸⁵

In order to get a grasp on the treatise the following short overview gives an impression of the contents of Res.⁸⁶

1. Introduction (Just. *Res.* 1)

Justification for belief as proof of the truth.

Goal: strengthen the weak believers and non-believers against the attacks of Satan regarding resurrection.

2. Subject and outline (2)

The position of the opponents is presented in three main arguments and a catch-question. That last issue will be addressed first, and then follows an orderly argument in defence of the resurrection of the flesh.

3. Answer to the catch-question of the opponents (3-4)

The problem of the genitals of the resurrected body is answered by stating that they do not have to work. The problem of defective bodies is answered by pointing to the healing power of Jesus Christ.

4. Refutation of the first argument (5-6)

Objection: God cannot resurrect the flesh. This is countered by pointing to what even the nations believe about the false gods and by arguments from nature, but also by worldly reasoning to show that it is possible according to the prevailing philosophies: Platonism, Stoicism and Epicureanism.

5. Refutation of the second argument (7)

Objection: The flesh is not worthy of resurrection. This is answered by pointing to the creation of the human being with flesh. It is also refuted that the flesh causes the soul to sin.

6. Refutation of the third argument (8-10.3)

Objection: The flesh is not promised salvation. But that would make God's work in creation vain. Moreover, it would be absurd if only a part of the human being is saved, because the human being is defined as including its body. Examples from the life of Jesus follow and finally Pseudo-Justin argues on the basis of anthropology: flesh, soul and spirit will all be saved.

7. Conclusion (10.4-17)

Final arguments to seal the deal: resurrection of the flesh is a new and unprecedented hope and leads to saving the flesh from the desires. Otherwise, one may give the flesh as well loose reins to indulge in the passions.

⁸⁵ Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 199-203, 221-222, 230-232.

⁸⁶ The interpretation of Res occurs on the basis of the Greek edition of the text by Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*.

5.2 Christianity and Philosophy

Pseudo-Justin begins his treatise with a reflection about truth and evidence. In the middle part of the work the utility of worldly reasoning is discussed (Just. *Res.* 5.11-16). To put this discussion in perspective it is useful to turn first to the relation of Christianity with philosophy.

Philosophy and religion are not separate categories in the ancient world. The religion⁸⁷ of some of the Eastern peoples was called a philosophy (Clem. Al. *Strom.* 1.15), among them notably the religion of the Judaeans, the Hebrew or Mosaic philosophy (1.14, 28). This appreciative description is also found in Philo, and Josephus uses it to describe the various schools of thought in Judaism.⁸⁸ In the second century CE interactions of intellectual Christians with Greek philosophy begin to gain profile. Intellectual emancipation of the Christians in the course of this age is evidenced by the rise of several Christian schools which flourished especially in Alexandria and Rome. These schools were, in any case in the beginning, not really institutions, but rather a group around a teacher, like Marcion, Basilides, Valentinus, Pantaenus and Justin Martyr. The last one is the first theologian who is relatively well-known to us and was a well-educated Christian. “Justin Martyr is the first extant Christian writer to display signs of real dialogue with philosophy.”⁸⁹ Using a philosophical *topos*, he tells that after being educated by several philosophers, he found the truth speaking with an old man about Christianity: “When I thought about his words, I found therein the only trustworthy and profitable philosophy. This is the way and these are the grounds, why I am a philosopher” (Just. *Dial.* 8.1-2). Regardless of the historical reality behind these words, they underline the way he presents himself as a philosopher. Justin’s pupil Tatian, also making use of a motif that belongs to a philosophical context, has a similar story of seeking the truth (Tat. *Or.* 29).⁹⁰ He presents Christianity as a philosophy (Tat. *Or.* 31.1; 32.1).

Justin seeks in his *Apologies* common ground with Greek philosophy. He is positive about the elements of truth in non-Christian philosophers: “Those who lived with the Logos are Christians, even when they were called atheists, like Socrates and Heraclitus with the Greeks” (Just. *I Ap.* 45.3). But at the same time he criticizes the philosophers and claims that his philosophy is superior. About half a century later Clement of Alexandria takes the same stance that Greek philosophy is useful, but that it must know its place as a preparatory way to the truth of Christianity (Clem. Al. *Strom.*). Tatian is relatively more hostile. He denies that Christianity has borrowed from Greek philosophy, paradoxically unaware of the influence of Greek philosophy on his ideas. This paradox is explainable however, because it is plausible

⁸⁷ Of course, ‘religion’ is a not unproblematic term for the worship of gods in the ancient world, because it carries with itself the modern notion of a terrain that is separable from other terrains of life.

⁸⁸ Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 2.216; *Vit. Cont.* 26, 28; *Somn.* 2.127; *Jos. Ant.* 18.11; *Bell.* 2.119.

⁸⁹ Emily J. Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century: The Case of Tatian*, London 2003, 116.

⁹⁰ Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 58.

that the influence of Greek philosophy was mediated to him by the already existing Christian philosophical tradition, most prominently represented by Justin.⁹¹ Tatian's teacher Justin in turn is likely to have been influenced to a great extent by the philosophy of Philo, directly or indirectly.⁹² It is therefore useful to distinguish between the explicit Christian interaction with Greek philosophy and on the other hand the influence of an existing intellectual tradition and trickled down, widely accepted philosophical ideas. The intellectual emancipation of Christians can partly be seen as joining and 'hijacking' the existing Jewish intellectual tradition and apologetic. Further, Christians like Tatian could have justified explicit use of Greek philosophy by assuming that the Greeks did plagiarize it from Moses. Finally, it should be noted that both Justin (2 *Ap.* 13) and Tatian view (Middle) Platonism as relatively the most true Greek philosophy.⁹³

Justin, Tatian and Clement of Alexandria belong to the proto-orthodox trajectory of early Christianity. In other trajectories the relation to philosophy developed differently, especially in the case of Christian Gnosis. Although the origins of Gnosis are unexplained until today ("it was in the air"), it is plausible that it owes much to a thought world in which Middle Platonism participated too.⁹⁴ That is expressed for example in the hierarchical cosmology with the absolute transcendent God at the top and the base matter at the bottom, and the pursuit of the return to the divine world. In the Valentinian Gnosis arose a systematization of Christian and Gnostic elements, in which the conception of the emanation from and restoration to the original Fullness was the framework to interpret the Christian message about creation and salvation. The Valentinian system can therefore be called a philosophy of Christianity. "The Christian ideas about fall and redemption are here given a metaphysical interpretation through a monistic philosophy that seeks to solve the ontological problem of mediating between unity and multiplicity by means of a theory of extension and contraction."⁹⁵ Another indication of the affinities between Gnosis and Platonism is the fact that Plotinus took the effort to scorn certain Gnostics as imbeciles for their thievery from Plato, their superfluous introduction of beings and principles, and their contempt for creation (*Plot. Enn.* 2.9). These criticisms indicate that there was enough common ground to have a 'conversation' and that the views of these opponents were similar enough to provoke such a harsh response.

Because we are best informed about the Christians who could reflect on their beliefs and put their thoughts in writing, it is easy to become a bit forgetful about most Christians who did not have the *σχολή* to examine the Christian doctrines rationally and who can aptly be described as *ἰδιῶται ἄνθρωποι* (*Luc. Peregr.* 13). If we tone down the vituperative attacks of

⁹¹ So Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 98-109, 142-143.

⁹² Lona, *Über die Auferstehung*, 99-103. Cf. for an evaluation of (in)direct influence Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 116-122.

⁹³ Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 104.

⁹⁴ Van den Broek, *Gnosis*, 219-223, 239.

⁹⁵ Einar Thomassen, "Valentinian Ideas About Salvation as Transformation", in Turid Karlsen Seim and Jorunn Økland (eds.), *Metamorphoses: Resurrection, Body and Transformative Practices in Early Christianity*, Berlin 2009, 169-186 here 182-183.

Celsus, then he was probably not far from the truth that Christianity mainly attracted uneducated people who were asked to believe, not to be able to give a demonstration of the truth of Christianity. That they defended that by echoing Paul in saying that the wisdom of this world is nothing and the Christian message is folly in the eyes of the Greeks (Paul, *1 Cor.* 1.18-25; 2.6-8), became ironically a self-fulfilling prophecy in the case of Celsus (Or. *Cels.* 1.13, see §3.1), because that view on itself seemed to him completely absurd. But such an attitude of invoking belief instead of reason was met with irritation in Christian circles too. Rhodo for instance, a pupil of Tatian (towards the end of the second century CE), discussed in Rome with the ‘heretic’ Apelles to ask proof for his ideas. He subsequently ridiculed him for not being able to defend his teaching and for resorting to belief instead of knowledge (Eus. *H.E.* 5.13.5). This may reflect a double standard, but is also an example of how the rise of intellectual engagement was encouraged by the diversity within Christianity. With regard to the non-Christian intellectuals the interaction with philosophy was meant to give Christianity intellectual credit, while at the same time philosophy served as a convenient tool to attack other Christians with ‘false’ views (and who were of course not seen as ‘true’ Christians).

5.3 Truth: A Matter of Belief?

Both the *Epistle to Rheginus* and Pseudo-Justin’s *On the Resurrection* address the issue of reasoning and persuading. To recapitulate, the *Epistle to Rheginus* (Rheg) stresses that (the right understanding of) resurrection is a matter of belief, not of persuasion (see §4.2). The right view is obtained by faith (Rheg. 44.1-3, 8-10) and who does not believe, cannot be persuaded (46.3-8). “And suppose that, among the philosophers here, there is one who believes. Yes, he will arise” (46.8-13).⁹⁶ But a philosopher who arrogantly tries to become learned in unsolvable problems, acts wrongly (43.25-32). In other words: any intellectual effort to understand the resurrection is futile, unless the philosopher believes in Christ and learns the truth in that way.

Is this rather apodictic dismissal of critical thought to be interpreted as a rejection of Greek philosophy? The communicative situation is that the author writes to someone who is not yet familiar with the teachings of the author (49.25-50.8). It is possible that he would be more open to rational thought with an advanced student. But the fact that the recipient Rheginus is supposed to have now a full understanding of the resurrection (49.9-15) gives the impression that all the essential questions are addressed. But then, just as in the case of Tatian, a paradox becomes visible. On the one hand, knowledge of the truth is characteristic for salvation, the object of salvation is the intellect, the goal is to become free of the bonds of the flesh, just like in Platonism, the understanding of resurrection is in line with the hierarchical cosmology of Platonism, and the letter has the form of a philosophical sermon. On the other hand, the author

⁹⁶ Adapted translation from Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* and Peel, *The Epistle to Rheginos*.

distances himself from the philosophical quest for the truth, because belief in the revelation of the ‘Word of Truth’ is the only way to a solution, and he dismisses the use of the philosophical method in favour of belief. So on the one hand rational inquiry meets opposition, but that does not prevent that the views of the writer of the letter are deeply influenced by ideas current in Greek thought.

In my interpretation in the previous chapter it turned out that the specific questions of Rheginus consisted of an objection against the anthropology of spiritual resurrection (does the flesh not belong to you and will it therefore not be saved?) and of an objection against the evaporation of the reality of resurrection if the body is completely shed off. These objections sound like those of people who included the flesh/body in resurrection. Maybe we have to imagine that Rheginus was ended up in a similar situation as Apelles in the previous paragraph and was embarrassed by the arguments of the opponents, whereupon the opponents complacently won the debate. The strategy of the author of Rheg is to make his views immune by claiming that such questioning is vain, that belief is necessary and that you have to stand *within* the ‘Word of Truth’ to understand the difficulties of it. This is a rather esoteric view. Knowledge of the truth follows from belief, while the people who disregard belief fail to navigate through the problems and remain outsiders.

Remarkably, Pseudo-Justin’s opening of his treatise contains very similar statements. He starts with the contention that ‘the message of the truth’ does not allow scrutiny and criticism, because its inherent credibility is warranted by God:

“[1] The message of the truth (ὁ τῆς ἀληθείας λόγος) is free and sovereign, not willing to be accessible to any test of scrutiny, nor to endure the examination by demonstration with its hearers. [2] For its nobleness and trustworthiness want that the One who sent it himself is believed. [3] A message of truth is sent by God. [4] Therefore also the freedom around it is not improper. For, supported by authority, it does reasonably not want that proof is asked for what is said, because there are no other proofs apart from the truth itself – and God is precisely that.” (Just. *Res.* 1.1-4)

The phrase ὁ τῆς ἀληθείας λόγος means in the first place “the message consisting of the truth” (truth is the content of the message, see 1.3) but can also be read as “the message originating from the truth” (because the truth is God himself).⁹⁷ According to a Stoic definition, “freedom is the authority to act sovereign” (Diog. Laert. 7.121) and the message of the truth is therefore not subservient to demonstration. According to Pseudo-Justin, the authority of the truth asks for faith, not for demonstration. His opposition to examination (ἐξέτασις) is almost exactly the criticized attitude Celsus ascribes to Christians: ‘Do not examine (ἐξέταζε), but believe’ (Or. *Cels.* 1.9). But Justin defends that position by arguing that if you want a demonstration, there

⁹⁷ Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 134, 136.

is no other demonstration than God himself: if God is the sender and God himself is the truth then the message is the truth. Pseudo-Justin underpins his position with an epistemological theory:

“[5] Every proof (ἀπόδειξις) namely is stronger and more believable than what is demonstrated. In any case, what is not believed at first, before the proof has arrived, finds belief when that is provided and it appears to be as is said. [6] But nothing is stronger or more believable than the truth. Therefore, someone who asks proof for this is like someone who wants that by reasoning what appears to the senses is demonstrated that it appears. [7] For sense perception is criterion of what is accepted by the ratio, but there is no criterion for sense perception except itself. [8] Well, just as we what is investigated by the ratio bring before the senses and judge of what kind what is said actually is, true or false, and judge no longer, because we believe the senses, in the same way we send the human and worldly messages/reasoning up to the truth and judge with it whether they are bad or not, but we judge the messages/reasoning of the truth with nothing else, because we believe in it.” (Just. *Res.* 1.5-8)

Demonstration is an argument which from perceived things leads to things that were earlier not perceived (Cic. *Acad.* 2.26), from the known to the unknown. The ‘known’ is here, according to Pseudo-Justin, a criterion for judging and that criterion is ultimately the truth itself. That the senses are one instance of judgement can also be found in the ideas of the Stoics (Diog. Laert. 7.52, 54) and in those of Epicurus (Diog. Laert. 10.38, cf. Cic. *Acad.* 2.142). But Epicurus has also another criterion: preconceptions that require no further proof (Diog. Laert. 10.33, 38). The truth works in a similar way as a criterion, according to Pseudo-Justin, but is more than a preconception, it is “divinely sourced.”⁹⁸ The truth has not to be demonstrated, because the truth is the truth. Although in the ancient world it was accepted to view knowledge of the Gods as self-evident and to adhere to ἡ κοινὴ τοῦ θεοῦ νόησις (Diog. Laert. 10.123)⁹⁹, this circular reasoning does only work when you already believe that the specific god of Pseudo-Justin and his message are the truth. From this we can conclude that the intended audience of Pseudo-Justin is primarily his fellow Christians.

In what follows, Pseudo-Justin explains the message/Logos as Jesus Christ, who is the guarantee (πίστις) of himself and all things. Therefore, the belief (πίστις) of those who know him is the proof of the truth (Just. *Res.* 1.9-11). With regard to the subject of the treatise it is important that the Saviour brought about resurrection through himself and eternal life after that (1.9).

The idea that belief is promoted at the cost of examination by demonstration sounds quite familiar to the reader of the *Epistle to Rheginus*. In fact, there are strong reasons to suspect

⁹⁸ David Rankin, *Athenagoras: Philosopher and Theologian*, Farnham 2009, 85.

⁹⁹ Rankin, *Athenagoras*, 86.

that Pseudo-Justin knew the approach to the matter that the *Epistle to Rheginus* propagated.¹⁰⁰ Heimgartner points in particular to three agreements within the small space of the introductions of both works:

1. The use of ‘Logos/message of (the) truth’ in relation to the right understanding of the resurrection. The prominent place of the term ὁ τῆς ἀληθείας λόγος in Pseudo-Justin is also almost certainly directed against the work of Celsus, ἀληθῆς λόγος, whose main objection against the resurrection (God cannot do it) is elaborately refuted.
2. The similar use of the motif of ‘rest’: “resting upon the truth” (*Rheg.* 44.2-3) and “take rest upon it [i.e. Christ or the Logos]” (ἀναπαύονται ἐπ’ αὐτῷ, *Just. Res.* 1.11) both point to trusting the established view without asking demonstration.
3. The rare combination of the titles Saviour, Lord (δεσπότης) and Christ in *Rheg.* 43.37 and in *Just Res.* 1.9.

It appears, then, that Pseudo-Justin (*Res*) goes along to a great extent with the rejection of the method of persuasion and demonstration with regard to the resurrection in the *Epistle to Rheginus* (*Rheg.*). But *Res* shows more sophistication than *Rheg.*, because the conviction that the truth of the resurrection is a matter of faith, which is enough proof, is argued neatly by using a philosophical argumentation about knowledge of the truth. Although it should be granted that it is doubtful that it is more than preaching to the converted and that the motif of introducing an apology by stating that it is in fact unnecessary is a rhetorical ploy (cf. *Or. Cels.* praef.), the assurance to believers that their faith is enough proof of the truth of their views rests upon a rather thoughtful epistemology. If the identification of Pseudo-Justin with Athenagoras is accepted (see §5.1), a look at the *Legatio* reveals that Athenagoras took πίστις as the Christian alternative for the (failed attempt towards) knowledge of the truth of the poets and the philosophers (*Ath. Leg.* 7.2). What Christians believe (πεπιστεύκαμεν, cf. *Just. Res.* 5.13 below) is coming from the divinely inspired prophets. Therefore, who is interested in wisdom of the divine is irrational to abandon belief (ὡς ἔστιν ἄλογον παραλιπόντας πιστεύειν, *Ath. Leg.* 7.2). In contrast to human opinions the Christian knowledge is taught by God (11.1; 12.3). Just as *Res.* 1.9 states that Jesus Christ is πίστις and proof, *Leg.* 9.1 states that the prophets guarantee (πιστοῦσιν) the reasoning of the author. Athenagoras/Pseudo-Justin, then, works with “an authority-based or prophetic knowlegde-as-πίστις.”¹⁰¹

Res is not left standing at the assurance that faith is proof, nor does *Res* limit its exposition to stating what is the right view. *Res* will engage in a demonstration. But the only reason to engage in an argument is to strengthen the weak among believers and non-believers against the attacks of the adversary, Satan (*Just. Res.* 1.12; cf. for the idea of demons preying upon weak souls *Ath. Leg.* 27). This method betrays the tension that within the domain of faith it is

¹⁰⁰ Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 138-140 thinks it is impossible to circumvent the conclusion that Pseudo-Justin knew the *Epistle to Rheginus*.

¹⁰¹ Rankin, *Athenagoras*, 79.

nevertheless necessary to ‘go down’ to the level of arguing what the right conviction is, because Pseudo-Justin has noted that belief, like in Rheg, does not necessarily carry with it the *right* understanding of the resurrection (though from that is of course concluded that the others do not believe at all). But this argumentation is still mostly a justification of the coherence of the in his view established truth. That would be acceptable only to Christians, even though it would perhaps tone down those who engage in ‘sophistries’ to trap the adherents of the resurrection of the flesh in contradictions. In the chapters 5-6 of Res however Pseudo-Justin goes a decisive step further and resorts to ‘worldly reasoning’, a revolutionary approach within the Christian apologetic tradition.¹⁰² His strategy is worked out in more detail in Res 5.

The fifth chapter of Res is the beginning of the argumentation in favour of the resurrection of the flesh in an orderly manner. After the repetition of the three arguments that will be refuted, Pseudo-Justin starts the refutation of the first argument (God cannot resurrect the flesh) with the statement that its proponents are more faithless than unbelievers:

“Now, in the first place it seems important to me to set forth against those who say that it is impossible for God that he rises the flesh, that they are ignorant when they on the one hand say that they themselves are believers, but on the other hand demonstrate by their acts that they are unbelievers, yeah, more unbelieving than the unbelievers.” (Just. *Res.* 5.2)

With a quote from the *Odyssee* (Hom. *Od.* 10.306) Pseudo-Justin can claim that even the nations believe that the gods can do everything effortlessly, so that Christians should believe it all the more about their God (Just. *Res.* 5.3-5). What is more, Pseudo-Justin can point to signs (τεκμήρια): the creation of man (5.6) and the procreation of mankind (5.7). This would be unbelievable if it only was promised, but it is all the more believable because it happens. The same is true for the resurrection (5.8-10). (In 5.2-10 Pseudo-Justin actually makes use of an argument of Justin, *I Ap.* 18.3-19.5.¹⁰³) Within the framework of Pseudo-Justin’s thought these signs are indeed strong, but less so in the light of what we know about the opponents, because they probably would not have accepted that the God would have been so intimately involved in the creation of matter and therefore could not accept these signs as proof. Moreover, the simple reference to the power of God infuriated Celsus (and Porphyry) and the reference to Homer would not have changed that. Pseudo-Justin succeeds however in making the point that his opponents are worse than (most) unbelievers with regard to believing what is possible for God. He makes the limits of his arguments thus far explicit when he turns to ‘worldly reasoning’:

¹⁰² Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 168.

¹⁰³ Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 157-158.

“[11] But now we try to demonstrate that the resurrection of the flesh is possible, while we ask from the children of the truth to judge kindly when we engage also in reasoning of this world which appears to belong to those outside; [12] firstly because there is nothing outside God, even not the world itself (for it is his work), secondly because we engage in these arguments with regard to unbelievers. [13] If we namely did that with regard to unbelieving believers, it would suffice to answer: We believe (πεπιστεύκαμεν). But now it is necessary to proceed by means of demonstrations. [14] On the one hand, the mentioned proofs would be enough to demonstrate the possibility of the resurrection of the flesh, [15] but because they are very unbelieving, we will bring forward the argumentation not from the faith (for they do not belong to that), but, in order that it is all the more compelling, from the unbelief, their mother, I mean of course the worldly reasoning. [16] For if we demonstrate from these that the resurrection of the flesh is possible, they are doubtlessly worthy of much shame if they are not able to follow either the reasoning of the faith or that of the world.” (Just. *Res.* 5.11-16)

When Pseudo-Justin proceeds to demonstrate the possibility of the resurrection of the flesh without the convenient help of calling in God’s omnipotence, he asks patience from one part (the main part?) of his intended audience: the believers who agree with him, but are possibly “weak” with regard to the temptation of Satan (1.12). He brings forward two interesting arguments. In the first place he is of the opinion that worldly reasoning might seem belonging to those from outside, but in fact it is not outside of God, because the world is of God and therefore secular arguments are no threat to the faith. In the second place Pseudo-Justin contends that worldly reasoning is fitting, because he is going to argue with regard to unbelievers (5.12), that is to say the pretenders who are in reality even worse than who are commonly called unbelievers.

In what follows Pseudo-Justin has to justify the course of his argument when he engages the views of his Christian opponents who claim to have faith, but are unbelieving believers. He argues that if he had believing unbelievers as target, they would accept the answer “We believe it.” And the mentioned proofs about God’s power would have been sufficient (5.13-14). I interpret ἀπίστους πιστούς with the last word as modifier, “believing unbelievers”, because the common ground is the belief that god(s) can do everything. The representatives of the view that God cannot resurrect the flesh are in fact disbelievers, more unbelieving than the unbelievers who believe that god(s) are able to do that (5.2). Elsewhere Pseudo-Justin brings his opponents in relation to the devil (1.12; 10.11-12) and similar polemic is visible here when he says that unbelief is their mother (5.15, cf. for the metaphor Pol. *Phil.* 3.3). The turn to worldly reasoning is thus a rhetorical strategy to, firstly, place his Christian opponents in the camp of the unbelievers, worse yet, very unbelieving unbelievers, and then to mock them if they are not even able to follow worldly reasoning which shows that the resurrection of the flesh is possible. Then their ridiculous position comes to the light (5.14-16). Non-Christian

unbelievers are not explicitly in view here, but the treatise is also directed towards non-Christians who are not yet believers (1.12). The strategy of Pseudo-Justin however kills two birds with one stone, because he pleases the last group by pointing to their common ground and by addressing the main objections anyway.

The explicit interaction with Greek philosophy happens in Res 6 and will be discussed in the next chapter. As will become more clear, the ghost of Celsus haunts in the background of the Christian opponents of Pseudo-Justin. But at the surface his interactions with Greek philosophy functions within an intra-Christian debate, enforced by the fact that the beliefs of both groups about resurrection has not enough common ground, so that he has to treat them as unbelievers. At the same time Pseudo-Justin shows the awareness that philosophy and reason also belong to the world of God and that if he wants to uphold with intellectual integrity God's involvement in the whole world and the claim that God is the ultimate truth, he has to integrate philosophy into his worldview. Although the interaction with Greek philosophy in Res is not a goal in itself, it shows the fruits of that interaction. Pseudo-Justin thus uses Greek philosophy in a positive, but apologetic way: he tries to show that it is compatible with his view on the resurrection. This is a frequent *modus operandi* in the apologetic literature.¹⁰⁴

The observation that Pseudo-Justin does use Greek philosophy to further his agenda gets more relief by looking at Athenagoras. In his *Legatio*, Athenagoras goes at great lengths to find common ground with the emperors and is consequently not hindered by the limitations of intra-Christian debate. He presents Christianity implicitly as a philosophy when he compares the name 'Christian' with the pursuer of philosophy, an activity that is not evil in itself (Ath. *Leg.* 2.4). Although the *Legatio* expresses criticism towards philosophers because Athenagoras thinks they fall short, he uses Greek philosophy also in a positive, be it apologetic way. Athenagoras makes use of the doctrines of philosophers and the great poets to argue that the Christian teaching is similar to or in accordance with the philosophers (5.1-6.4; 20.2-3; 23.3-10), just as Pseudo-Justin does in Res. He acknowledges that he made use of a collection of the opinions of philosophers (αἱ δόξαι 6.2). But his appreciation has its limitations: Christians unskilled in reasoning are more beneficial in their lives than philosophers who constantly concoct against each other (11.3-4).

¹⁰⁴ See for example Ath. *Leg.* 6.1-4; 20.2-3; 23.3-10; 36.3; Min.Fel. *Oct.* 19.3-20.1.

6 Pseudo-Justin About God and the Flesh

6.1 A Closer Look at Pseudo-Justin's Argumentative Structure

What does Pseudo-Justin have to say in defence of the resurrection of the flesh? The previous chapter addressed his attitude with regard to the epistemological status of believing the truth and the use of philosophical arguments. This chapter pays attention to the actual arguments that Pseudo-Justin uses in this framework. Before delving into some specific cases, it is useful to discuss the argumentative structure of the treatise (see for a short overview §5.1).

Although the writing has not survived complete, there are good reasons to suppose that most of it has. After the introduction (Just. *Res.* 1) Pseudo-Justin provides an outline of the subject matter by describing the position of the opponents: φασὶν οἱ τὰ χεῖρονα λέγοντες οὐκ εἶναι τῆς σαρκὸς ἀνάστασιν (2.1). The arguments that are subsequently preliminary described, are summarized again in 5.1:

“Further, of those who say that the flesh does not rise, some say that it is impossible that it rises, others that it is not fitting for God to raise¹⁰⁵ it because it is worthless and contemptible, and again others say that it even has no promise at all.” (Just. *Res.* 5.1)

These arguments seem to belong together, but the way Pseudo-Justin formulates suggests that he is not arguing against one group of opponents. However that may be, this summary of their position can be projected back on the exposition in the second chapter of *Res.* Then it turns out that the third main argument is not clearly marked there and that therefore the text of that chapter probably is incomplete.¹⁰⁶

Main arguments	Exposition (Just. <i>Res.</i> 2)	Discussion
1. It is impossible	2.2	5.2-6.18
2. The flesh is not worthy	2.3-4	7
3. The flesh has no promise	lost part? + 2.14	8-10.3

Between the short exposition of the second argument and the (presupposed) exposition of the third, Pseudo-Justin gives an example of the sophistries of the opponents. According to them the flesh will rise either complete or incomplete. If incomplete, then the one who resurrects (i.e. God) is incapable. If complete, the genitals will be there too, which contradicts the word of the Saviour that there will be no marriage after the resurrection (2.5-13). The author announces to solve first this riddle and then to argue in an orderly manner that the flesh will

¹⁰⁵ The Greek has the rare verb ἀνιστάνειν.

¹⁰⁶ Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 142-144.

be saved in the resurrection (2.15). First the second part of the catch-question is addressed, namely the supposed problem that the complete flesh will also have the genitals (3.1a). The author brings the problem back to one point: that the existence of body parts necessarily means that they are working (3.1b-2). He refutes that supposition (3.3-18). Then the first part of the catch-question is addressed, namely that the resurrected bodies will be in the same shape as they are buried, sometimes defective (4.1-2). This problem is countered by the healings of Jesus (4.3-6).

It is noteworthy that the refutation of these ‘sophistries’ takes so much space in the exposition (*Res.* 2) and that Pseudo-Justin chose to address them before a systematic defence against the main counterarguments. Possibly this catch-question was popular in the environment of Pseudo-Justin’s intended audience and therefore he wanted to neutralize it first, before the systematic approach. The author of the *Epistle to Rheginus* chose the other way: he first set out his theological views and then addressed some specific problems which Rheginus brought to the table.

6.2 *The Possibility of the Resurrection of the Flesh*

The first and most important objection against the resurrection of the flesh was that it was impossible. Pseudo-Justin discusses this objection first, and that is in line with the first reaction of Celsus towards the idea of the return of a rotten body (see §3.1):

[...] ἀδύνατον [...]. ποῖον γὰρ σῶμα πάντη διαφθαρὲν οἷόν τε ἐπανελθεῖν εἰς τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς φύσιν καὶ αὐτὴν ἐκείνην, ἐξ ἧς ἐλύθη, τὴν πρώτην σύστασιν;

“[...] It is impossible [...]. For what sort of body, completely and utterly destroyed, could return to its original nature and to that same first constitution from which it was dissolved?” (Or. *Cels.* 5.14)

Pseudo-Justin describes this view as follows:

ἀδύνατον γὰρ εἶναι τὴν φθειρομένην καὶ διὰ λεπτῶν λυομένην ταύτην συναχθῆναι εἰς τὸ αὐτό.

“For it is impossible that this flesh, being destroyed and dissolved in small particles, is gathered together into the same unit.” (Just. *Res.* 2.2)

At the start of the discussion of the first main argument, Pseudo-Justin adds that it would be impossible for *God* to raise the flesh (5.2). This reminds of Celsus’ statement that it is impossible for God to do anything contrary to (his) nature. It is very probable that Pseudo-Justin had the arguments of Celsus in mind, which would have been shared among those

Christians who rejected the resurrection of the flesh.¹⁰⁷ The impossibility for God to raise the flesh has not so much to do with his power as well as with the question whether God can do evil, supposed that raising the flesh is a negative event. By adding God to the argument in 5.2 compared to 2.2 Pseudo-Justin complicates his own reasoning, because the argument that raising the flesh is something good has yet to be provided.

As discussed in the previous chapter (§5.3), Pseudo-Justin's strategy is first to demonstrate that his Christian opponents are more unbelieving than unbelievers (5.2-10) and then to show that they cannot even follow the reasoning of the world (5.11-16). Of course, if Pseudo-Justin is able to show the possibility that God can raise the flesh, that would be a first step to neutralize the reproach of Celsus and his colleagues that God, reason itself, cannot do anything irrational.

The 'worldly reasoning' Pseudo-Justin engages in consists actually of the views on nature of the main schools of Greek philosophy: Platonism, Epicureanism and Stoicism. Here follows the full translation of *Res.* 6:

Short exposition about the nature of the universe

“[1] Well then, the inquirers into the nature of the world, who are called wise, say that the universe (τὸ πᾶν) exists of matter and God, at least according to some of them, like Plato, but according to others, like Epicurus, the universe exists of atoms and void, and again others, like the Stoics, say that the universe exists of the four: earth, water, air and fire. (I mention only the most prevailing opinions, for that is sufficient.)”

Views on the origin of the universe

“[2] And Plato says that everything has come into existence through God from matter and according to his providence. But Epicurus and his followers say that everything originated from the atoms and the void in accordance with a random motion caused by the natural movement from the bodies. The Stoics say that it came from the four, because God pervades them.

[3] Although such a disagreement exists among them, still they have common doctrines which they all endorse. [4] One is that something neither originates from nothing, nor dissolves into nothing and perishes, and thus that the elements, from which everything originates, are imperishable.”

Demonstration of the possibility of the restoration of the flesh

“[5] Now, because this is the situation, it will appear that according to them all the restoration of the flesh is possible. [6] For if according to Plato there is matter and God, both of them imperishable, and God on the one hand occupies the place of a craftsman, like

¹⁰⁷ Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 169-170.

a sculptor, and the matter on the other hand occupies the place of clay or wax or something like that, [7] it is true that what originates from the matter is a perishable figure (the statue or the image), but the matter itself is imperishable, like clay or wax or another form of matter. [8] In this way the sculptor moulds and creates from the clay or wax the shape of a living being. [9] When the figure is dissolved again, it is not impossible for him to make the same figure by mixing up the same matter and renewing it. [10] Thus it will, according to Plato, also not be impossible for God, who is imperishable and possesses the imperishable matter, when the from matter originating figure is dissolved, to renew it again and to make the same figure as it was also previously.

[11] But truly, when according to the Stoics the body originates from the blending of the four elements and when that body dissolves into the four elements, while these continue to exist as imperishable, it is possible that the four elements take on again the same mixing and blending from God who pervades them, and make the body which they have made earlier. [12] It is like this: when someone will make a mixture from gold, silver, brass and tin, and then wants to dissolve it again so that everything is apart, he will also be able¹⁰⁸, if he wants, by mixing the same metals, to make again the mixture that he has made from them previously.

[13] But also when, according to Epicurus, the atoms and the void are imperishable and the atoms are put together along a certain kind of arrangement or position, the body as well as other compositions come into existence. But it dissolves in the course of time again into the atoms from which it also originated. [14] Because these continue to exist as imperishable, it is in no way impossible that they come together again and take on the same position and arrangement and make the same body as has come into existence from them previously. [15] It is like this: when a maker of mosaics will make the form of a living being out of little stones, and when after that, when these are broken up due to time or by the maker himself, he will bring together the same little stones, which he possesses though they are scattered, he will not be incapable to gather them, put them together in the same way and to make the same image of that living being. [16] Now, because the maker of mosaics has the little stones, he will not be incapable to gather the scattered stones and make again the same image of the living being, but God is not able to gather again the members of the flesh which are dissolved from each other and to make the same body as has come into existence by him previously?

[17] But enough, for the doctrine (λόγος) about that the resurrection of the flesh is possible is demonstrated sufficiently by me on the basis of the non-Christian philosophers (κατὰ τοὺς ἔθνικούς). [18] But if the resurrection of the flesh does not prove to be impossible according to the unbelievers, how much the more according to the believers!" (Just. *Res.* 6)

¹⁰⁸ For the text-critical problem see Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 164, 166.

Note that the construction of the argument reflects a didactic purpose. Pseudo-Justin first introduces what is the basis of the universe according to each philosophy, then how everything comes into existence. With the help of the common doctrine of the imperishableness of the basic components of each cosmology he is able to demonstrate in sentences with a repeated parallel structure that in theory it is possible that the matter, the elements or the atoms are restored in the same way as previously. The abstract description is nicely illustrated by staging respectively a sculptor, a metallurgist and a mosaic maker. The whole chapter seems to be the elaboration of the view Athenagoras (= probably Pseudo-Justin) pointed out succinctly in *Leg.* 36.3 where the problem of the reconstitution from the rotten body is formulated and the same solution as here is suggested.

Pseudo-Justin does not reveal the source of what he writes about the three main schools of Greek philosophy. But it is probable that he consulted one or more doxographic manuals. That would be certain if Pseudo-Justin is in fact Athenagoras, because the last explicitly notes that he, in order to mention the names of the philosophers who subscribe to the oneness of God, “turned to the Opinions” (ἐπὶ τὰς δόξας ἐτραπόμην, *Ath. Leg.* 6.2). The use of such a manual on the opinions of the philosophers by Pseudo-Justin can be substantiated by the comparison with for instance the work of Diogenes Laertius, who wrote his monumental collection of biographies probably in the beginning of the third century CE and whose work reflects the extensive use of such sources.

“Plato says that everything has come into existence through God from matter and according to his providence” (*Just. Res.* 6.2). In the *Timaeus* Plato indeed states that the cosmos came into existence through the providence of God (διὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ γενέσθαι πρόνοιαν, *Plato Tim.* 30b-c), but matter (ὕλη) is lacking. However, Diogenes Laertius ascribes two universal principles to Plato: God and matter (δύο δὲ τῶν πάντων ἀπέφηεν ἀρχάς, θεὸν καὶ ὕλην, *Diog. Laert.* 3.69) in a passage that is devoted to his dogma’s (τὰ ἀρέσκοντα, 3.67) and thus could be derived from a doxographic manual.

The Epicureans say that “everything originated from the atoms and the void in accordance with a random motion caused by the natural movement from the bodies” (*Just. Res.* 6.2). This and the statement that the atoms and the void are imperishable (6.13), are derived mainly from Epicurus’ *Letter to Herodotus*.¹⁰⁹ This and two other letters are collected in *Diog. Laert.* 10.35-116, 121a-135: another indication that Pseudo-Justin used a collection of opinions in which these letters were included.

Notably, he pays relatively more attention to Epicurus than to the other schools. That is apparent from, firstly, the fact that he moves the final demonstration on the basis of Epicurus to the end instead of discussing Epicurus in the middle, and that he spends the most text on it (14 lines in contrast to respectively 11 and 7 lines). In the second place, the technical description of the workings of the atoms and the void is more specific than in the case of the

¹⁰⁹ Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 160-161 n. 117 notes many similarities.

other schools. The random motion (φορά) is the motion of the atoms through the void (ἢ διὰ τοῦ κενοῦ φορά, Diog. Laert. 10.46). That motion is caused by the eternal movement or vibration (κίνησις) of the atoms themselves (κινουῦνται τε συνεχῶς αἱ ἄτομοι τὸν αἰῶνα, Diog. Laert. 10.43). In the third place, the κοινὸν δόγμα that something cannot originate from nothing and cannot dissolve into nothing (Just. Res. 6.3-4) is obviously formulated on the basis of Epicurus (πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι οὐδὲν γίνεται ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος, Diog. Laert. 10.38).¹¹⁰ Moreover, Pseudo-Justin is massaging the data here, because strictly speaking the elements of the Stoics are not imperishable but are only restored after the conflagration.¹¹¹ But the Stoics receive only a superficial treatment anyway. The treatment of the philosophical schools by Pseudo-Justin is very succinct, just as Athenagoras admits that he not intends to give a precise demonstration of the doctrines of the philosophers, but only goes through them in so far as it suits him (Ath. Leg. 6.2). (The apologetic device of appealing to the agreements of the philosophers, by the way, is also employed in Ath. Leg. 7.1.) How to explain the relatively more extensive and preferential treatment of Epicurus? An attractive hypothesis is that Pseudo-Justin intended to pay more attention to this school in his demonstration because Celsus had at least the reputation of being a follower of Epicurus.¹¹² The problem is that it is more probable that Pseudo-Justin argues with other Christians who readily made use of Celsus. In that case, it is possible that Pseudo-Justin has strategic reasons to pay the most attention to Epicurus: his views are the furthest away from Christian views, so that a demonstration on the basis of Epicurus tells a lot about the possibility of resurrection.

The demonstration of the possibility of the resurrection of the flesh on the basis of Greek philosophy is the heart of *On the Resurrection*.¹¹³ It is introduced by an elaborate methodological reflection, it is the treatment of the first main argument, it provides assistance in the argumentation of the third main argument (Just. Res. 8.13) and forms the opening statement of the conclusion (10.5-6). It is unclear how successful Pseudo-Justin was with this demonstration. But he succeeds in bringing the discussion on a higher intellectual level with the help of information about the Greek schools of thought which he probably consulted in a doxography. For the critics who took note of *On the Resurrection* it would not have been possible any more to dismiss the resurrection of the flesh with a sneering rhetorical question about its impossibility.

6.3 *The Flesh as a Work of Creation*

The second main argument which Pseudo-Justin refutes is that the flesh is not worthy of resurrection, because “its essence is earth” and “it is full (μεστή) of every sin” (7.1). This

¹¹⁰ Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 160.

¹¹¹ Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 162.

¹¹² Cf. de discussion about Celsus’ philosophical ideas by Chadwick in Origen, *Contra Celsum*, xxiv-xxvi and by Hoffmann in Celsus, *On the True Doctrine*, 30-33.

¹¹³ Cf. Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 167-168.

reminds of Celsus' objection that σάρκες deserve no eternal life because they are "full (μεστήν) of things about which it is not even nice to speak" and should be thrown away like dung (see §3.1). The argument probably reflects a widely supported viewpoint among the opponents of the resurrection of the flesh, for instance the author of the *Epistle to Rheginus*, who sees the flesh as belonging to the corruptible world and the loss of it as a gain (see §4.2). Just as this last writing, the proponents of the argument could have argued with texts from the Pauline tradition.¹¹⁴

The argumentation of Pseudo-Justin is that according to Genesis 1:26 and 2:7 God created the human as a being of flesh (σαρκικὸν ἄνθρωπον, 7.2-4). The conclusion is simple:

"[5] It is clear, then, that the human which was created according to God's image, was of flesh. [6] Now, is it not absurd to contend that the flesh, created by God after his own image, would be dishonourable and worth nothing?" (Just. *Res.* 7.5-6)

The flesh is valuable in God's eyes, even more so because he created all things for the sake of humanity (7.7-8). Then the objection that the flesh is sinful and causes the soul to sin, is refuted. The flesh follows the soul, and when they are joint, they can sin, but not on their own (7.9-11). But even if the flesh was sinful, the Saviour would have come to save it (7.12). So the flesh is valuable in God's eyes and it would therefore rightfully be saved (7.13).

It is clear that Pseudo-Justin draws on very different traditions than the more dualistic view of his opponents, namely on Hellenistic-Jewish traditions. Celsus has alongside the Christians also the Jews in view when he formulates his criticisms against the view that God made all things for mankind (Or. *Cels.* 4.74-99; but compare the view of Cicero that everything is created for gods and men, Cic. *Nat. Deor.* 2.133, 154). And the connection of Gen. 1:26 and 2:7 was already established by *I Clement* 33.4-5, a writing that draws heavily on Biblical traditions, and by Justin in his dialogue with the Jew Trypho (Just. *Dial.* 62.1-3). But while Justin is writing about the value of the body as expressing the image of God without a connection to the resurrection, Pseudo-Justin takes it a step further by sharpening it towards the description of man as σαρκικός in order to argue for the resurrection of the flesh.¹¹⁵

6.4 *The Flesh as Part of the Human Being*

The third main argument of the opponents of Pseudo-Justin is that, even granted that the human flesh is valuable, it nevertheless has not directly the promise of resurrection (8.1). He argues that, firstly, the Creator would not allow that the valuable flesh will perish, because he would then act in vain and be foolish. "He who is by nature the reason of the whole is not foolish!" (οὐκ ἄφρων ὁ τῶν ὅλων πέφυκε νοῦς, 8.2-6). Interestingly Pseudo-Justin turns

¹¹⁴ Lona, *Über die Auferstehung*, 139-140.

¹¹⁵ Lona, *Über die Auferstehung*, 92-96, 99-103, 154.

around the argument of Celsus and others that it would be irrational to save the invaluable flesh. If it is valuable, as the opponents admit here, then it is only reasonable that God would raise it.¹¹⁶

Before turning to the second argument to refute the third main thesis, I summarize the following ones first. The third argument in this passage is that if God can resurrect the flesh, he would be spiteful if he did not do that (8.13-15). Finally, when the opponents say that only the imperishable soul is related to God and God wants to save what is akin to him, Pseudo-Justin argues with the help of a surprising application of a part of the Sermon on the Mount (*Mt.* 5:44; cf. *Lk.* 6:26, 32, 34) that God would be only good if he saved what is alien to him too (*Just. Res.* 8.16-25).

The second argument against the third main point of the opponents has an anthropological nature. When God promises to save man, that includes the salvation of the flesh (8.7-12). And what is man?

τί γάρ ἐστιν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἀλλ' ἢ τὸ ἐκ ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος συνεστὸς ζῶον λογικόν;
“For what is a human being but a rational animal, existing of soul and body?” (*Just. Res.* 8.8)

Man is the combination of body and soul, and therefore the salvation of man includes the body. The definition has parallels in Greek philosophy (Pseudo-Plato, *Epin.* 981a; *Ar. Pol.* A.1253a.9-10) and Christian literature (*Just. I Ap.* 8.4; *Dial.* 93.3; *Clem. Alex. Strom.* 3.64.2; 4.9.4; 4.164.5). Notably, Athenagoras describes man as existing of soul and body (*Leg.* 36.2). Pseudo-Justin takes his starting point in the creation of the composite human being to describe the object of salvation. This causes a fundamental difference with Greek thought (more precisely Platonism, see §2.1) which takes the pre-existent soul as its starting point and object of salvation.

Anthropology is also present in the small text passage (*Just. Res.* 10.1-4) between the second hiatus in the transmitted text and the conclusion of the treatise. How this part is connected to the previous text is therefore not completely clear, but it seems that the author wants to argue in yet another way that the resurrection is not spiritual, but fleshly (see especially 9.3, 5). Pseudo-Justin argues that resurrection is only applicable to the flesh:

“[1] Resurrection belongs to the poor flesh that has fallen, for the spirit (πνεῦμα) does not fall. [2] The soul is in the body. The body without soul does not live. It does not exist from the moment the soul leaves it. [3] For it is true that the body is the home of the soul, but the actual home of the soul is the spirit. [4] These three will be saved for those who have a pure hope and an unshakable faith in God.” (*Just. Res.* 10.1-4)

¹¹⁶ Cf. Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 189.

There are some interpretative difficulties here, but if we suppose with Martin Heimgartner that (a) this passage is not interpolated, (b) the *lectio difficilior* in 3b is authentic instead of the variant “the soul is the home of the spirit” and (c) we start from the fact that Pseudo-Justin elsewhere employs a body-soul anthropology, what the author says is that only the flesh/body dies, not the soul, for although the soul resides in the body, the soul belongs really to the sphere of the spirit and therefore survives the flesh.¹¹⁷ In other words: the soul and spirit do not need a resurrection. I would suggest that the uneasy introduction of the spirit in this passage is due to the terminology of spiritual resurrection employed by the opponents (see 9.3: εἰ δὲ ἦν πνευματικὴ μόνη ἢ ἀνάστασις ...). For this reason Pseudo-Justin had to introduce the spirit into his anthropology on an ad-hoc basis. But which place the spirit exactly occupies remains vague.

This argument of Pseudo-Justin is another version of the objection encountered in Minucius Felix that a resurrection has to be related to the body (see §3.2). The author of the *Epistle of Rheginus*, proponent of spiritual resurrection, had to counter the problem that leaving the body at death does raise questions about the reality of the resurrection (see §4.2 part D). And the *Gospel of Philip* has another solution for the problem (see §4.1). The fact that this problem apparently was widely discussed may explain that Pseudo-Justin places it at the end of the last main section about the resurrection of the flesh, in order to deal a last blow: spiritual resurrection is a *contradictio in terminis*.

6.5 *The Resurrection of Christ and the General Resurrection*

In Just. *Res.* 9 the author comes back to his promise (5.10) to speak about events in the life of the Saviour in order to show that resurrection happens. The passage begins (after a hiatus) with refuting that the flesh is useless. Jesus Christ healed the flesh and he even did raise dead people in order to show how the resurrection will happen, namely with both soul and body (9.1-2). He himself did not leave his body behind in order to show that there is a resurrection of the flesh and that the flesh can go to heaven (9.3-8). The author cannot imagine that someone would not be persuaded by these facts (9.9). Crucial is the following statement:

“Why, then, has he risen with the flesh that had suffered, if not in order to demonstrate the resurrection of the flesh?” (Just. *Res.* 9.5)

Pseudo Justin underpins that with the same story as Ignatius used to prove the resurrection in the flesh (see §2.4). One of the arguments, then, of Pseudo-Justin is of a Christological nature. The other connection in *On the Resurrection* between a Christological statement and the

¹¹⁷ Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 185-187.

general resurrection is to be found in the introduction. The Logos, the Son, “gives us through himself the resurrection from the dead and the subsequent eternal life” (1.9). He is as the Message/Logos of the truth guarantee (πίστις) of himself and everything altogether, while his followers have their faith (πίστις) in him as proof (1.10-11).

The reason to highlight this aspect of Pseudo-Justin’s resurrection theology is the observation of Katharina Schneider that this writing is the only one among the proto-orthodox apologetic treatments of the resurrection that actually takes Christ’s resurrection as the foundation of the general resurrection.¹¹⁸ Some authors do not even mention the resurrection of Christ. She suggests that the omission of arguing on the basis of the resurrection of Christ appears to be founded in the inability of these authors to use that effectively to counter criticism from the side of the Gnosis and philosophical criticism.¹¹⁹ However that may be, the fact that Pseudo-Justin *does* take the resurrection of Christ as the foundation of the general resurrection is consequently not self-evident. But if it is assumed that Pseudo-Justin reacts to the *Epistle to Rheginus* (see §5.2), a writing that has a thoroughly Christological foundation for the spiritual resurrection (the *Gospel of Philip* is a similar case, see chapter 4), or at least to Christians who came from the same circles as where these writings originated, it is not far-fetched to assume that Pseudo-Justin has this group in view. This is supported by the observation that, according to the exposition chapter (Just. *Res.* 2.14, cf. §6.1 above), the proponents of the third main thesis against the resurrection of the flesh claimed that Jesus appeared only spiritually and provided an illusion (φαντασία) of flesh.

6.6 Resurrection of the Flesh and the Development of Christian Identity

Celsus grumbles that since Christians have become a multitude, they are divided and condemn one another. Their identity is strengthened by their undermining attitude, but the only thing in common is their name (Or. *Cels.* 3.10, 12, 14). As to their doctrines, “Christians teach nothing new” for “the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is out of date (ὡς ἔωλα)” as Celsus’ Jew says (2.5). As is already discussed, Celsus views the resurrection as one of the absurdities of Christianity and as proof of their gross material understanding of the knowledge of God. It is understandable that in the storm of these criticisms the resurrection of the body became one of the central matters of contention and also the topic with which the Christian identity was shaped. For Justin those who rejected the resurrection of the flesh were not real Christians, and for Pseudo-Justin they are those of the wrong opinion, instigated by the devil. Thus the belief in resurrection of the flesh became an identity marker.¹²⁰ Not only in a negative way, for Pseudo-Justin shows how the resurrection of the flesh can function as a

¹¹⁸ Schneider, *Studien zur Entfaltung*, 264. Note that she only takes the apologetic, “altkirchlichen” tradition in the second century from Aristides onwards into account.

¹¹⁹ Schneider, *Studien zur Entfaltung*, 264-265.

¹²⁰ Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body*, 76-77, 84-86.

unique selling point of Christianity. The resurrection is not a misunderstanding of the idea of metempsychosis, nor is it out of date or nothing new. Instead, the doctrine of the immortal soul and the mortal body is nothing new:

“”[7] For those things we heard from Pythagoras and Plato too before we got to know the truth. [8] If, then, the Saviour had said these things and proclaimed life for only the soul, what new thing did he bring us in comparison to Pythagoras and Plato and their troop? [9] But now he came proclaiming to the people a new and strange hope. [10] It was indeed strange and new that God not promised to the immortality to keep the immortality, no, he promised to make the perishable imperishable.” (Just. *Res.* 10.7-10)

The resurrection is a symbol of salvation and therefore the right understanding of it is crucial. That is true for the post-Pauline trajectory of the *Epistle to Rheginus* and the *Gospel of Philip* where the resurrection as a present possession is necessary for experiencing salvation. But it is also true for Pseudo-Justin, because the trustworthiness of God is at stake (1) and in his view it is ultimately the adversary Satan who tries to mislead people away from salvation. Those who deny the resurrection of the flesh threaten the value of the resurrection of the flesh as identity marker and give in that way the Christians a bad name (10.11-12). On balance, it seems that the proponents of the resurrection of the flesh are more concerned about its identity value and that its defence mainly targets Christians with other views.¹²¹

The resurrection debate around 180 CE by Celsus, the author of the *Epistle to Rheginus* and by Pseudo-Justin(/Athenagoras), is a snapshot of the development of Christianity in the second century CE. In the course of this century, several big questions had to be answered which were related to the resurrection: what is the human being? How is God related to this world, as Creator or not? What is the meaning of the world and its history?¹²² Resurrection carries with it a related complex of ideas. Those who speak about spiritual resurrection are embedded in a Gnostic worldview where spiritual resurrection is the term for the return to the spiritual Fullness from which the pre-existent souls came. This is often related to the rejection of the Jewish Scriptures. Those who speak about the resurrection of the flesh subscribe to the (Jewish) conception of God as Creator of the human body after his own image, following the ‘Mosaic philosophy’. These vastly different theo- and cosmologies led to strife and conflict, in which the concept of resurrection was a convenient way to focus the differences.

The communicative situation of the *Epistle to Rheginus* and Pseudo-Justin’s treatise shows that the discussion about the resurrection was not merely the hobby of a select group of intellectuals. Resurrection has to do with the ultimate salvation and also instructs ethical

¹²¹ Outi Lehtipuu, “Biblical Body Language: The Spiritual and Bodily Resurrection”, in: Michael Labahn and Outi Lehtipuu (eds.), *Anthropology in the New Testament and Its Ancient Context*, Leuven 2010, 151-168, here 168.

¹²² W.C. van Unnik, “The Newly Discovered Gnostic ‘Epistle to Rheginos’ on the Resurrection: II”, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 15 (1964): 153-167, here 164.

behaviour: Rheginus is urged not to live according to the perishable flesh and to flee its bonds, while Pseudo-Justin imagines that denying the resurrection of the flesh would lead to giving the flesh loose reins, like a physician who allows an end-stage patient to follow his desires (10.13-15). On the other hand the physician Jesus keeps the flesh from missteps and treats it with a behavioural diet, because it will be saved (10.16-17).

Resurrection, which was regarded as an absurdity by intellectuals and at the same time begun more and more to function as a defining symbol for Christians, invited reflection and interpretation. Christian Gnostics who did not want to renounce the term resurrection, because resurrection was so deeply ingrained in the Christian tradition, had to interpret resurrection as a present reality in line with the post-Pauline trajectory, despite its bodily associations which seemed to fit badly into most Gnostic systems. Highly educated Christians in the proto-orthodox trajectory faced the intellectual criticisms of non-Christians on the absurdity of the resurrection. “These apologists confront the pagan intellectual challenge to resurrection belief, attempting to carve out a place in the larger society by importing its (...) rhetoric, and forms of argument.”¹²³ In this confrontation the conception of the resurrection was shaped and often mirrored by the various concerns that exerted pressure: resurrection became resurrection of the flesh (or spiritual resurrection). In Pseudo-Justin’s treatise, the traditional conception of the body as belonging to the image of God was pushed further to show that man can be defined as fleshly. The strategy to defeat with their own weapon, namely worldly reasoning, those who found the reconstitution of the rotten body absurd, pushed the continuity between this earthly body and the future body to its limits: the future body would be reconstituted from the same elements and the only difference would be that the flesh then would receive immortality and possibly healing from God. Ironically, then, the intellectual reflection on the resurrection of the flesh, which Pseudo-Justin raised to a new level, provided a bolder articulation of the doctrine. The resurrection of the flesh became one of the focal points of a Christian ‘discrepant’ identity¹²⁴, with a “fundamental distance from the culture with which it competes.”¹²⁵

¹²³ Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body*, 145.

¹²⁴ See for the term Mattingly, *Imperialism*, 213-217.

¹²⁵ Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body*, 145.

7 Conclusion

The question of this thesis is how the view on the resurrection of Pseudo-Justin's *On the Resurrection* is related to the dominant intellectual discourse of Hellenistic philosophy and what its place is in the development of Christianity.

Regarding the Greek views on the body after death the conclusion is that the ancient worldview was thoroughly characterized by 'a hierarchy of essence'. Heavy bodies belong essentially in the lower ranks and finer bodies essentially in the higher positions of the cosmos. This is reflected differently in myths and funerary inscriptions than in philosophical thought. The first speak relatively unconcerned about bodies in the afterlife and even about the bodily return from Hades, whereas philosophers of the Platonic persuasion beware the mixing of heaven and earth. In the school of Plato the basic pattern of thinking about existence is the fall of the pre-existent soul and its return to the divine realm. In Judaism around the beginning of the Common Era similar conceptions exist, but at least some currents of Judaism have also the conception of resurrection, where the ultimate bliss is viewed as embodied, in one way or another. This is taken over in Christianity and remains an important concept, mainly because the resurrection of Christ is at the heart of the Christian faith. The first signs of short-circuiting appear in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. They apparently rejected the idea of resurrection because they thought as spiritual people to be free from the body. Paul's answer retains the bodily character of the afterlife, but meets at the same time the possible objections by positing a spiritual body that sheds off the soul and the flesh. In none of the later writings that address the resurrection more elaborately, Paul's conception is taken over. That has to do with the developments in Christianity that come more and more to the surface in the course of the second century CE. Some Christians, living in a thought world in which the divine is preferably distanced from earthly existence, begun to separate between the earthly Jesus and the divine Christ, or stated that Jesus only seemingly had suffered. This is countered by the beginning proto-orthodox trajectory who saw in that view a threat to salvation by Jesus' suffering. One of the arguments of Ignatius for the reality of Jesus is that he was also in the flesh after the resurrection. This is then transferred to the general resurrection. Around the middle of the second century Justin mints the term 'resurrection of the flesh' as an identity marker of the true Christian.

During the second century some currents of Christianity developed a Christian form of Gnosis. The mythical system of the most Christian form of Gnosis, Valentinianism, shows many similarities with the soteriology of Platonism. In this system there is no or a very limited place of salvation for the material body, because it carried the hierarchy of the cosmos to the extreme, even to the chagrin of Plotinus. Some currents within the Christian Gnosis stood at the same time in a tradition that championed 'the apostle', Paul. As is clear from the *Gospel of Philip* and the *Epistle to Rheginus* the resurrection was viewed in line with

Ephesians as a present reality, while the flesh was shed off at death. The systematic character of the grand narrative of these currents of Christian Gnosis make that we can speak of a philosophy of Christianity. Due to the similarity with the Platonic worldview there was much continuity between Greek views and the Gnosis. The discontinuity is located in the mythical interest and the appeal to enlightenment over against critical thought. This is reflected in the dismissive attitude of the author of the *Epistle to Rheginus* towards philosophical enquiry in matters of the truth.

The apologetic tradition of the proto-orthodox trajectory has in Justin the first Christian intellectual (that we know of) who directly interacts with mainly Platonic thought. The apologists could to a certain extent embark on the ship of Hellenistic-Jewish philosophy/theology. At the same time, an apologist like Athenagoras used the Greek poets and doxographic literature in the apologetic strategy to point to similarities between Christian and the non-Christian views in order to disarm the view on Christianity as a dangerous cult.

In the years towards 180 CE at least three writings, all associated with Egypt, give evidence of an intensive debate about the resurrection. Rheginus, the recipient of the *Epistle* to him, probably was involved in discussions with proponents of the resurrection of the flesh, who argued that the flesh was an inalienable part of the human being and that a resurrection without body was not worthy of the name. The author exhorts Rheginus to dismiss critical inquiry without having received the truth and to rest upon the ‘word of truth’. In ca. 177 CE Celsus wrote an attack on Christianity, ‘the true word/doctrine’ in which the resurrection features as one of the absurd opinions of them and as proof for their incapability to attain knowledge of God. His main objection is that resurrection is flat-out impossible and that the salvation of the flesh is undesirable and therefore impossible for God, who cannot do evil. Celsus also scorns Christians for invoking belief instead of reason and thinks that Christianity is nothing more than a very bad form of Greek thought due to the credulity in barbarian myths.

It is at this point that Pseudo-Justin (who may well be identified with Athenagoras) engages in the defence for ‘the word/reason of the truth’ in his treatise about the resurrection of the flesh (ca. 178 CE). He does not directly attack Celsus, but probably the Christians (according to Pseudo-Justin: ‘Christians’) who readily made use of his work, as is evidenced by many parallels between the two writings. What Pseudo-Justin accomplished can be summarized in several points.

1. The reason to devote a complete apologetic treatise to the question of the resurrection for the first time in the history of Christianity is that the truth is at stake. Christians with the ‘wrong’ opinion, inspired by the devil, give Christianity a bad name as quarrelsome people. Nevertheless their arguments (partly derived from Celsus) have a certain force, which has to be disarmed.
2. Resurrection of the flesh is not a conception that follows from rational proof. But the alternative is not a simple invocation of belief. Pseudo-Justin shows a lot more

sophistication than the author of the *Epistle to Rheginus* in arguing for an authority-based epistemology in which the truth is not reached by critical examination, but the truth sends its trustworthy messenger who calls for belief. In this way belief can pass as proof and the Christian can with intellectual honesty say in front of Celsus: ‘Do not examine, but belief.’

3. Revolutionary is his strategy in an inner-Christian debate (!) to provide proof for a Christian viewpoint on the basis of the views of Greek philosophical schools. This strategy aims to paint the opponents as more unbelieving than non-Christians and as ridiculous because they do not even follow ‘worldly reasoning’. At the same time this would be reassuring for the not-yet-believers to which the treatise is also directed.
4. The non-Christian argument is intended to counter the main objection of Celsus that the reconstitution of the dissolved body is simply impossible. What Pseudo-Justin demonstrates is that according to the schools of Plato, Epicurus and the Stoics it is in theory possible that a body is reconstituted from the same elements. The intensity of the interaction with the philosophy of these schools is similar to that in the *Legatio* of Athenagoras, where the author admits he only makes use of the doxographic literature in so far as it suits him. Whatever the merits of Pseudo-Justin’s demonstration are, at least he brings the discussion to an intellectual level instead of mocking and insults at the confrontation with the idea of resurrection.
5. Regarding the status of the flesh Pseudo-Justin draws on the Jewish-Christian idea of God as creator of man after his image. It is at this point that the greatest difference appears between the proto-orthodox Christian views and the dominant intellectual discourse of Greek thought. Because Pseudo-Justin argues that the flesh is God’s own work, he can counter the objections that God could not and would not resurrect the flesh. However, it is also clear that the pro-flesh party digs itself in: Pseudo-Justin pushes the idea of God’s image to the extreme by characterizing man as fleshly. Also in the demonstration on the basis of philosophy there is no much room for discontinuity in the resurrection. The only discontinuity that is allowed is that God grants the flesh immortality. On this point, then, the view of the defenders of the resurrection of the flesh is embedded in a different, ‘barbaric’ cosmology in comparison with the (Platonic) Greek cosmology. In this way it forms one of the focal points of their ‘discrepant’ identity.
6. That resurrection of the flesh is an identity marker becomes also clear at the end of the treatise. While Celsus contended that Christianity brings nothing new and that resurrection is nothing else than a badly misunderstood reincarnation, Pseudo-Justin retorts that the resurrection of the flesh is a new and strange hope, and therefore a unique selling point.

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