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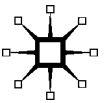

GREEK RESURRECTION BELIEFS AND THE SUCCESS OF CHRISTIANITY

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For my mother

When we say . . . that he, Jesus Christ, our teacher, was crucified and died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven, we propose nothing new from what you believe about those you consider sons of Zeus.

Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 21.1

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PREFACE

The idea of this book took shape only gradually while I was working on various projects within Greek religion and early Christianity. As I repeatedly encountered various explanations of how the Christian resurrection belief emerged and succeeded, it struck me that something did not seem quite right.

The Greeks loathed the flesh, I was told, but then why did they turn to that form of Christianity that insisted on the resurrection of the flesh, when there were so many alternative Christian movements that did not do this?

The Christian resurrection belief originated from Jewish beliefs only, I read again and again, but then why did Christianity put more and more emphasis on the resurrection of the flesh the more converts it made from traditional Greek religion?

The resurrection of the flesh represented a tremendous obstacle in the Christian effort to win over the Greeks, I heard repeatedly, but then why did more and more Greeks turn to Christianity as this new religion increasingly emphasized the resurrection of the flesh?

At times I felt like a character from an Agatha Christie novel, misled by various false trails. Then, turning to the ancient sources, I found that it was, perhaps most of all, the modern explanations about the resurrection beliefs that had been leading me astray.

Apart from a few philosophical diatribes, there is really no proof of any general Greek abhorrence of the flesh. Quite the opposite. Starting to examine the ancient Greek sources more carefully, I soon found not only a distinct attraction toward the flesh, but numerous reports about people being resurrected from the dead, people having their flesh immortalized, and people being deified and physically translated to various distant parts of the world. All in connection with the longing for physical immortality, various sources unveiled beliefs in people

suddenly disappearing without a trace, in men going down into the ground as the very earth opened up under their feet, in children being put on the fire, and in people having their bodies dismembered and put into cauldrons. Most important of all, I found a strong and enduring conviction that immorality always had to include both body and soul.

This led me to wonder if the main question we had most often asked about the resurrection was the wrong one. Maybe we should not ask why the Greeks became Christians *in spite of* the Christian belief in the resurrection of the flesh. Maybe we should ask whether the Greeks became Christians partly *because* of the Christian belief in the resurrection of the flesh. Asking ourselves this question, we encounter quite another story. It is this story I have tried to relate in this book.

Looking back at the years I have been working on this project, I find that there are certain people who have been particularly invaluable in their overall support, in their helpful suggestions, and, most importantly, in believing in me and this project. They are Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, Knut Olav Åmås, Penelope Boehm, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Liv Ingeborg Lied, Kaizad Mehta, Jorunn Økland, Diane Sova, my sister, Christine Endsjø, my grandmother, Jenny Endsjø, and my parents.

I want, moreover, to thank Ingrid Åmås, Peder Anker, Mia Berner, Lars Berntzen, Elisabeth Bjelland, Pål Bjørby, Jostein Børtnes, David Brakke, Torkel Brekke, Jan Bremmer, Bernadette Brooten, Elizabeth Clark, Gina Dahl, Deena Deutsch, Matthew Dickie, Hedda von Ehrenheim, Roald Fevang, Tomas Hägg, Evy Håland, Thomas Harding, Bjørn Hatterud, Sidsel Høye Haugan, Richard Hecht, Ulla Heli, Geir Hellemo, Karstein Hopland, Kristin Høye, Janicke Iversen, Knut A. Jacobsen, Otto Krogseth, Hugo Lundhaug, Gary McDonald, John Anthony McGuckin, Dale Martin, Lisbeth Mikaelsson, Halvor Moxnes, Bente Myrtveit, Henrik Nordhus, Steinar Opstad, Katrine Ore, Robert Parker, Aslak Rostad, Jeffrey B. Russell, Håkan Rydving, Robert David Sánchez, Mara Senese, Geir Skogseth, Vidar Solheim, Michael Stausberg, Anne Stensvold, Helge Svare, Leif Vaage, my editors, and the anonymous reviewer at Palgrave Macmillan for their suggestions, support, and kind assistance. As for institutional support I am grateful to Religious Studies at the University of Bergen for good working conditions, to San Francisco University and the Union Theological Seminary at Columbia University for letting me use their resources at two important periods of my study, and to the Norwegian Research Council for providing the financial means for this quest.

Introduction: Dilemmas of the Flesh

Flesh mattered to the Greeks. The very first lines of the *Iliad* describe how the wrath of Achilles has "made the warriors themselves the prey for dogs and birds of all kinds," while only "the *souls* of these valiant warriors" go to Hades.[1] This ancient passage from Greek literature presented the ultimate horror to the Greeks. The flesh devoured by the ravenous scavengers is identical with the warriors *themselves*, as the text makes clear. The disembodied souls that escape to Hades are nothing but mere shadows. The men themselves go nowhere but into the bowels of savage beasts.

This is no unique scene. Again and again we read about the despair over people being devoured in the battlefield, at sea, or in other places. For Priam, the old king of Troy, what he dreads the most about losing his city to the Greeks is how he himself can expect to be eaten by his own dogs: "Even the dogs that . . . I reared at the table to guard my door."[2] Priam's son Lycaon has at this point already been slain by Achilles and flung into the river, so that "many fish . . . shall eat the white fat of Lycaon."[3] Asteropaeus, another poor fellow killed by Achilles, lies dead in the surf, where "eels and fish made a meal of him, tearing and feeding upon the fat around the kidneys."[4] The corpse is no empty vessel but identical with the person: one is one's body.

Artistic depictions sometimes dwell on this matter as well. On the frieze of a sizeable seventh-century B.C. jar from Euboean Eretria, birds nibble carefully on the corpses of warriors.[5] An Ischian crater dating to the end of the eighth century B.C. depicts the dismal fate of shipwrecked men helplessly floating around in the water, some of them being devoured by fish.[6] Eating as much as they are able to, the ravenous creatures see only food while tearing forever apart and consuming the flesh that equals the very identity of the unfortunate men.

Almost a thousand years later we witness a similar preoccupation with the flesh. A human being is still considered complete only with the possession of both body and soul. At the same time the scenario is completely reversed. Turning first to how the human flesh may be "consumed by wild beasts, or by any other animals,"[7] the second-century Greek church father Athenagoras insists that we need not worry. God will still see to it at the resurrection that the various particles of the flesh will be "united again with one another," so that "they occupy the same place for the exact construction and formation of the same body."[8] It does not matter where the particles of the flesh have ended up, they may even have "become food for fishes."[9] The creatures will have to regurgitate whatever piece of human flesh they have ever eaten. Centuries after Athenagoras, again, we find a large number of artistic depictions of this particular notion—fish, beasts, and birds disgorging a foot here, a hand there, and sometimes a whole head, whatever these creatures devoured in the first place. The earliest of these scenes are found in Thessalonica, in Torcello outside of Venice, and in Sinai. Although it is uncertain how far back these illustrations go, animals regurgitating human flesh soon became a staple scene in the presentation of the last judgment and the general resurrection. For all its gore, this is truly a happy event in which the human person is completely reconstituted.

The ancient Greek and early Christian scenes strangely mirror each other. The former depict the miserable and irreversible fate of those unfortunate men whose flesh is devoured by various beasts, and the latter portray the joyful scene of similar animals regurgitating bits of human flesh that are to be reassembled so that they will once again become bodies, which now even are immortalized. The tragedy depicted in the most ancient scenes emphasizes the general corruptibility and absolute finitude of the flesh and thus of humans themselves. Even for those who are given proper obsequies, there is practically no hope of preserving the flesh, which really equals one's personal identity. Fire or decay will do its job. The joy of the Christian picturizations lies in the opposite, in the conviction of the absolute incorruptibility and immortality of the resurrected flesh at the end of times, no matter what originally had happened to it.

But is there any connection, historical or otherwise, between the Greek and the Christian scenarios? Is there a relation between the ideas of beasts and birds feasting on the flesh of men and similar creatures disgorging human flesh centuries later? Was the hope displayed in the latter in some way an answer to the despair inherent in the former, more tragic, scene?

Today, most Christians still profess a belief in "the resurrection of the *flesh,*" as in the probably late second-century *Apostles' Creed*, not just "the resurrection of the *body*." There is here a literal stress, which sometimes seems forgotten. Martin Luther, that brimstone reformer of the sixteenth century, argued that "the term 'resurrection of the flesh' is not well chosen. When we Germans hear the word flesh, *Fleisch*, we think no farther than the butcher shop."[10] Many Christians today will, like Luther, find the term "flesh" problematic because of its explicitness. We must, however, throw away both modern and early modern skepticism when looking at these most ancient sources. Doing this, we realize that to the ancient Christians the resurrection of the flesh really involved the very same flesh we have as living. Early Christians were thinking of the flesh as literally as possible. Although there is a fundamental difference between human flesh and animal flesh, we cannot discard Luther's image of the butcher shop just like that. When early Christians prayed for the resurrection of the flesh, it was no question of metaphor. The hope of immortal flesh meant that our present flesh would be fortified, lose its mortality, and last forever. Christian second-century apologist Justin Martyr outright condemned anyone who questioned the literal resurrection of the flesh, especially among those "who are called Christians."[11]

Although the belief in the eternal survival of the flesh goes against some of today's most basic scientific principles, we must at the same time recognize that the connection between immortality and flesh is really not that foreign to contemporary Western culture either. Immortality today is still closely related to the idea of the survival of the flesh. Most people in Europe and North America harbor expectations of some form of afterlife for the soul, but this, to most of us, does not constitute immortality. Immortality usually equals some form of continuous union of body and soul.

The hope that our souls somehow will outlive our bodies is a far cry from the desire for physical immortality, a yearning that exists even today. In a culture that insists on the connection between happiness and physical well-being, we find a sound selection of industries catering to our desire. Our wish to live increasingly longer and healthier is reflected in fitness centers and nutrition plans for the many and offers of advanced surgery for the not so many, including the possibility of replacing more and more parts of the body and making it look younger as well. Some, however, are not content with the possibility of leaving this mortal coil as surgically enhanced centenarians and hope to abolish all time limits on our physical existence. Emboldened by a society

full of people who astonishingly seem to have put the process of ageing at bay, a few have set out on a venture trying to eradicate the threat of aging and death. On this path, some have turned to rigorous diets, others to severe regimens of physical exercise. Others again, who have already succumbed to mortality, have had their bodies frozen in the hope of being resuscitated in some not-too-distant future when science will be able to preserve forever the intricate machinery of our physical bodies.

But science has not come up with the *idea* of physical immortality. The more recent scientific and medical discoveries have merely supplied an array of new opportunities to fill a demand that was already there. It is our own desire for physical immortality that has created these industries.

Going back to the beginning of the Christian era, we find a landscape of similar hopes and desires. People were not only attracted to the idea of immortal flesh but were in large numbers turning to a new religion that promised that it was really possible to achieve a state of physical immortality.

If we allow ourselves to take a great sweep of the history of religion, we find that the belief in some form of eternal *physical* existence has not always played a prominent part. Whereas a conviction that the soul, or something similar to it, will have some form of afterlife is found in most cultures, that we may have an opportunity to live forever in the flesh remains an exceptional idea. It is impossible to refer to the appearance of this idea as some general religious tendency in human nature. This seems to be something more culturally specific. We must therefore try to find how this idea appeared.

The promise that true Christians would receive physical immortality exercised an immense power over millions of people in late antiquity. It encouraged many to various degrees of physical hardship, and some even to give up their present lives in return for what was promised them. The belief in the historical resurrection of Jesus and the future resurrection of the physical bodies of the dead represents maybe the most central tenet in the form of Christianity that by the fourth-century emerged supreme. As Tertullian, the late second-century Latin church father well acquainted with Greek writings, maintained, "The resurrection of the dead is the Christian's trust. By it we are believers."[12]

Countless volumes have been written on the incredible success of Christianity in the Hellenistic world, on how a fledgling spin-off from a not very popular minority religion conquered the hearts and minds of millions of Pagans. By the beginning of the fourth century,

just before Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, Christians already comprised something close to a majority in the Hellenistic part of the empire. A considerable number of social, cultural, and religious factors contributed to the formidable victory of Christianity, as made clear by various scholars. The success of the belief in the resurrection of the flesh is often treated as something that was just taken for granted within this larger religious package that was so well received. But this cannot be the case. The pivotal role the beliefs in bodily resurrection and physical immortality played in early Christianity makes it difficult to see these beliefs as anything but inseparably tied to why Christianity succeeded.

Few have been concerned with the apparent paradox of the Christian success of immortal flesh and how most scholars consider the Hellenistic world. According to the majority of scholars writing on this religious breakthrough, the culture that made Christianity its own considered the physical body something negative and found the whole idea of the resurrection of the flesh absurd. Dutch scholar of religion Jan Bremmer, for example, argues that Christian apologists and theologians "would spend an enormous amount of energy in explaining and defending" the doctrine of the resurrection of the body because this to the Greeks and the Romans "was an unthinkable idea."[13] This is in agreement with Biblical scholar H.S. Long, who, in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia,* simply states that "Greco-Roman paganism found resurrection difficult to accept."[14] Greek theologian Kallistos Ware similarly considers the Platonic revulsion for the flesh the general ancient Greek attitude.[15] I could go on and on. The list of authorities offering such claims is apparently endless.

If this general disregard of the body truly saturated the Hellenistic world, we are looking at a fundamental dilemma: Why, then, did the Greeks turn to a religion that evolved around physical immortality and the salvation of the *flesh*? Why would millions of converts cherish the idea of physical resurrection if this was a belief in complete contrast to what they themselves had held to be true for centuries?

Christianity originated in Judaism with the followers of Jesus from Nazareth. But Christianity succeeded within a Hellenistic world, where Judaism never carried a decisive influence. Therefore, we must also look at Greek ideas to comprehend why the resurrection belief won through and developed the way it did. Whenever someone accepts new religious ideas, he or she does it on the basis of what he or she already believes. No one can be considered completely independent of the cultural and religious milieu in which one exists. To be successful,

Christianity had, to a great extent, to operate within the system it wanted to replace. Although looking only at philosophical writings among Greek sources, already by the end of the nineteenth century, Edwin Hatch maintained in his presentation of early Christian history "that no permanent change takes place in the religious beliefs or usages of the race which is not rooted in the existing beliefs and usages of that race."[16] When reading Paul, the gospels, and the early church fathers, we must therefore try to hear their words with Greek ears, not just with Christian ears. We must attempt to discern what these early Christian writers offered of expectations, hopes, and possibilities to a Greek mind and heart.

That the hope in the resurrection of the flesh should become a dominant belief in the Greek world did not automatically follow from the success of Christianity. It was no matter of course that the ancient world should embrace the notion of physical resurrection. Even Christianity was not a religion originally promising anyone immortal flesh. Paul simply declared "that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."[17] Indeed, as Finnish New Testament scholar Gunnar af Hällström points out, against the background that the resurrection of the flesh "seems to be rejected outright by the Apostle Paul," it "seems a minor miracle" that this became a central dogma in Christianity.[18] Much of Christianity's earliest history reflects a resistance toward the resurrection of the flesh.

This is just as much a story about a war within, as a struggle with external forces. When examining the internal struggle, Patristic scholar Joanne McWilliam Dewart maintains that "there were fundamental differences of opinion among Christians themselves concerning the worth of the material world, the relationship between body and soul, the nature of the eschatological kingdom and—tied in with all these—the meaning of resurrection."[19] Among those who considered themselves Christians, a substantial number would for centuries keep on altogether rejecting the belief in bodies of flesh and bones being raised to eternal life. Gnostics, Origenists, and others instead held the flesh as something either irrelevant or outright negative. According to them only a spiritualized body or just the human soul was to become immortal.

But this Christian skepticism toward the idea of immortal flesh does in no way solve the original dilemma. It only makes it more complicated. When the field also was so full of strong and articulate Christian proponents of a belief in the resurrection of a spiritualized body and the primacy of the soul, why would the Greeks turn to those who advocated

the resurrection of the flesh? Why, then, was there a steadily greater emphasis on the importance of the flesh within early Christianity? If the most ancient Christians believed that the body would be resurrected without the flesh, and the Pagans held that the soul as immortal should try to escape the flesh, why would the idea of the resurrection of the flesh end up as paramount? What constituted the attraction of immortal flesh?

Contemplating the success of Christianity and the success of the resurrection of the flesh, we realize that the one does not follow automatically from the other. The belief in the resurrection of the flesh did not succeed just because Christianity did. As many early Christians did not believe in the physical resurrection at all, a more precise question thus becomes, why did Christianity end up paramount in a version that advocated the resurrection of the flesh? Why did the Greeks instead not turn to one of the forms of Christianity that denied any future existence of the flesh?

The belief in physical immortality developed only gradually. If there had been contemporary scholars studying Christianity in its very beginning, they would find little reason to conclude that Christians would come to insist on the belief in immortal flesh. But the fact remains that the more popular Christianity became among the Greeks, the stronger the emphasis became on the resurrection of the flesh. The more vehemently the most powerful Christian apologetics insisted on the promise of immortal flesh and denounced anyone who questioned the absolute physicality of the resurrected body, the more popular this new faith became among the Greeks.

This parallel development indicates that there was some kind of connection between how Christianity increasingly emphasized the resurrection of the flesh and how it became the predominant Greek religion. If we dare leave all preconceptions behind, we may, really, put forward a completely different hypothesis on one of the reasons why the Greeks would not only turn to this new creed but cherish a promise of immortal flesh. Perhaps the increased insistence on immortal flesh, as more and more Greeks turned to Christianity, was a response to Greek expectations? Maybe the Christian breakthrough among the Hellenistic populace was not at all *in spite* of the preaching about physical immortality and the resurrection of the flesh, but partly *because* of this insistence on immortal flesh?

That the attraction of immortal flesh should have contributed in any way to win the Hellenistic majority over to Christianity is completely contrary to what almost everybody today claims the case to be. We

are therefore forced to take a fresh look at how people actually considered the connection between flesh and immortality at the point when Christianity made its entrance. Was there anything in the Greek religious ideas, which for centuries had influenced most people of the eastern Mediterranean, that made these people attracted to the idea of immortal flesh? What was the possibility of the flesh? Was the immortalization of the flesh in anyway considered plausible? Why, in the end, did the belief in immortal flesh not only prevail but succeed with such immense force?

CHAPTER ONE

Where Do We Stand?

Explanations So Far

Those who maintain that a revulsion for the physical body was typical of the Hellenistic environment where Christianity was introduced usually argue that the Christian ideas on physical resurrection originated in Jewish beliefs only. Swedish scholar on religious studies Helmer Ringgren, for instance, argues that "the New Testament seems to have taken over the general idea of resurrection from contemporary Judaism," whereas "Greek influence" led to that "the early church developed the idea of an immortal soul."[1] Swiss Biblical scholar Oscar Cullmann similarly operates with a comprehensive "Greek thought that the material, the bodily, the corporeal is bad and *must* be destroyed" in absolute opposition to "Christian (and Jewish) thinking."[2] According to theologian Kallistos Ware, it is "noteworthy that the viewpoint which finally prevails" with respect to the Greek Christian belief about the resurrection "is Biblical rather than Platonic."[3] Even Caroline Walker Bynum, who has played a pivotal role in bringing the early Christian preoccupation with the physical body to the fore, contrasts "the Jewish notion of the resurrection of the person" with the "Greek notion of immortality of soul," leaving no room for any other Greek ideas.[4]

All these claims that the idea of resurrection was alien to Greek culture are, if we may put it simply, based on two separate assumptions that nevertheless support each other. On the one hand, there is the conviction that Greek philosophy to such a degree saturated Hellenistic culture that it is extremely difficult to operate with Greek beliefs contradictory to philosophy. As most philosophical movements were skeptical of the

flesh, if not outright negative, Hellenistic culture at large must therefore also have looked askance at the body. Whatever influence Greek ideas exercised on the development of early Christianity must consequently be in harmony with these basic philosophical principles of general body loathing. The idea that any Hellenization of Christianity equals a philosophical influence is in itself also an old theological principle. In modern studies this was already established by the British church historian Edwin Hatch in 1888,[5] after which it has more or less remained a dogma.

The other assumption about why resurrection originated in Jewish beliefs alone stems from the indisputable fact that Christianity itself originated in Judaism. As the belief in the resurrection of the flesh came to be considered such a pivotal aspect of Christian dogma, it follows that this belief must have emerged from Jewish ideas only. There is here, too, a heavy theological aspect, as pre-Christian Judaism of course plays a unique role within Christianity as its divinely condoned predecessor. "At least since Tertullian," the religious scholar Luther Martin observes, "*thought* in Western culture has been associated with Athens while *religion* has been attributed to Jerusalem." To see the Christian dogma of the resurrection of the flesh also in connection with Athens thus becomes highly problematic. As Biblical scholar Ronald H. Nash argues, "The conviction that the New Testament was inspired by God and thus authoritative would be weakened considerably by evidence that the New Testament writers had derived any essential beliefs from their pagan milieu."[6] Indeed, the belief that the canonical writings were the "divinely revealed truth" makes it impossible to see the writers of the New Testaments as primarily "children of their time."[7] As such, it follows that "any claim that the Christian doctrine of rebirth [that is, resurrection] was borrowed from pagan Hellenistic sources would, if true, constitute a serious blow to the traditional understanding of Christianity."[8]

Some scholars simply deny that anything but the victorious church's theological view on its own beginnings can be true. Considered by many theologians in every way building up to the momentum of the resurrection of Christ, pre-Christian Judaism has within much of Christian history been seen as completely in harmony with the most basic Christian ideas, not least when it comes to the teachings about the resurrection. Just to indicate that the success of the resurrection of the flesh was caused by anything but Judaism thus equals heresy.

Although it is hard to find any scholar today who denies that Christianity in some way must have been influenced by its Hellenistic

surroundings from the very beginning, the belief in the resurrection is mostly presented as something that remained immune to any influx of Greek ideas. Around 1900, Sir James Frazer simultaneously opened and put a lid on the whole idea of traditional Greek beliefs influencing Christian resurrection beliefs with his theories on dying and rising gods, as his ideas proved to have little basis in the sources.[9] Disregarding the discredited theories of Frazer, more recently scholars have again felt more at liberty to look to other places than to Judaism for explanations about why the Christian belief in the resurrection ended up as it did, and some have also looked into the possible connection between the Christian resurrection beliefs and Greek religion. Hugo Rahner basically compares the resurrection with various philosophical ideas about natural cycles, where the flesh is nowhere included.[10] According to James Dunn, the "numerous reports of appearances of divine figures like Isis and Asclepius" mean that "there was nothing unusual in the 'resurrection appearances'" at the time of Jesus.[11] Very briefly and without any comprehensive discussion, both Hans Conzelmann and Pheme Perkins see parallels between the ascension of Jesus and various Greek incidents.[12] Hans Dieter Betz similarly compares the vanished Jesus with what he calls "disappearing heroes and God-men [Gottmenschen]."[13] Drawing on a number of different phenomena like the funerary cult of the souls of heroes, the physical translation of certain figures, and the spiritual apotheosis of Hellenistic rulers, Adela Yarbro Collins suggests that this may all connect to the focus on the empty tomb of Jesus in the gospels.[14] In their *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament*, Eugene Boring, Klaus Berger, and Carsten Colpe have identified a number of possible parallels between the gospel resurrection narratives and various Greek texts on matters such as resurrection and translation.[15] Without going into details, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza argues that it "is difficult to rule out any literary influence or dependence" between the "resurrection appearances of Jesus and appearances of Hellenistic figures such as Apollonius of Tyana, Romulus, Aristeas of Proconnesus, Cleomedes of Astupaleia, Peregrinus Proteus, and others."[16] Dale Martin argues that people could have recognized the idea of resurrection in the Greek belief about people who were resuscitated back to a mortal existence and refers also to the first-century A.D. complaints of Plutarch about "the masses" believing in physical translations.[17] Combining a number of these various notions, Stanley Porter argues that the Christian idea of resurrection was reflected in philosophical ideas about reincarnation, in ancient reports about people who were resuscitated without

becoming immortal, and in miraculous stories about people who were immortalized without having been resurrected.[18]

None of these scholars have, however, offered an extensive analysis of Greek beliefs about immortality and resurrection in their drawing of parallels toward early Christianity. In spite of these various attempts of finding other explanations, there has been little change in the general image of the Christian resurrection belief representing a beacon of originally Jewish beliefs standing aloof and unscathed in the tempest of religious change, as wild and unruly waves of Pagan ideas smashed relentlessly upon it from all sides. This mighty scholarly tradition, which has tried to keep anyone from seriously looking at any other religious tradition but Judaism in the attempt to understand the development of resurrection beliefs, has, indeed, left a profound mark.

Judaism, Greek Philosophy, and That Third Factor

It is impossible to escape the fact that Judaism and Greek beliefs together represent the very fundament upon which Christianity developed. Although Judaism also was Hellenized and Jewish communities were found all over the Roman Empire, we may, if we simplify it, see Judaism as providing the seed of Christianity, through Paul and the first followers of Jesus. Hellenism may similarly be considered the soil on which Christianity flourished. But how could the belief in the resurrected body prevail if this was typical only of the one religion in the ancient Mediterranean that differed the most from what most people believed? We will find ourselves equally much at loss if we, in our attempt to understand why Christianity came to promote the belief in immortal flesh, turn only to what is frequently considered the most important part of Greek culture, the philosophical tradition. The contrast between the philosophical skepticism toward the body at large and the flesh in particular and that which would end up as the dominant Christian dogma on the resurrection is almost absolute.

As we have seen, Greek thinking is often considered identical with its philosophical tradition, especially when it is seen in relation to early Christianity. To make such a complete equation is, however, incorrect. Greek philosophy was never identical with what most Greeks held to be true. Although the belief that nothing within Greek culture escaped the ascendancy of philosophy is still found, especially in more simplistic presentations of Christian antiquity, most classics scholars today acknowledge that the philosophical tradition at no time held a

monopoly over Greek minds. This has been maintained for quite some time. The celebrated scholar on Greek religion Lewis Richard Farnell observed already in 1921 that "Greek philosophic speculation is by no means a trustworthy witness, to speak for the average mind and average faith, although . . . the influence of the philosopher was more likely to reach the people than has often been the case in other periods and in other communities."[19]

As firsthand witnesses of the intellectual milieu of the early Christian era, some philosophically inclined men deplored the fact that their own beloved Plato was not widely read. While referring to how both Homer and the tragedians were perused extensively all over the Hellenistic realm, and "hundreds of thousands . . . continue to use" the laws of Alexander the Great, Plutarch admitted in the first century A.D. that only "few of us read Plato's *Laws*."[20] About the same time, Strabo simply stated as a fact that "philosophy is for the few, whereas poetry is more useful to the people at large."[21] The third-century church father Origen remarked that "it is easy, indeed, to observe that Plato is found only in the hands of those who profess to be literary men,"[22] who, of course, did not constitute a large part of the population. Even the educated elite of the Hellenistic population exhibited a distinct distance from the ideas of Athens' most famous philosopher. A significant example is Pausanias, the erudite second-century A.D. writer of the extensive cultural travelogue on mainland Greece, who refers to "Plato, the son of Ariston" as someone whose ideas were adhered to only by "some of the Greeks,"[23] even though he was "the greatest of the philosophers."[24]

Henry Chadwick, the influential scholar on early Christianity, concludes that "Platonic metaphysics were the peculiar study of the few, of an intellectual aristocracy."[25] In his study on Paganism in the Roman Empire, Ramsay MacMullen agrees, pointing out that philosophy exercised no detectable influence on the cultic practice of traditional religion. Rhetorically he asks, "Who cared?":

> The inappropriateness of common forms of worship, seen through the eyes of Seneca or Porphyry, appears not to have deterred a single soul from the inheritance of his tribe. If anyone listened to Epicureans or Stoics, no signs attest to this conversion. Which is not to deny that conversions . . . *must* have been made—but not in numbers at all detectable.[26]

Most people seem not to have bothered at all about what the philosophers held to be true. As pointed out by MacMullen, there was instead

a popular tendency in the Roman period toward regarding philosophers as generally irrelevant, constantly at variance with each other, and unable to do anything but overthrowing other doctrines.[27] This is not unlike the sentiments exhibited already in Aristophanes' burlesque comedy from 423 B.C., *The Clouds,* in which Socrates and his followers are the object of extensive derision. Although philosophy clearly played a part in this era, it was never what drew the great crowds.

Whereas people in general apparently found the philosophers irrelevant, the latter frequently criticized "the masses," "*hoi polloi,*" for their beliefs. But the philosophical criticism was in no way limited to the uneducated throngs. In fact, it was traditional beliefs at large that represented the target, wherever it was found, even in the highest social circles.

To ardent rationalists like Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom, and Lucian of Samasota, the gods did "certainly not" exist "in the sense or shapes that Homer meant," as MacMullen observes.[28] These "pagan purists" held that the gods were far removed from such common human traits as being born, eating, drinking, and fornicating, as most of them do extensively in their traditional representations. Frequently these philosophers summed up what they disdained in the term "*deisidaimonia,*" meaning "superstition." But *deisidaimonia* was actually a term that traditionally indicated proper awe of the gods. As such we see that the philosophical criticism implicated even the very top echelons of society, both their general beliefs and the way various religious events were sponsored by the elite. It seems that the repeated and derogatory references to "the masses" were most of all a way of connecting traditional beliefs to the unenlightened rabble.

In their effort to undermine traditional beliefs, philosophers would reinterpret or rationalize ancient myths, while usually rejecting outright similar miraculous events from more recent times. But again, these speculations were of only limited consequence, as demonstrated by how "superstitions," generally condemned by the Pagan purists, actually gained ground in the third century A.D. even in the upper classes.[29] At the same time as Christianity was about to become a powerful factor in society, "gullibility is no longer a target for ridicule. In the most educated circles that the Empire has to show, enchantments, trances, and wonder-working raise no laugh; rather, fear and awe," as MacMullen observes.[30] At this point the emperors "are acclaimed in open ceremonies as winning bountiful harvests for their farmers and calm seas for their sailors, by their piety,"[31] similar to how there traditionally often was a direct connection between the well-being of a city and how the ruler behaved toward the gods.

The conventional values, the traditional beliefs of both the lower and upper classes, were continuously criticized by the philosophers. But, then, what comprised this other tradition so immune to philosophy, these religious ideas that shaped Greek minds for centuries?

Traditional Greek religion, with all its complexity and diversity, goes far back in time. Already the Homeric and Hesiodic writings from the eighth century B.C. exhibit a comprehensive worldview closely related to the Hellenistic worldview we find a millennium later.[32] Though there were significant changes from this time until the early Christian era, several of the most basic aspects endured, including an intricate relationship between humans and gods, humans and beasts, and humans themselves. Humans were per definition mortal, and this was what ultimately separated them from the gods, the immortals. Everything that defined the way humans lived was simultaneously assuring that they did not escape their mortal nature. Human nature meant a brief life followed by an eternity as a disembodied soul. The food habits of humans, their sacrificial rituals as well as their wartime and sexual activities, and even the space of the community within which they lived were all aspects of this greater pattern that made certain that mortal men and women would not fall down to the level of animals or, on their own account, rise hubristically to the level of gods. Within human society similar rules perpetuated the clear distinctions between humans as to whether they were male or female, slave or free, young or old.

As the ancient Greek beliefs about life and death, body and soul, flesh and immortality are found intertwined in everyday piety, ritual practice, mythical tales, and common beliefs about nature, society, and geography, the source material is equally diverse. It is virtually impossible to identify a limited area where these beliefs are found. We must therefore look at a great number of sources. We will have to turn to all those texts—the poetry, drama, and prose—that in some way touch the subject. Wandering around the scattered remains of ancient cemeteries, we must try to discern the expectations about the afterlife exhibited on the tombstones. Important voices to listen to in this matter are indeed also the philosophers', frustrated over traditional beliefs still reigning. And, not least, we have to pay attention to early Christians complaining about the wicked superstition of the Pagans. We must, in short, go to whatever source that my help us get a grasp of the ideals, hopes, and frustrations of the Pagan Greeks in regard to flesh and immortality; we must listen to people's frustrations, their aspirations, and their perceptions about the proper and possible limits of the human state.

More fantastic events, from both historical times and the most ancient era today usually considered mythical, often demonstrate what could happen when the proper limits were challenged or broken. Our quest to sort out the beliefs about mortality and immortality will sometimes lead us to strange places. Convoluted and amazing stories about the interaction between gods and humans render a complex picture of the latter's place in the world.

When looking at some of these wondrously elaborated accounts, it seems relevant to ask whether the Greeks really believed in these fantastic events. This question has been raised by many, most prominently by the French classics scholar Paul Veyne in his book *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths?* Veyne concludes that although there was considerable disagreement on what actually happened with the various figures from what today is defined as a mythical era, no one denied the existence of persons such as Achilles and Theseus. That Alexander the Great was considered a descendent of the mighty Heracles on his father's side was, as Plutarch admitted, "accepted without any question."[33] Other Hellenistic writers such as Strabo and Dio Chrysostom also took the *basis* of these ancient narratives for granted in their discussions about what *details* were historically correct.[34] As Veyne remarks, even the early Christians "said nothing of the mythological heroes, for they believed in them as much as everyone else did."[35] This is, for example, obvious with Origen who pointed out that although people might not believe in the divine ancestry of either Achilles or Aeneas, or in the existence of the dreadful sphinx, they did not reject the historicity of the Trojan war or the existence of Oedipus.[36]

Although some ancient scholars wanted to find rational explanations to all the marvelous tales about the celebrated figures of yore, this represented no general tendency. We must be careful not to see these most ancient figures as separate from all the wondrous tales woven around them. As we shall see, much of the more fantastic elements in these ancient stories was also generally considered true. Not only do we witness such explicit beliefs far into the Christian era, but some of these more strange tales are found paralleled in historical times.

When Christianity was introduced in the eastern Mediterranean, Hellenism had for centuries exerted a profound influence on all of this area. Greek education was not only widespread among the higher and middle strata of society, but to a large degree seen as the basis of any proper education. In his momentous work on *paideia*, Greek literary culture and education, Werner Jaeger argues that "Greek tradition was the ultimate cultural link," not only connecting the Grecophone

communities but aiding both Greek and Latin minds "to express themselves and to communicate with each other." *Paideia* was what "for centuries had been the unifying cultural ideology of the Roman Empire and the civilization for which it stood."[37] "The formative mold of Greek paideia was Homer," but eventually "the word paideia meant Greek literature as a whole."[38] Contrary to the philosophers who never had an absolute breakthrough in the Greek universe, Homer, Hesiod, and the classical tragedians never lost their grip on the Greek mind, assuring a profound sense of cultural continuity even far into imperial times. The fundamental Greek understanding of how gods and humans related to each other, as reflected in these nonphilosophical texts, was not only more ancient but proved to be much more influential than any philosophical speculations. The cultural pattern found in these ancient texts was identical with the basis for *paideia*.

Both theatres and gymnasia were also intimately connected with the basic structures of what constituted Hellenism. Grecophone rulers established such institutions throughout their realms, successfully introducing large parts of the originally un-Greek population to these fundamental aspects of Greek culture. The traditional Greek gods, ancient rituals, and numerous sacred festivals all proved distinctly tenacious, not only against the philosophical speculation of their own intellectual elite, but also against the onrush of newer deities whom they managed to incorporate within their own belief system. At the same time Greek temples were constructed all over the Hellenistic Mediterranean, often involving the identification of various indigenous deities with Greek gods.[39] Though constantly facing competition from other cults, the ancient gods still exercised their hold on the populace. MacMullen goes as far as claiming that in the Roman era "paganism in the Greek-speaking provinces underwent no significant changes. Individual cult centers became more crowded, or deserted, or richer or poorer; but no major ones grew up or died."[40] Thus the traditional belief system, which originally had nothing to do with philosophy, remained center stage as long as Hellenic culture managed to hold out against the onrush of Christianity.

Hellenism did not just mean that great numbers adopted Greek culture; it was also a question of identification. "Greek" was never just a racial or ethnic term but something one could become by behaving in a certain manner. If one spoke Greek, acted like a Greek, believed like a Greek, one was a Greek. Already in the fourth century B.C. the rhetorician Isocrates proclaimed that "the title Greeks is applied rather to those who share our culture than to those who share a common blood."[41]

Indeed "Greek" was an emic term in the Hellenistic period, referring generally to both the original Greeks and the Hellenized population.

But how deeply were the various populations Hellenized? Although all of the eastern part of the Roman Empire can be considered Hellenistic, we also find local and regional differences. People in the cities and in the higher social classes were usually the more Hellenized, primarily because of a better access to education and to other Greek institutions. Whereas the indigenous cultures of Asia Minor gradually became completely absorbed, Syriac and Coptic not only survived but were revived as literary languages in the Christian era. Jews both within and outside Palestine were also heavily Hellenized, for a long time even reading their holy scriptures in Greek, but due to their pronounced distance from Greek religion they were never identified as Greeks. Paul, as a Grecophone Jew, repeatedly used the distinction between Jews and Greeks as a dichotomy covering the population at large in the eastern Mediterranean. This dichotomy is, of course, a simplification, ignoring the strength of other cultures in this area. Still we see that large parts of the population considered themselves Greek by the way they adhered to Hellenistic culture. A Greek identity did not have to be exclusive either, as indicated by how the people around the Mediterranean were repeatedly considered Greek when referred to in a local context and as other nationalities when seen in comparison with people in other regions. There was also awareness that not everyone had been equally Greek forever, and at times the Hellenized population was contrasted with more original Greeks. Sometimes emigrant Greeks were similarly accused of having moved away from their original identity. According to Livy in the first century B.C., many of the Greeks who had emigrated to distant places had degenerated into barbarians.[42]

We must be well aware that Greek Paganism represented no moribund religion as Christianity made its entrance. As the church historian W.H.C. Frend observes, the second century A.D. "saw the Greco-Roman world reach the climax of self-confidence and prosperity."[43] The traditional gods were even subjects of their own renaissance in this century, a revival that included the building of magnificent sacred structures and revitalized pilgrim activity.[44] In a gubernatorial report to Emperor Trajan from early second century A.D. Bithynia (on the southwestern coast of the Black Sea), Pliny the younger rendered how "it is certainly quite clear that the temples, which had been almost deserted, have begun to be frequented, that the established religious rites, long neglected, are being resumed, and that from everywhere sacrificial animals are coming, for which until now very few purchasers could be found."[45]

As Peter Brown remarks, the historian "is in constant danger of taking the end of paganism for granted."[46] That traditional religion was about to wither away by itself, only awaiting its replacement, was far from the case. Christianity encountered stubborn resistance from traditional religion. To restrain their ancient and dangerous rival, Christian authorities had to employ forceful means—closing down temples, prohibiting cultic practices, and impeding the public life of the Pagans in a number of other ways. For a religion to a large extent based on cult, the prohibition of ritual practices proved disastrous. The Christians emperors were well aware of this, using their weapons where they proved the most effective. When banning sacrifice, they were, as Robin Lane Fox remarks, "aiming at the living heart of pagans' cult acts."[47] The many sacred games and oracles disappeared only as they were explicitly made illegal by the Christians. But still a great number of Pagans survived "unterrified" by the "laws against sacrifices, seizure of idols by the state," and acts of blunt violence.[48] MacMullen points to the extreme resilience of Paganism in certain places, as in Gaza: "It surprises us, indeed, still to find an almost wholly pagan town in the Holy Land in the fifth century (but there remained others in the sixth!)." But the pressure became increasingly severe. Whereas unofficial agents such as mobs and monks used violence against Pagans in the fifth century, in the sixth century the emperors themselves backed their threats with brute force.[49] Apparently, the Christian emperors had no other choice against such resilient beliefs. Paganism died fighting.

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CHAPTER TWO

The Attraction of Immortal Flesh

Again and again we find that philosophical skepticism toward the flesh is presented as identical with the general attitude of the Greeks. Corporeality, most modern books on Greek religion tell us, was to be eschewed as only the immortal soul was important. But this contempt of the flesh is highly inconsistent with the role immortal flesh played in the Greek encounter with Christianity. If the ancient Greeks loathed the flesh, how could they embrace a creed that advocated that all righteous people were to get their flesh back for eternity?

We seem to be looking at diametrically opposite notions. To see what actually the case was, we will therefore have to return to the ancient sources. We must leave all preconceptions behind and look afresh at what the Greeks really believed about corporeality and immortality. Somehow we must try to recapture what was once their ultimate desire.

The General Attraction of the Flesh

Flesh represented no trivial matter to the Greeks. Flesh equaled life. The state of the flesh thus reflected the quality of life. Man in his perfection had a perfect body. Certainly the soul mattered, but without a well-functioning body of flesh and bones one was nothing. A profound preoccupation with the physical body characterized even much of the communication between mortals and immortals. Ramsay MacMullen puts it all very clearly, pointing out that "what pagans did pray for . . . was health, first."[1] As so many others, ancient Greeks turned to the gods for what was most important to them. And to them, the state of the flesh was paramount.

Beseeching the Greek gods for good health did not prove in vain. Just as popular conviction frequently blamed most illnesses on malicious gods or spirits, "many or most gods could heal." Indeed, "the chief business of religion, it might then be said, was to make the sick well."[2] The Greek belief that the gods really bothered about people's bodies was also expressed by the immense popularity of various healing cults. Visited by people from all over the Hellenistic realm, the major sanctuary of Asclepius, the healing god par excellence, in Epidaurus was the most popular place of pilgrimage in antiquity. This was supplemented by a number of other sacred sites also offering supplicants hopes of physical healing. The general focus was again on the flesh. Grateful people, convinced that Asclepius had cured them, offered the sanctuary countless plaques commemorating the miraculous healings and even more small figurines depicting the healed body part. As understood from the inscriptions in Epidaurus, "'Savior'" or "'salvation,' had to do with health or other matters of the earth, not of the soul for life eternal."[3] This was not only the case at the shrine of Asclepius. The word "*soteria,*" usually translated with "salvation," generally "meant *safety*, *health* in fullest human sense."[4]

Comparing the attitudes toward life and the afterlife, we find that when addressing the gods people always found room for physical improvements in their present existence. A desire for fertility, beauty, or wealth was frequently expressed in Hellenistic prayers.[5] On the other hand, resignation characterized the attitude toward the afterlife. This did not mean that people were careless with their dead. They would do their utmost to give their loved ones a proper funeral. But apparently there was a clear limit to what anyone could do to improve the fleshless existence after this life.

The pivotal role played by sports in both classical and Hellenistic times is another proof of a profound cultural preoccupation with the body. The desire among people to improve their physical bodies and to hail those whose bodies were close to perfect was an inseparable part of Hellenism. This great regard for human flesh also found expression in the impressive athletic arenas built all over the Hellenistic realm. Indeed, as the classics scholar Roger Chambers points out, the gymnasium "functioned as the gateway to Greek life as Hellenism moved east."[6]

The celebration of the body of flesh and bones was a key aspect of Greek culture in general. This was a fact duly taken up by the more recently Hellenized areas. The new cities throughout the eastern Mediterranean established numerous sacred games of their own and

also sent their best sons to the more ancient games in Greece proper, where the official lists of victors still bear witness to the extensive honors bestowed upon them.[7]

As the gods were physically perfect, only the greatest athletes could function as models for the artistic depictions of the gods. The great athletic games also demonstrated the paramount role the physical body played in the communication between gods and humans. The games had a profound religious significance—being performed in honor of various deities and marked by a number of sacrifices. Traditionally the gods were apt even to intervene directly in the competitions, assisting their favorites and impeding others.[8] Looking, for instance, at Homer's presentation of the funeral games of Patroclus, the gods made sure they got the result they wanted. Apollo made Diomedes lose his whip in the chariot race, while Athena not only gave the whip back to Diomedes but provided extra strength to his horses and broke the yoke of his rival Eumelus.[9] As Nestor remarked afterward about the hapless Eumelus, "He should have prayed to the gods for help. Then he would not have come in last of all in the race."[10] Later on Odysseus assured his victory in the foot race by praying to Athena who subsequently made his limbs light and hampered his main opponent.[11] Even in historical times this understanding still held true. Xenocrates of Acragas, for example, was quite literally understood by Pindar in the fifth century B.C. to have received his two splendid athletic victories from Poseidon and Apollo, respectively.[12]

Modern scholars have mostly rejected earlier claims of these games becoming degenerated after reaching a zenith in the fifth century B.C. and point instead to the fact that these theories are often based on viewing the rise of athletic professionalism negatively and not just as a morally neutral development.[13] Having examined the reaction to the late second- and early third-century A.D. criticism of Lucian, Galen, and Philostratus—some of those who most strongly maintained that Hellenistic athletics had lost all its original luster—the classics scholar Harry Pleket concludes that "neither the athletes, nor the crowds, the cities which organized contests or the elites who produced some of the athletes, seem to have cared."[14] We are again countered by the general impression that the vast majority, more often than not, turned a deaf ear to the more philosophical representatives of the intellectual elite when they opposed more traditional beliefs. The perfect bodies of the athletes would remain the most poignant images of human perfection. When trying to express the ultimate goals in life, even philosophers turned to athletic metaphors to get their message across, although they at the

same time criticized the physical achievements of the athletes. Even in their denigration of the traditional celebration of the flesh, they found no more powerful way than to use the language of perfect flesh.[15]

Mortal Souls, Annihilated Bodies

That the attraction of the flesh in this life is well documented through healing cults, athletics, and general religious activity cannot by itself explain why Christian ideas of immortal flesh should emerge and appear so appealing. The question thus becomes, how did this attraction translate to the afterlife? To grasp what constituted the Greek attraction of the flesh, one must try to gain at an understanding of what expectations the Greeks held about the afterlife when Christianity entered the scene. What were the possibilities after death, and, more importantly, how did they *feel* about what they considered their fate?

There is no single answer to these questions. Starting off with the beliefs about the afterlife expressed in the Homeric epics, we find that, although they were in time supplemented by various more novel ideas, these Homeric beliefs demonstrated a remarkable resiliency. This related, of course, also to a more comprehensive conservatism of Greek culture, which in Hellenistic times dominated all the eastern Mediterranean. Some of the most basic Homeric ideas about what was desirable in the afterlife would prove influential even as Christianity entered the stage.

In the Greek world, in all periods, death was usually defined as the soul's separation from the body. This is amply demonstrated in Homer's depiction of the death of many warriors, again and again described as the soul, *psychê,* leaving the body.[16] Even Plato could agree to this, having Socrates proclaim that death, in his opinion, "is nothing but the separation from each other of two things, soul and body."[17] The Homeric souls in Hades were always defined as *dead*. They were "the spirits of the dead," "*psychai nekyôn,*"[18] or "the powerless head of the dead," "*nekyôn amenêna karêna*."[19]

Death did not equal absolute nonexistence, but the frail existence of the soul without the body. Without one's physical body, one was no longer a complete person. For the Greeks, human nature always equaled a psychosomatic unity. As the classics scholar Michael Clarke argues, "Homeric man does not *have* a mind, rather his thought and consciousness are as inseparable a part of his bodily life as are movement and metabolism."[20]

The disembodied soul was therefore never identical with the whole person but only one's shadow, *eidôlon*. The separation of body and soul left both parts helpless. As Erwin Rohde points out in *Psyche*, his momentous work on the evolution of Greek beliefs on the soul and the afterlife, "All power of will, sensation, and thought have vanished with the disintegration of the individual man into his component parts."[21]

In Homer, Hades offered only a depressing and dismal existence where the dead were left even without their reason. This notion of the afterlife "is the work of resignation, not of hope."[22] After having taken a sip of the sacrificial blood and thus for a brief moment getting his consciousness back, the dead soul of Achilles wailed miserably, rebuking Odysseus for hailing him as a ruler of the dead: "Do not speak soothingly to me of death, glorious Odysseus. I should, so that I could live on earth, rather serve as the hireling of another, of some portionless man whose livelihood was but small, than to be lord over all the dead that have perished."[23]

The immaterial existence in Hades lasted forever. The Homeric souls fluttered around ceaselessly as helpless shadows in the murky underworld without even a recollection of their previous lives. This was not immortality. This was human mortality in its final, most miserable, and never-ending phase. The powerless shadows encountered by brave Odysseus at the gates of Hades were simply the *dead* souls of mortal men and women. Rohde puts it quite succinctly: "To speak of an 'immortal life' of these souls, as scholars both ancient and modern have done, is incorrect."[24] One cannot talk of any true survival without the body. To be dead, as Achilles pointed out in the *Odyssey*, was to "have perished" or to have "decayed completely."[25] As dead *you* were no more. Forever without your body, the psychosomatic unity of body and soul that counted for your identity had been shattered. With the body destroyed, all that remained was literally a shadow of your former self. As we saw in the first lines of the *Iliad*, the war had "sent untimely many souls of valiant warriors to Hades and made the warriors *themselves* the prey for dogs and birds of all kinds."[26] As Clarke observes, "The corpse has lost vitality but still holds the dead man's identity" because what most people today call "the body" was for the Homeric Greeks "exactly coterminous with and identical to the mass of blood, bones, and consciousness that is a human being."[27] The warriors *themselves* had been annihilated, maimed, and devoured by scavengers, only their souls had in some way continued to exist as they went to Hades.

This description of the dead souls, which did not even have consciousness, does not, however, represent the whole picture of what the

Greeks thought about the fate of the disembodied souls. The way a few exceptional dead, such as Tantalus and Sisyphus, were eternally punished in Hades[28] demonstrates that even Homer could operate with some form of consciousness of the dead—if not these punishments would make no sense. In general the image of literally unconscious souls dominating Hades in the *Odyssey* is usually countered by dead souls who exhibit more awareness, even reaching out to the living exacting from them various services. But death was still in no way preferable to life.

Not long after the depressive complaints of Achilles, other sources suggest that not all dead fared in an equally depressive way. Proclaiming that "happy are those of men upon earth who have seen these mysteries," the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* indicates that going through the Eleusinian mysteries may have contributed to making the state as dead somewhat better. As it declared, "He who is uninitiated and who has no part in them, never has share in this destiny once he is decaying, down in the darkness and gloom."[29] Although the promise of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* is too vague to draw any absolute conclusions, it soon becomes clear that the Greeks in general held that those who were initiated in Eleusis had a better afterlife. In Aristophanes' comedy from 405 B.C., *The Frogs,* we meet the dead souls of some of those who have been initiated, rejoicing in song and dance just outside the border of Hades.[30] Taking into account the straightforwardness of this presentation, one may suspect that the Athenian comedian actually portrays what was held to be the lot of Eleusinian initiates when dead.

Many later epitaphs also reflect hopes for a better existence than Hades for the disembodied soul. We find a hope of reaching "the blessed," a longing that seems to be connected with what the Eleusinian initiates were promised. Frequently various deities are expected to assist the dead souls to a better existence than the gloomy state they originally could expect. A long second-century B.C. epitaph from Rhodes gives an extensive description of what could await one initiate when dead: "This man . . . Now he is in the place of the pious. Pluto and Core gave him a place there, and Hermes, and Hecate who carries the torch. In reward for his fidelity they appointed him to supervise the *mystai*, and to be beloved by all."[31] Where exactly one ends up if reaching "the blessed" remains unclear.

But still most people continued to see the eternal existence of the dead soul without the body as nothing to look forward to. Even the Eleusinian mysteries could do nothing but alleviate the depressing conviction that the state as a dead and disembodied soul never was

preferable to life. Hellenistic epitaphs gave similar admonitions as Achilles in Hades, reminding those who still are living to take advantage of their present state: "Live, for there is nothing sweeter granted to us mortals than this life in the light," encourages one first-century A.D. Greek grave from Naples.[32] These inscriptions indicate a quiet despair, a sad longing for the flesh that everybody knew forever eluded their loved ones as they put the tombstone over their graves.

The Greeks never forgot Odysseus' depressive encounter with the powerless dead souls at the gates of Hades. They did not have the opportunity to forget it. Although not everything written by Homer was taken at face value, the role played by the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in Hellenistic culture, as the basic texts in all education, assured that nobody was ever allowed to ignore the Homeric presentation of the miserable state of Hades. The image of these weak and immaterial shadows, bereft even of their mnemonic faculties, forever haunted the Greek minds. Far into the Christian era, these depressing scenes would still influence how the Greeks believed they themselves would fare after death. Even those who considered these Homeric beliefs mostly irrelevant are found verifying the tenacity of these same notions. As Rohde argues,

> The passionate indignation with which philosophers of the Stoic as well as the Epicurean faith attacked the beliefs resting on the teaching of Homer cannot be explained except by supposing that Homer and his picture had remained a guiding force with the masses who were uninstructed in philosophy. And, in fact, ancient writers use language which shows that the ancient conception of Hades was by no means discarded but on the contrary was still vigorously alive among the populace.[33]

The idea that the dead body is identical with the deceased person did not disappear either. This is witnessed in cemeteries even when Christianity made its appearance. Many epitaphs inform us that so and so actually *lies* here in the grave.[34] There is usually no question of the physical remains only representing an empty shell indifferent to the deceased. Sometimes the epitaph is addressed to the physical remains found under it, as if to comfort the dead.[35] One should be careful not to assume that those who wrote these epitaphs considered the dead bodies to have some kind of consciousness. A dead body was seen just as entirely without life as it is today, and there is nothing in Greek sources indicating that anyone believed anything else.

But that the bodies held some of the *identity* of the deceased does not contradict this.

Sometimes the dead bodies speak for themselves, as if the inscriptions on the grave are the very uttering of the dead beneath the tombstone.[36] Around the turn of the millennium a servant had this to say on his epitaph: "I lie under a stone in a strange land, Inachus, the much bewept and obedient servant of Crinagoras."[37] The deceased also express various sentiments about their state as dead. A grave in Cos from Roman times proclaims, "In this tomb I have some deliverance from the bitterness of death" and "I am a corpse."[38] Shipwrecked men cast upon land complain about being buried too close to the sea: "Forever wretched I am even among the dead, the hateful roar of the waves sounds in my ears" reads one epitaph probably from the first century A.D.[39] At times the epitaph speaks about how it feels to lie under the earth, as a woman states (uncertain date), "I am Myrtas who quaffed many a generous cup of unwatered wine . . . and no light layer of earth covers me, but a wine-jar, the token of my merrymaking, rests on me, a pleasant tomb."[40] A first-century B.C. epitaph ascribed to Meleager beseeches the earth not to weigh heavily on poor Aesigenes as if the corpse really could suffer from the weight.[41] In the time of Augustus, the poet Crinagoras of Mitylene uses this convention to pray for eternal discomfort for one of his enemies: "Earth," he begs, "rest not lightly or sparsely on the ashes of this monster."[42] The grave could similarly be presented as a home for the dead, as an Athenian man proclaimed on a fourth-century A.D. Pagan grave: "I, her husband, gave this house in which Pamphile dwells in most blessed honor."[43] Some poets used the idea that the corpse represented the dead to the extent that they made up complaints uttered by dead bodies who had had their graves destroyed, for example, by the farmer's plough. "Who said that death was deliverance from evil, when not even the tomb, stranger, is the end of my sufferings," Antiphilus had one unfortunate victim of a careless plough moan in the first century A.D.[44]

Some funerary inscriptions, however, deny any form of existence after the separation of body and soul, making even reaching Hades no longer an option.[45] This, of course, is the most radical expression of a belief that any form of life was absolutely dependent on the unity of body and soul. This message of no hope was expressed in a formula frequently adorning tombs: "Once I was not, then I was, and now I am no more."[46] In a third- or fourth-century A.D. inscription from Rome one finds this conviction of no existence at all after death, combined with a general attack on all traditional ideas about what happened to the dead

in Hades: "There is no boat in Hades, no ferryman Charon, no Aeacus keeper of the keys, nor any dog called Cerberus. All of us who have died and gone below are bones and ashes. There is nothing else."[47]

For some, one's only true hope of any form of survival was through the memory of those left behind. Because of the way she led her life, a woman in Roman era Attica was given an epitaph proclaiming, "You will live forever, and your name will not fade, nor shall time destroy the glory of your life."[48] A Phrygian woman from early Christian times considers in her epitaph that she will survive through her offspring: "I leave a fair-famed company of children, to bear faithful testimony to my virtue. I die the wife of one husband and still live in ten living beings, having enjoyed the fruit of prolific wedlock."[49]

These most depressive epitaphs were, however, not typical. Although the body was considered the dead person, so was the soul. On the basis of this logic, we often find epitaphs stating how the dead person is in fact bilocated, considered to be simultaneously in the grave and in some other place. The deceased was simultaneously both present and absent as the soul and the body each constituted half of the entire person. This, of course, was the same logic expressed already in the *Iliad*, when the souls of the dead warriors went off to Hades while the valiant men themselves became the fodder of scavengers. An epitaph from Phrygia clearly describes the same splitting of identity caused by death: "Here their beloved land holds Aculinus and his wife; for the soul of each has fluttered away."[50] In her second-century B.C. epitaph, Philaenis, a Greco-Egyptian poetess, is asked not to mourn the fact that she as dead finds herself buried in Crete far from home, because "from no matter where, the road is the same to Hades."[51] A contemporary Lydian slave is accordingly grateful for lying in a freeman's grave, while he at the same time can assure his owner, "I am yours, master, in Hades too."[52] In the first century B.C., a certain Meleager laments over his wife, Heliodora, who is simultaneously clasped by the earth and found on the banks of Acheron in Hades.[53] Other dead are said to be at the same time in the grave and in "the house of Night,"[54] in the company of Persephone,[55] or in Charon's boat.[56] Not everybody was that fortunate. "Even though he lies under the earth," a not too kind second-century A.D. epitaph asserts, the grammarian Parthenius is simultaneously finding himself in the middle of the infernal river Cocytus where he is forever punished by the Furies.[57]

As the body was partly identical with the person, what happened to the body was in no way unimportant. People whose bodies were lost or destroyed were forever deprived of the possibility of a proper funeral.

Inscriptions on cenotaphs over empty graves thus tend to be gloomier than other funerary writings. In a third-century B.C. epitaph, Alcaeus of Messene attempted to express these sentiments: "Most mournful of all is the fate of travelers who perish in the ocean."[58] The cenotaph of Sopolis, a man lost somewhere in the sea, reads, "Instead of *himself* we pass by a name, and an empty monument."[59] That the body was absent meant that Sopolis "himself" was not in any way present either. Around the birth of Christ, Antipater of Thessalonica laments over the unfortunate Nicanor: "Wasted by the grey sea" and who now lies "naked on a strange beach or perhaps near the rocks."[60] In the first century B.C. a certain Satyrus expressed his fury against the wind god Boreas for ending up dead and lost somewhere in the sea.[61] About the same time Marcus Argentarius recorded the sad fate of another unfortunate sailor, arguing that an empty tomb was a false tomb.

> My ill-fated body was covered by the sea, and besides the waves my mother, Lysidice, wept much for me, gazing at my false and empty tomb, while my evil genius sent my lifeless corpse to be tossed with the sea-gulls on the deep. My name was Pnytagoras and I met my fate on the Aegean, when taking in the stern cables because of the north-wind.[62]

The body mattered even for the future existence of the dead and disembodied soul. The state of one's bodiless existence in Hades depended on the state of the body. As the classics scholar Emily Vermeule points out, the form of the disembodied soul would forever reflect how the body was at the time of passing or at the time of the obsequies.[63] Somehow the form of the body reflected the *psychê,* and it was consequently crucial to preserve the body as complete as possible at the point of the final transferal. There is probably a connection between these traditional ideas and how Aristotle claimed that the form of the living being is the soul.[64]

The belief that the form of the body equaled the form of the soul must also be considered connected with the ancient saying, "Those who the gods love die young"—a formula that is found on graves also in Hellenistic and early Christian times.[65] The implication is that those who are not loved by the gods will die when they have been worn out by old age and consequently have souls that forever reflect the decrepit frames of their age-worn bodies.

That there was some real consolation in the hope that an early death may equal eternal youth for the dead soul was nevertheless not

common. As the classics scholar Richmond Lattimore remarks, the epitaphs of those who died untimely most often only bewail their fate.[66] Grief often takes the form of bitter despair when hoary parents have to bury children in their prime. "Forever lamentable is the death of young men,"[67] maintains a third-century B.C. funerary epigram. "Hades descended upon you and wasted your youth," reads a first-century B.C. epitaph from Cos,[68] while a third-century A.D. inscription from Galatia simply states that death "snatched away the finest flower of your lovely youth."[69] The very idea that the gods would make their favorites die young can even be found directly contradicted, as on a first- or second-century B.C. grave from Cnossus in Crete where it is asserted that the gods *reward* those who deserve it with "a *long* and prosperous life."[70] To live, however wretchedly, was for most infinitely more preferable to the existence as dead. To give up any portion of one's life to improve one's existence in the afterlife was generally considered a bad deal. Convinced that the eternal existence as a dead soul never was preferable to life's union of body and soul, most people clung to life. As Sophocles remarked, "For the time of life is short, and once a mortal is hidden beneath the earth he lies there for all time."[71] Indeed, "not even old age knows how to love Hades."[72]

The notion that the soul forever reflected the shape the body had at the point of death or at the funeral would remain strong. In a first-century B.C. epigram Charon, the infernal ferryman, is asked to assist the soul of a child, whose infant form means that he, even as dead, "cannot walk steadily in his sandals."[73] To remain forever in the bodiless shape of a child brought no happiness. A second-century A.D. epitaph by Lucian preserves the lament of another small boy: "My name is Callimachus, and pitiless Hades carried me off when I was five years old."[74]

But there was also a much more dismal aspect to the notion that the soul forever reflected the form of the body at the point of death or obsequies. At the gates of Hades, Odysseus witnessed "many who had been wounded with bronze-tipped spears, men slain in war, still wearing their blood-stained armor."[75] Later reports from Hades state the same basic facts. Having gorged out his own eyes, Oedipus did not have to see his parents when he went to Hades.[76] Even his soul was now blind. The ghost of Clytemnestra could accordingly forever display the fatal wounds that her son had given her,[77] while Ajax of Locris, who died by drowning, was depicted in Hades in a famous fifth-century B.C. painting by Polygnotus in Delphi, with a color "like that of a shipwrecked sailor with the brine still rough on the surface of his skin."[78] When

Lucian's fictional figure, Menippus, visited Hades, he, too, observed the souls of men still displaying their wounds: "One injured in the leg, another in the head, and so on."[79]

If the soul forever reflected the form of the body, the implication was that the destruction of a body before the obsequies could prevent someone from any post-mortal existence at all. To secure the body a proper funeral was accordingly of vital importance. For all its gloom the eternal existence of the soul in Hades was definitely better than no existence at all. This is the terrifying truth brutally clear to the daughters of Pelias after they had been tricked into cutting up their own beloved father. Contemplating the minced meat that had once been their father, they realized that this was, as pointed out by Pausanias, simply "not enough to bury."[80] Medea, who engineered the dismal fate of Pelias, did not stand back from performing a similar trick on her own kid brother, dismembering him and throwing the limbs from her ship, piece by piece, into the sea.[81] This forced her father to pause in his pursuit of his eloped daughter because he had to collect the body parts of his dismembered son.

Similar beliefs explain the great care the gods showed the corpse of Hector, which Achilles attempted to reduce to pulp by dragging behind his wagon. Not only did Aphrodite keep dogs from Hector's body both night and day, but she "anointed him with rose-sweet, ambrosial oil," so that he took no harm from Achilles' violent abuse. Apollo constantly saw to it that a dark cloud protected the body from the strong sun, lest the flesh should be shriveled.[82] The gods could even go to the step of postponing the process of natural disintegration, as Hermes assures Priam about the corpse of his son Hector: "For his body does not decay at all, neither do maggots consume it, such as they go into men slain in war."[83] When Achilles despaired over how the flesh of his dead friend, Patroclus, would "rot" and flies would "enter the wounds that the bronze has dealt on the corpse . . . and breed worms inside of it," his divine mother, Thetis, could similarly assure him that she would see to it that the flesh of Patroclus would "remain the same, or be even better." This she did by putting ambrosia and nectar in the nostrils of the dead body.[84] It is not that the bodies of either Hector or Patroclus would remain forever. Nowhere did Homer indicate anything but that in the end both of them were put on funeral pyres and subsequently burnt. But what both gods and readers were well aware of was that the state of the bodies of Hector and Patroclus at the moment of the final obsequies was what would decide their eternal existence in Hades. If their bodies were destroyed without the appropriate funerary ceremonies, they would lose any chance of an afterlife.

Having one's body destroyed before it received proper obsequies was consequently often considered the most horrific fate possible. The true horror of the macabre images of birds and beasts feasting on the corpses of the fallen warriors and of fish plucking the flesh off drowned men lay in that these were depictions of men about to be completely annihilated. When Achilles wished for Hector to be eaten by the dogs, he wanted to rob the Trojan prince of even an existence in Hades, to have him entirely obliterated.[85] One of the most dramatic episodes in the *Iliad* is accordingly when the warriors fought over the dead body of Patroclus. Even risking their own lives in the attempt, Patroclus' Greek comrades wanted to ensure that he received a proper funeral.[86] The Trojans, on the other hand, fought because they wished to mutilate the dead body of Patroclus and "give it to the dogs of Troy."[87] Repeatedly the warriors threatened each other with consumption. Hector promised that Patroclus would be eaten by vultures,[88] Achilles that Hector should be devoured by dogs,[89] whereas hoary Priam wished that Achilles should be food for both vultures and dogs.[90]

To be denied burial could be the ultimate punishment, as happened with the daughter of Nisus, who was left to be torn to pieces by seabirds because of her treachery against her father.[91] The distress again and again expressed whenever some victorious warlord refused a proper burial for the enemy bodies was also connected to the conviction that this denied the victims any future existence whatsoever. The whole drama in both Sophocles' *Antigone* and Euripides' *Suppliant Women* is about the agony of people not allowed to bury their loved ones. As King Creon of Thebes in *Suppliant Women* refuses to let the Argives bury their dead, he is told that "all of Hellas is concerned if the dead are deprived of what is necessary and kept unburied."[92] It is the same Creon who in *Antigone* denies the protagonist a burial for her brother, an impious act that leads to horrific pollution and the downfall of the entire royal house. That the Celts were allegedly "indifferent whether the earth received them [their own fallen warriors] or whether they were devoured by wild beasts or carrion birds" was accordingly a matter of great amazement to the Greeks.[93]

The animal kingdom could also be judged on the basis of their treatment of the bodies of their dead. As the Pagan natural historian Aelian wrote in the early third century A.D.,

> It seems that dolphins are mindful even of their dead and by no means abandon their fellows when they have departed this life. At any rate, they get underneath their dead companion and then carry

> him along to the shore, confident that men will bury him . . . And another company of dolphins follow them by way of honoring, or even actually fighting to protect, the dead body, for fear that some other great fish should rush, seize it, and devour it.[94]

The dolphins acted as exemplarily as the Greek warriors fighting to salvage the body of Patroclus. Aristotle, too, told of dolphins trying to protect their dead comrades from being eaten by fish.[95] Aelian also contrasted the dolphins' pious behavior with the outrageous treatment the Athenians meted out to the unpopular statesman Phocion, whom they not only executed in 318 B.C. but whose corpse they simply left to rot: "And so, dear dolphins, you must pardon the savage nature of man, since even the Athenians cast out the excellent Phocion unburied."[96]

The terror of having one's body destroyed was in no way limited to classical literature. In the first century A.D. Philippus of Thessalonica wrote about a decomposed corpse he chanced upon on the beach and, with this in mind, concluded that "blessed indeed are those who were never born to see the sun."[97] To die this way was worse than never being born. A third-century B.C. epigram composed by Leonidas of Tarentum referred to a certain Callaeschrus, seemingly making the dead man himself express very precisely what was the matter: "I myself am *lost*, whirled hither and thither in the sea, a prey for fish."[98] Another personal tragedy is witnessed in a Hellenistic cenotaph recorded by Honestus of Byzantium: "I announce the name of Timocles and look round in every direction over the salt sea, wondering where his corpse may be. Alas, the fishes have devoured him before this, and I, the useless stone, bear this idle writing carved on me."[99] What the loss of one's body really entailed is also made clear on a third-century B.C. epitaph for poor Euippus made by Asclepiades: "The evil south-easter destroyed me, my ship, and my goods, and *nothing* but the name of Euippus is left."[100] With one's body lost, one's very identity was in danger of complete annihilation.

When a certain Clitonymus was killed by a mob and thrown in the river in the first century A.D., he could, in spite of it all, still consider himself lucky as he was recovered and "his whole body from head to foot" could be properly buried.[101] The good fortune of Clitonymus appears more clearly when compared with a fate related by Leonidas of Tarentum in the third century B.C.:

> I was eaten, so terrible and great a monster of the deep came and gulped me down as far as the navel. Half of me, a cold burden, the

> sailors drew from the sea, but the shark bit off the other half. On this beach, good man, they buried the vile remains of Tharsys, and I never came home to my country.[102]

The importance of the flesh would sometimes lead to unorthodox solutions in the most tragic of circumstances, as witnessed by Hegesippus also in the third century B.C.:

> The fishermen brought up from the sea a half-eaten man in their net, a most mournful relic of some sea-voyage. They sought not for unholy gain, both him and the fish, too, they buried under this light coat of sand. Land, you have the whole of the shipwrecked man, but instead of the rest of his flesh you have the fish who fed on it.[103]

To recover what possibly could be salvaged of the wretched man's body, the anthropophagous fish were put into the grave along with the half-devoured body. Although the form of the body certainly was halfway gone, putting the formless flesh in the grave, even when devoured, could at least represent a minor ray of hope of some form of afterlife. The flesh was at least still there, in the guts of the fish. That having one's grave filled with carnivorous fish in any sense could be considered a relief may perhaps be seen as symptomatic for how little hope there really was for the afterlife for most people. But our exploration of the Greek afterlife does not end here.

The Heroes, the Fortunate Dead

Although the Eleusinian mysteries, at least since classical times, promised some form of bliss in the afterlife, one could fare even slightly better as dead: one could end up a hero. The heroes were the disembodied souls of men and women who, once they were dead, could wield extensive power over the living and became the object of cult.

According to Rohde, the oldest extant reference to heroes is found in Porphyry's insistence that honoring the heroes along with the gods was already an ancient practice at the end of the seventh century B.C.[104] But one must note that the term "hero" did not always allude to these dead but powerful men and women honored by the living. In the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, a hero was more simply the equivalent of a brave warrior, while for Hesiod the heroes were the entire human race preceding our own.

Whereas the concept of the classical hero is not found in Homer, the way Hesiod presents the fate of the men of the Golden and Silver Ages is practically tantamount to what classical and Hellenistic Greeks thought of the fate of heroes. After they died, the souls of these most ancient men continued as *daimones* either above or below the earth where they would act as guardians for the living and would be the object of cult.[105] That Hesiod's dead *daimones* and the classical heroes, who were worshipped all through Greece far into the Christian era, really were the same seems likely.

In considering the heroes, one must be careful not to confuse them with the much more powerful gods. Having forever lost their bodies as they died, the heroes were not immortal. The classical heroes as well as Hesiod's men-turned-*daimones* were mere disembodied souls, although much mightier than the normal dead souls. "Blessed *mortals,*" "*makares thnêtois,*" was what Hesiod called them.[106] The heroes were essentially only dead and bodiless souls of a more fortunate kind.

Usually the *graves* were the center of the cult of the heroes, something that again stressed their state as dead and disembodied souls. As was the case with the normal dead person, the corpse of the hero continued to harbor an aspect of personal identity, although the connection with the soul was forever ruptured. Stories about how the bones of various heroes were rediscovered and brought to specific sites meant that an eternal physical existence was quite simply impossible. Emphasizing the heroes' kinship with other dead souls, the classics scholar Martin Nilsson argues that "the hero belongs to the nether world in spite of all his power and all the worship paid to him, and in fact the hero-cult originates in the general cult of the dead."[107]

Most heroes came from that celebrated generation that so valiantly fought by the gates of Thebes and Troy. But the number of heroes was still being supplemented. The souls of certain historic individuals were also believed to have become heroes after their death. The seventh-century B.C. Messenian tyrant, Aristomenes, was considered a hero by many Greeks, even in the early Christian era,[108] and the same was the case with Oebotas, an Olympic victor of 756 B.C.[109] The Arcadian Mantineans considered the valiant soldier Podares, who was killed in a battle against the Thebans in 385 B.C., a hero.[110] But the supply of new heroes did not cease. In Hellenistic times the number of heroes was further inflated. The Sicyonian general Aratus, who was poisoned in 213 B.C. was, for example, honored as a hero in his native city.[111] When his lover Hephaestion died, Alexander the Great similarly ordered that "sacrifices should be offered to him

as hero,"[112] though it does not seem that this royal decree inspired a lasting cult.

In the Hellenistic and early Christian eras Pagan epitaphs demonstrate an increasing tendency to heroize ordinary citizens.[113] A second-century B.C. grave in Cnossus informs the dead man himself that "glorious Hades has enthroned you beside Idomeneus," a Cretan hero who was the object of cult.[114] "Here the earth holds a discreet and excellent hero," one Phrygian grave from the fourth century A.D. proclaims.[115] In a speech referred to by Josephus, Titus, the Roman general and emperor-to-be, claimed that all who died in battle became heroes, but this could just as well as reflecting actual beliefs, be a more unusual pep talk to a group of soldiers.[116]

This increased practice of heroizing also more ordinary dead meant that the best possible state a dead soul could achieve was something no longer considered restricted to an exclusive number of outstanding men and women. One should, however, keep in mind that this more democratic understanding of heroization never developed to such a degree that all dead would become heroes. Just as traditionally was the case with heroes, these newly heroized souls mostly were not seen as immortal either. As heroes had normally been considered the fortunate *dead*, this notion was also continued.

Although the existence of the dead hero was one without a physical body, one cannot automatically define the nature of the hero as entirely immaterial. The idea that the *psychê* was made of some form of light material was not unknown to the Greeks. The nature of the fleshless heroes may be considered as related to this notion of the soul, and if we turn to Pausanias' presentation of various local beliefs about heroes, we find that the nature of a hero could be quite tangible. According to a tradition about Odysseus' journeys not related by Homer, one of Odysseus' sailors got drunk and raped a young girl in the city of Temesa in southern Italy. Enraged, the locals stoned the offender to death, but the dead sailor, now a vengeful hero, started killing the Temesans indiscriminately, though Pausanias does not say how he exactly did this. The hero ceased his random attacks on the population after he was propitiated every year by being given the most beautiful girl in Temesa. The young girl offered always died. This practice was said to have continued until 472 B.C., when the Olympic pugilist and victor Euthymus waylaid the hero and defeated him by sheer strength. Thus, concludes Pausanias, "the hero was driven away from the land and disappeared, sinking into the depth of the sea."[117]

Although without his physical body, the hero of Temesa certainly proved capable of making his presence felt. The nature of this vicious hero was not unique. Generally heroes could suddenly appear with great physical strength to both wreck havoc and come to the aid of those who honored them. The Messenians claimed that their seventh-century B.C. leader, Aristomenes, was present as a hero at the battle of Leuctra in 371 B.C.[118] When the Greeks defeated the Persians at Marathon in 490 B.C. many "saw an apparition of Theseus in arms rushing in front of them [the Greeks] against the barbarians."[119] Moreover, "a man of rustic appearance and dress" slaughtered many of the Persians with a plough. This mysterious man was not found anywhere after the battle. When the Athenians enquired of the oracle in Delphi about what had really happened, they were merely ordered to honor "Echetlaeus," that is, "the man with the ploughshare," as a hero.[120]

The nature of heroes was quite similar, perhaps even identical, to that of ghosts or shadows. Sometimes heroes were simply referred to as ghosts. In 279 B.C. the ghosts, *phasmata*, of several heroes showed themselves in the battle against the Celts at Delphi, though they were not said to have directly participated in combat.[121] According to the Orchomenians, the *eidôlon* (phantom) of Actaeon, the famous hunter who was devoured by his own ravenous hounds, once ravaged their land. To propitiate the vengeful ghost, the Orchomenians were ordered by the oracle at Delphi to sacrifice to Actaeon annually as to a hero.[122]

A particularly sinister story about a mighty ghost is retold by Phlegon of Tralles in his second-century A.D. collection of strange tales. A certain Polycritus, a respected citizen of fourth-century B.C. Aetolia, returned from the grave as a phantom appearing before a citizen assembly that was deliberating on what to do with Polycritus' hermaphroditic child born posthumously. The ghost demanded that they should give the infant over to him, upon which he tore it limb from limb and devoured it. Having eaten everything but the head, the phantom simply vanished before the shocked crowd.[123]

The Immortal Nature of the Gods

For all the efforts devoted to the obsequies, no Greek, from Homeric times to the beginning of the Christian era, could do anything to preserve that psychosomatic unity humans were considered to be. All they were able to do was to ensure that the dead and disembodied soul would have some form of future existence. That a few more fortunate

dead ended up as heroes, a disembodied existence where one fared definitely better than most other dead, was never because of the efforts of the living but always due to some divine intervention. Just the same, a heroic existence was still a far cry from immortality. The idea of immortal flesh seems at this point infinitely far off. But humans, of course, were not the only ones in this universe.

The very definition of humans was their mortality. Humans were "the mortals," "*hoi brotoi*." As death meant the separation of soul from body, the Greeks knew very well what immortality was about. Immortality was the continuous union of body and soul. This understanding of immortality as a fundamentally *physical* state forces us to look closer at the nature of the Greek gods. As immortality originally meant a continued physical existence, "the immortal gods," "*hoi theoi athanatoi,*" as they were generally called, also accordingly had physical bodies. As much as the heroes, the "blessed mortals" of Hesiod were characterized by their lack of bodies, the gods were characterized by their corporeality. As Rohde concludes on the heroes, "Their nature was still mortal, and hence their bodies had to die, and this constituted their difference from the everlasting gods."[124] The gods were originally considered immortal exactly because of their physical bodies.

A good example of how physical the body of a god really was is found in the description in the *Iliad* of how the Greek warrior Diomedes wounded Aphrodite:

> When he caught up with her as he pursued her through the great throng, then [Diomedes] the son of great-hearted Tydeus thrust with his sharp spear and leapt at her, and cut the surface of her delicate hand, and immediately through the ambrosial raiment . . . the spear pierced the *chrôs* (body or flesh) on the wrist above the palm, and out flowed the immortal blood of the goddess, the *ichor*, such as flows in the blessed gods.[125]

Later on that same day Diomedes wounded Ares as well, again "tearing the fair *chrôs* (body or flesh)" with his spear.[126] With haste, Ares fled to steep Olympus where he complained bitterly to Zeus and "showed the immortal blood flowing from the wound."[127]

Chrôs or *chroia*, meaning body, body surface, or flesh, is the term used in the *Iliad* for the physical nature of the gods. This is not, however, a term reserved for a divine nature. Also when mortal warriors have their flesh pierced or torn, the term is *chrôs* or *chroia*. Arrows may, for example, "stick themselves in the *chroia* of youth" and even "long to

glut themselves with *chrôs*."[128] A spear similarly smote Odysseus so that it "tore the *chrôs* from his side."[129] Although gods by nature were physically incorruptible, *chrôs* or *chroia* was not a term that by itself implied incorruptibility. Only the *chrôs* of the immortals was incorruptible. The *chrôs* of mortals, on the other hand, was, like the rest of the human body, destined for decay. A distressed Achilles could therefore wail about his dead friend, Patroclus: "For the life is slain out of him, so all his *chrôs* will *rot*."[130] Only the careful intervention of divine Apollo and Aphrodite prevented the *chrôs* of the dead warrior, Hector, from decay.[131]

Chrôs or *chroia* is not the only term indicating how the physical nature of the immortals was really an incorruptible mirror image of the corruptible nature of humans. The flesh of the immortal cattle of Helius is referred to by the term *krea*, the same term used for both roasted meat and the raw flesh devoured by wild beasts elsewhere in Homer.[132] In a furious verbal exchange between the two deadly enemies, Achilles even threatened to eat the *krea* of Hector raw.[133] In this way we see again how close the parallels between mortal and immortal nature were.

The cattle of Helius very clearly demonstrate to what degree one must understand the notion of immortal flesh quite literally. Through the folly of Odysseus' comrades we are presented with a vivisection of these immortal creatures. After flaying, dismembering, and even roasting the immortal herd, the impious crew learn that it is virtually impossible to extinguish the life of these creatures; they are still not dead. Indeed, "the hides crawled, the flesh (*krea*) both roasted and raw, bellowed upon the spits, and there was lowing as of cattle."[134] Cut up and roasted, the unfortunate animals are still being eaten alive by Odysseus' crew. That anyone was immortal meant that one's flesh was not only incorruptible but apparently impossible to annihilate.

The right big toe of King Pyrrhus is another remarkable example of the incorruptibility of immortal flesh. This toe of the third-century B.C. Epeirot monarch was said to possess divine power. After the dead king had been burned on his funeral pyre, this toe was consequently found unscathed.[135] Immortal flesh was simply not corruptible and could not be harmed by either flames or decay.

That something was immortal meant that it was incorruptible. Also other physical objects could therefore be immortal. The "immortal veil" lent by Ino Leucothea to Odysseus was immortal by reason of its incorruptible nature.[136] The shield of Athena was accordingly both "ageless and immortal."[137] The term "incorruptible," "*aphthitos,*" was also repeatedly used to describe the nature of the gods, thus emphasizing their physical nature. Just like gold was "incorruptible", "*aphthitos*",[138]

and did not fall victim to decay, so was the case with the immortal flesh of the gods.

The herd of Helius and the other immortal creatures, in shape differing from the humanoid gods, offer another opportunity to learn what physical immortality actually entailed. Just as mortal men and women were mirrored in the humanlike forms of the immortal gods and goddesses, certain animals had their immortal counterparts. Whereas most immortal beasts served only the gods and were as distant from people's everyday life as the gods themselves, Helius' cattle were not the only ones playing a distinct role in some of the more ancient stories. The steed Arion was the immortal offspring of either Poseidon and Demeter or the Earth, and it proved a worthy assistant first to King Oncus of Arcadian Thelpusa, then to Heracles, and finally to Adrastus, one of the seven against Thebes.[139] The gods gave immortal horses to Pelops as well, so that he could win Hippodameia as bride.[140] Xanthus and Balius were also immortal horses born to the wind gods Zephyrus and Podarge.[141] After initially having been given to Peleus, they were brought to the Trojan war by his son, Achilles. That the immortality of these animals was to be understood in similar terms as the immortality of the humanoid gods is also indicated by the way the poet contrasted the mortality of both Achilles and his father, Peleus, with the immortality of their horses.[142]

When contemplating the nature of these immortal beasts, we find again that originally immortality in no way could be understood as anything but absolutely physical. It was, indeed, outstanding physical nature that made anything immortal differ from anything mortal. It was not their lack of physical nature that made the deathless animals stand out, on the contrary. Any idea of possible immateriality is ruled out by how Odysseus' crew caught and slaughtered the immortal cattle of Helius and by how Xanthus and Balius were yoked by Achilles' charioteer like any other steeds, bringing their master into the fiercest of battles. It was indeed their supreme physical ability that made these horses stand out. The way they ran swift as the wind shows how they embodied a physical potential outrivaling any mortal animal.[143]

The Homeric understanding of immortality could hardly have been more physical. In Homer, Martin Nilsson maintains, "the gods were so consistently anthropomorphized that they were nothing but stronger, more powerful, and immortal men."[144] The essence of this belief remained although, as we will see, it was to be complemented. The Pre-Socratic philosopher Xenophanes scoffed at his Greek contemporaries for believing "that, like themselves, the gods have clothing, language

and a body."[145] Plato, too, referred to this traditional understanding of the gods, complaining how his contemporaries picture "a god whom we have never seen, nor fully conceived, as an immortal living being, possessed of a soul and a body united for all time."[146] In Chariton's first-century A.D. novel, *Callirhoe,* no one protests when the protagonist suggests that his vanished bride really must have been a goddess, truly a physical figure of flesh and bones, who had walked out on him, just like the divine Thetis once had left the mortal warrior Peleus long ago.[147] The second-century Christian apologist Athenagoras gives an indication of how literally the Pagan idea of divine materiality was far into the Christian era. As he made clear, the Greeks still understood the gods to be "of flesh," "*sarkoeidês*":[148] "The masses", "*hoi polloi*" could simply not "distinguish between matter and God."[149]

Though infinitely more perfect than us in their physical nature, the gods and other immortal figures were still beings of flesh and bones. The French classics scholar Jean-Pierre Vernant concludes that the Greeks considered the divine body the perfect model for the human body.[150] The difference between the human and divine body was man's "limitation, deficiency, and incompleteness" compared to the gods' perfection, imperishability and subsequent physical immortality.[151] The gods were not at all just spiritual beings.

Although their physical nature was repeatedly stressed, the gods also had an ability to change their shape at will. When operating among men, especially in the cultivated areas, they would usually take the guise of actual men and women, meaning that the state of absolute immortal perfection was no longer apparent. The most ancient stories are full of deities appearing as ordinary mortals. These visitations of gods in disguise were also considered to happen in historical times. While the Lacedaemonians mistook a couple of mortal men for being the divine Dioscuri in the seventh century B.C.,[152] in Argos in 272 B.C. Demeter in the likeness of an ordinary woman killed Pyrrhus, the king with the immortal toe, with a blow of a tile.[153] In the *Gospel of Mark* we are also presented with the Lycaonians convinced that Zeus and Hermes visited them in the guise of men.[154] Chariton does not seem to have raised many eyebrows either when he in his first-century A.D. novel presented the possible idea that the young girl Callirhoe really had been a goddess all along appearing incognita.[155] That a god could appear as an ordinary mortal was also connected with the great emphasis the Greeks put on showing kindness to strangers. You simply could not be sure who was at your door.

As the divine form really was the perfected image of man, for the gods to appear as ordinary mortals did not involve that much change. But the gods also used the cap of Hades to make themselves invisible to each other,[156] and to mortals they could even decide themselves whether they wanted to be invisible or not. On one occasion in the *Iliad* Athena is visible to Achilles alone, but no one else sees her.[157] The immortals had the opportunity to take completely other forms as well. In the *Iliad* we suddenly find Apollo and Athena in the shape of vultures looking on the mighty warriors.[158] Apollo took at times the shape of a great and awesome dolphin. Zeus famously appeared as a snake, a bull, a swan or as an eagle, in order to have his way with mortal men and women to whom he was attracted. The very change from human to animal form was also witnessed in the *Odyssey*. After first having encountered Athena appearing as Odysseus' old friend Mentor, Telemachus and his men saw how the goddess suddenly "departed in the likeness of a sea eagle, and everyone was amazed at the sight."[159]

Although immortality meant that something was immune to decay, immortality seems not to have meant that the body was impervious to injuries, as we saw demonstrated with how Diomedes wounded both Aphrodite and Ares. Escaping in the chariot of Ares, the wounded Aphrodite left the melee of the battlefield for steep Olympus where her mother, Dione, soothed her with other stories about gods who had suffered physically at the hands of mortals: Ares who had been bound and put into a jar by the giants Otus and Ephialtes; Hera and Hades who Heracles smote when he himself was just a mortal man, although an extraordinary powerful one.[160] In another episode from the Trojan war not related in the *Iliad*, the Arcadian general Teuthis struck Athena with a spear in her thigh. This did not leave the mighty goddess unscathed either, and the incident became the origin of a particular cult in Arcadia where Pausanias witnessed a temple image of Athena "made with a wound in her thigh."[161]

As with mortals, some of the injuries to immortals could be healed, others not. The nature of immortality nevertheless meant that if healing was possible, this could be performed extremely swiftly. When Ares came with his bleeding wound, the god Paeëon immediately stopped the pain and healed him easily by putting on drugs, for Ares "was verily in no wise of mortal mould."[162] The god Hades, also "in no wise of mortal mould," was healed in exactly the same manner after being wounded by the mortal Heracles.[163] As Aphrodite had escaped injured to Olympus, her mother, even more simply, just "wiped the *ichor* from the arm with both her hands, and the arm was restored and the grievous pains assuaged."[164]

As the result of his punishment, Prometheus, too, showed to what extent the flesh of an immortal being could be healed. Bound with "inextricable bonds and cruel chains," Prometheus had to suffer an eagle every day eating "his immortal liver". But "by night the liver grew as much again back as the longwinged bird devoured in the day."[165]

Hephaestus, too, was seriously wounded as Zeus threw him down from Olympus. In the *Iliad*, Hephaestus recounts the dramatic episode himself: "he caught me by the foot and hurled me from the heavenly threshold; the whole day long did I fall, and at sunset I fell in Lemnos but little life was in me."[166] But, contrary to the other wounded gods, Hephaestus was not entirely healed. According to the first- or second-century A.D. Pseudo-Apollodorus, this incidence was what had made the artisan god lame.[167] The return to Olympus of Hephaestus, riding a donkey, was a common motive on vases, and sometimes his feet are visibly deformed.[168] Although immortal, it was impossible to heal the mutilated feet of Hephaestus. Apparently something so fundamental as the bones of the gods could not be repaired if they first had been mangled.

His malformed feet did not, however, impede Hephaestus entirely, as was made clear in for example the *Iliad*. Although he was "halting", "beneath him the slender legs moved nimbly."[169] An extraordinary ability of movement was indeed typical of any immortal creature regardless of what his or her body looked like. This ability we have already seen demonstrated by the immortal steeds who assisted various mighty warriors. All gods moved with the same absolute ease, transferring themselves almost instantly from Olympus to any place they wanted to go. They ran, swam, and flew, all with the same extraordinary speed and ability.

Ambrosia, the food of the gods, also underlines the physical dimension of how Greeks originally considered immortality. Most often ambrosia is described as the victual that makes someone immortal. The gods themselves regularly eat ambrosia, as is fitting to someone who remains forever immortal. Ambrosia can also be applied with a similar effect externally on the physical body, as seen with how Demeter and Thetis anointed the infants Demophoön and Achilles to make them immortal.[170] Neither Demophoön nor Achilles became, however, immortal as the application of ambrosia ceased. At least to someone who is originally mortal, the effect of ambrosia was clearly not permanent. This was even more obvious with Tantalus and his friends. Having been brought to the company of gods and also explicitly given immortality, Tantalus then pilfered the gods' nectar and ambrosia "with which they

had made him immortal", and gave it to his mortal pals.[171] As the gods put a stop to this shady dealing, both Tantalus and his friends ended up once again mortal as they no longer had any access to ambrosia.

As immortality originally always equaled physical immortality, we must note how ambrosia in all these examples preserved the physical body, making it incorruptible. The physical properties of ambrosia are, however, even more obvious the times it does not make anyone immortal but is applied to dead bodies. As the dead Hector was violently abused by Achilles, Aphrodite regularly "anointed him [Hector] with rose-sweet, ambrosial oil" so that "his body does not decay at all."[172] Thetis in a similar way put ambrosia and nectar in the nostrils of the dead Patroclus to preserve the corpse from decay, assuring that the flesh would "remain the same, or be even better."[173]

Comparing the use of ambrosia on the living and the dead, we find that its primary effect was not one of immortality, but one of physical preservation. Immortality only followed as it was the effect of making a live body physically incorruptible. Regardless of the state of one's body, ambrosia would preserve and enhance its present nature. If one was alive, ambrosia would make one physically immortal as the physical nature of one' flesh was not only preserved but enhanced so that it became incorruptible. If dead, the regular application of ambrosia would also enhance one's physical nature as much as possible, making one's flesh immune to decay. When ambrosia was no longer employed, the physical effect of the divine unction would cease simultaneously, and one's body would return to its former corruptible self, either dead or alive.

Having looked at the great contrast between the wonderful physical existence of the gods where there seems to have been few limits as to what was possible, and the in all manner limited existence of ordinary mortals, we find that an attraction of the flesh was decidedly present in Greek religion. Whereas having mortal flesh meant that a short life span was soon exchanged for an eternity as a dead and disembodied soul where one could not even expect consciousness, to have immortal flesh meant that one not only lived forever, but that one could happily play around in the universe with almost unlimited powers.

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CHAPTER THREE

The Possibility of Immortal Flesh

Having established to what degree the attraction of the flesh was present in traditional Greek religion, we are still left in the dark as to how the Greeks could accept the Christian idea of the resurrection. To dream an impossible dream is a far cry from believing that dream to come true. What was it with what they already believed that made the Greeks accept the idea of a physical resurrection as something plausible? How was it that, when first encountered by the Christians, they showed little surprise at how Christ had been raised from the dead and made physically immortal? This is where we have to examine somewhat more closely whether traditional Greek religion had no other possible fate in store after this life than that as a dead and disembodied soul. Was there anyone at all before Jesus Christ who, like him, had been physically raised from the dead and attained immortality in the process? What did the Greeks really consider the ultimate *possibility* of the flesh?

Resuscitation to a Normal Life

As a sagacious but mortal man in the most distant of times, Asclepius was renowned for his abilities to heal practically everything. This ability was, however, not just a blessing as he had no sense of properly limiting his own powers. According to the fifth-century B.C. poet Pindar, Asclepius was "seduced by a splendid fee of gold displayed in his hand to bring back from death one who was already its prey." Zeus, in no way pleased with this challenge to his authority and to the limits of death, immediately hurled a single thunderbolt through the breasts of

doctor and patient alike.[1] Men were simply not supposed to help each other escape mortality.

Not all sources agree that Asclepius was killed immediately after having brought his first patient back from death. Asclepius was often credited for having raised a number of legendary figures before he was killed. Around 500 B.C. various poets claimed that Tyndareus, the father or stepfather of the beautiful Helen,[2] and some of the seven who marched against Thebes were restored to life by the famous healer.[3] Apparently the memory of the deeds of Asclepius got more and more fantastic with time. In the first century B.C. Diodorus of Sicily had Hades declare "that the number of dead was steadily diminishing, now that men were being healed by Asclepius."[4] But the exact number of people who were resurrected by Asclepius is not the main issue. Although Zeus soon put an end to this practice, the story of Asclepius demonstrates that the Greeks held an idea that death did not have to be irreversible.

How exactly Asclepius brought his clients back to life is not completely clear, and we find no extant explanation of this before the Christian era. Whereas Pseudo-Apollodorus claimed that Asclepius used the blood from Medusa's right side,[5] it seems just as probable that he originally was considered to have used some medical herb, as argued by the first-century B.C. Latin writers Virgil and Ovid.[6] Drugs were at least used in the case of Glaucus, the young son of the legendary king Minos, who had drowned in a jar of honey. Having seen how a snake resuscitated a dead mate by applying an unidentified herb to its body, the seer Polyidus used the same herb to bring Glaucus back to life.[7]

Heracles was also able to bring people back from the dead. He, however, did in no way bother with complex medical skills or secret potions of mystical herbs. He relied on his own brute strength. In a tragedy of Euripides from 438 B.C., this was how Heracles brought Alcestis, "a woman recently dead," back to life. He simply defeated Death personified in a physical combat by the grave.[8] Although the return of the dead woman, not surprisingly, is treated as sensational, nowhere does Euripides indicate that her life in any other way was seriously altered. As Heracles left the resuscitated Alcestis reunited with her husband, everything seems to imply that family life would resume pretty much as before. That Alcestis mysteriously returned with a veil was probably a sign of her encounter with death—at the point of dying Greeks normally would veil their heads.[9] That she is not able to speak for a week seems more like an artistic idea of Euripides. We have to allow for a degree of literary license and accept that a returned Alcestis, chattering

ceaselessly about her existential experiences as dead, would quite simply have ruined the mood of this serene tragedy.

Plato referred to the fate of Alcestis, but did not mention any part played by Heracles. According to Plato her resurrection was more simply a boon granted by the gods in recognition of her supreme self-sacrifice, volunteering to die in order to save her husband.[10]

The famous story of Orpheus and his attempt to bring Eurydice back from the dead must also be categorized with those who were brought back from death to a mortal existence. There is no indication anywhere that Orpheus hoped for immortality for his beloved; he only wanted her to once again resume life together with him. Pseudo-Apollodorus relates how Orpheus, after Eurydice had been killed by a snake, "went down to Hades to bring her up."[11] As only the dead souls went to Hades, Orpheus really set out to release from death only the disembodied soul of Eurydice, which somehow was to be reunited with her body upon its return. That the dead soul could be returned from Hades in order to reunite with the dead body was indeed a way someone could be raised from the dead, as also seen with the Thracian king Rhesus.[12] Armed with nothing but his beautiful song, Orpheus almost succeeded. Hades promised to release Eurydice "if Orpheus on the way would not turn around until he came back to his own house."[13] Not everybody held that Orpheus had to venture as far as Hades to retrieve the soul of his beloved. According to Pausanias, Orpheus only went to an ancient oracle of the dead in Thesprotis, Epirus. The result was nevertheless the same: "The soul of Eurydice followed him," but, alas, "turning around he lost her."[14]

The Greek warrior Protesilaüs was also for a short while brought back from Hades. According to Pseudo-Apollodorus, "When seeing him, Laodamia [his wife] rejoiced, thinking that it was himself returned from Troy; but when he was sent back to Hades, she killed herself."[15] It is, however, uncertain whether Protesilaüs was temporarily resurrected with his body or whether he just showed himself to his wife as a fleshless phantom, which, as we have seen, in Greek tradition could be a rather tangible figure.

Not every resurrection was considered equally miraculous. People who are considered dead and then suddenly wake up on their own account represent a well-known phenomenon even today and were known to the Greeks as well. In the case of Er, a Pamphylian soldier who revived as he lay on his funeral pyre, Plato was most of all interested in what this soldier, as a resuscitated person, could relate about the other side. The divine judges Er had met while dead had accordingly

appointed him to be "a messenger to mankind."[16] In his fifth-century A.D. commentary on this passage by Plato, Proclus recounted the fate of Polycritus of Aetolia, Eurynous of Nicopolis, and Rufus of Philippi, who were all said to have returned from death in a similar way as Er. Rufus had, just like the Pamphylian soldier, been "sent back by the chthonic gods to tell the people of the sights he had experienced," whereas Eurynous "had been forbidden to reveal any of it."[17] Nothing is recorded about what Polycritus told regarding Hades, but he seems to have learned at least something from the experience, as he "showed up at the general assembly of the Aetolians where he gave them excellent advice concerning the matters they were deliberating."[18]

That the ancient Greeks were aware of the possibility of apparently dead people suddenly coming back to life did not mean that they felt comfortable with this phenomenon. There was something decidedly disconcerting with these figures who returned from the dead, demanding to retake their place among the living. Not too surprisingly, these resuscitated corpses would also make special star appearances in ancient horror stories. In one of the extraordinary events collected by Phlegon of Tralles, he recounts how in fourth-century B.C. Macedonia a dead girl named Philinnion left her grave every night to sit by the bedside of the young man she loved. Proclus, too, relates this story and even refers to contemporary letters commenting on the case.[19] This is no simple resuscitation story, as the girl went back into her tomb every morning. According to Phlegon, she even brought an iron ring and a gilded wine cup she got from her young lover back with her into the grave.[20] Her appearance, however, was by itself remarkably undramatic considering her being a recently deceased person who left and returned to her grave on a regular basis. The young man had originally no suspicions whatsoever that the visits of Philinnion were anything but rather ordinary love trysts. It was an old nurse, who knew Philinnion before she died, who was first alarmed when spying on the lovers. But even after he had been told that his beloved had really come back from the dead, the young man still ate and drank with the dead girl and "simply could not believe what they told him."[21] When the resurrected Philinnion finally discovered that she was being spied upon, she proclaimed that because of this interference she would return to the place originally appointed for her. But her nocturnal visits were also according to some greater scheme: "For it was not without divine will that I came here." Immediately after speaking these words "she was dead, and her *body* lay stretched out visibly on the bed."[22] Thus, the possibility of this being a mere phantom is explicitly ruled out. She had definitely come back in

the flesh, though only to die once again in the presence of the man she loved and other witnesses. When several people from the city went to the cemetery the next morning, they found the tomb, where they had put Philinnion some months previously, empty but for the gifts she had received from her young lover.[23]

Another miraculous and disconcerting event occurred in the aftermath of the battle between the Romans and the forces of Antiochus in Thermopylae in 191 B.C. A dead cavalry commander of the name Bouplagus from the army of Antiochus suddenly rose up among the corpses, left the battlefield, and walked to the enemy camp with his mortal wounds still visible. Arriving at the camp, he demanded that the Roman commanders should behave properly toward the slain soldiers, before he once again fell dead to the ground.[24]

Though there probably was dissent about a number of these specific incidents, the general notion that once dead it was theoretically possible to return to mortal life did not represent any great controversy in the Greek world at any time. Even philosophers who otherwise found little value in the body presented some of these stories as true.

American New Testament scholar Dale Martin argues that the Greeks may have thought of Asclepius' feats and other similar incidents when they were told "that they would be raised from the dead by the power of Christ."[25] In an article on resurrection and the Greeks, Stanley Porter similarly, mainly on the basis of Euripides' presentation of the temporary resuscitation of Alcestis, claims that "there was significant antecedent in Greek thought regarding resurrection."[26] That these resuscitated persons should have prepared the Greeks for the Christian ideas on the resurrection is, however, difficult to maintain. Whether brought back to life by miraculous means or simply waking up on their own account, these ancient figures were only brought back to mortality.[27] Either returning to their previous ways of life or dying again almost immediately after first being resuscitated, these persons were not permanently altered by their experience with death. None of them ever gained physical immortality as the resurrected Christ did and as what was promised all those who believed in him.

Although miraculous, the medical achievements of Asclepius and Polyidus, as well as Heracles' successful fight with Death personified, were in fact only various ways of *postponing* the time of death as it originally had been decreed by fate. Turning to the New Testament, one finds a closer parallel here to the fates of Jairus' daughter,[28] the son of the widow in Nain,[29] Lazarus,[30] and "the holy ones" who were resurrected the moment Jesus died,[31] than to the resurrection of Jesus.

There is just as little indication that any of these New Testament figures became immortal as there is about the Greek men and women whose fate we have just looked at.

We must nevertheless recognize how these incidents were truly examples of the resurrection of the *flesh*, as is plain to observe from how these resuscitated persons would move about with the same bodies they had before they died in the first place. But this was no question of *immortal* flesh.

Dismemberment and Rejuvenation

If the resuscitated corpses of Alcestis, Philinnion, Er, and the patients of Asclepius may seem macabre, modern readers will probably wince even more at what happened to Pelops, a handsome young boy who in time would give name to the peninsula of Peloponnesus. Although clearly expressing his own pious skepticism about these events, Pindar relates what people considered Pelops to have gone through: "They cut your limbs apart with a knife and plunged them into high boiling water over the fire, and at the tables, among the last dishes, divided your flesh."[32] In the scholiast to Lycophron, we learn how "Tantalus, having invited the gods to a feast, served up his own slaughtered son," Pelops.[33] But this was not the end of the story. The gods saw through the deception and refused to partake in the anthropophagic feast.[34] At this moment, when one would suspect that all hopes were gone for Pelops, the gods put the body parts back into the cauldron. Thereupon the gods, or just Clotho, a goddess of fate, retrieved him—not only once again "healthy and unharmed,"[35] but even "more beautiful" than ever.[36]

Pelops' remarkable fate probably could be ascribed to the outstanding power of the gods if it had not been that this incidence was far from unique. The fourth-century B.C. poet Lycophron relates how Jason, the leader of the Argonauts, too, "had his own body cut to pieces in a cauldron" and made young again this way.[37] This time it was Jason's wife, Medea, who played the part of the rejuvenator. According to various other sources, Medea also rejuvenated both Jason's hoary father, Aeson,[38] and the old nurses of Dionysus.[39] To demonstrate her abilities to Pelias' daughters, Medea also "dismembered a ram and made it into a lamb by boiling it."[40] No author dwelt on what happened to the fortunate sheep after it got its youth back; the focus of this story is much more gloomy and as such served as a warning for anyone who wanted to try this out at home. Pseudo-Apollodorus relates how the loving

daughters, as soon as the rejuvenated lamb leaped out of the cauldron, ran and got their old father, cut him up, and threw the body parts into the cauldron so that he, too, could regain his youth.[41] According to Pausanias, it was Medea herself who "took Pelias and cut him in pieces to boil him."[42] Either way, after the old man had been dismembered, Medea immediately left the scene, and the distraught daughters discovered that the hotchpotch that once had been their father was not just for anyone to restore back to life.[43]

In Aristophanes' comedy from 424 B.C., *The Knights,* an expert butcher, the sausage maker, made the ancient Demos both younger and more handsome by first making a stew out of him in the manner we have just seen demonstrated. "Having refined Demos for you by boiling, I have turned his ugliness into beauty," explains the sausage maker to the chorus. "He has once again become like he was when he was living with Aristides and Miltiades," that is, a young man. In the end the resurrected Demos himself appears and thanks his butcher and benefactor: "The refining by boiling did me good."[44]

As demonstrated in these various stories, the idea that people could be rejuvenated by being killed and dismembered was well known among classical and Hellenistic Greeks. But after the irreverent parody of Aristophanes on these most ancient practices, no one is known to ever have tried to make anyone young again by these means. That all of these incidents, with the exception of Aristophanes' comedy, were limited to the most ancient of times, to the era usually considered mythical today, also makes it difficult to see these ancient stories as mirroring any actual beliefs held when the Christian ideas on the resurrection were introduced. Even on a purely phenomenological level it is still difficult to draw a close parallel between these cases and what Christianity claimed happened to Christ and may happen to the rest of us at the end of time. Those who were brought back to life after having been dismembered and stewed in the cauldron became both younger and apparently physically perfect, but there is nothing in the sources indicating that these persons remained forever this way. Although Pelops really would have a dramatic fate, he would die in the end. His funeral was depicted on a Corinthian chest from the seventh century or earlier.[45] The bare bones of Pelops also bore witness of his mortality, and in the second century A.D. Pausanias tells us how these bones were still kept in a bronze chest in the ruined city of Elean Pisa.[46] We do not hear anything more about either Aeson or the old ram after they had been restored to their youth,[47] but we cannot assume from this silence that they somehow should have lived on forever. Jason, who also had

been physically enhanced by means of the cauldron, would, as Medea prophesied, "die the miserable death of a coward, struck on the head by a piece of the Argo" as the fabled ship was falling apart due to decay.[48]

None of these persons escaped death forever, achieving physical immortality, as was the result of a Christian resurrection. There was again a question of resurrected flesh but not immortal flesh. As was the case with these other resurrected figures we have looked at so far, hated old age and death always came in the end, though apparently later than what originally would have been the case. In this way, the dramatic treatment in the cauldron represents just another way to trick fate—though just for a while.

Resurrection and Physical Immortality

The way none of these cases of resurrection we have looked at so far really meant eternal life has at times been used as an argument for claiming that the Greeks were unfamiliar with any real precedent to the resurrection and subsequent immortalization of Jesus Christ.[49] But in doing this, a third category of physical resurrection in Greek tradition is completely ignored.

The prototypal warrior Achilles was the result of the marriage between the goddess Thetis and her mortal husband, Peleus. It is important to note that Achilles' semidivine ancestry in no way meant that he was anything but mortal. To be immortal, both parents had to be immortal. Men and women who had a deity as one of their parents appear in almost all stories from the most distant past of the Greeks—and those individuals were all mortal. There were Heracles, Asclepius, Minos, Perseus, Bellerophon, Theseus, and Aeneas, just to mention a few of them. As Euripides would point out, "Even the children of the gods perish in death's darkness."[50] This was the rule. In historical times one could still encounter people considered the mortal offspring of various deities, among them the seventh-century B.C. Messenian tyrant Aristomenes, the fifth-century B.C. Olympian victor Euthymus of Locri, the third-century B.C. Sicyonian general Aratus, Alexander the Great, and the first Roman emperor, Augustus.[51]

The mortality of Thetis' son Achilles was pointedly demonstrated. He died. Killed by an arrow piercing his proverbial tendon, Achilles was placed on the funeral pyre. But, then, the truly miraculous happens. The oldest version of this story was found in the lost eighth-century B.C. epic *Aethiopis*, of which a synopsis is preserved in Proclus'

Chrestomathia. There, as the flames were just about to consume Achilles' body, "arriving with the Muses and her sisters [the Nereids], Thetis bewails her son. After this she snatches away her son from the pyre and carries him over to the island of Leuce,"[52] a remote spot at the ends of the earth. Here Proclus' summary ends, but different writers, such as Ibycus, Simonides, Pindar, Euripides, and Apollonius of Rhodes, observe that Achilles now is *living* forever in the utmost periphery of the earth, either in Leuce, the Elysian Plain, or the Islands of the Blessed.[53] Obviously Achilles must have been resurrected after Thetis brought his dead body to this distant spot.[54]

The presentation of what really happened is sketchy, but there is a number of reasons to hold that Achilles not only was resurrected, but that he was physically immortalized. As Thetis snatched the dead body of her son away from his funeral pyre, we realize that the body somehow must be involved in his future fate. The very claim that Achilles now is living in Leuce must be seen in connection with the traditional belief that any form of life was impossible without the psychosomatic unity of body and soul. We have already learned how there was a general belief among Greeks that people really could be raised from the dead and that when this happened, flesh and bones were always included. When Achilles, too, is revived again, we find that there is nothing indicating anything but that this also was the case with him. As no longer mortal, Achilles must have had his physical nature severely altered, his flesh mortified so that it was just like that of the gods, immortal and incorruptible.

Just before we learn from the *Aethiopis* about how Thetis carried away the body of Achilles, Memnon, the mortal son of the Trojan prince Tithonus and Eos, the goddess of dawn, is also resurrected and made immortal. Memnon represents probably the closest parallel to the fate of Achilles, and as such it makes sense to compare notes. Just like Achilles, Memnon was slain fighting outside of the walls of Troy, actually by Achilles himself. According to Proclus' summary of the *Aethiopis*, "Eos then asks of Zeus and he gives her son immortality."[55]

The way Memnon's mother is the one who secures immortality for her son by asking the supreme god, represents another parallel to what happened to Achilles. According to Pindar, Thetis was the one who "entreated the heart of Zeus" so that she was allowed to take her slain son, Achilles, to the Island of the Blessed and thus secure him immortality.[56] We hear nothing of where Memnon is brought by his divine mother in the summary of Proclus, but on a series of different vases, the story is retold in a way that again closely resembles what happened to

Achilles. We see Eos mournfully looking at the body of her dead son,[57] holding him almost in the manner of Michelangelo's *Pietà*.[58] Then we find her flying away with the corpse, sometimes over clearly depicted ocean waves,[59] so that he could be resurrected and immortalized in some remote place like Leuce or Elysium. These depictions of Eos taking away the body of her dead son serve as another reminder of how literally the subsequent immortal existence was considered to include the flesh.

Achilles and Memnon were not the only ones in Greek tradition who died, were resurrected with flesh and bones, and gained physical immortality in some distant location. Many seem also to have held that Heracles' mother, Alcmene, would undergo such an experience. As the philosophically inclined Plutarch complained, there was a popular belief that the dead body of Alcmene miraculously disappeared as she was lying on her bier. A large stone was instead found where the corpse once had been, while Alcmene herself was considered to have been brought immortalized to heaven.[60] As she was already dead, this, of course, meant she had been resurrected in the process. Plutarch, who himself was convinced of the immortality of the soul, becomes in his frustration an important witness of how people in the first century A.D. still held that this resurrection and subsequent immortalization really involved the *flesh*. Referring to what "the masses," "*hoi polloi,*" believed happened to Alcmene, Plutarch insisted that we instead "must not against nature send the *bodies* of good people with their souls to heaven."[61] And with the body Plutarch definitely meant the flesh, pointedly telling people how they instead of believing such tales should look to the ideal of a "fleshless, *asarkos,*" existence.[62] As a true philosopher, Plutarch himself, of course, did not believe in any of these popular stories about physical resurrection and immortalization. According to him it was only the soul that has hope of reaching the divine sphere "when it is most completely separated and set free from the body, and becomes altogether pure, fleshless and undefiled."[63] But as Plutarch himself demonstrated, most people could not care less about what he preached.

Although Plutarch bemoaned the superstition of "the masses," we should note that he in no way criticized them for just making things up. Indeed, as he makes clear, the story of how Alcmene was resurrected and translated flesh and bones to heaven was actually *typical*, "just like the fables the Greeks tell."[64] As Plutarch himself realized, it was he, with his severe criticism of these traditional beliefs, who was untypical.

When we last left Asclepius, he was very much dead, killed by a thunderbolt of Zeus because of his hubristic practice. Turning to the *Iliad*, we find the oldest indication that this was not really the end. Here, we learn about Machaon as the "*mortal* son of Asclepius."[65] This is no usual way of referring to a son of a mortal man. That mortals got mortal offspring was a matter of cause and not anything normally emphasized. As pointed out by Pausanias, to talk of the "mortal son of Asclepius" really is the same "as if one should say 'human child of a god'."[66] But Asclepius, as we has seen, was originally no god. He was himself a human offspring of Apollo and a mortal woman,[67] who had had his own mortality unequivocally demonstrated as he got himself killed by Zeus. If we are to believe the *Iliad*'s indication of Asclepius' divinity, something must have happened after his death. And, indeed, it did.

That Asclepius at some point really became a god is as indisputable as his original mortality. He was one of the most popular deities in classical and Hellenistic times and the flow of pilgrims to his main shrine in Peloponnesian Epidaurus outnumbered those to any other place in antiquity. Origen is among those who relate what happened to Asclepius after his being killed by Zeus. As he points out, the Greeks believed that Asclepius was a mortal man who had become a god.[68] That Asclepius became not only immortal but a god was not anything different from what Achilles, Memnon, and Alcmene went through. As the immortals, *hoi athanatoi*, were the gods, becoming immortal, *athanatos*, simply meant becoming a god. As Erwin Rohde points out, "When a Greek says 'immortal' he says 'God': they are interchangeable ideas."[69] Although just a few of these deified persons received or demanded a divine cult, they were still gods simply by achieving physical immortality.

The way they had their physical bodies made immortal was also what distinguished these mortals turned gods from the dead who only became heroes and whose souls were eternally severed from their bodies. The Greeks were originally very much aware of the difference between seeing someone as a god or as a hero.[70] The way the Greeks, both ancient and Hellenistic, disagreed about what had actually happened to virtually anyone in the mythical era would still mean that someone's hero could be someone else's god. But originally nobody claimed that someone who forever had lost his or her physical body had become a god, or that someone who had been physically immortalized had just become a hero. When someone was believed to have become a god, it was also held that his or her body

would have been immortalized, while a hero never regained his or her body.[71]

Immortalized, Asclepius would, just like the other gods, forever display an eternal union of body and soul. As late as the end of the second century A.D. Celsus stressed how "a great multitude of men, both Greeks and barbarians, confess that they have often seen and still see not just a *phantom*, but Asclepius *himself* healing and doing good deeds and predicting the future."[72] Asclepius was neither a phantom nor a hero; he was a god with an incorruptible body of flesh and bones.

But Asclepius cannot have been deified *before* his being killed by the shaft of Zeus, because the most fundamental characteristic of the gods was, of course, their immortality. Asclepius consequently must have been resurrected from the dead before he was deified. Christian second-century apologist Theophilus of Antioch relates exactly how this took place: Asclepius "was raised" from the dead after being "struck with lightning."[73] Justin Martyr, another church father from about the same time, offers the same explanation, telling how "Asclepius, who, though he was a great physician, was struck by a thunderbolt, and so ascended to heaven."[74] In an account of how Dionysus' mortal mother, Semele, ended up living "among the Olympians," Pindar indicates that this, too, happened simultaneously with her being slain by a thunderbolt.[75] As such Semele, too, may be numbered among those mortals who were raised from the dead and made physically immortal.

Heracles was also among those men and women who the Greeks, according to Plutarch, Pseudo-Lucian, and Origen, believed were resurrected and turned into gods.[76] The most ancient reference to his deification is found already in Homer. After learning that "not even the mighty Heracles escaped death,"[77] we find Heracles' *eidôlon* (shadow) in Hades while "he *himself* is among the immortal gods."[78] The confusing idea that Heracles' shadow or image was in Hades must probably be seen in connection with how, for example, Euripides claimed that Helen never went to Troy but only her shadow or image.[79] Heracles "himself," his body and soul, as Homer stressed, really had become a god, apparently after some form of resurrection, as he at this point had, indeed, died.

In Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, we find Heracles dying on a pyre that he had made for himself.[80] Fatally wounded by a poisoned robe given him by his wife, he chose to die properly on a funeral pyre before the poison ignominiously ate away his flesh. But this was not the end of Heracles. In Euripides' *The Children of Heracles* we encounter a defiant mother of Heracles who "will not accept the report that he went down to the

house of Hades, his body consumed by the dread flames."[81] This, of course, was what normally was the case whenever someone was put on a funeral pyre. But Alcmene is proven right, as the chorus can assure her that "your son has gone to heaven, old lady."[82] His flesh had *not* been "consumed by the dread flames"; instead, he had with his entire body "departed from the earth." "Dwelling in heaven," he now "lived in the company of the gods."[83]

In another tragedy, Sophocles relates how Heracles, "the man with the brazen shield, all bright with the fire of god above Mount Oeta, came to the company of the gods."[84] Pseudo-Apollodorus offers some more details, relating how "it is said that a cloud passed under him and with thunder brought him up to heaven." This was the way "he obtained immortality."[85] The third-century B.C. poet Theocritus let the seer Tereisias explain poetically the change of the body of Heracles to his mother, how "the Thracian pyre will hold all the mortal nature (*thnêta panta*)" of her son, whereas Heracles himself joins the gods.[86] Also Theophilus of Antioch explains how Heracles became a god after putting himself on the pyre,[87] whereas Plutarch and Origen more simply referred to Heracles as one of the gods who had been born as mere human.[88]

Various vase paintings also tell us what happens next. Some depict Heracles mounting a chariot led by one of the goddesses, either Athena, Hebe, or Nike.[89] On the sixth-century B.C. throne in Lacedaemonian Amyclae, there was, as Pausanias explains, also a depiction of Athena "taking Heracles to dwell with the gods."[90] Other depictions show Athena introducing Heracles to Zeus on Olympus,[91] or Heracles more simply as a deified mortal in the company of various other gods.[92] The late fifth-century B.C. Cadmus Painter gives us one of the most detailed depictions of this deification. Here we see the funeral pyre still burning with nothing among the firewood but the empty armor of Heracles. Heracles himself, his body of flesh and bones, is instead being translated away in the chariot of Athena.[93] The empty armor along with the unscathed Heracles together with Athena emphasize that no part of the body of Heracles is to be found in the fire, that he is really departing for Olympus with both body and soul.

Isocrates claimed to know *why* Heracles had been immortalized: "He became a god because of his virtue."[94] Although few questioned the divinity of Heracles, not everyone was as convinced about the virtue of Heracles. In an irreverent third-century B.C. commentary to his appetite, Callimachus makes fun of the god, while at the same time unambiguously demonstrating how much Heracles still consisted of

flesh and bones after having been immortalized: "For though beneath a Phrygian oak his limbs was deified, he has not ceased from gluttony. He still has that *belly* he had when he met Theiodamas at the plough"[95] and had eaten an entire ox.

The infant Melicertes was another figure who was resurrected and made physically immortal. Pseudo-Apollodorus offers the most detailed account of how this happened. Having been driven mad by Hera, his mother, Ino, "threw Melicertes into a boiling cauldron, then carrying the dead child she sprang into the deep." There in the sea Melicertes became not only once again alive but immortal, receiving as a deity the name of Palaemon and extensive affection from sailors whom he would protect in storms forever afterward.[96] As the conscientious guide, Pausanias brings his readers to the very cliff somewhere on the road between Megara and Corinth, from where Ino flung herself into the sea with Melicertes in her arms.[97]

Rhesus, the Thracian king, was also brought back to life and immortalized after he had been slain by Odysseus and Diomedes. In Euripides' tragedy named after him, Rhesus' mother, one of the Muses, explains how this is going to happen. Persephone will "send up his soul, *psyche*," obviously reuniting it with his body. After that he will forever remain as a subterranean deity, a "man-god, *anthrôpodaimôn,*" lying "hidden in the caves of the silver-rich land."[98]

In what purports to be the report of an actual sixth-century B.C. visit to Leuce, Pausanias relates how a certain Leonymus, a general from Crotona, was told by the Pythian priestess in Delphi to travel to Leuce in order to have his wounds healed. Setting out, he reached the fabled island, where he in time, was not only healed, but where "he declared" that "he saw Achilles, as well as Ajax the son of Oileus and Ajax the son of Telamon. With them, he said, were Patroclus and Antilochus."[99] That all these other warriors from the Trojan war are presented along with the resurrected Achilles supports the idea that they must have gone through a similar process as him. The way their deaths are elaborately presented in various other Greek texts means that the story of Leonymus really implies that their immortalization was the result of some form of resurrection.[100] The reference to Patroclus, Antilochus, and the two Ajaxes is nevertheless remarkable, as no other extant sources specifically refer to their being immortalized.

Lycophron in his ordinary convoluted manner, seems to have placed the Trojan warrior-prince Hector on the Islands of Blessed,[101] something which must have entailed his resurrection, as Achilles' killing of him was one of the major events in the *Iliad*. A Hellenistic inscription from

Phrygian Cotiaeum indicates that Sarpedon, another of the champions from the Trojan war, was resurrected and made physically immortal as well: "Therefore they [Death and Sleep] washed him in immortal springs and cast him among the islands of the blessed immortals."[102] According to Pausanias, Protesilaüs, too, was among the mortals "who are worshipped among the Greeks as gods."[103] That this warrior from the Trojan wars had been resurrected and immortalized was in direct opposition to how others, as we have seen, believed Protesilaüs to have been only temporary resuscitated before going back to Hades.

Pindar relates how Castor, one of the two Dioscuri, was killed and resurrected before he was given immortality by Zeus. As Castor lay dead, "Zeus opened once more the eye, and then released the voice of the bronze-clad warrior Castor," after which both he and his brother, Polydeuces were promised an existence where half the time is spent "breathing beneath the earth" and the rest "in the golden homes of heaven."[104] Also in the epic cycle of the *Cypria*, probably from the seventh or sixth century B.C., Castor was definitely killed and resurrected before being made immortal.[105]

Similar to how the mothers of Achilles and Memnon entreated Zeus on behalf of their sons, it is Castor's brother who comes to his rescue. As Castor is dying or already dead, Zeus suddenly offers Polydeuces "to escape death and old age."[106] Polydeuces, as Pseudo-Apollodorus put it, "refused to accept immortality while Castor was dead," something that led to their both becoming gods instead.[107] In this version of the story, Polydeuces, too, seems to have died and been resurrected before becoming immortalized. Polydeuces, at least, "fell down in darkness" when hit by a stone before Zeus carried him to heaven.[108] Also the *Odyssey* refers to the fate of the Dioscuri and their "having obtained honor like that to the gods." Similarly to how Pindar had the brothers breath beneath the earth, their subterranean existence in the *Odyssey* equals something close to immortal life. Even though it is said "one day they live in turn and one day they are dead," "they are both alive" as "the lifegiving earth covers them; and even beneath the earth they have honor from Zeus."[109] The *Cypria* more simply relates that after "Castor was killed," Zeus gave Castor and Polydeuces "immortality every other day."[110]

Some sources do not mention the complicated schedule of the immortalized twins at all, only focusing on their immortalization. Euripides, for example, just had the Dioscuri proclaiming that "Zeus made us gods,"[111] similar to what was claimed about them by Pseudo-Lucian and Isocrates.[112] Origen only referred to the Dioscuri among

"the men who were believed by the Greeks to have become gods."[113] But this was not necessarily in opposition to how they more frequently were presented as shifting their abode between heaven and a subterranean existence. Gods could, as we saw was the case with Rhesus, also dwell under the earth.

According to Euripides the Dioscuri prophesied how also their still mortal sister Helen, would "be invoked as a goddess" but only, as they tell her, "when you have made the last turn and ended your life." Again we see that death and resurrection followed by immortalization is indicated. After this has happened she would, just as her equally immortalized brothers, "receive offerings from men, for Zeus wishes this."[114] Not everyone agreed about the sequence of these events and Pseudo-Lucian argued that Helen first was "changed into a goddess herself because of her beauty," after which she "won divinity for the Dioscuri."[115] Isocrates, too, maintained that it was Helen who first "gained immortality," after which she "made her brothers gods."[116] Pseudo-Apollodorus simply stated that the immortalized Helen went to the Elysian Plain, without implicating her brothers in this process.[117] According to Pausanias, the Crotonan general Leonymus on his visit to the white island of Leuce encountered an immortalized Helen, who at this point, rather surprisingly, "was wedded to Achilles."[118]

As the Greeks in classical and Hellenistic times clearly held these various men and women as historical figures, we must consider whether they also believed that these people were really resurrected from the dead and immortalized. The sources clearly indicate that they did just that. In the second century A.D. Pausanias simply states, "I can enumerate other humans also born at this time"—meaning the time of the wars at Thebe and Troy—"who are worshipped among the Greeks as gods."[119] Indeed, "in those days humans were changed to gods, who still have honors paid to them."[120] The same notion was referred to by Plutarch, who included both Dionysus and Heracles among "those deities who were born in a mortal state and later changed into an immortal state . . . who through their virtues were enabled to cast off mortality and suffering."[121] "Among the heroes who became gods are Heracles, the son of Zeus, the Dioscuri and Helen," Pseudo-Lucian remarked in the second century A.D.[122] About a century later, Origen referred to how Asclepius, Heracles, and the Dioscuri were all "men who were believed by the Greeks to have become gods."[123]

If these incidents were confined only to the period the Greeks considered their most distant past and most people today a mythical era, it would, of course, be slightly more difficult to see how the fate of these

figures could be compared with the resurrection and immortalization of Jesus of Nazareth in the reign of Emperor Tiberius. That what happened on that Easter day just outside Jerusalem could seem not only strangely familiar but even plausible to a Hellenistic audience is, however, also supported by the fact that one of the closest parallels to what happened to Christ actually occurred in historical times. In the late fifth century B.C. Herodotus presented the story about the seventh-century B.C. sage Aristeas of Proconnesus who one day went into a fuller's shop in his native city where he, quite simply, died. The fuller locked his store and ran off to notify Aristeas' relatives of the unfortunate event. As the report of Aristeas' death spread in the city, "it was disputed by a man from Cyzicus who . . . said that he had just met Aristeas going in the direction of Cyzicus and spoken to him." When the relatives reached the shop and unlocked it "there was no Aristeas there, dead or alive."[124] Apparently the dead man had been physically resurrected, somehow got out of the locked shop, and walked out of the city. As classics scholar Michael Clarke remarks about this incident, "There is nothing to suggest that a soul separated itself from the bodily man."[125] Like all these other figures, Aristeas was resurrected in the flesh.

Seven years after his disappearance, the resurrected Aristeas reappeared miraculously once more in his hometown and "composed that poem which the Greeks now call the *Arimaspeia*, after which he vanished once again."[126] Later events indicate that this resurrection meant that Aristeas had become both ageless and immortal. 240 years after his first reappearance, in other words close in time to when Herodotus himself lived, Aristeas appeared in Metapontium in Italy "and bade them set up an altar to Apollo, and put beside it a statue bearing the name of Aristeas of Proconnesus."[127] Celsus tells us that "an oracle of Apollo" then enjoined "the Metapontines to treat Aristeas as a god."[128] This strange fate of Aristeas was really considered something that actually happened. Even in the first century A.D. Plutarch admitted grudgingly that people still believed in the story of Aristeas.[129]

The fate of Aristeas gives, in other words, a number of reasons why the Greeks would not be totally surprised when they first heard of the resurrection and subsequent immortalization of Jesus. Just like Jesus, Aristeas died in the presence of witnesses, disappeared, for thereupon to reappear as immortal in both fantastic and apparently everyday ways. As such, Aristeas is an historical figure demonstrating that Greeks considered the way certain persons could be resurrected and receive physical immortality as something that could happen even in their own time.

We find also other indications of popular belief in historical persons being resurrected from the dead and made immortal. In the first couple of decades after the death of Nero, a number of persons appeared in the east claiming to be the emperor, as if he had resurrected after being killed in 68 A.D. Tacitus mentions two of these: one who raised a small army and was finally killed in the Cycladic island of Cythnus, and another who was considered to have had considerable success among the Parthians.[130] Also Suetonius can relate how twenty years after the emperor's death "a person of obscure origin appeared, who proclaimed that he was Nero, and the name was still in such favor with the Parthians, that they supported him vigorously."[131] Because of the relatively brief interval between Nero's death and his reappearances one cannot, however, rule out that the popularity of these claims came from a conviction that Nero had not been killed in the first place, and not that he had somehow been resurrected and made immortal.

When large numbers of people in the early third century A.D. were convinced that Alexander the Great had returned we, however, find a much stronger case of belief in a physical resurrection and immortalization. This figure appeared first close to the Danube, and made his way towards the Hellespont, gathering on his way a devote following of "four hundred male attendants, who were equipped with thyrsi and fawn skins," as if this was a Dionysic retinue and the leader truly was divine. In the end he vanished miraculously, just like any other divinity, some place close to Chalcedon.[132] That Dio Cassius called the returned Alexander a phantom, in accordance with how various heroes sometimes reappeared, does not exclude the possibility that to many this figure really was the old conqueror himself, body and soul, who for a short period had returned to the central parts of the earth like a number of other physically immortalized persons had done before him. This, indeed, seems more likely, than to think that hundreds of men should have followed what they believed to be a ghost.

Becoming Immortal by Merely Touching Death

It is impossible not to recognize that Achilles, Memnon, Alcmene, Asclepius, Semele, Heracles, Melicertes Palaemon, Rhesus, Castor, Helen, and Aristeas of Proconnesus all were considered to have been resurrected from the dead before receiving physical immortality. There seems also to have been such beliefs about Polydeuces, Alexander the Great, and, perhaps, also Nero. There is in addition to these figures

a number of people who became physically immortalized, but where death seems to be more in the background. We have already seen how Polydeuces, according to most sources, was not resurrected like his brother Castor, but was immortalized just the same, without ever dying.[133] Even Homer, who denied Achilles immortality, told of people who were made physically immortal in this way. Proteus, the old man of the sea, prophesied that Menelaus would "not die in the horse-grazed pastures of Argos," but that the gods would convey him "to the Elysian Plain and the ends of the earth . . . where life is easiest for men."[134] Escaping death, Menelaus could look forward to an eternal existence where body and soul would remain joined forever. As Erwin Rohde argues, "The picture which fancy has drawn here is the precise opposite of the blessed immortality of the soul in its separate existence."[135]

Somewhat ironically, Homer conveyed the immortalized Menelaus to Elysium, one of those wondrous places where most authorities but Homer himself considered that Achilles had ended up. Euripides reports the same story but sends Menelaus off to the Island of the Blessed, another of those miraculous places at the ends of the earth the immortalized Achilles was believed to have gone.[136] The translation of Menelaus to an existence of eternal life consequently meant that he, too, became a god. Pseudo-Apollodorus simply refers to how Menelaus "was made immortal by Hera" as he was sent to the Elysian Field along with his wife, Helen,[137] while Christian apologist Athenagoras informs us that the Lacedaemonians still considered Menelaus a *god* and "offer sacrifices and hold festivals to him."[138]

Although Proteus assured Menelaus that he would not die, this does not mean that death is totally irrelevant in this case. Enjoying his leisure in Sparta after about thirty years of dramatic marriage to Helen, Menelaus was no longer a young man. Still, immortality was not something he already possessed. Menelaus was a mighty king but if he had not told his visitors himself of Proteus' prophecy, there was nothing in either his appearance or behavior indicating that he was going to live forever. For the old king immortality was something he was *looking forward to*, not something he already *possessed*. It was something that he would first experience when translated to Elysium. But why was the aged king still waiting? How old would he actually become before he was made immortal? This is where we realize that death may not be completely irrelevant in this case either. Apparently, Menelaus would be made immortal the moment he otherwise would have succumbed to old age.

The extreme old age of Cadmus and Peleus and how they were only *promised* a future existence some place at the ends of the earth indicate that they, too, would be immortalized first at the point of death. Cadmus, already an "old alien,"[139] could just *look forward to* Ares delivering him and settling him in the land of the blessed together with his already immortal wife Harmonia.[140] Hoary Peleus, who in Euripides' *Andromache* was trembling with age and described himself as being "on the farthest edge of old age" and even being "no more," did not have to wait that long.[141] After burying his grandson, Neoptolemus, in Delphi, the ancient man already on the verge of death was told by the divine Thetis, his former spouse, "As for yourself, so that you may feel grateful for your marriage with me, I will release you from the ills of mortals and make you a *god*, *immortal* and *incorruptible*. And then you shall dwell with me forever in the house of Nereus, god with goddess."[142] That Euripides had Thetis saying that she would explicitly turn Peleus into a *god* was, as we have seen, typical as this was what happened to all those who were immortalized. That Peleus would be made incorruptible, *aphthitos*, was just as important. As immortality was the continuous union of body and soul, to become immortal was literally a question of the flesh becoming incorruptible, to have one's body being given that same perfect physical nature as Zeus, Hera and Athena. Gods were, as we also have seen, repeatedly referred to as incorruptible, *aphthitos*. As the eternal bane of human nature, corruptibility is the process that forever breaks down the human body. Only through becoming incorruptible could the flesh ascertain that the body would forever remain together with the soul. The very flesh would be transformed so that it no longer could fall victim to the ravage of time and decay. As such, Peleus and the other figures who became immortal received the same incorruptibility as that of the divine gods.

There is also a connection between death and immortality apparent with Ino, another deified figure in the *Odyssey*. Ino, as we remember, was the mother of the infant Melicertes whom she in a bout of madness killed by throwing into a boiling cauldron. In the *Odyssey* we meet her immortalized as the goddess Ino Leucothea, as Odysseus is left helpless on a makeshift raft drifting around in the great Oceanus. "But the daughter of Cadmus, saw him, the beautiful-ankled Ino Leucothea, who previously had been a mortal of human speech, but now in the salt sea had got a share of honor from the gods."[143] This clearly physical figure, who climbed up from the water to sit beside Odysseus on his decrepit vessel,[144] is herself explicitly called a goddess, *thea*.[145] Obviously, something must have happened after she threw herself in the sea. From

Pindar we learn how Ino was "for all time allotted an incorruptible life in the ocean between the daughters of Nereus."[146] Pseudo-Apollodorus indicates how the transformation from mortal to immortal happened. After throwing herself into the surf carrying her dead child, "she herself is called Leucothea."[147] Apparently her immortalization took place the moment she otherwise would have drowned. Her dead son, as we have already seen, was resurrected simultaneously as the lesser deity Palaemon.

The remarkable fate of Ino Leucothea was not soon forgotten. In the second century A.D. Pausanias tells of a place by the coast, a bit north of the Messenian city of Corone, that in his time was still sacred to Ino because this was where she was said to have come up from the sea "after her divinity had been accepted and her name changed to Leucothea."[148]

The fate of Bolina and Hylas, and perhaps also that of Glaucus and Britomartis, paralleled that of Ino Leucothea. Bolina was a maiden who threw herself into the sea when being pursued by Apollo. As the god was not one to be dissuaded because the object of his desire seems to have drowned herself, Bolina "became immortal thanks to Apollo."[149] Conspicuously absent from most sources, Bolina remained a rather local deity, giving the name to a small city on the coast of Achaia. Pausanias, of course, took his readers to the point where Bolina leaped into the sea, close to that which at his time was only the ruins of the city bearing her name.

Heracles' young lover Hylas was also immortalized as he was about to drown in a spring, where he had gone to fetch water on a brief stop during the Argonaut expedition. Theocritus tells how a number of enamored nymphs, "dread goddesses," all clung to the poor boy's arm and made him "fall headlong into the dark water."[150] As one of the nymphs attempted to kiss Hylas, Apollonius of Rhodes recounts how the loving caress of the goddess-nymph turned into a lethal embrace dragging the young boy into the dark eddy.[151] Three times Hylas tried to answer the cries of his fellow Argonauts searching for him, but as "his voice came thin from under the water, although being very near, it seemed far away."[152] Under the surface, the nymphs, on the other hand, tried to comfort the weeping lad.[153] In fact, he had little reason to be sad. Pulled down into the water with his entire body, Hylas was at a point beyond drowning, miraculously breathing in the wet element as some other divinity. Not knowing what had happened to Hylas, the other Argonauts were greatly distressed by their loss of one of their sailors until the lesser deity Glaucus appeared out of the sea, bidding

them not to tarry as "a goddess-nymph through love has made Hylas her husband."[154] This was consequently how "the fairest Hylas was to be numbered among the blessed."[155]

Britomartis of Crete was another young woman who was turned into a goddess. Delighting in running and in hunting, she was apparently immortalized after throwing herself into some fishing nets when fleeing from an enamored Minos. "She was made a goddess by Artemis," Pausanias simply informs us. As a once mortal girl becoming a goddess "she is worshipped not only by the Cretans but also by the Aeginetans, who say that Britomartis shows herself in their island."[156] How exactly her deification took place is not known, but we cannot rule out that this happened as she, too, was about to drown haplessly intertwined in fishing nets.

Close to the Boeotian city of Anthedon the Hellenistic tourist could visit a precipice by the sea called the Leap of Glaucus. As the diligent guide, Pausanias readily informs of the beliefs connected to this site: "That Glaucus was a fisherman, who when eating of the grass was turned into a deity of the sea and has ever since foretold men the future, is a belief generally accepted."[157] Strabo, on the other hand, more simply maintained that Glaucus was "said to have changed into a *ketos*, a sea-monster."[158] This is not a claim that in any way contradicts the immortalization of Glaucus, as he, like many other deities in the sea, was frequently considered to have a fish-tail. More remarkable is the assertion of Pausanias and Nonnus that it was eating the grass that had made Glaucus immortal. This is a unique event, and we cannot rule out that earlier sources could have considered this fisherman to have been immortalized as we was about to drown in the ocean, similar to what happened to Ino, Hylas, and Bolina. This immortalized fisherman, is not to be confused with the other Glaucus, that young son of Minos who was resurrected by Asclepius or Polyidus. Whereas Minos' son did not become immortal, Glaucus the fisherman would become a rather popular sea deity, showing up, for example as we just saw, in the story of the Argonauts.[159]

Also Menelaus' niece Iphigenia became immortal in a way where death in some way was involved. The ancient authorities disagree on what actually happened to the maiden, but up to a point they all tell the same story. To secure the winds necessary to carry the Achaean fleet over to Troy, Agamemnon had his daughter brought to the altar of Artemis in order to sacrifice her.[160] According to Aeschylus and Sophocles, Iphigenia was truly sacrificed, dying on her father's bidding.[161] In Euripides' *Electra* we learn how Agamemnon killed his

daughter himself, "stretching Iphigenia out above an altar, he slit her pale white throat."[162] Hesiod, however, claimed that Iphigenia was not at all killed, but by the will of Artemis, was transformed into the goddess Hecate.[163] Whereas we do not learn how Iphigenia was deified in Hesiod, in the epic *Cypria* Artemis intervened herself as Iphigenia was about to be sacrificed. The goddess "snatched her away and translated her to the Taurians and made her immortal," putting a deer on the altar instead.[164] In other words, Iphigenia was immortalized just as she was going to be slain in sacrifice. Pausanias also refers to this happening, when he describes the temple of Artemis, which in his time was found in Aulis.[165] In the end of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, in a plot either narrated by Euripides himself or some later editor,[166] Iphigenia is again immortalized and replaced by a deer. "Your daughter has clearly flown away to the gods," a messenger reports to the mother. "She is in the company of gods," her father happily reports, as his original plans of sacrificing his own daughter had been thwarted by the gods through their direct intervention.[167]

Dionysus is usually remembered today as just one of the most powerful Greek deities, but conceived in the union of Zeus and a mortal woman, Dionysus was himself originally no god but a mortal. Both Plutarch and Origen referred to how people considered Dionysus a mortal who had become a god.[168] "Precisely at what point the mortal-born Dionysus became a full-fledged god," however, "is not certain," as the classics scholar Edward Tripp remarks.[169] Like what was the case with so many others, Dionysus' immortalization may also have happened in a close encounter with death, as this could have taken place when he as a foetus was rescued from the body of his dying mother who caught fire when witnessing Zeus in his true form and complete glory.[170] On the sixth-century B.C. throne in Amyclea there was even an image of how Dionysus apparently was deified. According to Pausanias this throne depicted "Hermes bringing the infant Dionysus to heaven."[171] It is likely that this was the premature babe just rescued from the womb of his dead mother and about to be sewn into the thigh of his divine father Zeus.[172] The way this scene on the throne in Amyclea was found side by side with a depiction of Athena "taking Heracles to dwell with the gods," an unequivocal act of deification, supports the case of this really being an illustration of the immortalization of Dionysus. Dionysus, who with his human mother was *conceived* as a mortal, would in this way, when finally delivered from the thigh of Zeus, be *born* an immortal. This also offers an explanation to Hesiod's unusual claim about a

mortal woman getting an immortal son, when referring to Semele and Dionysus.[173]

Although the Greek emphasis tended to put more stress on the process of immortalization, than on the resurrection, we have found that on a number of times people were immortalized as they were raised from the dead. Although not resurrected, the fate of these other figures, who were made immortal apparently the moment they otherwise would have died, seems also closely related to the fate of those who were explicitly resurrected. About to die either by old age, drowning, sacrifice, or some other cause, Menelaus, Helen, Peleus, Cadmus, Ino, Hylas, Bolina, Iphigenia, Dionysus, and, according to some, Polydeuces, merely touched upon death before they were all made physically immortal.

Achieving Immortality through Death

Although not everybody who was raised from the dead became immortal, many did. Others who merely reached a point they normally would have died were also immortalized. Obviously, death often played a part in the procedure of immortalization. That death was sometimes considered an actual *means* to achieve physical immortality can also be seen from some unsuccessful attempts to make someone immortal.

Looking back to their most murky past, the Greeks could find dramatic accounts about female figures trying to render children deathless by almost killing them. In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* we learn how Demeter in the guise of an old crone took the position as a nurse in the royal household in Eleusis. Here the goddess decided she would make the royal baby, Demophoön, "immortal and unaging forever." Instead of nourishing him at the breast, Demeter would by day "anoint him with ambrosia as if he were the offspring of a god and breath sweetly upon him as she held him in her bosom. At night she would hide him like a brand in the fire."[174] Pseudo-Apollodorus only mentions the fire, not the ambrosia.[175] Either way, as a result of this extraordinary treatment, the very flesh of Demophoön changed and he "grew beyond his age." Indeed, he became "like the gods face to face."[176] The story makes it quite clear that this was no case of metaphors. Worried because of the unlikely growth of her son, the royal mother spied on the old nurse, and finding that her child was put in the midst of the fire she cried out in terror. The queen's intervention terminated the process of immortalization, and an enraged Demeter immediately took

the babe from the fire, threw him on the floor, furiously telling the royal mother, "I would have made the dear child immortal and unaging forever . . . but now he can in no way escape death and the fates."[177] According to Pseudo-Apollodorus, the mother interrupting the goddess lead to even more dire consequences as the babe simply "was killed by the fire."[178] To put children in the flames is no trivial matter.

In the first century A.D. Plutarch repeated this story, with the difference being that he connected the procedure to the Egyptian goddess Isis, who was often identified with Demeter, and another royal child.[179] In a similar account the goddess Thetis was also interrupted in her attempt to make an infant immortal, in this case her own son Achilles. Apollonius of Rhodes told how Thetis at night would encompass "the child's mortal flesh in the night with the fiery flames." "By day she anointed his tender body with ambrosia so that he could become immortal and that she might keep hateful old age from his body." It was her husband, Peleus, who put an end to his wife's activities. Having hidden himself, "he saw his dear son gasping in the flames" and intervened. The infant survived although Thetis, just like Demeter, threw him screaming to the ground.[180] Actually, at this point Thetis had almost managed to make the flesh of Achilles immortal by the means of ambrosia and lethal fire. Only the heel remained when Peleus discovered the baby in the flames and stopped Thetis from completing the procedure.

Not everybody was so sure about the abilities of Thetis. According to Ptolemy Hephaestion around 100 A.D., Thetis was not at all in control. In this version she had just managed to burn one foot of Achilles as Peleus terminated the process. As it had been destroyed by the fire, a particular bone in Achilles' foot was replaced by that of an exhumed giant. According to this version, Achilles' extraordinary vulnerability in his heel was actually due to his mother trying to make him immortal in the fire. Regardless of whether Thetis had exposed all of the body except the foot, or just a foot to the fire, the father had sufficient reason to be concerned. As Ptolemy informs us, Thetis burned all their six other children to death.[181] Lycophron confirms this story, telling how Achilles "out of seven children" was the only one "who escaped the fiery ashes."[182] In a desperate attempt to make her mortal offspring immortal, the divine mother killed all of her other children, having them one by one succumbing in the flames, a dire accomplishment also documented by the scholiast to Aristophanes.[183]

The ancient author of the *Aegimius* presents another but no less dramatic version of what Achilles suffered as an infant. Thetis threw "the

children she had by Peleus into a cauldron of water because she wanted to know whether they were mortal." The boiling water proved that they all were exactly that.[184] Perhaps she hoped that her child would be resurrected to immortality after having been boiled to death, as what was the case with Melicertes, the more fortunate son of Ino.[185] Whatever Thetis' intention, all of her boiled children just remained dead. In yet another version first known from Statius' first-century A.D. epic, *Achilleid*, Thetis went to the infernal river of Styx in order to make her son physically immortal.[186] As Styx was a point of no return for everyone who died, death functions again as a means to immortality. Dipping the child in the river was apparently all that was necessary to immortalize it. Apparently, Thetis held her son in the heel as she lowered him into the water, thus explaining why this would remain his only vulnerable spot. A fourth-century A.D. silver plate found in Augusta Rarica in modern Switzerland depicts this exact scene.[187] This river-dipping may at first seem like an incredibly easy way to escape death, but then we forget how difficult it is for mortals to reach this river in Hades before it is to late and we are nothing but dead and disembodied souls.

According to the seventh- or eighth-century B.C. poet Eumelus, Medea, too, killed her children in an attempt to immortalize them. "Medea, as her children were born, carried each to the sanctuary of Hera and concealed them, believing that to hide them like this they would be immortal. At last she learned her hopes were in vain."[188] How exactly Medea's children died is unclear, but we are still left with a close connection between death and immortality.

No attempt to immortalize children by almost killing them is attested in historical times; it is obvious that this was not anything Greeks in general considered an option in either classical or Hellenistic times. Still, this connection between death and immortality exhibited in these dramatic incidents somehow reflects the much more widespread belief in a connection between resurrection and immortality. As these methods for infant immortality were never tried out outside the most mythical of eras, they may be considered an extreme mythical display of the fundamental Greek conviction that physical immortality was the best human existence possible.

The Gods Who Were Not Resurrected

Anyone who suggests a connection between the Christian idea of the resurrection and any Greek ideas is frequently, and often immediately,

connected with one of the most influential twentieth-century figures in the history of mythological interpretation, Sir James Frazer. With his typically innovative use of mythical material, Frazer argued that Greek religion operated with a number of *gods* who *repeatedly* died and were resurrected. This claim, as pointed out by a number of scholars, is probably not at all correct.[189] In spite of the many humans who were resurrected from the dead and subsequently deified, there is no unequivocal example of anyone who *initially* was a god fared similarly. There is certainly no example of anyone at all who died and was resurrected on a regular basis.

The prime example of Frazer is Adonis, whose worship, he argued, "the Greeks borrowed" from the Semitic peoples "as early as the seventh century before Christ."[190] Indeed, Frazer maintained, under various names in the eastern Mediterranean Adonis was the personification of "the yearly decay and revival of life, especially of vegetable life," "a *god* who annually died and rose again from the dead."[191]

The main problem with Frazer's presentation is that the Greek Adonis was no god at all. He was just a mortal boy to whom both Aphrodite and Persephone were attracted. The first time we hear of the beautiful youth, Hesiod made him the son of the Phoenix and Alphesiboea, at least later defined as a royal couple from Phoenicia.[192] Most other sources made Adonis the incestuous offspring of the eastern princess Smyrna or Myrrha and her father.[193] Either way, Adonis' state as a normal, but exceptionally handsome, mortal boy is beyond any speculation. To be born immortal one had, as we have seen, to have two immortal parents. No one ever claimed that any of Adonis' parents were divine. Even the way Theocritus referred to Adonis as a demigod or *hêmitheos* does not indicate any divinity. This term was frequently used on valiant figures of yore, who were just as mortal as Adonis turned out to be. Hesiod referred to the two entire generations who died fighting around Thebes and Troy as *hêmitheoi*.[194]

If Adonis actually at some point was believed to have been resurrected, he could, of course, have become a god, like all these other men and women who were raised from the dead and immortalized. It is important to keep this in mind, especially as we recall how powerful deities like Asclepius, Heracles, and at least one of the Dioscuri all had been resurrected. But none of them died as gods, but as mortal men. They only *achieved* divinity after this brief encounter with death.

With the Greeks considering so many mortals to have been raised from the dead and subsequently immortalized, Frazer really made an odd choice by putting his main focus on Adonis. Whereas Frazer

presented Adonis as an important figure "who annually died and rose again,"[195] there is no indication whatsoever of his being resurrected before the second century A.D. All the most ancient sources only mention his death.[196]

In a poem, Theocritus proclaimed, "Dear Adonis, you alone of demigods, as they say, visits both earth and Acheron [one of the rivers of Hades]."[197] As Pseudo-Apollodorus explains to us, this was because he had to divide his time between Aphrodite and Persephone, who were both in love with him. Going from one goddess to another he was one of many mortals who indulged in the erotic company of gods. It is not possible to see his annual visits to Persephone in Hades as representing an annual cycle of death and resurrection. Adonis' returns from his infernal visits were really no examples of resurrection, but an event parallel to how a number of other men like Odysseus, Heracles, Orpheus, and Theseus, went to Hades while still alive.[198] Adonis did not go on forever paying limited visits to the land of the dead either. After some time he was killed by a boar.[199] As Jonathan Z. Smith points out, "Adonis' alternation between the upper and lower worlds *precedes* his death."[200] His trips between earth and Hades ceased when he died. And as none of the goddesses tried to raise him after his death, Adonis simply remained dead. That was the end of the story. There was, in other words, little reason to rejoice. And the Greeks did not. As Ovid made Aphrodite herself stress, the festival is only an eternal remembrance of her grief. "Every year your death repeated in the hearts of men shall reenact my grief and my lament."[201]

The Adonia, the festival connected to the death of the popular youth gives, indeed, little reason to believe that the Greeks held that Adonis was resurrected. Pausanias only referred to how "the Argive women bewail Adonis."[202] When the arrival of the emperor Julian in Antioch in 361 A.D. coincided with celebration of the Adonia, this was seen as a bad omen due to the funerary character of the festival.[203] It is also difficult to see the seeds sown in this festival as any allegory of resurrection. The young plants were either left to whither in the scorching summer sun after having sprouted for eight days, or were simply thrown into the sea or into wells.[204] Emperor Julian even used the garden of Adonis as a metaphor of a futile project.[205] Indeed, as the French classics scholar Marcel Detienne points out, "From Plato to Simplicus an entire tradition condemns the Adonian gardens for being cultures without crops and essentially sterile."[206]

It is only when that handsome Greek lad is identified with the Near Eastern god Tammuz, that Adonis himself is called a god and there is

any indication of his resurrection. Frazer's whole theory of Adonis as a resurrected Greek god is based on late texts drawing such parallels, as for example this third-century A.D. passage of Origen:

> The god whom the Greeks call Adonis is called Tammuz, as they say, among the Jews and among the Syrians . . . It seems that certain sacred ceremonies take place each year. First he is bewailed as though he had ceased to live, and secondly there is rejoicing on his behalf *as if he were* resurrected from the dead. Those who pride themselves on interpreting the myths of the Greeks and what is called mythic theology say that Adonis is the symbol of the fruits of earth that are mourned when they are sown but whose growth is a cause of joy for those who cultivate them.[207]

Even this text gives no proof of belief in Adonis' resurrection, as it really only *compares* Adonis' fate to a resurrection in order to explain how the mourning is followed by joy "*as if he were* resurrected." Jonathan Z. Smith remarks on these late texts that "whether this represents an *interpretatio Christiana* or whether late third- and fourth-century forms of the Adonis cult themselves developed a dying and rising mythology (possibly in imitation of the Christian myth) cannot be determined."[208]

That Origen talks of something that may be interpreted as a resurrection of a god when referring to the Semitic deity Tammuz may not at all be accidental. Lucian of Samosata, too, in his second-century A.D. description of a feast in honor of Tammuz in the Syro-Phoenician city of Byblos, referred to how the locals after having mourned his death, "claim that he lives and send him into the air."[209] Taking a new look at some of the material of the ancient Near East, Tryggve Mettinger comes to the conclusion that Frazer was not all wrong. Convincingly, Mettinger argues that the Semitic gods of Baal and Melqart must be considered to have died and returned to life,[210] although he still finds "insurmountable difficulties for the conclusion that Adonis was a dying and rising deity."[211] The Norwegian scholar of religion Ulla Heli points out that also the Sumerian goddess of Inana must be considered to have been resurrected from the dead.[212] But here, of course, we are veering far off the track. The way these recent studies have demonstrated that ancient Near Eastern mythology, indeed, supports parts of Frazer's great scheme is of little consequence to Greek beliefs.

Although not originally a Greek figure, Phrygian Attis belonged in the mythology around the mighty goddess Cybele who in Hellenistic times got quite a following. He, too, was, according to Frazer "a god

of vegetation" whose "death and resurrection were annually mourned and rejoiced over."[213] But as Jonathan Z. Smith points out, Attis was, just like Adonis, "not a deity at all."[214] Attis was in fact just another beautiful young mortal who died after having an intimate relationship with a powerful deity. Pausanias relates that some considered Attis to have been killed by a boar, just like Adonis.[215] Others believed that he died after becoming mad and castrating himself.[216] There is no mention ever of his resurrection, but Zeus granted "that the body of Attis should neither rot at all nor decay."[217]

Frazer also considered the Egyptian god Osiris a deity who died and was resurrected.[218] Osiris was, of course, never part of a Greek pantheon but his general popularity in the Hellenistic realm makes it relevant to look closer at what beliefs were connected to him. After Osiris was killed and dismembered, his wife and sister Isis recovered and rejoined his limbs, after which he became the ruler of the dead. This, as Jonathan Z. Smith remarks about the ancient Egyptian version, "most certainly . . . was never conceived as an annual event. The repeated formula 'Rise up, you have not died,' whether applied to Osiris or a citizen of Egypt, signalled a new, permanent life in the realm of the dead."[219] There was no question here of an immortal physical existence either, as we know it from Greek tradition. Osiris was, instead, "the mythical prototype for the distinctive Egyptian process of mummification," a preservation of the body that assured a future existence of the dead soul.[220] In his famous Hellenized version of this story, Plutarch did not talk of any physical resurrection of Osiris either, claiming instead that the "traditional result of Osiris' dismemberment is that there are many so-called tombs of Osiris in Egypt; for Isis held a funeral for each part when she had found it."[221] When Osiris later returned from the dead to instruct his son Horus, he therefore did not come back with his original body.[222]

In a typically Greek manner, Diodorus of Sicily does not treat Osiris as a god before his death. He is instead merely a powerful king. It was only after his death that Isis, then as queen, ordered the priests "that they pay Osiris the honors of a god."[223] But according to this version too, Osiris remained very much dead.

In his refutation of Frazer's Greek "dying and resurrecting gods," Jonathan Z. Smith for some reason did not discuss Frazer's claim that Dionysus was among these deities. Frazer's argument actually concerned only the *Orphic* Dionysus. In our case it is therefore important to keep this Orphic deity distinct from the Olympian Dionysus. Though essentially the same deity, the beliefs held among the Orphics

on Dionysus were decidedly different from what the more traditionally inclined Greeks, classical or Hellenistic, believed about this originally mortal man who had become one of the most powerful gods in the Olympian pantheon.

It is, nevertheless, difficult to see this deity who played such a significant role in Orphic beliefs as a resurrected deity either. When we look closer at the Orphic Dionysus, who Frazer claimed "was believed to have died a violent death, but to have been brought back to life again,"[224] we find that he was really reincarnated—not bodily resurrected. As Diodorus of Sicily pointed out in the first century B.C., there were some mythographers who proclaimed that Dionysus was not just one figure but "that there were three persons (*hypostêsamenoi*) at different periods, and to each of these they ascribe separate deeds."[225] After each time he died, the Orphic Dionysus was not resurrected but *born* again. The result was, as H.S. Long observes, a "belief in transmigration, not resurrection in the proper sense."[226] The fifth-century A.D. mythographer Nonnus only operated with two Dionysuses,[227] but there was still no question of bodily continuity. Dionysus was the twice born, *dissotokoio*.[228]

Later on the beliefs in the dismembered Orphic Dionysus are also found in slightly different context. In the first century Diodorus of Sicily also claimed that some held that Dionysus, like Pelops, Jason, and Aeson, was boiled by Demeter, "after which the body parts were reassembled by Demeter and born again from the beginning."[229] In the middle of the fourth century A.D. Julian, the last Pagan emperor, similarly referred to "the legend that Dionysus was rent asunder and his limbs joined together again."[230] This is something quite different from the original Orphic beliefs about a soul that is repeatedly reincarnated. Here the story apparently has been influenced both by the ideas of people being cut up and rejuvenated like Pelops, and by the myth about Osiris being reassembled by Isis. The latter connection becomes just the more obvious when we recall how Osiris and Isis were frequently identified with Dionysus and Demeter. Just the same, the result is that Diodorus and Julian refer to something that *may* be a story about a dying and resurrected god, but it can also be the case that Dionysus did not really die at all when being cut up, as we saw with the immortal cattle of Helius, which survived being both slaughtered and dismembered.[231] It could also be the case that the cutting up and subsequent reassembling of Dionysus was considered the way the mortal son of Semele became divine in the first place. This is what is suggested by Justin Martyr, who compared Dionysus being "torn limb from limb"

with how Asclepius "was struck by a thunderbolt, and so ascended to heaven" and with how Heracles offered "himself to the flames," two unquestionable examples of mortal men being immortalized.[232]

A Question of Space

A number of men and women who were raised from the dead were simultaneously made physically immortal. But as we have seen, resurrection was still no certain way to immortality. Considering the countless number of people who never achieved anything but an eternal existence as a disembodied soul in Hades, one can certainly not assume that an encounter with death alone led to immortal life. Of course, most people who encountered death simply died. Not even everybody who was resurrected gained immortality, many only returned to an ordinary mortal existence. On the other hand, several people, who merely touched upon death, received physical immortality. How come that people fared so differently?

If we look closer at all these figures who achieved immortality, either after being resurrected or after just having a brush with death, we find one decisive factor common to all them: Space. Everybody who became immortalized was at the same time transferred away from the ordinary geographic realm of mortals to some distant part of the universe. Achilles, Memnon, Menelaus, Helen, Cadmus, the two Ajaxes, Patroclus, and Antilochus, all went to various fantastic places at the ends of the earth, Leuce, Elysium, or the Islands of the Blessed. Melicertes, Ino Leucothea, Peleus, Glaucus, Bolina, and Britomartis became deities in the ocean, whereas Hylas found immortality in the waters of a lake. Heaven, the abode of the Olympian gods, received Heracles, Asclepius, Semele, Dionysus, Alcmene, and, according to some, Iphigenia. Rhesus remained forever hidden in the earth as a subterranean deity. Slightly more originally, Castor and Polydeuces shifted between being in heaven and under the earth. We never learn where Aristeas of Proconnesus went, but he was definitely removed from the sphere of ordinary mortals when he not himself chose to reappear like some *deus ex machina*, the gods who intervened miraculously in the end of so many tragedies.

What difference space made is clearly demonstrated in the story about Pelops, who, as we remember, was raised from the dead younger and more beautiful than ever. Like so many other people who were resurrected, he, too, died in the end. But this is far from the whole

story. According to Pindar, an enamored Poseidon brought Pelops to the divine abode of Zeus immediately after his resurrection.[233] As such the fate of Pelops seems very much parallel to a number of other resurrected figures who were translated to various places apart from a proper human geography and subsequently immortalized. Swept away to Olympus, the young boy "was seen no more," simply because he now dwelled body and soul among the gods.[234] But, alas, after a short time among the Olympians, Pelops was sent back again by the gods to dwell "among the shortlived race of men."[235] The return to the geographic realm of humans was not only a question of logistics, it meant that Pelops once more became just another ordinary mortal, moribund and forever severed from the possibility of physical immortality. When Poseidon spirited Pelops away to the abode of the gods, the resurrected boy had, indeed, been made immortal. As Pseudo-Lucian pointedly remarks, "For Pelops is said to *have shared* the immortality with the gods,"[236] he was only immortal *for a while*. To *remain* immortal he must have continued to dwell either in this divine sphere or in some other area removed from ordinary humans. Sent back to the land of the living he became once again mortal, and, in the end, died.[237]

The Greeks were familiar with certain exceptional people achieving physical immortality, but they did not expect to continuously meet these deified persons in their own neighborhood. Those who became immortal were understood to leave the mortal realm where they no longer belonged, going to distant places where mortals did not belong. Only for brief moments could these men and women turned gods come back and visit the human sphere they had left behind.

As demonstrated by Pelops' change from mortal to immortal, and back to mortal again, none of these other figures who returned from death without leaving the human geography achieved immortality. The resurrected man or woman who simply returned to the land of the living, returned at the same time to mortality. Even those who seem to have achieved some kind of perfect state in their encounter with death soon lost their luster when having to dwell once again among ordinary mortals.

The effect of the food of the immortals seems to have been similarly limited by the aspects of space. Tantalus, the father who cut up his son Pelops, stole ambrosia from the gods and gave to his drinking companions.[238] Nowhere is there any indication that Tantalus' pals lived forever as the ambrosia apparently had no lasting effect when provided to people who remained in the spatial restrictions of the human realm. Tantalus himself, on the other hand, actually dwelled among the

gods for some time, where they, according to Pindar, "had made him incorruptible" by the means of "nectar and ambrosia."[239] But as he was thrown out of heaven, Tantalus, too, became mortal once again, died, and ended up eternally punished in Hades.[240]

Aristaeüs represents a more complicated case. As an infant he was, according to Pindar, taken from his mother's breast and given to the divine Seasons and Gaia who would "gently nurse the babe upon their knees, and on his lips distil ambrosia and nectar and make him immortal."[241] But as this diet ceased, Aristaeüs would return to the human realm and as such seems to have become mortal once again acting pretty much like any other great man of yore, founding cities, keeping bees, marrying, and fathering children. In the end he would nevertheless end up a god, but this again only happened as he was again removed from the spatial realm of mortals.[242]

According to Pausanias, the fisherman Glaucus really became immortal by eating a certain kind of grass by the seashore.[243] But his immortalization happened simultaneously with leaving the mortal realm for the wet and definitely inhuman realm of the deep sea. Again we find space playing a decisive factor. Even if it was the grass that really made Glaucus immortal in the first place, he must just the same leave the mortal realm the moment he became immortal. That large numbers of people never ventured to the same precipice by the sea to eat of this wonderworking grass demonstrates that this was not just a question of diet.

But the consequence of space was not all bad news. Just as living in a human geography would keep you mortal, to be translated alive to some of these remote places was frequently considered sufficient to achieve immortality. Why go through the agony of death if you did not have to? The *Odyssey* offers a good depiction of how space mattered in the question of immortality. Having lost all his comrades in the depth of the sea, Odysseus found his way to the remote island of Ogygia somewhere in the middle of the Oceanus, far away from any proper human geography. Here he was welcomed by the goddess Calypso, who gave him a rare offer: "She said," Odysseus recounted, "that she would make me immortal and ageless for all days."[244] As Odysseus declined the offer, we never learn how exactly the goddess planned to perform this transformation. It is, however, clear that immortalization equaled spending eternity with Calypso in this remote spot in the ocean. It was Odysseus' longing for his homeland and his family that made him refuse Calypso's offer. Just as the distant geography of Ogygia was one of the factors that made it possible for him to achieve immortality, he

was aware that as a god it was not possible for him to resume his ordinary life in his dear native island of Ithaca. Mortality and immortality were mutually exclusive states of existence. As an immortal god you could not settle among mortal men.

As we have seen, not everybody believed that Iphigenia flew away "to the gods"[245] when immortalized. According to the epic *Cypria*, Artemis snatched Iphigenia "and translated her to the Taurians and made her immortal."[246] Although later sources place the Taurians by the northern Black Sea, it is unlikely that the author of the *Cypria* believed that this fantastic people lived so close by; it is more likely that the original land of Taurians was something more akin to the wondrous places of Elysium and the Islands of the Blessed. As I have argued previously, miraculous places that originally defied any real sense of space, like most of the places on the route of both Odysseus and the Argonauts, were gradually in classical and Hellenistic time identified with actual places that can be easily found on maps.[247] It is, nevertheless, a remarkable point that Iphigenia, immortalized, was translated to another *people*, something that gives reason to speculate whether the Taurians were themselves immortal. The Hyperboreans, another people living in the absolute periphery of the world, which one could reach "neither by ship nor by land,"[248] were obviously considered immortal by some. Pindar explains how they live free from "toil and conflict," far removed from even the "severe justice of Nemesis" they are untouched by both "sickness" and "baneful old age."[249] Whereas Callimachus only referred to the Hyperboreans as a "very long-living race,"[250] Strabo, on the other hand, reduced the life span of this wonderful people to a bit more than a thousand years,[251] thus giving them a similar fate as nymphs who were often seen as only close to immortal.

The way that at least the distant Hyperboreans were considered immortal, or close to it, represents another example of to what degree the Greeks traditionally saw a connection between space and immortality. The most remote parts of the Greek world were generally inhabited with peoples blurring the division between mortals and immortals. While the Hyperboreans inhabited the ultimate North, superhuman Ethiopians lived in the ultimate South, and Phaeacians, the people who were "near kin to the gods,"[252] somewhere in the far West. Both Ethiopians and Phaeacians are described by Homer as frequently feasting directly with the immortal gods,[253] an interaction that again questions the mortal nature of these peoples. When describing the Ethiopians as a people that, although with extreme difficulties, actually could be reached by outsiders, Herodotus still describes them

as clearly superhuman, living at least to the age of 120 while their dead bodies remained incorruptible.[254]

This connection between distant geography, incorruptibility, physical immortality, or, at least, extremely long age, remained a factor in the Greek worldview far into the Christian era. Various other remarkably long-living peoples were continuously identified in the geographical periphery, like Ctesias' Cynocephali or Dogheads who could get up to 200 years old,[255] Iambulus' people in the Island of the Sun who normally reached an age of 150,[256] and the millenarian Macrobians in the *Orphic Argonautica*.[257] In the fourth century A.D. these beliefs seem to have influenced some of the descriptions of Christian ascetics living in the wilderness, achieving miraculously extreme old age, and something close to incorruptibility as well.[258]

Swept Away to Immortality

Although Odysseus declined the offer of immortality, we have in no way exhausted the number of people who according to the Greeks achieved physical immortality simply by leaving the spatial confines of the ordinary human realm. Indeed, the number of men and women who became immortal, either through resurrection or through another experience bringing them close to death, is dwarfed by the number of people deified without this taking place. Calypso was, for example, not the only one Odysseus met on his journeys who was able to make people immortal. On the equally distant island of Aeaea Odysseus visited the goddess Circe, an encounter that according to other sources than Homer resulted in the son Telegonus.[259] In the sixth-century B.C. epic *Telegony*, Odysseus was accidentally killed on his native island Ithaca by this son, after which Telegonus "transports his father's body with Penelope [Odysseus' famously patient wife] and Telemachus [the son of Penelope and Odysseus] to the island of his mother [Circe], where she makes them immortal."[260] There was here no question of resurrection. As Telegonus subsequently marries Penelope (and Telemachus Circe) it is clear that Odysseus, Penelope's original husband, was not among those who Circe immortalized. He just remained dead. In Pseudo-Apollodorus' rendering of this story, only Telegonus and Penelope are immortalized as "Circe sent them both away to the Islands of the Blessed."[261]

The largest number of people being transferred to some distant place for physical immortality is referred to by Hesiod. After first telling how

a great part of an entire generation was killed in the wars at Thebes and Troy, the poet relates how Zeus gave the rest of this generation

> a living and abode apart from humans and made them dwell at the ends of the earth. And they dwell untouched by sorrow in the Islands of the Blessed along the shore of the deep swirling Oceanus, happy heroes for whom the grain-giving earth bears honey-sweet fruit flourishing thrice a year, far away, near the immortals, and Cronus rules over them.[262]

For Hesiod, we must remember, being a hero meant nothing more than being one of that bellicose generation. They were just as much heroes before they were immortalized as after. But as those ferocious warriors now lived forever they had in fact become immortal. Now they were gods.

According to the *Iliad*, Ganymede, "who was born the most beautiful of mortal men," was taken away by the gods "because of his beauty so that he could dwell with the immortals" and serve as "the cupbearer of Zeus."[263] In the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* it is Zeus himself who snatched away Ganymede "because of his beauty."[264] Pindar particularly stressed how Zeus took the young man with him because he was so very much in love with him.[265] "Zeus took away the boy to where he would enjoy his company for all time," Pseudo-Lucian remarks.[266] Early artistic depictions show Ganymede pursued by Zeus looking like his own humanoid self,[267] but later on Zeus would either take form of an eagle himself, or employ such a bird, to catch his object of desire. Not afraid to be explicit, Sophocles described how Ganymede in heaven would be "warming the royal power of Zeus with his thighs."[268] It is difficult to be more literal than this in one's emphasis of the physical nature of this abduction. It was the flesh of Ganymede Zeus desired, and the god explicitly got what he wanted and made it immortal. Immortal flesh was present in heaven in quite a number of ways.

In the *Odyssey* we learn that Cleitus, a grandson of the famous seer Melampus, was snatched by Eos, "because of his beauty so that he could dwell with the immortals."[269] The wording is exactly the same as in the *Iliad*'s description of Ganymede being taken away by the gods. The *Iliad* also presents us with Tithonus, a son of the Trojan king Laomedon, lying beside Eos on her couch as if he had already been translated by her to her divine abode.[270] According to the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, we learn how the enamored Eos took Tithonus away from his mortal dwelling in the Troad and brought him to her own place "by the streams of Oceanus at the ends of the earth."[271] There Zeus made him

immortal after Eos had beseeched the supreme god to do this favor, not unlike how she later asked him to make their son Memnon immortal.

Cephalus, another beautiful young mortal, is also presented by Hesiod as one of Eos' many lovers.[272] On a sixth century tripod in Lacedaemonian Amyclae, Pausanias witnessed Cephalus being carried away "because of his beauty" by Hemera, not Eos; but where this other goddess brought Cephalus we do not learn.[273] Xenophon merely referred to Cephalus being "carried away by a goddess."[274] Euripides, however, tells how "beautiful-singing Eos once carried off Cephalus *to the gods* because of love."[275] Pseudo-Apollodorus, on the other hand, had Eos translating Cephalus to Syria where she consorted with him before giving birth to Phaëthon.[276] That the Syria referred to here really meant the particular region of the Near East it is today is in no way certain. As Edward Tripp remarks, "Syria also served as a convenient name for all little-known eastern lands . . . and was therefore called the home of Eos, the dawn-goddess."[277] There was in the *Odyssey* also Syrie, a strange island never placed on any map, where there was no hunger or illness, and where death came gently by the shafts of Apollo and Artemis.[278]

Also born mortal because of the originally mortal nature of his father, Phaëthon, the son of Eos and Cephalus, was translated in a similar way by another goddess in love. When he was a beautiful young boy "Aphrodite seized and caught him up and made him a keeper of her shrine by night, a divine god," as Hesiod relates.[279]

Ariadne seems to have fared similarly as Ganymede, Cleitus, Tithonus, Cephalus, and Phaëthon. Hesiod informs us that after Dionysus made this daughter of Minos his wife, Zeus "made her immortal and ageless."[280] Pausanias simply states that Dionysus snatched Ariadne away.[281] In what seems to be an attempt to reconcile various different versions of what happened to Ariadne, the Naxians themselves claimed that there were actually two Ariadnes, one who "was married to Dionysus on Naxos" and another one who died on the island after being abandoned by Theseus.[282]

Known for his legislative and judiciary talents, Rhadamanthys, the brother of King Minos of Crete, already dwelled in Elysium at the time of the Trojan wars, according to the *Odyssey*,[283] He, too, seems to have reached his immortal state as he was translated from the world of ordinary mortals. And again, not everybody agreed. Pseudo-Apollodorus claimed that he instead ended up as a judge in Hades,[284] something that perhaps did not involve any form of physical immortalization.

One should note that in a few instances, immortalization was not connected with the most distant areas but with the wilderness immediately outside the *polis*, the Greek city. This is most of all a reminder that the most important division in the Greek understanding of space was not distance but whether the area was properly cultivated or not, according to Greek standards.[285] As the classics scholar Stephen Scully points out, the walled *polis* was perhaps the most important spatial entity to the Greeks, separating man "from nature's randomness" and creating within its walls "a space that can be called exclusively human."[286] As Aristotle put it, "Man by nature is a being of the *polis*."[287] *Without* the *polis*, man was "either a beast or a god."[288] Without the city, there was in principle nothing that could keep humans from slipping into either bestiality or divinity. As such there was really no essential difference between the most immediate wilderness and the most distant lands. This was one of the reasons why people could be immortalized and remain that way, also just outside the city walls.

Endymion, the legendary founder of Elis, was one of those men who did not go far as he was immortalized. Because of his beauty Zeus offered him "to choose whatever he wanted, and he chose to sleep forever remaining immortal and ageless."[289] This happened simultaneously with his retiring to Mount Latmus right outside Elean Heracleia.[290] According to Callimachus, a Cretan goatherd named Astacides, was carried off similarly by a local nymph to some place apparently not far away from where he had tended his flock, as nymphs were lesser deities inhabiting the immediate wilderness surrounding the human realm of cultivated geography. Callimachus in the end, simply informs us that "now Astacides is divine."[291] Pseudo-Apollodorus refers to how Dionysus similarly translated Ariadne only to Lemnos, another place not too far away but an island often considered a thoroughly outlandish spot, where she, too, consequently could have lived forever.[292]

Contemplating the connection between space and immortality, we must look closer at Hippolytus, the only one of those resurrected by Asclepius who, according to later sources, became immortal. Both Ovid and Virgil claimed that Hippolytus was turned into the god Virbius, forever roaming the wild Italic woodlands close to a path down to Hades.[293] Although we have only Latin references to the deification of Hippolytus, what we find here is still in complete agreement with how such a process often took place according to ancient Greek tradition: a resurrection followed by a geographical translation to an area distinctly removed from the proper human realm. And, again, we find that space is the only factor that makes Hippolytus differ from all these

other figures who were resurrected by Asclepius but who no one ever said became immortal. Although Hippolytus ventured no further than to some wild Italic forest, all the others remained in the properly cultivated geography.

Just as the unambiguous resurrection from the dead, the translation to these places distinct from the mortal realm and a subsequent immortal existence represented a phenomenon that was not limited to the most distant time we today consider mythical. Parallel to how Aristeas of Proconnesus was deified after being resurrected from the dead in the seventh century B.C., there were also historical persons who were suspected of having been made immortal as they were transferred miraculously to various distant places. The fifth-century B.C. poet Bacchylides presents an interesting version of how the Lydian king Croesus left this mortal coil. Defeated by the Persians in 546 B.C., the old king had his men prepare for him a funeral pyre, onto which he mounted himself in the manner of Heracles, together with his daughters. As one of the king's men kindled the pyre, the king and his daughters anticipated nothing but death: "The young girls screamed and threw their hands to their mother, for death foreseen is the most hateful death to man." At this moment when the lethal flames rushed over them, Zeus sent a cloud to quench the flames and then, "carrying the old man together with his slender-ankled daughters, the Delos-born Apollo settled them among the Hyperboreans,"[294] the wondrous people dwelling at the northernmost end of the earth who were said to live without either toil, sickness, or old age.[295] This distant land, which one could reach "neither by ship nor by land,"[296] clearly parallels other supernatural places like Elysium and the Islands of the Blessed where people who were immortalized were brought.[297] Although it is not explicitly stated, Croesus and his daughters thus seem to have achieved something like immortality, after having been saved miraculously from death by the flames.

When the Earth Opens Up

Some of those who were deified were transferred even shorter distances. Also the earth immediately beneath our feet was considered a place where one could live, with both body and soul, forever. We have already seen how Rhesus ended up a "man-god, *anthrôpodaimôn,*" lying "hidden in the caves of the silver-rich land,"[298] and how the deified Dioscuri were considered by many to spend half of their time breathing

beneath the earth, honored by Zeus.[299] But when someone went under the earth, there could be much more drama than this.

As the seer Amphiaraüs was fleeing one of the defenders of Thebes, Pindar relates how Zeus suddenly "cleft the deep breast of the earth with an all-powerful thunderbolt and hid him with his horses before his warlike spirit could be dishonored by his being struck in the back by the spear of Periclymenus."[300] According to Diodorus of Sicily people in the first century B.C. still believed that "the earth opened up," apparently on its own accord, "and he [Amphiaraüs] together with his chariot fell into a chasm and disappeared from sight."[301] "The earth opened up to receive Amphiaraüs," is all what Philostratus had to say about this in the third century A.D.[302] Pseudo-Apollodorus and Pausanias, on the other hand, claimed that Amphiaraüs did not just enter the earth together with his horses but with his charioteer as well.[303] For those who wanted to see for themselves, Pausanias took his readers to the exact spot on the road between Potniae and Thebes where "they think the earth opened to receive Amphiaraüs."[304] The eminent tour guide also refers to rival claims that this really happened in the ruined city of Harma, a name simply meaning "chariot."[305]

One could have suspected that this really meant that Amphiaraüs was led right down to Hades, but when we look closer at the sources we find that this was not at all the case. Euripides described how the gods "by snatching him away alive, chariot and all, into the depths of the earth openly *praise* him."[306] The gods, of course, did not honor anyone by simply dragging him or her down to Hades. Indeed, as Xenophon points out, Amphiaraüs "was honored by the gods with immortality."[307] Amphiaraüs' subterranean translation was how "Zeus made him immortal," according to Pseudo-Apollodorus.[308] Pausanias is equally explicit when relating how the Greeks considered Amphiaraüs a god: "The divinity of Amphiaraüs was first established among the Oropians, from whom afterwards all the Greeks received the cult."[309] Strabo, accordingly, referred to a temple dedicated to Amphiaraüs, close to where he was thought to have gone down into the earth.[310]

Not everybody agreed that Amphiaraüs remained forever under the earth. Strabo, for example, refers to stories about Amphiaraüs only falling out of his chariot or his vehicle simply being crushed as he fled his pursuers.[311] Other times the disagreement did not concern his deification. As Pausanias pointed out, some "say that Amphiaraüs *rose up* after he had become a god,"[312] apparently ascending to a divine existence in some upper realm similar to all those other figures who were taken away by various deities.

Rhesus and Amphiaraüs were in no way the only ones who were deified in this subterranean manner. Just as the legendary Boeotian artisan Trophonius decapitated his own brother, the earth "opened and swallowed him up" as well.[313] That high moral standards at times had little to do with how you fared is thus most ostentatiously demonstrated with Trophonius. As Pausanias points out, the fratricide is among the "humans who are worshipped among the Greeks as gods." Trophonius was one of those deified men and women who "even had cities dedicated to them" as "Lebadeia was dedicated to Trophonius of the Boeotians."[314] For centuries he would reappear in his own oracle in Lebadeia, a mighty deity that would make such an impact on the pious petitioner that he was left temporarily "paralyzed with terror and unconscious both of himself and of his surroundings."[315]

In their appearance both Amphiaraüs and Trophonius demonstrated again how those who were immortalized seem to have kept their flesh. Not only were they taken down body and soul into the ground, but anyone going to their oracles could, as Celsus reported in the second century A.D., chance to "see the gods in human form, appearing clearly and without illusion."[316] Celsus also included the Lydian seer Mopsus among these deified mortals who appeared as gods in human form under the earth,[317] thus indicating that Mopsus, too, was resurrected and deified as a subterranean deity after he and the celebrated warrior Amphilochus slew each other in Mallus in Cilicia.[318] Plutarch referred accordingly to Cilicians revering Mopsus with sacrifices.[319] Celsus suggested a similar fate for Mopsus' killer and victim Amphilochus as well, as he referred to the Acharnians revering him as a god, too.[320] Like Trophonius, both Mopsus and Amphilochus remained active in oracles for centuries.[321]

After taking his own father for a pirate and killing him in Rhodes, Althaemenes, a grandson of Minos, "prayed and was hidden in a chasm."[322] Although we do not learn anything more about Althaemenes, the way he disappeared indicates that this was also some form of subterranean translation. One should perhaps include Caeneus as well among those who in this way ended up as divine figures under the ground. Caeneus was originally a woman who Poseidon turned into an invulnerable male. When he was attacked by a great number of centaurs, they could consequently not harm him physically, even though they continued to bludgeon him with big fir sticks. Instead, as Pindar remarks, "Caeneus passed beneath the earth as he cleft the ground with his foot."[323] Apollonius of Rhodes and Pseudo-Apollodorus tell essentially the same story, and various vases give vivid illustrations of the

centaurs hitting Caeneus with rocks and big trunks, gradually pounding him into the ground.[324] On an early fifth-century B.C. red figure Attic vase of the Cleophrades Painter, we see Caeneus, still fighting, already with his feet planted deep into the ground,[325] while on the equally old vase by the Leningrad Painter and the slightly more recent vases of Polygnotus and the Cleveland Painter, Caeneus has gone down to the waist while continuously brandishing his sword.[326] The author of the *Orphic Argonautica* from as late as the fourth or fifth century A.D. claimed that Caeneus in this way "descended alive among the dead in the depth of the earth."[327] Although there are no other references to any subsequent subterranean existence of Caeneus, the very fact that he was sent alive under the earth makes it just as likely to see his fate as parallel to that of Rhesus, Amphiaraüs, and Trophonius who were definitely deified.

Immortal Misery

As a dismal mirror image of all those fortunate people who were immortalized and translated to wondrous parts of the cosmos, gods could also punish people by giving them immortality combined with a miserable existence. In Homer Odysseus' son Telemachus bewails the fate of his father, as he erroneously believes that "the storm-winds, the *Harpies*, have swept him away and left no tidings. He is gone out of sight, out of hearing, and for me he has left anguish and weeping."[328] We must note that Telemachus does not hold that his father is dead. Being taken away by Harpies really meant something else, as Telemachus exclaims, "For I should not grieve so for his death."[329] This is a fate worse than death. The Harpies certainly did not translate people to a blessed existence as in Leuce or Elysium. But there were still parallels between these very different forms of translations. The *Harpies* were the ones who would *harpazein*, snatch, their unfortunate victims, just like the gods repeatedly would *harpazein* those they wanted to immortalize.[330]

In her longing for her missing husband, Penelope wishes that she herself will be taken away by the storm winds: "Let some furious storm snatch me up and bear me through paths of darkness until it drops me into the mouths of overflowing Oceanus."[331] One could suspect that what Penelope asks for here really equals certain death, but in her misery she also refers to what was presented as the actual fate of the daughters of Pandareüs. These unfortunate girls "the stormwinds, the *Harpies*, swept away and gave to the hateful Erinyes," vengeful

divinities living in some remote region,[332] where the girls would apparently live forever, eternally harassed by their cruel divine mistresses.

The seer Phineus was also among those who were swept away to misery by the awful Harpies. In his lost work *Circuit of the Earth*, Hesiod wrote about how the Harpies brought this hapless man "to the land of the Galactophagi, the Milk-eaters, who have wagons for homes."[333] Here Phineus, too, seems to have suffered some form of perverted immortality, blinded because he revealed to Phrixus the way to distant Aeaea by the end of the earth.[334] Presenting the Harpies as bird-like female monsters, Apollonius of Rhodes identified the place where Phineus was translated with the Thracian wilderness not far from a downward path to Hades.[335] Because of how he unerringly foretold men the sacred will of Zeus, the angry god not only blinded Phineus but sent upon him "ancient old age"[336] and made sure that the Harpies did not just leave the seer to his own devices. The Harpies remained his constant companions and "with their crooked beaks incessantly snatched the food away from his mouth and hands."[337] As he no longer was able to eat, "his limbs trembled of weakness and his parched skin caked with dirt, and only his skin held his bones together."[338] Feeling his way with his hands, the blind man could move only by creeping on the ground.[339] This could hardly be considered to comprise life at all. But the true horror of Phineus' dismal existence was that he was not able to die either. There was really no end to the misery of Phineus. He was doomed to remain like this forever, eternally condemned to this form of nightmarish immortality. It was only when the Argonauts had chased the Harpies away and thus put an end to the curse, that Phineus was able to die. Freed from his immortal misery, his only wish was now that "may the god at once grant me death."[340]

The Harpies were perhaps not the only ones who snatched people away to eternal misery. According to Euripides, the chthonic sphinx did not kill all of her victims either, but brought them instead to some bright pathless region with clearly negative connotations.[341]

Having hubristically boasted about how many more children she had than the goddess Leto, Niobe was also punished with some form of miserable immortal existence. According to the *Iliad*, she not only had to suffer that Apollo and Artemis killed all her numerous children but was translated to some remote place where she would live eternally, forever in agony. "And now somewhere between the rocks, on the lonely mountains, on Mount Sipylus [in Lydia], where, it is said, are the couches of goddesses and nymphs, . . . there on a large stone she broods over her woes sent by the gods."[342] According to Athenagoras,

the Cilicians held that Niobe really had become a goddess, though he says nothing about whether they also believed she suffered forever.[343] As it was one's physical immortality, not the quality of one's existence, that defined whether one was a deity or not, we realize that Niobe really could have ended up as an eternally suffering goddess.

Whereas Homer, as we have seen, just had the immortalized Tithonus lie on a couch besides Eos, most others sources refer to a much more sinister fate. When asking Zeus to make her beloved Tithonus immortal, Eos unfortunately forgot to ask for eternal youth as well. As a result Tithonus grew forever older and feebler,[344] but physically immortal, he could not die or wither away completely. To Tithonus immortality itself became a dreadful curse, as he was never able to escape a body that became forever more decrepit.

Again we witness how literally the Greeks considered immortalization to mean an eternal existence of the flesh. Of no faults of his own, the once beautiful young Tithonus received an immortal fate truly "more wretched than painful death," as the seventh-century B.C. poet Mimnermus put it.[345] Not surprisingly, the goddess's love and interest decreased gradually as the wretched Tithonus became increasingly decrepit. In the end, as we learn from the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, Eos simply "put him in a small room and closed the shining doors. There he babbles endlessly and has no more strength."[346]

A Body Vanishes

When the beautiful young boy Ganymede was immortalized by Zeus, his father Tros was at first in no way rejoicing. Quite the opposite. The father's utter despair is clearly depicted in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*: "The heart of Tros was filled with insufferable grief, for he did not know where the monstrous stormwind had snatched up his dear son, so that he mourned every day unceasingly." There was no trace of Ganymede anywhere, the body had vanished completely. The cessation to Tros' agony came only with the direct intervention of Hermes, telling him that his son was not dead but had become "immortal and ageless."[347]

Similar stories were told of others who were immortalized. According to Apollonius of Rhodes, Heracles had no idea where his beloved Hylas had gone. Thinking that either "robbers have attacked and are carrying him off, or wild beasts are devouring him," Heracles broke out in sweat, tore up whole trees in rage, and behaved, generally, "like a bull

stung by a gadfly."[348] He was in no way hopefully contemplating the possibility that his young lover had been physically immortalized, as in fact was the case.

The most important point of these stories is not the despair of those who thought themselves bereaved, but how the persons immortalized disappeared without a trace. In no way can this be considered a question of just a spiritual apotheosis. It is the missing bodies that triggered the grief, the uncertainty whether these persons were dead somewhere, perhaps being devoured by some beasts, or, for that matter, had been spirited away to immortal misery in some hateful place, as what happened to Niobe, Tithonus, and the daughters of Pandareüs.

Although a missing body did not always equal deification, an act of physical immortalization always meant that the body could not be found. Whenever the physical body was missing, those left behind could always have some hope that this was an act of divine intervention, that the vanished person had indeed been taken away and been made immortal. Since deification always meant that the body remained intact forever in some distant place, any bodily disappearance meant the faint possibility that that certain someone had become an immortal god. When there was no body to be found, one could never know whether the person in question had simply fallen down some pit or been transferred to some remote spot and deified. As German scholar of religion Gerhard Lohfink observes, "in Hellenistic beliefs translation and deification was so closely connected that translation was often the real criterion for whether a human being had been deified or not."[349]

As their bodies disappeared, those who were deified were not considered to leave any grave behind either. As the presence of the physical remnants of someone meant that it was impossible to consider that person to have achieved physical immortality, it is important to be aware of the distinctions made between a *taphos*, a real grave containing the physical remains of a person, and a *mnêma*, a mere cenotaph put up in memory of a body that was elsewhere. Whereas a grave, of course, would exclude the possibility of a physical apotheosis, a *mnêma* would not. The difference between those who had become deified, and those who had more simply died or perhaps become a hero, was also reflected in funerary geography. As there was no ultimate agreement among the Greeks about what happened to each and every renowned person, some of those figures who we have seen was thought by some to have been swept away to physical immortality were still connected to graves that others thought contained their remains. Pausanias, for example, informs his readers that on the slope of the Athenian Acropolis there

was an ancient *mnêma*, a cenotaph, of Hippolytus, which meant, as some believed, that the Athenian prince could have been deified. The Troezinians, on the other hand, asserted that they had his *taphos*, grave, in their city, a claim that naturally ruled out any possibility of his immortality.[350] The Megarians exhibited a grave of Ino and were accordingly "the only Greeks who say that the corpse of Ino was cast up on their coast," contrary to how almost everybody else considered Ino to have been metamorphosed into the goddess Ino Leucothea.[351] Claiming that Ino's son Melicertes was buried on the Isthmus of Corinth where they honored him only as a hero, the Corinthians were similarly at variance with how most people thought him to have been resurrected and deified.[352] While Ariadne was most frequently considered a goddess, the Argives similarly claimed to have her grave.[353]

Aristaeüs, the mortal son of Apollo and the girl Cyrene, who had been given nectar and ambrosia as an infant,[354] was among those who were considered to have disappeared without a trace. This happened after a remarkable childhood and an eventful but not extraordinary life. It was accordingly his disappearance, not his miraculous childhood, that made people believe that he ended up as immortal. As Diodorus of Sicily explains, "after dwelling some time in the neighborhood of Mount Haimus he was never seen again by men, and became the recipient of immortal honors not only among the barbarians of that region but among the Greeks as well."[355] Pausanias similarly referred to Aristaeüs as one of the mortals who became immortal,[356] whereas Athenagoras observed how "Ceans worship Aristaeüs, considering him to be the same as Zeus and Apollo."[357]

Strabo relates how Diomedes, the fierce warrior who once attacked both Aphrodite and Ares on the same day, also vanished miraculously from an island off the coast of Italy,[358] which may easily be seen as connected with how he was the object of cult in Paphlagonia.[359] Either way, Pindar simply observed that Athena "made Diomedes an immortal god" without telling how exactly this took place.[360]

Orithyia, the daughter of the ancient Athenian king Erechteus, was another person who disappeared without a trace. Playing by a riverside just outside of Athens, the girl was suddenly swept away by the wind-god Boreas.[361] On an archaic chest in Olympia, Pausanias witnessed a depiction of Boreas carrying off the girl.[362] The motivation of Boreas was not at all subtle, as he immediately had intercourse with the girl who then bore him several children.[363] The disappearance of Orithyia also led to her being deified, and, as Herodotus recounts, the Athenians called on both Boreas and Orithyia to check their enemies with heavy winds.[364]

Sophocles presents the possibility that Oedipus vanished in a similar way.[365] Although the aged king said he was going to die, heading for Hades,[366] he disappeared mysteriously. A messenger returned to the denizens of Colonus with this report of what had taken place. After Oedipus had commanded that no one but Theseus should witness what was about to happen, the messenger and the children of Oedipus turned away:

> After a brief moment we looked again, and the man was no longer anywhere . . . No one but Theseus can say how he died, by what fate he met his end. For there was no fiery thunderbolt of the god, no whirlwind from the sea which snatched him away, but there was either some guide from heaven or some gentle, painless cleaving of the earth's base. Without wailing or disease the man went away.[367]

Although nobody talks of Oedipus actually being deified, his astonishing disappearance as described by Sophocles is very much a reflection of how such a deification usually occurred. The tragedian himself suggested the possibility of both a subterranean translation and a god taking the blind king away to some other place, but in the end left it to the readers to draw their own conclusions.

As classics scholar Anthony Edwards remarks, "The removal of a mortal by divinity either to a land of blessed immortality or to the company of the gods themselves is a common motif of Greek myth,"[368] that most of distant of times that the Greeks themselves considered their most ancient history. But also a number of actually historical figures was included among those whose bodies disappeared mysteriously and who were held to have been translated to some place far away and subsequently deified. We have already seen how Croesus and his daughters were translated by Apollo to an apparently immortal existence in the land of the Hyperboreans, how the resurrected Aristeas of Proconnesus vanished mysteriously, and how some people in the early third century A.D. considered Alexander the Great to have returned resurrected for only to once again disappear miraculously. Having brought down a school building in his native island of Astypalaea and thus unfortunately killing a number of pupils, Cleomedes, a disqualified Olympic victor of 484 B.C., was pursued by enraged citizens. Taking refuge in a sanctuary of Athena, he jumped into a chest and drew down the lid. Pausanias retold the story: "The Astypalaeans toiled in vain trying to open the chest. Finally they destroyed the wood of the chest, but found

no Cleomedes, either alive or dead." His body had vanished in front of their very eyes. The philosophical Plutarch, who of course did not believe in any of this, nevertheless presented the story about Cleomedes in almost exactly the same way.[369] Celsus told how "through some divine providence, he [Cleomedes] vanished, when certain men had cut open the chest in order to seize him."[370] After this they sent envoys to Delphi, from where they received the answer that Cleomedes of Astypalaea should be honored with sacrifices as he was "no longer a mortal."[371] The fact that Cleomedes had disappeared miraculously was considered a sign of his achieving physical immortality, similar to all those other men and women who were snatched away from the human realm. With an acute sense of discomfort, Plutarch classified Cleomedes among those who "the masses" believed to have been translated to heaven with both body and soul.[372]

Various Greek sources also considered the first Roman king, Romulus, to have been made physically immortal as he disappeared mysteriously, when in the middle of the day "the sun failed and night came down upon them, not with peace and quite, but with awful peals of thunder and furious blasts driving rain from every quarter."[373] According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus it was the king's disappearance during this "sudden darkness" and "violent storm" that made many believe that he had been "caught up into heaven by his father, Ares."[374] As usual the decisive factor that made people believe this was that "no part of his body or fragment of his clothing remained to be seen."[375] As no part of the body was left behind, people were free to believe that his entire body had been physically immortalized. As Plutarch complained, Romulus' disappearance contributed to "the masses" believing that he was among the "good men" whose "bodies" went "with their souls to heaven."[376]

Dionysius of Halicarnassus relates to a rationalistic attempt to explain how the belief of Romulus' deification came about. According to this, Romulus was killed by the patricians who "divided his body into several pieces, so that the corpse could not be seen, and then came out [of the senate] each one hiding a part of the body under his robes and afterwards burying him in secret."[377] In this way, the patricians should have got away with murder by cleverly operating in a way that was meant to be taken as another example of physical immortalization.

Even though the possibility of physical immortality eluded almost everyone, just the belief that this happened to a certain few represented to the traditional believer cause for exultation, as is clear from the profound exasperation of the philosophically inclined Plutarch. After this

miraculous translation of Romulus, "the masses, *hoi polloi*, believing and rejoicing in this . . . started to worship him with good hopes of his favor."[378] The most dreadful aspect of these stories to Plutarch was apparently the popular conviction that these cases of physical resurrection still, even in the first century A.D., represented the best fate possible for any man or woman.

Antinous, the great love of Emperor Hadrian, was said to have drowned in the Nile in 130 A.D., perhaps sacrificing himself out of the conviction that such a sacrifice would save the life of the emperor.[379] After his death, Antinous was officially proclaimed a god by the emperor, who in his honor instigated various games and mysteries, and built a number of temples, even founding an entire city, Antinoopolis, on the riverbank close to where the boy had been swept away by the strong river current. Celsus mentioned the deification of Antinous, along with Aristeas and Cleomedes,[380] in this way indicating that the body of the young boy never was found either, that the emperor's great love must have disappeared in the water of the Nile. This may be correct. No grave of Antinous has ever been identified,[381] although Clement of Alexandria in a diatribe complains that "the grave (*taphos*) of the debauched boy is the temple and town of Antinous."[382] Hegesippus, on the other hand, talks only of a cenotaph, an empty memorial monument without any body.[383] Some 240 years after Antinous' death, Epiphanius describes a lavish and imaginative funeral,[384] but there are no other sources referring to such an event. In his monograph on Antinous, Royston Lambert does not put much trust in Epiphanius' claim, generally dismissing this church father as "highly unreliable."[385] Even if there was a grave, this was clearly not something widely know. Either way, many could have believed, as what is indicated by Celsus, that the official deification of the boy ordered by Hadrian must have had as its foundation the disappearance of the physical body. Erwin Rohde finds it likely that the contemporaries of Antinous could very well have believed that his missing body as meaning that the handsome youth "had, in fact, not died but had been translated."[386]

Beautiful Antinous was in no way a marginal figure. As the beloved favorite of the emperor, he would become the centre of extensive and even popular cult, especially in Greece and Egypt,[387] even compared to the cult of Jesus.[388] His image is among the most frequently depicted of anyone in antiquity, and many Christians complained about the lasting worship of Antinous.[389] Also Pausanias refers to holy mysteries and sacred games in honor of the deified Antinous still being celebrated in the Arcadian town of Mantineia, decades even after Hadrian's death.[390]

The first-century A.D. grammarian and philosopher Pamphilus of Alexandria is foremost known for his comprehensive lexicon of foreign or obscure words. The epitaph to his empty grave, however, indicates that he, too, was believed to have suffered a rather remarkable fate: "The earth bore you, the sea killed you, and the seat of Pluto received you, and from there did you ascend to heaven. You did not die in the deep as one shipwrecked, Pamphilus, but so that you could add an ornament to the realms of all the immortals."[391] What may be indicated here is that being lost among the waves, Pamphilus was not devoured by the creatures of the sea but, after a short visit to Hades, went to heaven body and soul. This epitaph is nevertheless not clear enough to draw any definite conclusion either way on what actually his contemporaries believed befell the shipwrecked man.

What happened to another first-century A.D. philosopher, Apollonius of Tyana, represents an interesting case, not least because Apollonius himself preached the idea of the immortal *soul* and how it was trapped in the body.[392] Two different stories are preserved by his third-century biographer Philostratus on how Apollonius disappeared miraculously, either in Rhodes or in Crete. Although "there are some who simply held that Apollonius died in Ephesus," others "say that he came to an end in Lindus [in Rhodes], where he entered the temple of Athena and disappeared."[393] The most extensive story about the end of Apollonius is rendered from Crete where

> he ran to the doors of the temple, which opened wide to receive him; and when he had passed within they closed again, as if they had been shut, and there was heard a chorus of maidens singing from within the temple, and the song was this: "Leave the earth, go to heaven, come," or in other words go up from the earth.[394]

After this the witnesses found the temple empty. When Philostratus maintained that people "still wondered at his transition and no one dared saying that he was not immortal,"[395] this seems related to the fact that his body was never found. Vanished, he could according to traditional beliefs have been translated body and soul to heaven. The belief that this even could happen to someone who himself advocated the belief in the immortality of the soul demonstrates again to what degree Apollonius, Plato, Plutarch, and the other philosophers were not very successful with getting their message through, how few really bothered to listen to their violent attacks on more traditional ideas on the flesh. Just like all those other men and women we hear about from Homer

onwards, Apollonius' deification depended on his body disappearing. He, too, had apparently been physically immortalized.

The Cynic Peregrinus, more famous for his well-directed stunts than for his philosophy, is the only one we know of who tried to orchestrate what should look like his own immortalization by having his body disappear. Lucian of Samasota gives a firsthand account of this event, which took place during the Olympic games of 165 A.D. After having prepared a great pyre, Peregrinus "leaped into the fire" after which "he was not visible, but was encompassed by the flames which had risen to a great height."[396] Witnessing the spectacle, Lucian himself believed nothing but that Peregrinus had been consumed by the flames. Just as the fire had burned down, various people who had not witnessed the actual event asked Lucian of what happened. To those he considered fools, Lucian, the eminent satirist, recounted how

> I would thicken the plot a bit on my own account, saying that when the pyre was kindled and Proteus [which Peregrinus also called himself] flung himself bodily in, a great earthquake first took place, accompanied by a bellowing of the ground, and then a vulture, flying up out of the midst of the flames, went off to heaven, saying, in human speech, with a loud voice: "I am through with earth; I am going to Olympus."[397]

Remarkably, Lucian was not met with protests when presenting his own highly elaborated version of what had just taken place. Instead, people "were wonder-struck and blessed themselves with a shudder and asked me whether the vulture sped eastwards or westwards."[398] Although of course remarkable, the fictitious claim that immortalized Peregrinus should have taken the shape of a vulture was not completely incredible, as gods, as we have seen, easily would appear in animal shape. Few would take this as the permanent form of the immortalized Peregrinus.

Almost immediately after his presenting his own fabricated story about Peregrinus escaping the flames in the shape of a vulture, Lucian met with other people who were already convinced that Peregrinus had been made physically immortal just moments before.

> On my return to the festival, I came upon a grey-haired man whose face, I assure you, inspired confidence in addition to his beard and his general air of consequence, telling all about Proteus [Peregrinus], and how, since his cremation, he had seen him in

> white raiment a little while ago, and had just now left him walking about cheerfully in the Portico of the Seven Voices, wearing a garland of wild olive. Then, on top of it all, he put the vulture, swearing that he himself had seen it flying up out of the pyre, when I myself had just previously let it fly to ridicule fools and simpletons.[399]

After Peregrinus thus had tried to imitate the fate of Heracles and Croesus, many people seem not only to have accepted the parallel but responded according to traditional beliefs, talking of encounters with the deified figure just as was the case with those other historical figures Romulus and Aristeas of Proconnesus. Second-century A.D. Pagan Greeks were still apt to believe that it was possible to become physically immortal.

As we have seen, it took centuries before anyone claimed that Alexander the Great was resurrected and made physically immortal.[400] But according to a story preserved by Alexander's second-century A.D. biographer, Arrian, Alexander was, however, apparently very well aware of these traditional beliefs himself and wanted, not unlike Peregrinus, to make use of them in order to enhance what people would believe about him after his death:

> when he [Alexander] knew his death was imminent, he went out with the intention of throwing himself into the Euphrates, in order to disappear without a trace and make it easier for posterity to believe that one of the gods was his father and he had gone away to join them. His wife Roxane . . . stopped him, whereupon he gave a great cry and bitterly reproached her for grudging him the eternal flame of divine birth.[401]

Alexander, like anybody else said to be the result of a sexual union between gods and mortals, was himself born mortal. Just like the large majority of these men and women with one divine parent, he did not think he could manage to rise above his own mortal nature. But if we are to believe Arrian, Alexander nevertheless wanted people to *believe* that his body had been taken away by the gods and that he, indeed, had taken those final steps into divinity. If he was lucky his body would never have been recovered, he would "disappear without a trace." As Alexander himself knew, a body vanished was often the subject of immediate speculation of physical immortalization. Lost, he could truly hope that people would believe that he actually "had gone away to join the gods."

What Did the Christians Say?

Having examined what the Greeks considered the possibility of the flesh, we find that it should come as no surprise that many readily accepted the resurrection and subsequent immortalization of Christ. Back to the beginning of times, various men and women were believed to have achieved physical immortality either after being raised from the dead, at the point they would otherwise have died, or, more simply, as their bodies disappeared without a trace. Though always considered extraordinary, these events were still seen as plausible and were, to a point, still taking place when Christianity made its appearance.

One should expect that the first Grecophone Christians also were aware of these parallels. And this was, in fact, the case. Some Christian apologetics even explicitly made use of the clear parallels between traditional Greek beliefs and what happened to Christ. In the middle of the second century Justin Martyr simply claimed that "when we say also that the Word, who is the first-born of God, was created without sexual union, and that he, Jesus Christ, our teacher, was crucified and died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven, we propose *nothing new* from what you believe about those you consider sons of Zeus."[402]

Among the physically resurrected persons who went to heaven, Justin mentioned

> Asclepius who . . . was struck by a thunderbolt, and so ascended to heaven; and Dionysus too, after he had been torn limb from limb; and Heracles, when he had offered himself to the flames to escape his suffering; and the sons of Leda, the Dioscuri; and Perseus, son of Danae; and Bellerophon, on the horse Pegasus, although sprung from humans.[403]

From the way Justin elsewhere insisted on the physicality of the body of the resurrected Christ, it is clear that when he made these parallels he was aware that with these Pagan figures there was also a question of physical bodies being made immortal. Just like traditional Pagan Greeks believed about those who were immortalized, Justin also held the conviction that becoming physical immortal, as was God's promise to righteous men, equaled deification.[404] Justin was, of course, not in any way claiming that these traditional Pagan stories about people being resurrected and made immortal were true. As a Christian he was only referring to the traditional *beliefs* of the Greeks. When people already believed in these traditional stories, they should have no

problem believing in the resurrection of Christ—or so the logic of Justin goes.

Justin Martyr even had the answer for why there existed such parallels to what happened to Jesus. In his fictitious dialogue with the Jewish Trypho, he argued that the similarities between the resurrection of Christ and the stories of Dionysus, Heracles, Asclepius, and the Dioscuri were in no way accidental, as the devil himself "imitated the prophecies about Christ" when creating these "false" stories about men who were made into gods.[405] With this as a basis, Justin turned to the task of explaining why the many stories about Pagan figures who had achieved physical immortality were false and the account of Christ true: "We claim to be acknowledged, not because we say the same things as these [Greek writers] said, but because we say the truth: and that Jesus Christ is the only proper Son who has been begotten by God."[406] When challenged by Trypho to *prove* the resurrection and subsequent apotheosis of Jesus, Justin consequently had to ignore all Pagan precedents, pointing instead to a number of Old Testament prophecies that only with a very positive eye may be seen as foreshadowing the resurrection of Christ.[407]

Some decades after Justin, Theophilus of Antioch, too, drew parallels between the resurrection of Christ and those whom the Greeks long had considered to have been raised from the dead and immortalized.

> Then, as to your denying that the dead are raised—for you say, "Show me even one who has been raised from the dead, so that seeing I may believe"—first, what great thing is it if you believe when you have seen it happen? Then, again, you believe that Heracles, who burned himself, lives, and that Asclepius, who was struck with lightning, was raised. And you disbelieve the things that are told you by God?[408]

Again, a Christian apologetic draws a direct parallel between the resurrection and immortalization of Jesus, with the parallel fate of various Pagan figures. Like Justin, Theophilus also operates with that basic traditional Greek belief that physical immortality equals becoming a god.[409]

Tertullian, the Latin writer in the late second century well acquainted with Greek writings, considered the ascension of Christ to mirror that of Romulus, pointing out how they both were "encompassed with a cloud and taken up to heaven."[410] The main difference was, according to Tertullian, that what happened to Christ did so "more truly than what was asserted of your [senator] Proculus concerning Romulus."[411]

The witness of the Roman senator nevertheless carried a lot of weight, as even Tertullian regretfully admitted, "It is, in short, too bad that Romulus should have had Proculus to vouch for his ascent into heaven,"[412] not least because Jesus had no similar dignitaries witnessing his resurrection and ascension.

These comparisons between Christ and various other immortalized figures seem to have been rather common. In the third century Origen, seldom the most ardent defender of the physical aspects of the resurrected body, found it necessary to go at great length to insist that "the account of Jesus' resurrection from the dead cannot possibly be compared with such stories . . . about men said to have descended to Hades and returned from there."[413]

According to British Biblical scholar N.T. Wright, the natural meaning of Jesus' resurrection was, throughout the ancient world, "that something had happened to Jesus which had happened to nobody else."[414] This, as we see so clearly with Justin Martyr, Theophilus, Origen, and Tertullian, is most of all a theological stand. Even Christians were aware of the numerous parallels between the resurrection of Jesus and what according to Greek beliefs happened to a number of different people. Not able to refute the obvious parallels, early Christians responded instead by even more emphatically deny that there was any *truth* in these parallel stories.

The traditional belief that a vanished body alone could be an indication of someone being made physically immortal was also familiar to early Christians. Sometimes Christian apologetics seems even unable to deny the Pagan stories about someone gaining physical immortality in this way. The case of the resurrected Aristeas of Proconnesus is clearly something that Origen felt not able to reject, and he argued instead against this happening in accordance with divine providence, thus indicating that some demonic power must have been at work.[415] Origen also witnessed how the immortalization of Hadrian's lover Antinous "is compared with our Jesus."[416] Again he does not simply refute what happened to Antinous, but resorts to theological arguments in order to refute the comparison. He asks rhetorically, "That Antinous, the favorite of Hadrian, is honored; but surely you will not say that the right to be worshipped as a god was given to him by the almighty God?"[417] Only by juxtaposing the lives of Antinous and Christ, does Origen try to deny the deification of the former: "For what is there in common between a life of the beloved of Hadrian . . . and that of the holy Jesus?"[418]

When it came to the Olympian victor Cleomedes who vanished miraculously from a closed chest, Origen denied that any disappearance

actually had taken place, but, again, he was not entirely certain. Even if this event really was true, Origen argued, it "cannot be compared with what is related about Jesus, since in these examples no sign of the divinity ascribed to them is found in the lives of these men."[419] The resurrection of Jesus is something else entirely, only because

> the divinity of Jesus is established both by the existence of the churches of the saved, and by the prophecies speaking about him, and by the healings done in his name, and by the wisdom and knowledge which are in him, and the deeper truths which are discovered by those who know how to rise above mere faith, and to search the meaning which lies in the divine scriptures.[420]

The argument is, as we can see, completely circular. Jesus was truly resurrected because he reflected the only true religion, which, of course, is true because God really did raise Jesus from the dead. Cleomedes, on the other hand, was not immortalized because the beliefs connected to this story were not Christian.

At times Christians also referred to Pagan beliefs in physical immortalization in their artistic depictions. Endymion, who, as we remember, would sleep forever immortalized, was not only a favourite motif on Roman sarcophagi, but these depictions became, as demonstrated by the art historian Erich Dinkler, the model for Christian depictions on ancient sarcophagi from the third century on of Jonah reposing after being disgorged by the sea monster.[421] Also the immortalized Dionysus was sometimes depicted in a similar manner.[422] The story of Jonah was already in the gospels connected to the resurrection,[423] and thus the reemployment of the figures of Endymion and Dionysus as Jonah would connect the traditional Greek notion of the immortalized flesh with Christian ideas on the resurrection. As argued by the art historian Thomas Mathews, the story of Jonah in this way "was turned into a story of full physical satisfaction . . . clearly implying the Christian belief in the resurrection of the body and its incorrupt beatitude after death."[424]

If the Greeks were already familiar with the idea of various men and women being made immortal, why did not more Christians exploit this possibility for convincing people of the truth of their own novel religion? All Christian apologetics, even when drawing parallels to these Pagan examples of physical immortalization, tried to deny that any such thing had taken place before Christ. The reason why Christians did not cherish these apparent precursors of Christ is simply that any

such figures would subtract from the uniqueness of Christ. As Irenaeus of Lyons argued at the end of the second century, "For all the prophets prophesied these same things, but they never came to pass in the case of any one of the ancients." As he maintained, "None of these men was raised up on the third day, nor received into heaven, nor at his assumption were the heavens opened."[425]

The Greek past was according to the Christians generally characterized by its lack of proper divine intervention. That Christian history before Christ was based on the creed of the Jewish Bible was in itself an important dogma. Christian apologetics subsequently joined forces with the Greek philosophers in their reviling of the traditional stories of people being bodily resurrected and gaining physical immortality. In the end, it was the Christians themselves who, more than anyone else, fought against that these traditional Greek stories in any way should be employed to further the acceptance of the Christian resurrection.

CHAPTER FOUR

New Beliefs, Old Beliefs

At the time we first may be able to distinguish a comprehensive Greek worldview, we find a community where life in all aspects was preferred to death. Although the existence as a dead, disembodied soul could vary between an unconscious state in the land of the dead, some better fate due to the participation in certain religious mysteries, and being honored as a hero, it was always considered a condition worse than life. The insistence of so many modern scholars about the Greek distaste of the flesh and hope of the immortality of the soul is, of course, not taken out of thin air either.

The attraction of the flesh as expressed in the hope for physical immortality, which in Homeric times seems to have close to a monopoly within ancient Greek religion, found itself gradually in the company of various other beliefs about the soul, the body, and immortality. Although the conviction that immortality always equaled the continuous psychosomatic unity of body and soul proved distinctly tenacious, the proponents of other beliefs were at least highly vocal. The reverberations of their claims can, as we have seen, still be found in highly biased presentations of ancient Greek beliefs today.

When the Soul Became Immortal (According to Some)

Originally the bodiless existence after death was never preferred over the existence with both body and soul. Just the idea that the soul could be immortal independently of the body appears, as we have seen, to have been completely unknown to the most ancient Greeks. As Jan Bremmer, Werner Jaeger, and Simon Tugwell point out, the immortal

soul was a "relative latecomer" in the ancient world,[1] "a later product of the Greek mind,"[2] and something "which the Greeks themselves regarded as foreign or at least esoteric."[3] Without its companion the body, the soul was quite simply dead. That most souls were considered to have some form of eternal existence did not change this. The soul was dead no matter where it was found and no matter what degree of consciousness it was considered to have. Even Plato at times acknowledged this, having Socrates in his dialogue *Phaedo* saying that death was "the separate condition by itself of the soul when released from the body."[4] Although the idea of the immortal soul came to play a significant part in Greek philosophy, one must realize just how much this idea was in contradiction with traditional Greek beliefs. The very notion of immortality was originally inseparably tied to the continued existence of the flesh.

A disembodied "immortal soul" was not only something that was profoundly difficult to place within a traditional Greek worldview, but also a contradiction in terms, as disembodied souls that existed forever were generally considered *dead* souls. It is no wonder that we find the belief in the immortality of the *soul* seen as a foreign phenomenon, although these ideas very well could have appeared independently in the milieus of Greek experimental thinking. In the fifth century B.C. Herodotus held the idea of the soul's immortality as absurd and intrinsically un-Greek, claiming, quite incorrectly, that "the Egyptians were the first to teach that the human soul is immortal, and at the death of the body it enters into some other living thing then coming to birth."[5] Plato, too, admitted that the concept of the immortal soul was not at all something familiar to his contemporaries, having Glaucon, a young Athenian male, express outright surprise when countered by Socrates' ideas on the immortality of the soul. It is Socrates in the *Republic* who here talks of his encounter with the Athenian Glaucon: "'Have you never perceived,' I said, 'that our soul is immortal and never perishes?' And, looking me straight in the face in amazement, he [Glaucon] said, 'No, by Zeus, not I, but are *you* able to declare this.' 'I certainly ought to be,' I said, 'and I think you can too, for it is nothing hard.' 'It is for me,' he said."[6] That even Plato found it necessary to counter the incredulity of an apparently upper-class Athenian gives an idea of just how radical the idea of the soul's immortality probably seemed to the traditional believer.

According to the ancients themselves, the belief in the immortal soul was first launched among the Greeks by Pherecydes of Syrus in the sixth century B.C., a pre-Socratic philosopher and the alleged teacher of

Pythagoras, who also held the soul to be immortal.[7] Orphic beliefs may have been the source of Pherecydes' theories, or Orphicism could have come up with similar notions either simultaneously or later in time. The oldest literary reference to the Orphics is found in Herodotus,[8] who, characteristically for a traditionally inclined Greek scholar, regarded their ideas as not really Greek at all, but as "in truth Egyptian and Pythagorean."[9] Herodotus also connected these kind of beliefs with the barbarian Thracians.[10] Regardless of who were the first, there is no trace of any Greek belief in the immortality of the soul prior to Pherecydes and the Orphics.

When the idea of the immortal soul first appeared in the Greek world, it seems to have done so along with the belief in metempsychosis. Pythagoras allegedly stressed that he himself in a previous life had been the Trojan warrior Euphorbus who was slain by Menelaus. And after that

> he passed into several bodies according to the decree of Adrastea [a goddess of justice], which transfers the soul from body to body, and then he again resumed human form, and was born [as Pythagoras] to Mnesarchides of Samos, [this time] a sage instead of a barbarian, an Ionian instead of a Trojan, and so immortal that he did not even forget that he [originally] was Euphorbus.[11]

Diodorus of Sicily relates how Pythagoras accordingly recognized Euphorbus' ancient shield and knew it by every detail.[12]

Also the philosophical idea of an immortal soul was usually seen in relation to the idea of reincarnation. As Plato had Socrates argue in the *Phaedo*, most dead souls went to the Acherusian Lake in the underworld "and after staying there for certain fixed periods, longer or shorter, are sent forth again to the births of living creatures."[13] Many were likely to return as beasts, for "only the soul that has beheld truth may enter into our human form."[14] With the Pamphylian soldier Er who came back to life after being dead for several days, Plato even produced a firsthand witness to the whole process of exchanging bodies, relating how various renown persons chose lives that would recompense for what they had been through and how certain animal souls "entered into men" and others "into one another."[15] For most souls there was not much of a choice, as the way they had led their lives would decide what one would end up in the next life. As Plato explained in *Timaeus*, men who "were cowards or led unrighteous lives" would be reborn as women, "innocent and light-minded men" as birds, those ignorant of

philosophy as pedestrian animals, while men who were "impure by all sort of transgressions" could look forward to a future existence as "fish and oysters and other aquatic animals."[16]

The manner in which the idea of the immortal soul first appeared may nevertheless be connected with the traditional belief that immortality equaled a continuous physical existence. Whereas immortality originally always meant an eternal union of one soul and one body, the immortality of Pherecydes and Pythagoras meant that the same soul would be repeatedly reincarnated into new bodies. Perhaps it was the belief that the soul would be continuously united with a physical body that first defined the soul as "immortal." A soul without a body could still very much be considered a dead soul as Plato, as we have seen, also pointed out.[17]

A soul that repeatedly is reborn into various bodies represents at the same time also something entirely different from the traditional belief that the dead soul forever reflected the form of the body at the point of death or the obsequies. Originally a soul could therefore not enter a body that had a different form. As classics scholar A.L. Peck argues about the apparently related ideas of Aristotle, "the form—the Soul—requires matter of a particular kind: not any kind of matter will do."[18]

But there arose even a more radical idea, a belief of the soul's immortality completely independent of any body. This meant that the soul could be considered immortal all by itself, without either a continuous union with one and the same body, or constantly finding its way into new bodies. With this followed a negative attitude to the flesh in general. The union of body and soul was presented as something one should try to escape. Socrates famously referred to "one of our wise men" who maintained that "our body is a tomb."[19] Plato also had Socrates on his own account claiming that the soul is imprisoned in the body.[20] Interestingly, we sometimes find this belief among those who also advocate the belief in the transmigration of the soul. According to Plato the Orphics held that "the body is an enclosure or prison in which the soul is incarcerated until penalty is paid."[21] Plato himself seems to have entertained these beliefs as well, along with his intricate references to how the soul would be reincarnated according to merit. When Plato argued that someone who arrived purified and enlightened from initiation into the next world would "dwell among the gods,"[22] we see to what degree this philosopher saw the soul as independent of the physical body.

According to Plato the enlightened soul could look forward to a bodiless existence even *better* than that he or she had when alive in a

body. This was contrary to everything traditional Greek religion ever had taught. All of a sudden people were told not only to stop worrying about losing their physical bodies for eternity, but to *rejoice* about it. If "absolute pure when it leaves the body," the soul could even achieve divine nature all by itself.[23] As these blessed disembodied souls would dwell with the gods, the gods, too, were now presented as being bereft of the bodies they usually were considered to have.

It is, however, important not to take the historical outline of how the notion of the soul's immortality was introduced in Greece as a presentation of how these new ideas convinced the masses. They never did. Pherecydes, Pythagoras, Plato, and the Orphics all remained essentially marginal figures connected to the limited circles of educated men who pledged their allegiance to philosophy and religious innovation. As pointed out by Erwin Rohde, the idea of the immortal soul only "gained a footing in isolated sects and influenced certain philosophical schools." It remained "little remarked by the religion of the people and by orthodox believers."[24] It "never became a real part of the belief of the Greek populace."[25]

Perhaps the most frequent term put on graves in Hellenistic and Roman times is a witness of what most people still seem to have believed: "No one is immortal, *oudeis athanatos*."[26] This, as we have seen, did not have to mean that death entailed the end of everything, the disembodied but dead soul would still go on. Put on graves, the reminder that nobody is immortal refers to how the common fate of almost everybody—to have one's body destroyed and one's dead soul going to Hades—meant the end of any chance of attaining immortality. Immortality still had to include the flesh. The insistence on so many graves that the corpse also constituted part of the identity of the individual is another reminder that most seem to have denied that the soul could assume a state of immortality on its own. The dead souls as dead—not as immortal souls—continued to play a major part in Greek religion far into the Christian era. On, for example, an Athenian epitaph from Roman times, the dead man himself instructs people how to treat him as *dead* and not as some god: "If you wish to propitiate the soul of a *dead* man, do so by pouring to me such things as befit *mortals*."[27]

The new idea that the soul really was immortal had nevertheless a certain impact, as also may be witnessed in the cemeteries. To make the graves proclaim the soul's immortality is, nevertheless, a practice that first appears in Hellenistic times and that never dominated the genre. Having perused countless funerary inscriptions, Richmond Lattimore

concludes that "no epitaph containing an unequivocal assertion of immortality [of the soul] is earlier than the fourth century B.C. By far," even though it was never a frequent claim, "the greater number come from the Roman period."[28] But still the number of such epitaphs was not at all numerous. Erwin Rohde connects the proportionally small number of inscriptions referring to the immortality of the soul with the very limited influence of philosophical ideas held on the larger part of the population: "Very occasionally, in the adjective 'immortal' applied to the soul . . . we may detect the influence of mixed philosophical and theological ideas."[29] There is, as Rohde also points out, no certain reference on any known epitaph to the special belief of the soul's immortality involving reincarnation, which was so important to the Platonic mind.[30] Although the idea of the soul's immortality had appeared centuries earlier in Greek culture, it apparently took quite some time before it was held as a belief by anyone but Pythagoreans, Orphics, and hardcore philosophers. Some nevertheless pondered the possibility, as a Hellenistic inscription from Chios: "If it is possible to be born again, then this which holds me here is sleep . . . but if it is not possible to come back . . ."[31]

We also find some unequivocal funerary references to the soul being immortal. A Greek epitaph from second- or third-century A.D. Rome tells how "this tomb holds young Calocaerus, since his immortal soul has left his young body. For it hastened along the divine way, and left the cares of bitter life to go aloft in purity."[32] The parents of a certain Aelianus try to comfort themselves on this Greek epitaph from the Sabine countryside in imperial times:

> The good and discreet Aelianus was given this tomb by his father in concern for his mortal body, but his heart, which is immortal, has leapt up among the blessed. For the soul lives forever, it is what gives life and it has come down from the gods. "Stop your tears, my father and you, mother, stop my brothers from weeping. The body is the soul's tunic. You must honour the god in me."[33]

Very occasionally one finds tombs expressing a dreariness of life, as on a second-century B.C. inscription from Orchomenus proclaiming that here someone is "going gladly out of life to him who died before."[34] Those who prefer the afterlife, no matter in what form, to the present existence were nevertheless a precious few. For all the great variety of beliefs found in the cemeteries of the Hellenistic and Roman period, seldom is any version of *death* considered better than life. It is only

when the notion of *immortality* was somehow involved that the Greeks looked forward to some better existence after this mortal coil. Whereas immortality traditionally was inseparably tied to the idea of a continuous union of body and soul, immortality remained attractive also to those who found immortality pertaining to the soul alone. This is, for example, witnessed on a Greek grave of a young third-century A.D. man from Aquae Sextiae in Gaul who claimed that he had become one of the Dioscuri: "I am relieved of sickness, toil, labour and trouble, those things which ceaselessly afflict the flesh."[35] A similar message is found on a late Athenian epitaph where a certain Zosimus claims to be "leaving the troublesome life of men and gaining a place with the gods."[36]

Sometimes, however, the notion of the soul's immortality did not even give solace to those who professed a belief in it. Although the Athenian Panathenius from imperial times is considered to be "dwelling among the immortals, immortal himself," it is "divine malice" that made him die in the first place.[37] This was certainly no happy parting with the physical body. A husband in Paphlagonian Neoclaudianopolis who claimed that the soul of his wife had been snatched away by the gods and made immortal, also found little consolation in the divine fate of his spouse. The husband's despair is painfully tangible from the last depressing words he inscribed on his wife's tomb, stating that "you have left grief and everlasting mourning to your companions."[38] To the bereft husband in Neoclaudianopolis the implicit expectation that he once again could meet the immortal soul of his wife did in no way measure up to the presence of the entire person, the psychosomatic unity of body and soul that he never ever would see again. Having to endure the annihilation by fire or decay the dead bodies of one's loved ones, ending up in graves from where one knew they would never ever return, was still unendurable in this culture, which for centuries had been saturated by the attraction of the flesh.

Confusion and Contradictions

As these novel ideas about how the soul could achieve immortality apart from the body were in such direct opposition to anything held to be true in traditional religion, they held little chance of replacing the ancient notion that immortality was inseparably tied to the survival of the physical body. However, some time after these ideas were launched in the more marginal circles of philosophers and religious innovators,

we find that an apparently paradoxical juxtaposition of various beliefs came about. Already in the fifth century B.C., Pindar would refer to the metempsychosis of the soul as well as to the physical immortalization of various men and women like Ganymede, Achilles, Ino, Amphiaraüs, and the Dioscuri. The Boeotian poet seems to have had no qualms in thus juxtaposing mutually exclusive ideas on the afterlife. Pindar described the dead souls' descent into Hades as well,[39] in accordance with the traditional belief about what happened to the large majority. Clytemnestra's murder of her husband and his mistress is for example presented as her sending "Cassandra . . . together with the soul of Agamemnon to the shadowy shore of Acheron," one of the rivers in Hades.[40]

Traditional and more novel ideas on the afterlife were confused in other ways as well. Also first seen in the poems of Pindar, the soul now ventures on its own to some of the areas previously reserved for those who had been deified, body and soul: "Whosoever . . . has thrice been courageous in keeping one's soul pure from all deeds of wrong, passes by the highway of Zeus to the tower of Cronus, where the ocean-breezes blow around the Island of the Blessed."[41] The belief in an incorporeal existence by the end of the earth in this way was combined with a belief in reincarnation. Plato followed suit and let Socrates describe how every soul awaits a judgment by either Rhadamanthus or Aeacus in order to see whether it is headed for the Isles of the Blessed or for Tartarus.[42] Celsus similarly considered "the Islands of the Blessed" and "the Elysian Plain" places where "a blessed life" was reserved for "the *souls* of the blessed."[43] Interestingly, Celsus claimed that the Christian idea of heaven was really only borrowed from these beliefs about a marvelous land for the disembodied souls.

The idea that the bodiless soul may reach some of the wondrous places by the ends of the earth, originally reserved for those few who became physically immortal, is also found reflected on epitaphs from Hellenistic and early Christian times. A second-century A.D. epitaph from Pergamum is addressed to the deceased himself: "Your soul has flown away from the limbs to the other divine spirits, and you dwell in the Plain of the Blessed."[44] A husband in Paphlagonian Neoclaudianopolis had the following words inscribed in honor of his wife, Patra: "Nor shall any mortal say you have died, rather that the immortals snatched Patra away to rescue her from disease. Farewell, and be glad in Elysium."[45]

The notion of the soul alone going to Elysium or the Islands of the Blessed is as we see here certainly connected with the belief in the

soul's immortality, but we cannot take it for granted that all those who referred to this believed that the soul actually was immortal. The idea that the soul could go by itself to these marvelous places was also soon presented as a better alternative for the *dead* soul. Some inscriptions explicitly refer to this blessed state as the future existence of the dead, not immortal, soul. The second-century A.D. epitaph of the orator Aetius, for example, claims that although the soul of Aetius is now in Olympus "rejoicing with Zeus and the other gods," "neither eloquence nor god can make anyone immortal."[46] Even a happy but disembodied fate among the gods did not equal immortality, simply because immortality for most people still required a body. A first-century B.C. epitaph also refers to a Ptolemaic prince "*killed* by pestilence," whose soul is going to Olympus because "such princes are not led by Hades to his house, but by Zeus to Olympus."[47] In other words, one could even reach holy Olympus as a *dead* soul. A Greek epitaph from Rome in imperial times provides a description of what kind of dead souls would end up in these blessed places: "Truly this plain is the Islands of the Blessed, where pious men dwell, the most just and kindly ones, who when they *lived* treated each other with decency, wisdom, righteousness and respect."[48] Good manners pay, but were obviously not enough to grant immortality as the souls of these pious men only "dwell" in the Islands of the Blessed, contrary to how they previously "lived" when still united with their bodies.

The belief that it was dead souls and not immortal souls that went to these wondrous places is also found expressed in Lucian's satirical second-century A.D. *True Story*. In a fantastic tale we follow the narrator who journeys by ordinary means to the Island of the Blessed and the Elysian Fields. Here the living visitors are clearly distinguished from the dead inhabitants, who "have no bodies, but are intangible and fleshless, with only shape and figure."[49] That these disembodied souls are in any way immortal, meaning enjoying everlasting life, is ruled out as Rhadamantus asks the travelers "how come we walked on holy ground when still *alive*."[50] In complete contrast to the visitors, Lucian's dead shadows are quite simply dead. They are indeed strikingly similar to the dead souls encountered by Odysseus at the gates of Hades, with the exception that the dead in Lucian's *True Story* apparently have no problems with their mnemonic faculties. The change of destination for the disembodied souls, from Hades to Elysium, had for many not really transformed their nature, but only severely changed their lot for the better. But they were still experiencing everlasting death.

Sometimes the inscriptions are inconclusive as to whether they really refer to dead or immortal souls. In an anonymous epigram from the Greek anthology, we only learn that a certain Pytheas is considered to have reached the Island of the Blessed because of his great learning.[51] A Roman era grave from Bithynian Cyzicus asserts that it "keeps only the name of Micca; her soul is with the pious in the Elysian Fields."[52]

Although these more novel ideas moved the Greeks in the direction of seeing the bodiless existence of the soul more positively, the conviction that immortality must include the eternal union of soul *and* body remained strong. To talk of the idea on the soul's immortality ever achieving a general breakthrough in Greek culture at large is simply not possible. As Henry Chadwick observes, people in the first centuries of the Christian era still distinguished between the "survival of the soul" and "its immortality."[53] That the soul existed forever in Hades did still not mean it was immortal. That the disembodied soul according to some could go to the more fantastic places like Elysium or the Islands of the Blessed was similarly not necessarily connected with the idea of the immortality of the soul either. While some truly believed in the primacy of the soul, the majority apparently still considered the doctrine of the immortality of the disembodied soul a foreign import bearing no consequence upon their own religious worldview. Similar to how Herodotus half a millennium previously had insisted that the idea of the immortal soul came from the Egyptians, Pausanias maintained that "the Chaldaeans and the Indian sages were the first to say that the soul of man is immortal." This belief, explained Pausanias, had been followed only by "*some* of the Greeks, and not least by Plato, the son of Ariston."[54] Not long after Pausanias, Celsus similarly considered the belief in the soul's immortality as typical of a number of barbarian nations, including "Egyptians, Assyrians, Indians, Persians, Odrysians, Samothracians."[55] Even the third-century A.D. philosopher Philostratus, who was himself an advocate of the soul's immortality, considered that this belief had first reached the Greeks through the Egyptians and Indians.[56]

There appeared also a confusion of the nature of gods and heroes not originally found in Greek religion. That modern scholars sometimes mix up disembodied heroes with those who achieved physical immortality is consequently not only because few today make a distinction between an apotheosis of the physical body and a heroization, which only involved the soul: the confusion of these two processes is not completely disconnected with Greek ideas. Certain Greeks from classical time onward were equally vague on this distinction. Philosophically

inclined thinkers would mostly refuse any idea of bodily immortality at all and therefore also treated figures said to have achieved physical immortality as mere heroes. This is for example what Plutarch does in his general attack on the traditional believers who insisted on the physical translation of figures like Alcmene, Romulus, Aristeas of Proconnesus, and Cleomedes of Astypalaea, maintaining instead that only the souls of these figures had reached the sphere of the divine.[57] The equally philosophically inclined Lucian would in the second century A.D. similarly claim that Heracles, too, left behind his flesh, throwing off "the mortal part of him that came from his mother and flew up to heaven, taking with him the pure and unpolluted divine part."[58] About the same time Pseudo-Apollodorus similarly argued that the flames surrounding the Eleusinian infant in care of Demeter did not immortalize the flesh, but, quite the opposite, gradually stripped the baby "off its mortal flesh."[59]

There was also a more general confusion of people deified and heroized. Cleomedes of Astypalaea who vanished miraculously in 484 B.C. and who, according to Pausanias, was proclaimed by the Pythian priestess in Delphi to be "no longer a mortal," was simultaneously also said to be the "last of heroes."[60] This is a claim replete with contradictions. As his body had disappeared apparently due to divine intervention, Cleomedes seems to have achieved physical immortality, something that also is stressed by how he was described as "no longer a mortal" and by how Plutarch classified him along with these other men and women who were translated with their flesh into heaven.[61] That he simultaneously is called a hero indicates a confusion of the traditional categories, as a body of a hero never vanished in this way. A hero was, as we have seen, originally only a dead soul with special powers; a hero was not immortal. Other sources clearly treat Cleomedes as a figure who had been physically immortalized. Celsus and Origen, for example, compared him with Jesus Christ.[62]

A similar confusion of the nature of gods and heroes seems to be the case in how the fifth-century B.C. Theagenes of Thasos, an illustrious athlete and Olympic champion, was offered sacrifices in imperial times "as to a god,"[63] although there is no record of anything but his dying in a most ordinary manner. Looking at the belief in men who were translated beneath the earth while still alive, Erwin Rohde claims that there was a similar confusion of categories. He argues that some graves of heroes referred to people who originally were considered to have been translated alive beneath the earth and thus were actually minor deities not heroes.[64]

An early second-century A.D. tomb in Hermopolis in central Egypt tells the remarkable tale of the girl Isidora who drowned in the Nile. Although the mummy of Isidora was found in the grave,[65] the Greek inscription proclaims that she had been taken away by the local nymphs just as what had once happened to Heracles' young lover, Hylas. This parallel is explicitly pointed out in the inscription. That Isidora's dead body, contrary to that of Hylas, had been recovered did not refrain her family from claiming that she had been made immortal. In the epitaph Isidora's father proclaims, "No longer, my daughter, shall I sacrifice to you with lamentations, now that I know you have become a divinity. With libation and prayer praise Isidora, who was snatched away by the nymphs and became a nymph herself."[66] Also the deified girl herself speaks in the epitaph: "I am imperishable" she claims, as if her body really was still alive and incorruptible (which it was not), "I am no mortal." Isidora's fate represents a remarkable example of how the more novel belief that people could be deified *spiritually* could be expressed within religious and narrative patterns connected to more ancient ideas of *physical* immortalization.

The fate of Isidora also bears a clear resemblance to that of Antinous, Emperor Hadrian's lover who also drowned and was subsequently deified in 130 A.D. As witnessed by Clement of Alexandria (but by him only), there may have existed a grave of Antinous,[67] and as such there may also have been a belief that his body really was found and buried and that his deification only included his soul. The grave of Isidora seems nevertheless a few years older and as such there is probably no actual connection between the two. One cannot assume that the emperor's glorious retinue should have heard of the fate of the unfortunate but completely unknown girl.

Other times the hope of the soul's immortality is connected with the belief in astral immortality. Already in 421 B.C. Aristophanes referred to a belief "that when we die we turn into stars in the sky."[68] Although this never became a common belief, it remained extant for centuries. On the Aegean island of Amorgus, a dead man brought solace to his mother on his first-century B.C. grave: "Mother, do not weep for me. What is the use? You ought rather to honor me, for I have become an evening star among the gods."[69]

From late classical times onward, a number of rulers were said either to be either identified with various gods while alive, apotheosized after their death, or both. Known for his claim that Zeus was his real father, Alexander the Great probably did not consider himself a god as semi-divine ancestry traditionally did not equal divinity. As the classics

scholar Arthur Darby Nock has pointed out, there are no undisputed references to Alexander's divinity when alive,[70] although he enjoyed thinking of himself imitating the famous wanderings of Dionysus and Heracles, and impersonating various glamorous goddesses. Shortly after his death, however, he appeared in a dream to the Macedonian general Eumenes of Cardia, an appearance that led to his being honored as a god in spite of that everyone knew that Alexander had received a traditional, yet overwhelming, funeral and no one claimed that his body had disappeared.[71]

This royal reluctance to proclaim one's own divinity when still alive would soon go away. According to Plutarch, the Spartan general Lysander was at the beginning of the fourth century B.C. "the first Greek . . . to whom cities erected altars and offered sacrifices as to a god."[72] The Antigonid ruler Demetrius Poliorcetes was officially revered by the Athenians as a god. "Hail to you," a cultic hymn in his honor proclaims. "The other gods dwell so far away . . . We see you in our midst, not a wood or stone presence, but bodily. And so we pray to you."[73] This is not to say, that these divine honors rendered living rulers were not met with considerable skepticism. Even Demetrius, himself, as pointed out by the religious scholar Hans-Josef Klauck, "appears to have reacted basically with irony to the veneration paid him."[74]

Obviously influenced by the mores of their adopted country, the Macedonian kings and queens in Egypt not only proclaimed Alexander the Great to be a god[75] but ordered temples built for themselves in traditional Egyptian fashion.[76] The way these potentates either claimed to be some form of divinity when still alive and very clearly mortal, or were said to be turned into gods at the point of death, represents another example of how the understanding of gods and heroes were sometimes blurred in the Hellenistic realm.

The most famous of these new gods were the Roman emperors, who also were honored in temples all over the Greek Mediterranean.[77] A 49 B.C. inscription from Ephesus would accordingly refer to Julius Caesar as "a god who has appeared visibly and as a universal savior of the life of human beings."[78] Though a visible god according to this accolade, it is quite clear that only the soul remained deified. Suetonius wrote this about the deification of Caesar:

> He died in the fifty-sixth year of his age, and was numbered among the gods, not only by a formal decree, but also in the conviction of the common people. For at the first of the games which his heir

> Augustus gave in honor of his apotheosis, a comet shone for seven successive days . . . and was believed to be the soul of Caesar, who had been taken to heaven.[79]

As most of these deified rulers went through ordinary though sumptuous obsequies, that their bodies should have been translated was out of the question. As such there is no direct parallel between these deified rulers and the traditional Greek beliefs about people being physically immortalized. There is also a question to what degree the immortalization of emperors reflected actual beliefs, and not just official propaganda. According to Suetonius, Emperor Vespasian was even ironic on his deathbed about this belief. "Woe is me," he chipped. "I think I am becoming a god."[80]

The confusion of new and old beliefs did not just mean that the belief in immortalization more often was seen as a spiritual process. The ancient notion of physical translation and subsequent deification is also found reflected in beliefs entertained about various historical figures who officially were deified only in spirit. The Ptolemaic queen Berenice, who died in 281 or 271 B.C., was proclaimed a deity in the way that her soul had been elevated. But only a couple of years later, the poet Theocritus presented Berenice as having being "snatched away" by Aphrodite and in this way being turned into a "goddess in the temple," as if her very body had been transformed in the way we know already from Homer.[81]

Some Greek authors presented similar innuendoes about how Roman emperors were deified. Although the remains of the emperors were regularly buried in the Mausoleum of Augustus on Campus Martius, stories circulated, which indicated to the traditional believer, that a physical translation had taken place. In the early third century Dio Cassius informed his readers that in 14 A.D. Livia, the wife of Augustus, even though she herself "gathered up his [Augustus'] bones and placed them in his tomb . . . bestowed a million sesterces upon a certain Numerius Atticus, a senator and ex-praetor, because he swore that he had seen Augustus ascending to heaven after the manner of which tradition tells concerning Proculus and Romulus."[82] Proculus was, as we may recall, the ancient senator who had encountered the deified Romulus after the mysterious disappearance of his body.[83] Whether this reference to the traditional translation of body and soul must be credited Livia, Dio Cassius, or popular imagination, is not clear. There were certainly those who disagreed. Dio Cassius wrote about how in 38 A.D. another senator received a million sesterces

when he "declared on oath, invoking destruction upon himself and his children if he spoke falsely," that he had seen Drusilla, the sister of Emperor Caligula, "ascending to heaven and conversing with the gods."[84] Justin Martyr, too, referred to these beliefs connected to the apotheoses of the Roman emperors. He asks rhetorically, "And what of the emperors who die among yourselves, whom you deem worthy of immortalization, and on whose behalf you produce someone who swears he has seen the burning Caesar rise to heaven from the funeral pyre?"[85] Here again there is an indication that the imperial apotheosis did not just mean the deification of the soul. As the burning body rose to the gods, we see the obvious parallels to Heracles and Demophoön, the Eleusinian infant, whose bodies all were about to be made immortal as flames embraced them without hurting them at all.

The official iconography showing emperors ascending to the gods could also make people see a connection to those men and women who were translated body and soul into the divine realm. Germanicus, Tiberius' heir apparent, died in 19 A.D., before he could ascend the imperial throne, but the Sainte-Chapelle cameo made soon after his death depicts his riding a winged horse to the company of gods.[86] A 169 A.D. relief from Ephesus has the dead Emperor Lucius Verus mounting a four-horsed chariot as it was about to ascend.[87] Even when the nominally Christian Emperor Constantine died, a coin was struck with the traditional image of him "standing as a charioteer, drawn by four horses, with a hand stretched downward from above to receive him up to heaven."[88] These depictions reflect, of course, the same ancient motif found already centuries previously, when Heracles was portrayed leaving behind an empty funeral pyre.[89] The illustrations of dead emperors being taken up into heaven reflected also other classical translation themes, most obviously the one showing Ganymede carried off by Zeus in the form of an eagle. On the Arch of Titus in Rome from 81 A.D., the emperor is shown sitting on the back of an eagle taking him up heavenwards. Again we find official rituals evoking some of these ancient beliefs, as whenever an emperor was burnt on his pyre, an eagle was released.[90] Other times depictions show winged deities carrying away the emperors or their immediate relatives. On the base of the 161 A.D. Column of Antoninus Pius in Rome we see the emperor together with his wife, Faustina, on the back of some winged figure, and on the so-called Arch of Portugal, also in Rome, we find Hadrian contemplating his wife Sabina being carried away in a similar manner.

The State of the Afterlife at the Dawn of Christianity

Between Homer and the coming of Christ, distinct changes had happened to what people considered could take place in the afterlife. The Homeric notion was that death only offered three options. One could be physically immortalized and transformed into a deity. One could end up spending eternity as a disembodied and unconscious soul either in Hades, some other place, or, if one was a bit more fortunate, as a hero. Or, one could end up without any existence whatsoever as one's body was improperly destroyed. These options had been supplemented by a number of other possible fates. One could now hope that one's disembodied soul would end up in some of the places by the ends of the earth originally reserved for those who were immortalized, body and soul. Others again would argue that the soul itself was immortal, either because of its alleged ability to eternally being reincarnated into new bodies, or, more radically, because it really belonged to another eternal sphere than the corruptible body.

But the ancient notion of immortal flesh still held a strong attraction. Centuries of philosophical speculation on the soul's immortality had done little in way of diminishing the attraction flesh held on most people, although practically nobody had anything to look forward to but an eternal existence as a disembodied soul. As seen from how people still deplored their existence as disembodied souls, from how various figures were still considered to have been physically immortalized, and, not least, from the frustration of Pagan philosophers like Plutarch and Christian apologists like Athenagoras over the continuous superstition of "the masses," these basic beliefs were still going strong when Christianity made its entrance.

But this attraction of the flesh was at the same time also a sad attraction, an unhappy love affair that never could be fulfilled. Only an exceptional few were considered to have been made physically immortal. Not even the smallest hope was left for all those other dead whose bodies had been lost to decay, fire, or consumption. This was the scene upon which Christianity entered.

CHAPTER FIVE

Jewish Beliefs on the Afterlife

That the Christian belief in the resurrection is related to Jewish eschatological ideas is impossible to gainsay. This is a fact. But this fact does not by itself explain why this belief *succeeded* in the first Christian centuries. Jews were clearly visible in most larger communities during this period, but visibility does not equal influence. That their religion was widely known does not mean that their tenets were widely accepted. That Christianity first reached Jewish communities cannot explain either how this new religion was accepted by the Greeks.

Although there is a clear historical connection, Jewish beliefs on the afterlife were never identical with what Christians held to be true. We must also consider to what degree Judaism actually influenced the development of the resurrection belief in Christianity. This forces us to ask another basic question, How typical of Judaism during this time was the belief in the resurrection, not least the belief in the resurrection of the *flesh*? Does Judaism in early imperial times offer any clue for why early Christians chose this one form of belief in the afterlife and not anything else?

During the time of Jesus, Judaism was in no way a uniform religion but consisted of different movements. Jews were present in most Roman cities, and even prior to the destruction of the Temple the majority of them were living outside Palestine. Jews like other peoples in the eastern Mediterranean were also in various degrees Hellenized, even to a great deal using the Septuagint, the third-century B.C. Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.

When looking at Judaism during the first Christian centuries, one must, however, also be aware of the ongoing discussion to what degree some of the Jewish Pseudepigraphical books, pseudo-Biblical texts,

which never made their way into the final Biblical canons, really are just Jewish, Jewish Christian works, or in their preserved form, originally Jewish texts substantially edited by Christians.[1] The way these texts are not only written in the name of various ancient Jewish figures but in a manner that tries to express the time of these alleged authors was a means employed by both Jewish and Christian authors to provide ancient support for their own current beliefs.

The Jewish Evolution of Resurrection Beliefs

That Jewish eschatological beliefs merely equaled a belief in the physical resurrection represents a serious simplification not only of what constituted the religious landscape at the beginning of the Christian era but also of Judaism in general. One thing is certain: originally the belief in the resurrection, any kind of resurrection, was not at all the most typical Jewish idea of what would happen after death. It seems rather to represent a more recent addition to previously held beliefs. What strikes the reader of the most ancient texts is the silence on the subject of the afterlife. One may speculate whether a conviction that there was no afterlife at all could be the most ancient Jewish idea. That death was considered the end of everything would of course not equal some form of premodern atheism, neither would it mean that the Jewish God was callous or insensitive to his chosen people. Yahweh's promise of salvation in these earliest texts translates to the survival of the Jews as a people, not to the immortality of the individual. It is in itself an attractive offer that could be seen rather soundly demonstrated in history with the Jewish return from Babylonian captivity in 538 B.C. and the subsequent reconstruction of the Temple.

Regardless of whether the conviction that there was no afterlife is the most ancient Jewish belief or not, this belief appears prominent in the early Roman period, as witnessed by both contemporary Jewish and New Testament writers, who usually connected it with the Sadducees.[2] As Josephus maintained, "The Sadducees hold that the soul perishes along with the body."[3] In her book on early Jewish and Christian resurrection beliefs, Claudia Setzer points out how "Be of good courage. No one is immortal" was a common inscription on Jewish graves in both Rome and Palestine.[4]

At an early point, the idea of the Sheol appeared, a shadowy afterworld similar to Hades, the depressing Greek abode of the dead. In Sheol, too, the dead souls remained forever in a dank existence that

did not equal immortality. The apparent parallel was not lost on the ancients either, and in the Septuagint, Sheol is simply translated with Hades. Sheol is already mentioned on a number of occasions in *Genesis*, *Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*, always in connection with misery and mourning.[5] According to *Isaiah*, the dead denizens of Sheol were even cut off from God,[6] though there are also passages in which Sheol is depicted as not beyond the power of God, for example, in *Job*, *Psalms* and *Amos*.[7] American scholar of religion Alan Segal sees these descriptions probably representing "the Biblical polemic against other gods, in this case, against the notion that there is another god who is 'Lord of the Underworld,' as there was in every other culture surrounding the Hebrews."[8] Either way, the afterlife was obviously not Yahweh's primal concern.

Also the living should keep their distance from the dead. Any communication with the dead was consequently condemned, punished by stoning in *Leviticus*.[9] Later the loquacious ghost of Samuel chastised Saul for having the woman at Endor conjuring him up from the dead.[10] The prohibition on communicating with the dead is simultaneously an indication that the dead were considered very early to have some kind of conscious existence.[11]

One cannot find any concrete indication of Jewish belief in any form of resurrection before 200 B.C., only various references that *may* be understood this way and that most usually are understood this way just because of *later* beliefs. Swedish Biblical scholar H.C.C. Cavallin argues that the "belief in the resurrection of the dead appears only on the fringe of the Hebrew Bible" with only "one or possible two exceptions in the latest part of the Palestinian canon."[12] British scholar of Judaism, Daniel Cohn-Sherbok concurs, observing that "the rabbis of the post-Biblical period were faced with the difficulty of proving that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is contained in Scripture" and had to base themselves on innovative exegesis.[13]

The third-century B.C. *Book of Isaiah* offers a message that many have seen as connected with the resurrection: "Your dead shall live, my body shall rise. Oh dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy."[14] Several modern scholars nevertheless doubt that this enigmatic text refers to the resurrection at all. Cavallin, for example, is deeply skeptical, arguing against how "many scholars hold that the original Hebrew meaning of this verse involves resurrection of the dead, in spite of all of the problems of understanding both the Hebrew text and the context." Cavallin's conclusion is more simply that "this cannot be proven."[15] Biblical scholar M.E. Dahl finds this verse ambiguous, too, arguing that

"we cannot be absolutely certain that Isa[iah] 26.19 is either an explicit prophecy of resurrection or the earliest example of such a thing."[16] On the other hand, one cannot exclude the possibility of *Isaiah* referring to a belief in some form of resurrection. Thus, this verse would be instrumental in shaping later Jewish belief on the resurrection. As pointed out by Segal, later writers would take "the ambiguous prophecy of Isaiah in a literal sense, saying that 'the sleepers in the dust' will literally rise."[17]

A less ambiguous reference to some form of resurrection is found in the second-century B.C. *Book of Daniel*. Here we learn that "many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."[18] Segal calls this the "earliest undoubted reference to literal resurrection in the Hebrew Bible," while German New Testament scholar Horacio Lona calls this a definite evidence of a hope for resurrection.[19] There is, however, still no assertion that the *body* is being raised. Cavallin contends that although "the body is not mentioned, . . . the reference to the dust and the term *dr'wn*, which refers to corpses in decay in Is[aiah] 66:24, probably imply a resurrection of the body."[20] That the dead will be resurrected after sleeping "in the dust" is nevertheless not proof of a bodily resurrection. The prophecy of *Daniel* could just as well mean that only the souls, not the bodies, would awake from an unconscious existence as dead. American Biblical scholar Adela Yarbro Collins argues that the original Hebrew phrase in *Daniel* 12.2 is best translated not as "those who sleep in the *dust of the earth*" but "those who sleep in a *land of dust,*" a traditional reference to Sheol, the land of the dead.[21] Such a reading definitely leaves the bodies out of this resurrection, as only souls lingered in Sheol. Indeed, what happened to the dead bodies could actually have been irrelevant to the writer of *Daniel*.

Regardless of whether the bodies were included in the resurrection or not, one must notice that "those who sleep" in *Daniel* are facing three different fates after being raised. Some are awoken to "everlasting life," others to "shame and everlasting contempt." We learn even more about "those who are wise" and "those who turn many to righteousness." They "shall shine like the brightness of the firmament" and "like the stars forever and ever."[22] Collins claims that *Daniel* expressed a "notion of resurrection in terms of astral immortality," not physical immortality in the ordinary sense.[23] Segal agrees, maintaining that this "can only mean to the Jews that they shall become angels, something

that did not exclude astral immortality. For stars had been identified as angelic creatures from earliest times."[24] This seems at the same time to rule out any possible future of the flesh, as angels were usually considered fleshless.

The reference to the afterlife in *Daniel* and *Isaiah* perhaps implies only some form of the resurrection of the soul. As American scholar in ancient Judaism George Nickelsburg points out, some Jewish prophecies make it clear that only "the spirits, not the bodies, of the righteous will rise."[25] The idea that the soul alone may escape death may be found pronounced already in *Psalms,* where it is proclaimed that "God shall deliver my soul from the power of Hades."[26]

The probably first-century B.C. author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* asserts that "God created man to be immortal" but "through the envy of the devil death came into the world."[27] But the text at the same time claims that the "hope" of the *souls* alone "is full of immortality."[28] In the present situation "the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God" and "in peace,"[29] thus indicating that the souls awaiting resurrection are not really conscious prior to being raised. Nickelsburg simply argues that the *Wisdom of Solomon* refers to the "immortality of the soul."[30]

Some of the Pseudepigraphical references to the resurrection are similarly too vague to decide whether there is a question of a physical resurrection or some more spiritualized process. We find this ambiguity expressed in, for example, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarch*, which is either a first- or second-century B.C. Jewish text revised by Christians in the second century A.D. or a Jewish Christian work from this time. Here Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob shall "rise to life"[31] or shall rise "in gladness."[32] Eventually everybody will "rise, some for glory, others to dishonor."[33] Zebulon, one of Jacob's sons, prophesies to his children: "For I shall arise once more in the midst of you, as a ruler in the midst of his sons."[34] Although people are clearly being raised from the dead in this text, nowhere is there anything to indicate in which form they will be resurrected.

In the *Testament of Abraham*, a text probably from the first century A.D. that some scholars have maintained is Christian, Abraham is told by the archangel Michael that he will "be taken up into the heavens, but your body shall remain on earth, until seven thousand aeons are fulfilled, for then all flesh shall arise."[35] What is clear is that the general resurrection is to happen quite some time after Abraham's lifetime. Lona argues that the term "all flesh" only refers to "all mortals."[36] As American scholar in early Christianity Pheme Perkins remarks, the term "flesh and blood" is sometimes "a Semitic expression for human being," often

appearing "in contexts that stress creatureliness and mortality."[37] This may be the case also in the *Testament of Abraham,* as the text otherwise considers the human state of "flesh and blood" as clearly inferior to the fleshless spirit of the angels.[38] When the protagonist witnesses the final judgment, it is again no reference to either bodies or flesh—only the souls of the righteous ones are saved, while the souls of the unrighteous are led to destruction.[39]

The *Apocalypse* or *Second Book of Baruch* from around 100 A.D., a Jewish text that, at least, seems to exhibit a number of Christian interpolations, juxtaposes different forms of resurrection. On the one hand there is a description of the resurrection of only the *souls* of the righteous: "Then all who have fallen asleep in hope of him [the Messiah] shall rise again. And it shall come to pass at that time that the treasuries will be opened in which is preserved the number of the *souls* of the righteous, and they shall come forth."[40] On the other hand there is also what seems like a resurrection of everybody, a resurrection that *will* include the bodies, as "the earth shall then assuredly restore the dead. It shall make no change in their form. But as it has received, so shall it restore them."[41] This state of no change is, however, only temporary. The unrighteous are turned into horrible shapes, while the righteous become like *angels* and are "made equal to the stars." Indeed, the transformation does not stop here for the righteous: "They shall be changed into every form they desire, from beauty into loveliness, and from light into the splendor of glory."[42] That this angelic transformation also included the flesh is rather unlikely as angels were normally considered fleshless beings.

The first-century A.D. *Fourth Book of Ezra*, another text that has gone through a degree of Christian editing, prophesies how "that which is not yet awake, shall be roused, and that which is corruptible shall perish."[43] Then, "the earth shall give up those who are asleep in it, and the dust those who dwell silently in it; and the chambers shall give up the souls which have been committed to them."[44] As everything corruptible has already perished, that which is resurrected certainly does not include the flesh. Still there seems to be more than just a question of souls being resurrected. Segal suggests that the resurrection in *Fourth Ezra* is "a resurrection in refined bodily form."[45]

The general unclarity about what resurrection meant in Judaism in antiquity is also exhibited in the *First Book of Enoch*, a text probably receiving its present form in the first or second century A.D., though much of its contents may be considerably older. At first this text seems to represent a more certain reference to resurrection in which the body

is somehow included, declaring that "those who have been destroyed in the desert, and those who have been devoured by the fish of the sea and by wild beasts, shall return and find hope in the day of the Elect One. For no one shall perish before the Lord of Spirits, nor should anyone be capable of perishing."[46] This is an exceptional prophecy that may even be seen to foreshadow later Christian ideas on the resurrection. It is still a question whether this means a return of the *flesh*, as there is no reference to the beasts and fish disgorging what they have eaten. This may just as well be a question of recreation, such as in *Second Maccabees* and perhaps in *Ezekiel* as well. Either way, *First Enoch* maintains that "all flesh shall bless your name with an exceedingly limitless power forever and ever."[47] But, again, we cannot take this as a proof of belief in the resurrection of the flesh, as "all flesh" in this context may be just another general Jewish reference to all mortals. A bit later, however, comes another reference to how this resurrection will take place: "And the righteous and elect shall have risen from the earth . . . And they wore garments of glory. These garments of yours shall become the garments of life from the Lord of Spirits: And your garments shall not wear out, nor your glory pass away before the Lord of Spirits."[48] This donning of the "garments of life" may mean some form of metamorphosis of the body. There is in this text also a notion of only the souls being resurrected or enjoying some form of immortality: "And the *spirits* of you who have died in righteousness shall live and rejoice; and their spirits shall not perish."[49] The souls will wait for the day of judgment in certain hollow places in the earth, and the future fate of the souls of the righteous is contrasted with the souls of sinners, which will not "be raised."[50] In other words, *First Enoch* may prophesy about the resurrection of only the souls of the righteous.

Another text that possibly proclaims the resurrection of the flesh is the *Apocalypse of Moses,* probably from a bit before 70 A.D. Here the archangel Michael explains to Seth, the son of Adam and Eve, that at the end of time "all flesh shall be raised up from Adam till that great day,"[51] although, as we have seen, "all flesh" may just mean all mortals.[52] This *Apocalypse*, however, says nothing about how this resurrection is to come about, but as there is no Jewish source from this time indicating anything else, one may assume that if there really was a question of the resurrection of the flesh, this would happen through the divine recreation of the flesh.

A most dramatic scene is found in the probably second-century B.C. *Book of Ezekiel.* This text also represents the oldest Jewish material in which the flesh is mentioned in something resembling a resurrection.

In a vision the prophet is miraculously conveyed to a valley full of dry bones, where God tells him,

> Prophesy to these bones and say to them: . . . "Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause spirit to enter you and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to grow and cover you with skin and put spirit in you and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord."[53]

Most scholars argue that this vision of Ezekiel must be understood as a prophecy of national revival, implying neither a general nor a more specific case of resurrection.[54] The bones are, as made clear in the text, an image of "the whole house of Israel."[55] When God promises to "open your graves and raise you from your graves" and "bring you home into the land of Israel," this may very well be, rather than a promise of resurrection, a promise of return for the alleged author, Ezekiel, who lived in Babylonian exile in the sixth century B.C.[56]

Regardless of whether this passage originally connected to some belief in a physical resurrection or not, it would soon be seen exactly as that. In the first Christian centuries the vision of Ezekiel was understood as an unambiguous reference to a future physical resurrection, within parts of both Judaism and early Christianity.[57] This new understanding of Ezekiel is part of a more extensive development within Judaism in which the belief in the resurrection gained momentum. One should note, however, that the vision in *Ezekiel* depicts a scene of divine recreation. As such Ezekiel also contributed to the meaning that when the flesh was part of the resurrection, it was the result of God's power to create from nothing.

The most ancient Jewish text referring clearly to the resurrection of the physical body is no older than the first century B.C. The *Second Book of the Maccabees* relates the gruesome story of seven brothers who were martyred, one after another, by the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes. Having witnessed his two elder brothers having their tongues, arms, and feet cut off before being fried, still alive, the third brother holds forth his tongue and hands, proclaiming, "These I had from heaven and for his laws I despise them, and from him I hope to receive them again."[58] How this physical restoration is going to take place is also indicated: it will happen through the recreation of the bodies similar to how God once made the whole universe ex nihilo. The notion of how God once created everything from nothing is explicitly connected with the martyrium and expected resurrection of the seven brothers.

After six sons have been killed in ways that practically have annihilated their bodies, the mother addresses her youngest son in this manner: "I beseech you, my son, look upon heaven and earth, look at everything that is in them, and know that God made them out of things that did not exist; and mankind was made in the same way."[59] As argued by Segal, "What is being stressed is God's power to do anything, even the seemingly improbable task of reconstituting a human being when there is nothing left of the corpse."[60]

Although the reference to the resurrection in these few Jewish texts is mostly undisputed, one should be careful not to exaggerate their general importance. As pointed out by Perkins, in these Jewish apocalypses the resurrection only "occurs as a minor motif in the larger scenario of judgment."[61] It is the righteousness of God and his wish to give each and everyone what he or she deserves that stand prominent, not the resurrection per se.

There is in Hellenistic times a general development leading to a greater emphasis on a future resurrection in Judaism. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Jewish Bible used extensively by Jews in Hellenistic and Roman times, contains a number of revisions and additions to the original Hebrew text, making afterlife beliefs appear more prominently. As Cavallin suggests, this probably reflected the translators' "own developed notions about personal life after death or even resurrection."[62] In a number of places, verses have been altered to make them relate to some form of resurrection. Again, we find that these references to the resurrection leave us mostly in the dark as to what exactly the resurrection implied. There is nothing reflecting a similar stress on the resurrection in the sense of a physical resurrection of the flesh as that which would prove so important to Christianity.

How exactly the Jewish ideas on the resurrection originated within a religion that initially held no such ideas has never been firmly established. Many, however, have pointed to a possible Persian connection not least because the Persian Empire was in control of Palestine between 538 and 332 B.C. There is, as we have seen, absolutely no Jewish notion of resurrection found before this time. A problem with seeing Judaism as influenced by Zoroastrianism is that no extant Zoroastrian text can be dated back to this period with certainty. Close parallels nevertheless indicate that there must have been some kind of interchange between Judaism and Zoroastrianism. Segal concludes this way: "It seems safest to say that during the Parthian and Sasanian periods all three religions—Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity—cross-fertilize each other. But it also seems likely that the kernel notion of

resurrection was a Zoroastrian notion first, since it appears to be there right at the beginning of Zoroastrian literature."[63]

The idea that God will revive everybody or all true believers at the end of times may thus very well have come from Zoroastrianism. But this does not solve the question of the flesh. Regardless of what they held to be the case in the matter of a future resurrection, the Zoroastrians disposed of the flesh of the dead in their own peculiar way, putting out the dead bodies to be eaten by birds of carrion and other scavengers. There was indeed little left that could be resurrected in other ways than by a complete and miraculous recreation. This is also what seems to have been the case, as Zoroastrians expected everybody to receive a "future body," "*tan i pasen,*" at the end of time.[64] Although this says nothing about whether the resurrection is to include the flesh, it offers an interesting parallel to certain Jewish resurrection beliefs. There seems to be a similar *recreation* of the body. In the *Bundahishn*, which like most other extant Zoroastrian texts got its final version long after the early Christian era, probably in the ninth century, there is a connection similar to what is found in Jewish texts between creation and how the resurrection is considered to take place as a *recreation*: "Observe that when that which was not was then created, why is it not possible to create *again* that which was?"[65] The fact that most modern Zoroastrians, not least in diaspora, do not believe in the resurrection of the body[66] may, however, serve as a reminder that we must be careful when trying to assess how central this belief was in Zoroastrianism in antiquity.

Jewish Beliefs in the Immortal Soul

The Jewish texts advocating some form of resurrection belief, regardless of whether they included the flesh or not, were in no way speaking for everyone. Jewish philosopher Philo, a contemporary of Augustus, for example, not only refrained from believing in the physical resurrection himself, but did not mention any belief at all in physical resurrection in his writings, which deal extensively with Jewish questions.[67] Indeed, some Jews found the idea of the resurrection completely irrelevant, insisting instead that the belief in the immortal soul had originated in Judaism not Greek philosophy. According to the first-century A.D. Jewish historian Josephus, Pythagoras, that most ancient Greek advocate of the soul's immortality, "not only knew our [Jewish] doctrines, but was to a great degree a follower and admirer of them."[68]

Josephus also turned to more ancient authorities, quoting Alexandrian scientist Hermippus Callimachaeus who claimed around 200 B.C. that Pythagoras merely repeated "the doctrines of the Jews and Thracians, which he transferred into his own teaching."[69] This juxtaposition of Jewish doctrines with Thracian beliefs makes it clear that this is a reference to the belief in the immortal soul, as the Thracians had long been considered an inspiration to Pythagoras in exactly these matters.[70]

Going back to the end of the third century B.C., we find that the conviction that the immortality of the soul was originally a Jewish idea is about as old as the oldest reference to something resembling a resurrection within Judaism. This conviction also remained strong. Almost two centuries after Josephus, Origen could still claim that "Pythagoras brought his philosophy to the Greeks from the Jews."[71] In the middle of the second century, Justin Martyr explained how many considered there was a historical connection between Judaism and Greek philosophy:

> For Moses is more ancient than all the Greek writers. And whatever both philosophers and poets have said about the immortality of the soul, or punishments after death, . . . they have received such suggestions from the prophets which have enabled them to understand and interpret these things.[72]

That many held that the concept of the immortal soul originally came from Judaism is connected with the belief that all true religion and philosophy must have originated in Judaism simply in order to be true. The general idea that the essence of Greek philosophical thought was rooted in Judaism was also reflected in how Plato, according to the Middle Platonic philosopher Numenius of Apamea, received the cognomen of Moses Atticus, the Athenian Moses.[73]

The idea that the belief in the immortal soul was intimately tied with Judaism was also connected to actual beliefs on the afterlife held among the Jews. The belief in the immortal soul was in no way unknown to Judaism and may have been just as common among Jews in the Hellenistic and Roman eras as the belief in any form of resurrection. The claim professed by some scholars, that there remained a particular "Semitic mind" that "did not conceive of the survival of man's spirit as a triumph over death,"[74] only the survival of the body, can thus hardly be said to be correct. Grave material demonstrates that this distinctiveness of body and soul was not, as sometimes is claimed,[75] a belief peculiar to the more Hellenized Jews outside Palestine either. As Perkins makes

clear, "Archeological evidence from the first century A.D. . . . shows a wide diversity in tombstone formulae with no significant difference in the percentage of references to immortality [of the soul] over resurrection between [Jewish] inscriptions from the Diaspora and those from Palestine."[76]

In its presentation of the seven brothers martyred by the Seleucid king, the first-century A.D. *Fourth Maccabees* portrays their death as being immediately followed by immortality, a state that again can only include the souls as the bodies are perfectly destroyed. The mother urged her children on, "as though bringing forth her sons to immortality":[77] "For at that moment through their endurance virtue gave the awards of incorruption and longlasting life."[78] Immortality here is no physical promise sometime in the future. With the bodies destroyed, the souls of the seven brothers have earned themselves eternal life from the moment their souls leave their bodies. *Fourth Maccabees* asserts accordingly that those "who believe . . . die not, for as our patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they live to God."[79] As the author nowhere mentions the resurrection of any of these patriarchs, their continuous life seems again to imply only some form of immortality of the soul.

Some texts also reflect a belief in the immortality of the soul connected with the idea that the soul alone will be resurrected. Pseudo-Phocylides, a probably Jewish Alexandrian writer in the first century B.C. OR A.D., considered that "the immortal and ageless soul lives forever." "The souls remain unharmed in the deceased," apparently inside the dead body or what was left of it. And at the end of time this part of man will "come to the light again out of the earth."[80] Some sort of immortality of the soul seems also to be the case in the first-century B.C. *Book of Jubilees* in which it is written that "their bones shall rest in the earth, and their spirits shall have much joy."[81] Nickelsburg considers this a belief in the "assumption of the spirit to heaven."[82]

According to Philo, all souls were "immortal," being "originated from nothing created whatsoever, but from the Father and Ruler of all."[83] Alas, even an immortal soul could lose its immortality and die, as Philo promised an immortal existence only to the virtuous.[84] Apparently, the righteous soul became immortal at the moment of death, a transformation that meant that one "became equal to the angels . . . those unbodied and blessed souls."[85] Philo goes as far as claiming that the human mind is "entombed in a mortal body which may quite properly be called a grave."[86] As Perkins observes, in the thinking of Philo "the immortalizing transformation of the human person through wisdom has no

place for the body. The latter is mortal and, worse, associated with the passions that imprison the soul."[87]

Philo was in no way the prototypal Alexandrian Jew. "It is hard to say that Philo was typical of anyone but himself," Segal remarks. Philo was, however, not alone in Judaism with his pronounced revulsion for the body. According to Josephus, Eleazar, the commander at Massada, allegedly convinced the besieged community to commit mass suicide with a speech about the divine soul being "imprisoned in the body."[88] Josephus claimed that the Essenes, too, considered the immortal souls only as "united to their bodies as to prisons."[89]

Usually the Qumran community is considered part of the ancient Essene movement. Recently, with publication of all the scrolls from Qumran, some scholars have argued that these texts nevertheless indicate a belief in the resurrection. The most important proof of this is claimed to be the so-called *Messianic Apocalypse* proclaiming that "he will heal the wounded and will make the dead live for he will bring good news to the meek."[90] This may very well be, as Segal claims, a demonstration "that the Qumranites believed in resurrection of the dead,"[91] but again the text is really too vague to help us draw any absolute conclusions. As British scholar in ancient Judaism Philip Davies argues, there is "little or no clear reference . . . either to immortality or to resurrection from the dead" in the Qumran texts.[92] There is at least no reference to any resurrection of the *flesh* taking place. As such there is nothing in the scrolls contradicting Josephus' claims that the Essenes considered the soul as imprisoned in the body,[93] because, as we have seen, the resurrection could also mean only the resurrection of the soul. Both Alan Segal and Crispin Fletcher-Louis maintain that the Qumran texts may reflect an anglification.[94] As we observed in *Second Baruch*,[95] Philo,[96] and perhaps also in *Daniel*, that the resurrection really meant some form of anglification was not unknown in other parts of Judaism either.

Reincarnation, too, was quite compatible with Judaism in antiquity, as demonstrated by Philo. He relates how the air is full of souls and that some of these "descend to be fast bound in mortal bodies," while others "longing for the familiar and accustomed ways of mortal life, again retrace their steps."[97] This is apparently an ongoing process: some of the "bodiless souls" who populate the air "enter into mortal bodies, and quit them again at certain fixed periods."[98]

According to Josephus, the Pharisees held the souls to be incorruptible and, moreover, that the souls of the good would be reincarnated into new bodies as these souls "pass into other bodies," while "the souls

of the wicked suffer eternal punishment."[99] The Pharisees "believe that souls have an immortal power in them, and that under the earth there will be rewards or punishments, according to whether they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life and, the latter will be thrown in a prison forever, the former shall have power to live again."[100] That this group considered reincarnation a possibility is supported by the fact that Josephus, probably a Pharisee himself,[101] personally held this belief, claiming that those souls who "are pure and, obedient . . . obtain a most holy place in heaven, from where, in the turning of aeons, they are again sent into pure bodies."[102]

One may, of course, speculate whether Josephus referred to something similar to the traditional Greek philosophical form of metempsychosis, meaning that one would constantly be reborn into new bodies, or whether he actually referred to the souls only getting a new body at the end of time, thus equaling some form of physical resurrection. As he himself believed that "the bodies of all men are indeed mortal and are created out of corruptible matter; but the soul is ever immortal,"[103] it is at least clear that an eternal existence in one and the same body was not something he considered an option.

How the ideas on the immortality of the soul originated within Judaism remains uncertain. Segal may be correct when claming that "the immortality of the soul was explicitly borrowed from Platonism,"[104] but it is not possible to draw any absolute conclusions on this. That Jewish beliefs in the immortality of the soul around the time of the birth of Christ were clearly *influenced* by Platonism is obvious. But this in itself is no proof that these Jewish beliefs *originated* in Plato's ideas. The notion seems so widespread within ancient Judaism that one may speculate whether the beliefs may have developed from the more ancient Jewish ideas on the soul's eternal existence in Sheol. This is, of course, not the same as agreeing with the ancient theologians maintaining that the Greeks philosophers got their ideas from pre-exile Judaism. But the belief may have appeared independently in both Greek philosophy and Judaism. In this regard, one should note that the idea of the immortal soul is still prevalent among both Orthodox and Reform Jews. Many find the belief in bodily resurrection an idea simply "not rooted in Judaism."[105]

The Absence of Jewish Parallels to the Resurrected Jesus

Having in mind how early Christians considered themselves the true successors of Judaism, it is remarkable that Pseudo-Justin in the late

second century let the Devil pick a number of apostles from the Jews, "among those who crucified our Savior," and had them trying to keep people from believing in the resurrection.[106] Gunnar af Hällström argues that Pseudo-Justin here "came close to blaming the Jews for having incited all the parties concerned to reject this doctrine [of resurrection]."[107] One may, of course, take this depiction of the Jews as a typical presentation of a dangerous rival denying everything that a true believer holds as correct. But having in mind how the concept of physical resurrection seemed alien to so many Jews, one cannot rule out the possibility that Pseudo-Justin based himself on actual Jewish attacks on the Christian belief in the resurrection of the flesh.

There is one central aspect in the Christian belief on the resurrection that appears not to have been foreshadowed in Judaism. From the very beginning, the Christian idea on any form of future resurrection was intimately tied to the belief in how Christ was raised from the dead. Here lies a dilemma. There is apparently nowhere in Jewish tradition any clear example of an individual resurrecting from the dead for thereupon gaining an immortal existence *before* the end of time.[108] As Biblical scholar William Lane Craig observes, "It is now widely agreed that the disciples' belief in Jesus' resurrection cannot be plausibly explained as the result of their reflection on the Old Testament . . . Old Testament proof-texts of the resurrection could be found only after the fact of the disciples' coming to believe that Jesus was risen, not before."[109] The few incidents of individual resurrection from the dead are cases of people being resuscitated back to their previously mortal existence, like the widow's son and the son of the Somanite restored to life by Elijah and Elisha.[110] The dead Moabite whose body touched the bones of Elisha was similarly revived only to mortality.[111] These incidents are most of all witnesses of the power of God, as Hanna, the mother of the prophet Samuel, prays in *First Samuel*: "The Lord kills and brings to life, he brings down to Sheol and raises up."[112]

There are still a couple of incidents that may be considered borderline cases. Although not resurrected from the dead, the antediluvian patriarch Enoch did not die, but, as it is put in *Genesis*, "walked with God."[113] The prophet Elijah fared similarly, but the Bible gives more details to go by. After "a chariot of fire and horses of fire" separated him from his successor, the prophet Elisha, Elijah "was taken up in a whirlwind into heaven."[114] Many held that Enoch and Elijah were still alive with body and soul and that, eventually, they would both play pivotal roles in various apocalyptic dramas. A whole number of books was written in the Hellenistic era elaborating the fate of Enoch after

his mysterious disappearance. Enoch and Elijah are sometimes given the additional company of Moses, who, according to *Deuteronomy,* was buried in a secret grave.[115] Josephus, for example, who maintains that Enoch and Elijah "disappeared,"[116] claims that Moses did not die either but vanished with a cloud that had descended upon him.[117]

These beliefs in exceptional cases of individual immortalization are also seen presented as Jewish in the gospels. In *The Gospel of Matthew*, the Jewish onlookers at the crucifixion of Jesus misunderstood his plea to the Lord, "Eli, Eli," perceiving that he called for Elijah. Some in the crowd then remarked, "Let us see whether Elijah comes to save him,"[118] something that of course can be seen as sheer sarcasm on the part of the ghoulish crowd, but that at the same time indicates a belief that the ancient prophet, who had once been spirited away, could actually return.

Although the physical bodies of Enoch, Elijah, and, according to some, Moses, disappeared, the opinions varied as to what really became of their bodies after they were translated. In the probably first-century A.D. *Second Enoch*, preserved only in Old Church Slavonic, Enoch was radically transformed as he was anointed and dressed in clothes of divine glory by the archangel Michael. This made him appear "like one of his glorious ones," apparently the angels: "There was no observable difference" between him and the "glorious ones."[119] As angels were not considered to possess flesh, this transformation seems to mean that the body no longer comprised flesh. In the Christian *Ascension of Isaiah* from the second century, clearly modeled on earlier Jewish revelation texts, Enoch is similarly found "stripped of the garments of the flesh."[120]

In *First Enoch*, Enoch himself relates how only his "spirit was translated. And it ascended into the heavens."[121] But this is not quite as straightforward as it may seem at first. Suddenly, after telling about all the various wonders his spirit saw, Enoch recounts how he fell on his face and "my whole *body* softened and my spirit was transformed."[122] Although what exactly happened remains uncertain, the flesh apparently has no future place according to this text either. An explanation follows, stating how he has now become "the Son of Man."[123] Segal considers this "a mystic transformation of the heavenly journeyer Enoch into the angelic vice-regent of God."[124]

According to other sources only the souls of these prominent men were immortalized, whereas their bodies somehow vanished in this process. Philo, for example, on one occasion let the body of Moses be stripped away so that the soul was free to enjoy an immortal existence.[125]

On another occasion he let the body be merged with the soul "into a single unity, transforming his whole being into mind (*nous*), pure as sunlight."[126] Philo talks of Enoch in similar terms, arguing that "absolute happiness is impossible to one who is imprisoned in the mortal body."[127] Examining these examples, it seems that to Philo those "whom God had translated and removed from corruptible to immortal races"[128] had either left their mortal bodies behind or transformed them to a similar spiritual substance as the soul, "for transference implies visibility and change."[129]

Although some clearly referred to Enoch, Moses, and Elijah as being immortalized, others indicate that they would die just before the ultimate end of history. In the *Testament of Benjamin*, Enoch all of a sudden appears as resurrected along with Noah, Shem, Abraham, and Isaac.[130] Being resurrected, he had, of course, to have died prior to this. Also Josephus voiced some kind of reserve about the fate of Enoch and Elijah, claiming that they "disappeared from among men, and nobody knows of their death to this very day."[131]

One particularly interesting text in this context is the *Testament of Job,* probably written in either the first century A.D. or the last half of the first century B.C.[132] One must, however, be aware that some scholars consider this text in its present version to be the result of a certain degree of Christian editing.[133] After Job denies everyone to look for the bones of his dead children, claiming they had vanished, the children reappear in heaven.[134] Whether this must be considered an example of physical resurrection is, however, not certain, though it may be the case. The text is silent on the nature of the translated children. It is also not clear whether the bones were transferred to heaven and the flesh recreated, the physical remains were transformed into a similar spiritual substance as the souls, or the bones just vanished as the souls of the children were translated to heaven.[135] In his monograph on the resurrection, British Biblical scholar A.J.M. Wedderburn argues that the resurrection of Job's children is only "a vision."[136] Whatever this really was meant to be, just the claim of Job that the bones of his children have vanished makes the bystanders consider him out of his mind.[137] That anyone should be resurrected before the end of time is definitely not *comme il faut*. If the bodies of Job's children were, indeed, resurrected, this represents a unique case. The indication that this actually happened was nevertheless not given much attention. The fate of Job's children did not turn into a popular story, neither was their possible resurrection elaborated by any other writers.

When the *Testament of Job* explicitly refers to the general resurrection of the dead at the end of times it is equally vague, not saying whether this included both body and soul, only the soul, or whether the body would be completely transformed into some spiritual nature.[138] When Job himself ends his life, he simply leaves his body behind to be buried as his soul is taken up by God.[139]

Early Christian authors who themselves believed in the resurrection of the flesh generally exaggerated the physical aspect of the Jewish belief in the resurrection. This is in accordance with the basic Christian understanding that the entire Jewish Bible is one great prophetic text leading to the coming of Jesus Christ. As M.E. Dahl points out, those who believed in the resurrection "do not seem to have had any doubt that such a view was implied in the Old Testament."[140] If you as an early Christian believed in the physical resurrection, the Jewish Bible just had to reflect this as well. A whole number of quite different passages was suddenly seen as related to the unique resurrection of Christ and the general resurrection of the dead. Jonah's three days in the belly of the whale,[141] and Hosea's mysterious saying that we will rise on the third day[142] became tied to the drama of the gospels. Naturally without referring to Christ, also later rabbinical exegesis advocating the physical resurrection would understand these passages in a similar way.[143]

Various Jewish groups were also at times presented by Christians as having a stronger belief in resurrection than what other sources indicate. As most Christians considered themselves the true religious successors of Judaism, it was important to claim that any Jewish denial of the resurrection represented only the position of a small minority. Thus, even the Pharisees, whom the Christians usually denounced as the vile opponents of Jesus, could be seen as forerunners in this pivotal aspect of Christian orthodoxy. Luke depicted them as believing in the resurrection,[144] although Josephus held the Pharisees believing in the immortal soul and some form of reincarnation. The Essenes, who according to Josephus saw the body as the prison of the soul, were around 200 depicted by Hippolytus of Rome as also awaiting the resurrection of the body.[145] H.C.C. Cavallin finds that Hippolytus' historical creativity can probably be explained by how the then extinct Essenes generally were described sympathetically, and that the Church father subsequently would feel comfortable "to use this outstanding group of Jews as witnesses for orthodoxy."[146]

The many different beliefs on the afterlife found in Judaism as Christianity entered the stage make it difficult to hold any single notion as typically Jewish. The lack of prominence typical of the belief

in the immortality of the flesh is nevertheless striking. It is, instead, the great variety of beliefs which seems the most characteristic of Judaism at this time. As H.C.C. Cavallin sums up in his inquiry on the topic, in antiquity "there is no single Jewish doctrine about life after death," but several.[147] Various Jewish groups presented themselves or were presented as believing in a number of very different things: the denial of any form of afterlife, a shadowy existence in Sheol, that the body was only the prison of the immortal soul, the resurrection of the soul, the resurrection of some spiritualized body, and, finally, the belief that the flesh would be recreated in a physical resurrection at the end of times. It was mostly Christian writers, and not even all of them, who saw the belief in the physical resurrection of the body as the most typical Jewish belief.

Nevertheless, it is important to be aware of that this great variety does not mean that the Christian belief in the resurrection is not rooted in Jewish beliefs. The earliest Christian insistence of this being the case, makes it impossible to deny this origin. But the great variety of Jewish beliefs makes it more difficult to see Judaism as providing the pattern for how the Christian belief in the resurrection developed in its first centuries into insisting on the resurrection of the flesh.

With the close connection between Judaism and early Christianity, we really should ask the question why did the Greeks not turn to Judaism instead. Though seriously tainted after the anti-Roman insurrections in Palestine in the first and second centuries A.D., Judaism would still prove a serious contender to Christianity. Contrary to Christianity, Judaism was generally acknowledged for its antiquity, something which for most Greeks equaled a claim to authenticity in the matter of religious truth. The emphasis of ethnic exclusivity so obvious in later times was not as prevalent in antiquity either, as W.H.C. Frend points out, "On one ground or another Judaism, like Christianity, was presenting itself as a universal religion."[148] Many also did choose to convert to the ancient beliefs of Moses, as Robin Lane Fox observes.[149] Both Juvenal and Justin Martyr, for example, referred to Pagans who converted to Judaism.[150] Even more people chose to have a more freely associated status with one of the many Jewish communities in a way that would not exclude them from taking part in the civic duties in a Pagan community.

There is, however, one particularly important difference between how Christianity and Judaism presented themselves to the classical world. Contrary to Christianity, Judaism did not push the belief in the physical resurrection when trying to win converts. This difference may

consequently have been one of the factors leading to people preferring Christianity over Judaism. As we have seen, the notion of physical resurrection was not at all central in antique Judaism, the notion of immortal flesh even less so. The antiquity and ethical firmness of the Jewish tradition were instead presented as the greatest reason for anyone to turn to Judaism. In comparison with the Christians who attempted to usurp the Jewish tradition while denying the Law, Jews truly had stronger credibility in the matters of both ethical firmness and a real connection with the most distant past. The criticism that Christianity suffered of being just a newly invented religion could never touch Judaism.

CHAPTER SIX

The Challenge of Immortal Flesh

It was no matter of course that Christianity should embrace the notion of the resurrection of the flesh. Indeed, Christianity, as we first find it reflected in the writings of Paul, was a religion in which flesh played no positive role at all. In Judaism, from which Christianity originated, resurrection of the *flesh* never held center stage either, although a general eschatological resurrection belief was more widespread. Even centuries after Paul, many Christians still refused to believe that the flesh would be resurrected. That in the end the belief in the resurrection of the flesh stood supreme thus warrants an explanation.

The Fleshless Resurrection Body of Paul

In Paul's *First Epistle to the Corinthians,* the oldest extant Christian text dealing with resurrection, we are told that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."[1] In *Colossians* we learn that we are to be "putting off of the body of the flesh."[2] Whatever happens, Paul wrote in *First Corinthians*, we will all be transformed in such a degree that our bodies will no longer be of the flesh, "no flesh should glory before God."[3] As a number of scholars has pointed out, according to Paul, flesh is simply to play no part as we are made immortal.[4]

Paul hardly has anything positive to say about the flesh. As Gunnar af Hällström points out, Paul "frequently uses the word 'flesh,' *sarx*, in a derogatory sense, connecting it with the sinfulness of man in one way or another."[5] Flesh is always full of sin. To make his case, Paul pointed to his own body: "For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwells nothing good."[6] Indeed, "the flesh" is a slave "to the law of

sin"[7] and "those who are in the flesh cannot please God."[8] Even before his resurrection, the carnal nature of Jesus is questioned. According to Paul, Jesus was incarnated only "in the *likeness* of sinful flesh,"[9] although he was "descended from David according to the flesh."[10]

Paul also used flesh as a metaphor of the old Jewish covenant to stress how the flesh represents something we must leave behind. Contrary to the circumcision of the flesh, which was the sign of the old covenant, the new covenant is marked by being "circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ."[11]

It is difficult to argue that Paul held that flesh in any way was to play a part in the immortal state we are promised. To Paul, flesh is by definition always corruptible. The ancient Greek idea that flesh also could be incorruptible and immortal represented to Paul a contradiction in terms. Flesh, for Paul, was characterized by its physical "infirmity" or "feebleness."[12] As "what is corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and what is mortal shall have put on immortality,"[13] the flesh of the body will in the end be either obliterated or so radically transformed that it would no longer constitute flesh.

But what did Paul, as our earliest Christian writer, actually believe about the resurrection of the dead? That he was convinced of both the resurrection of Christ and the general resurrection of the dead is quite clear; this represents the very core of his Christian beliefs. It is equally clear that to Paul both Christ's resurrection and the future general resurrection involved the body. But turning to how exactly Paul considered the nature of the resurrected body beyond its not comprising flesh, we are faced with a more vague understanding. Later Christians have accordingly used Paul's writings to provide the basis for greatly diverging beliefs.

The apostle was not oblivious of his presentation of the resurrection not being easily understood by everybody. Rhetorically, he raised the question himself: "But someone will say 'How are the dead to be raised up? With what sort of body are they coming?' "[14] He must have countered these kinds of speculations when preaching the resurrection. It is to this dilemma that Paul presented the metaphor of the seed, which is often considered his most significant reference to the nature of the resurrected body: "As for what you sow, you sow not the body that will become, but a bare grain."[15] There is no general agreement among scholars as to what this really entails. Helmer Ringgren sees this as meaning "the body that rises is not the old body but a new one, just as a new plant comes out of the seed."[16] Taking this a bit

further, Adela Yarbro Collins argues that "the 'seed' itself shrivels and eventually decomposes" and there is a question of "discontinuity."[17] A.J.M Wedderburn similarly maintains that "all the stress in his discussion in 1 Corinthians 15 lies upon the discontinuity and the difference between our present earthly existence and the future, spiritual one."[18] German New Testament scholar Peter Lampe argues that when it comes to the general resurrection, according to Paul, the transformation is so complete that the new spiritual body we will receive "can be created *with* or *without* transformed particles of the old one."[19] Caroline Walker Bynum, on the other hand, insists that this radical change still involves some sort of continuity: "Something accounts for identity. It is *that which is sown* that quickens."[20]

Paul also argued that man's present body, the "*sôma psychikon*" or "body of the soul," would in the resurrection be transformed into the "*sôma pneumatikon*" or "body of the spirit."[21] But what the transformation from *sôma psychikon* to *sôma pneumatikon* actually implied remains just as contested as Paul's metaphor of the seed. The way this passage is often translated as the present "*physical* body" shall be transformed into a "spiritual body" represents no correct rendition, but it may, nevertheless, reflect correctly how Paul understood the resurrection body as the flesh definitely is excluded. Dale Martin disagrees on this point, arguing that the change taking place in the resurrection did not have to mean that one became immaterial, although no flesh was included. Spiritual was not necessarily immaterial. Even the disembodied soul was at this time often considered to consist of some form of physical matter.[22]

Paul insisted that the general resurrection of the dead was intimately connected with the resurrected Christ. In *Philippians* the apostle argued that Christ would "transform our lowly body to be conformed to his glorious body."[23] Just as we now bear the image of the first human, Adam, "the one made of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one," Christ.[24] The resurrected Christ is really "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep,"[25] "the firstborn from the dead."[26] He is the pioneer of immortality and incorruptibility. Individuals may now hope for their own resurrection, just like what happened to Jesus. We are offered a possibility to imitate the resurrected Jesus.[27] Thus there is a clear parallel between what Jesus went through and how all men and women will have their physical bodies radically changed in the resurrection. This forces us to see the body of the resurrected Christ as a reflection of the bodies everybody else can look forward to.

Although Paul's authority is based on the mandate literally given him by the resurrected Christ,[28] there is not much either to go by as to how Paul considered the nature of the resurrected Jesus beyond his not being raised in the flesh. Even when referring to a whole number of people who encountered the resurrected Christ prior to himself, Paul says nothing about the nature of the resurrected body.[29] One thing is nevertheless certain: just like all those Pagan figures who had been raised to physical immortality, Jesus was mortal prior to his death and resurrection. The body of Jesus prior to his death and resurrection was apparently not immaterial either. Having been "born of a woman"[30] and sent by God "in the likeness of sinful flesh,"[31] Jesus seems to have died with a physical body—if not of flesh and bones with something very much like it. It is, on the other hand, absolutely certain that the "glorious body" of the *resurrected* Christ did not consist of flesh, since his body is the model for the fleshless resurrection body we all can receive.[32]

Contrary to the general resurrection, which will take place at some point in the future, the resurrection of Jesus is an event that has already taken place, and as such one could expect that there is more to know about it. Paul, however, does not say what happened to the physical remains of Christ after he had been buried. He maintains that Jesus "was buried" and "raised up the third day,"[33] but there is no reference to the empty grave asserting that the resurrection really involved the physical body. As suggested by German theologian Rudolf Bultmann, Paul's silence on the issue of the empty tomb may have been caused by his not finding this really relevant.[34]

In our attempt to understand how Paul considered the nature of the resurrection body, we must also look at how he presented those who have not yet died on the point of the general resurrection. These will be made immortal without being resurrected. "Look, I tell you a mystery," Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "We shall all not fall asleep, but we shall all be changed," or "made different in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump."[35] A more comprehensive description of this future event is given in his *First Epistle to the Thessalonians*: as Christ returns, both "those who are dead in union with Christ" and "we the living who are left . . . will be snatched up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."[36] Those who are still alive when Christ returns do not have to die, but will just the same end up with a nature equal to those who will be raised from the dead. Thus, the change we go through as we are made immortal at the end of times does not require death. The way Paul insists that "we shall all be *changed*" or "*made*

different," regardless of whether we are dead or alive at the end of time,[37] indicates that the resurrection in some way still implied our present bodies, that whatever was left represented the seed from which the new spiritual body would develop. But again, we are left mostly in the dark about the nature of this changed and magnificent body. All we learn is that we will "put on incorruption" and "put on immortality,"[38] in a way that excludes "flesh and blood."[39]

When Jesus returns, those of us who are saved will apparently leave the earth forever behind: "We will be snatched up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord."[40] Expecting our future existence to take place in such a wholly other realm, Paul also connected the difference between the present corruptible body and the incorruptible resurrection body with the difference between terrestrial and celestial bodies.[41] Apparently the immortalization to Paul meant that our bodies will be transformed into a similar nature as the celestial bodies—the sun, the moon, and the stars—however he imagined these. Related ideas probably lie behind how Paul in *Second Corinthians* groans about "this earthly house, this tent" that now confines us, "longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven."[42]

To draw a final conclusion on how Paul understood the nature of the immortal body, beyond it not consisting of the flesh, is difficult. As the New Testament scholar S.B. Marrow observes, "The answer to this question remains, in the final analysis, a mystery."[43] Paul himself indicates that we really are not *supposed* to know how exactly we will end up, as "God gives it [that which is sowed] a body just as it has pleased him."[44] We will just have to wait and see what God has in mind for us.

Paul's belief in a fleshless resurrection body may nevertheless be seen in the context of his religious background. That Paul was originally Jewish is a fact beyond any discussion, and as such it makes good sense to see him in relation to contemporary Judaism. As we saw, most Jewish texts that refer to a future resurrection skirt the question of what this resurrection actually implied. To refrain from specifying the nature of the resurrection body seems more the rule than an exception. Turning explicitly to the resurrection of the flesh, we found that this really was a marginal belief among the Jews. Paul's fleshless resurrection body, which he does not describe in any detail, thus does not stand out from the general pattern of contemporary Jewish resurrection belief.

According to Luke, Paul was a Pharisee and never ceased considering himself one. When being questioned on his belief in Christ by the Jewish

Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish judicial and legislative body in Judea in the Roman period, Paul allegedly proclaimed, "I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees" and even connected his own beliefs on the resurrection with that of the Pharisees.[45] If Paul, indeed, was a Pharisee, this could explain his negative attitude toward the flesh. Although Luke depicted the Pharisees as believing in the resurrection,[46] according to Josephus, the Pharisees held only the *soul* to be immortal[47] or believed in some form of reincarnation.[48] Either way, there is no indication that the Pharisees viewed the flesh positively. Whereas Luke does not mention the Pharisees' attitude toward the flesh, Josephus clearly depicts them as seeing the soul as the better part. Paul's negative attitude toward the flesh may thus relate to his Pharisaic background.

There is also a number of close parallels between how Paul and other Jews at that time envisioned the resurrection. The way Paul compared the difference between our present and future nature with the difference between terrestrial and celestial bodies[49] may be seen as connected to the astral immortality promised in the *Book of Daniel* and the *Second Book of Baruch* to the righteous who shall be resurrected.[50] How the righteous, according to *First Enoch*, shall be "clothed with garments of glory," "garments of life from the Lord of Spirits,"[51] may similarly connect to Paul's claim that "what is corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and what is mortal shall have put on immortality,"[52] and to his description of how we shall discard "our earthly house, this tent" for an everlasting "house from God."[53] Paul's expectation of "putting on incorruption"[54] is also similar to how the protagonist in *Second Enoch* was anointed and dressed in clothes of divine glory, something that made him appear "like one of his glorious ones."[55]

There seems, moreover, to be a parallel between how Paul expected those who were still alive to change at the end of time and what happened to those who had, according to Jewish tradition, already been immortalized without being resurrected. The way Philo claimed that the body of Moses was merged with the soul "into a single unity, transforming his whole being into mind, pure as sunlight,"[56] and how, according to *Second Enoch*, "there was no observable difference" between the translated Enoch and the angels,[57] may both be related to the way Paul considered that, resurrected or not, "we shall all be changed" in a way that explicitly excluded the flesh.[58]

There is a general consensus that Paul drew the basic idea of resurrection from contemporary Judaism. That this must be seen as connected also to Paul's refusal to believe in the resurrection of the flesh and the unclarity with which he presents the resurrection body is, however, not

what is usually understood by this statement. But having examined the various Jewish sources, we have found that Paul's beliefs in the general resurrection were not at all exceptional in first-century Judaism. His denial of the flesh was in fact typical of much of Judaism during his time. As such Paul's resurrection beliefs may be considered primarily a reinterpretation of contemporary Jewish resurrection beliefs in a way that included the resurrection of Christ.

The Corinthian Riddle

Writing to his followers in Corinth, Paul complained about the disbelief of some of them: "But if it is being preached that *Christ* has been raised from the dead, how come that some of you say that there is no resurrection *of the dead*?"[59] As has been pointed out by several scholars, this Hellenistic congregation had thus no problem accepting the idea of the resurrected *Jesus,* but they were seriously in doubt about the promise of a *general* resurrection of the dead.[60] According to American Biblical scholar Barnabas Ahern, Paul actually confronted "the sceptical Corinthians with their total acceptance of the risen Christ as a corporate Person."[61]

Why the Corinthians should exhibit such skepticism is usually connected with what is held as an intrinsic opposition between Pagan and Judeo-Christian ideas on the body. Reflecting this widely held opinion, Ahern claims that "because of the sharp dichotomy which the Greeks had set up between body and soul, the men of Corinth centered their attention on the resurrection of earthly corporeity and flatly rejected it as a crass crudeness unacceptable to the Greek mind."[62] Patristic scholar Birger A. Pearson similarly asserts that "the opponents of Paul in Corinth believed in the immortality of the soul, and not the resurrection of the body," which they regarded "as superfluous, if not altogether repugnant."[63] We have already seen that this idea of a general Greek denial of the body is incorrect. But even if this really had been correct, it leaves us again only back with the original dilemma, why then would they accept the resurrection of Christ?

French Biblical scholar Albert Michel connects the Corinthian disbelief with the alleged reaction of Porcius Festus, the Roman procurator of Judea, who, upon hearing about Paul's belief in Christ "as the first to be resurrected from the dead," exclaimed, "You are mad, Paul! All the great learning is driving you to madness."[64] Dale Martin also explains the skepticism of the Corinthians toward what he considers an

upper-class reaction. This social and intellectual elite would have questioned "the idea that human *bodies* can survive after death and be raised to immortality."[65] This is, according to Martin, contrary to lower-class beliefs about people being resurrected back to a mortal existence and the complaints of Plutarch about popular beliefs. But there is no indication that the Corinthians Paul addressed were particularly upper class. Indeed, there is a fundamental difference between the upper-class skepticism of Festus in *Acts* and the opposition witnessed by Paul in *First Corinthians*. Festus, the probably well-educated and philosophically inclined Roman official, finds *any* form of bodily resurrection equally absurd, regardless of whether this was a question of the resurrection of Christ or the general resurrection of the dead. This absolute disbelief is something very different from the case in Corinth. The Corinthians readily accepted that Christ had been raised from the dead. It was only the idea of the future mass resurrection of the dead that they rejected. It is therefore not possible to see the incredulity of the Corinthians as simply the reflection of either a general Pagan skepticism toward the resurrection, which we know now simply did not exist, or a more philosophical skepticism, which viewed any kind of resurrection equally disparagingly.

To claim, like Michel, that the skepticism of the Corinthians is connected with the Jewish Sadducees, who apparently held no belief in a future resurrection whatsoever,[66] is no good explanation either, as the Sadducees unlike the Corinthians, would not accept the resurrected Christ. A theory of German New Testament scholar Wilhelm Lütgert from 1908, which was popular for long, explained the Corinthian skepticism as an influence of the Gnostic denial of the resurrection of the flesh.[67] Besides referring to a movement that probably did not exist at the time of Paul, this theory fails for the same reasons as one cannot explain the reaction of the Corinthians by either a Greek philosophical denial of corporeality or a Sadducean denial of any afterlife. The Corinthians did not reject the general idea that the body could be resurrected, just that it would happen to all of us.

It seems equally difficult to explain the skepticism of the Corinthians by referring to a more general Jewish influence, as this would be to put the Jewish ideas on the resurrection on its head. As we have seen, some Jews, though in no way all, held that the dead would be resurrected at the end of time. For the Jews the idea of general resurrection of the dead was at least familiar, while the notion that any single person should be resurrected and made immortal before the end of the world was generally deemed absurd.[68] To the Jews it was the resurrection

of Jesus, not the general resurrection of the dead, that, as German Biblical scholar Hans Conzelmann remarks, represented "a controversial matter."[69] What could happen when the Jews were countered with the belief in the resurrected Jesus is described by Luke, as he presented Peter and some other apostles preaching to the Sanhedrin. When the disciples claimed that God had raised and exalted Jesus, the Jewish congregation became enraged and wanted to kill them.[70] That everybody could expect a general resurrection at the end of times would, on the other hand, not raise much opposition as this was already a belief held by many Jews. When Paul, too, was brought in for the Sanhedrin, it was of little avail that he referred to the general "resurrection of the dead,"[71] as the reason for his being apprehended was that he was "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes."[72] The singular resurrection of Jesus was again what outraged the Jews.[73]

According to Wedderburn the Corinthians opposed Paul because "a tradition of an already present resurrection existence was circulating in early Christianity." This meant that "the rite of baptism was the occasion when, according to these views of Hellenistic Christianity, believers entered upon this present resurrected existence."[74] Dale Martin maintained in 1995 that this understanding represented the "current consensus among New Testament scholars,"[75] a "current consensus" that he at the same time criticized: this theory of "realized eschatology" does not in any way solve the dilemma as "nowhere in 1 Corinthians does Paul quote anything that could be a Corinthian slogan claiming that they have already been raised."[76] That some early Christians held that the general resurrection of the faithful had already taken place may still be indicated in the Pseudo-Pauline *Second Epistle to Timothy*, in which the author complains about Hymeneus, Philetus, and other wrong-believers "who have deviated from the truth, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some."[77] *Second Timothy*'s criticism of these people claiming "that the resurrection is past already" could, however, just as well represent another rebuke of people who believed in the already occurred resurrection of Christ but not that it would be followed by a general resurrection in the future—just like the Corinthians admonished by Paul.

The Greek Context of Corinth

When trying to solve the Corinthian riddle, it is expedient to look more closely at who the Corinthians addressed by Paul really were. When

Paul arrived in Corinth, it was a city that had formally been refounded by Julius Caesar about a century ago. Though originally a Roman colony, the new citizens soon reestablished the ancient Greek sanctuaries,[78] and by the middle of the first century A.D. this bustling commercial metropolis at the centre of the most important Greek trade routes at both sea and land seems to have become decidedly a Hellenized city. In her dissertation on cults in Corinth, Norwegian New Testament scholar Jorunn Økland concludes that the Corinthian community reflected an "interaction" between Greek and Roman cultures.[79] When Paul, according to Luke, initially spent 18 months in Corinth, directing his mission primarily at the city's non-Jewish population after facing fierce opposition from the local Jewish community,[80] we realize that he was addressing a Hellenistic community not unlike those found all over the eastern Mediterranean. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul also referred to an original dichotomy of Jews and Greeks, not leaving room for any other major ethnicity.[81] This is no surprise since Greek was the dominating culture in all of the eastern part of the Roman Empire.

No matter how we look at it, we find that the opposition encountered by Paul in Corinth seems primarily Greek. We have just seen how it is impossible to claim that Greek philosophical ideas made the Corinthians reject the resurrection altogether, because they actually accepted the resurrection of Christ. But may other more traditional Greek beliefs explain that peculiar conviction that the resurrection of Christ was plausible but the general resurrection was not?

Although Paul wholeheartedly rejected the resurrection of the flesh, this does not exclude the possibility that the Corinthians actually misunderstood him and believed that he spoke of the flesh. Indeed, most later Christians misunderstood Paul exactly on this matter. As M.E. Dahl remarks about later Christians' beliefs in the resurrection of the very body we have as alive, they "do not seem to have had any doubt that such a view was . . . unequivocally taught by St Paul—in 1 Corinthians 15 as elsewhere in his writings."[82] Although holding that the Corinthians rejected the notion of immortal flesh, many scholars nevertheless argue that the Corinthians misunderstood Paul as speaking about the flesh.[83]

There is, in fact, good reason to believe that the Corinthians misunderstood Paul and were convinced that when he talked about the resurrection, he talked about the resurrection of the flesh. As we have seen, Greek tradition was full of figures who had been made physically immortal. From the most ancient presentations of the resurrection of Achilles and Heracles to Plutarch's despair over the first-century A.D.

"masses" who still held that certain fortunate individuals were resurrected and translated to heaven, the basic belief of the Greeks was that when it was a question of resurrection, it was that of the flesh. Indeed, the terms Paul employed to explain this altered state were identical with those that the Greeks for centuries had used to explain the state of physical immortality. As New Testament scholar Erich Fascher remarks, the Greeks spoke repeatedly of "resurrection, *anastasis,*" or "to be resurrected, *anistasthai,*"[84] and meant with that, as we have seen again and again, the restoration of the union of body and soul. That these terms were found in the Jewish Bible as well[85] does not change the fact that the Greeks could recognize these terms from their own tradition. In his ubiquitous use of "immortality," "*athanasia,*" Paul also employed a term that within traditional Greek religion usually pertained to the immortality of the physical body, the flesh included. Paul's insistence that the resurrected body would put on "incorruptibility," "*aphtharsia,*"[86] would to the traditionally inclined Greeks seem as an even stronger indication of immortalization of the flesh, as this term was repeatedly used to describe the nature of the gods. When Thetis immortalized her estranged husband, Peleus, he, too, became *aphthitos*.[87]

Patristic apologetics would also, as we have seen, most often compare the Christian resurrection not with the emperors, who were mostly considered to have been deified only with their souls, but with such figures as Asclepius, Heracles, Romulus, and Aristeas of Proconnesus, who were all immortalized with their flesh.[88] Although they rejected the belief in resurrection per se, even philosophers such as Plutarch recognized that when people professed their belief in the resurrection this implied the flesh.

We have noted what Paul considered would happen to those who were not dead when Christ returned and initiated the resurrection. To Paul himself this was primarily a dilemma involving those who would be resurrected and those who would be made immortal without being resurrected. To the Greeks what would happen to those who were not dead at this point in the future would also seem decidedly familiar. When Paul explained how "we the living . . . will be snatched up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air,"[89] the Greeks could recall how figures such as Ganymede, Cleitus, Tithonus, Cephalus, Iphigenia, Romulus, Cleomedes of Astypalaea, and perhaps also Croesus all had been immortalized as they were swept away alive by various deities. These acts of miraculous translation were just like the resurrection usually considered to include flesh and bones. Although Paul, as we have seen, considered this event to mean that human nature no longer would include the flesh,

he probably unwittingly contributed to the Greeks misunderstanding him by using the term *harpazein* (to snatch) to describe how exactly this translation took place.[90] *Harpazein* was, as we have seen, the standard term employed to describe people being taken away by the gods and made physically immortal, flesh and bones included. Even Paul's remark "thus we shall always be with the Lord"[91] reflected how these ancient figures were considered to live forever as gods after being snatched away. The claim that "we shall all be changed," or "made different in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,"[92] was to a Greek audience in no way excluding a future existence in the flesh.

Ridicule at the Areopagus

When hearing Paul preaching about the resurrection, the Corinthians, thus, more probably than not, understood him as speaking about the resurrection of the flesh, as they had grown up with a religion that for centuries had cherished this possibility. The physical resurrection of a mighty figure like Jesus could easily appear as both familiar and plausible. But for some reason they were still not convinced of the general resurrection of the dead, even though this possibility should have been distinctly attractive for people holding that immortality always had to include the flesh.

We find a remarkable parallel to the Corinthian episode in Luke's presentation of the Athenian reaction to Paul at Areopagus. This whole incident begins with Paul "declaring the good news of Jesus and the resurrection."[93] After this, he was brought to Areopagus by some "philosophers" because they wanted to know "what this new teaching is": "For you bring startling things (*xenizonta*) to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things are."[94] One must note that when these "philosophers" decided to bring Paul along, they had just heard him speak about "Jesus and the resurrection."[95] The resurrection of Jesus was consequently neither shocking nor very controversial to these "philosophers," rather quite the contrary. Their interest was aroused, and they want to hear more. This is somewhat surprising if we assume that those who approached Paul really were philosophers, of whom most actually had scant respect for the body in general. If these men were not really philosophers but just individuals generally educated within the Greek tradition, a reference to a historical figure who had been physically resurrected and immortalized would, on the other hand, represent a familiar, though not everyday phenomenon, "startling" or "astonishing things"

as they call it.[96] As they apparently accepted the possibility of individual resurrections, the philosophical orthodoxy of these "philosophers" could not have gone very deep. Having reached the Areopagus, Paul preached without causing raised eyebrows how God had raised Jesus "from the dead," "*ek nekrôn*."[97] Problems only arose when the apostle connected the resurrection of Jesus with "the Day in which he [God] is going to judge the community of the world in righteousness," that is, with the general resurrection of the dead. This is what made people laugh at Paul: "And having heard about the resurrection *of the dead* (*nekrôn*) some ridiculed."[98] We must be aware, in particular, of how this last claim is something quite different from how Paul already maintained that Jesus had been raised "*from* the dead," "*ek nekrôn*."[99] As British Biblical scholar James Dunn argues, "The *anastaseôs nekrôn* almost certainly refers to the eschatological resurrection *of* the dead ('the general resurrection') rather than to Jesus' own resurrection *from* the dead," "*anastaseôs ek nekrôn*."[100] In this Lukan episode of Areopagus we consequently find the same opposition as in Corinth, and perhaps also in *Second Timothy*, between the idea of the exceptional individual resurrection, which seems to have been accepted as a possibility, and the idea of a general resurrection of the dead, which was deemed absurd and outright laughable.

When hearing about the resurrected Christ, Corinthians, Athenians, and the opponents in *Second Timothy* could all have found this sounding strangely familiar. In contrast to some of those converted to Greek philosophy who reviled the body as the prison of the soul, people who held onto their more traditional Greek beliefs were not only used but attracted to the idea that singular individuals had been raised from the dead and given physical immortality.

There is, however, no direct logical connection between the belief that an extremely small number of individuals was made physically immortal and the belief that this, at some point in the future, should happen to everyone. No notion of a general resurrection of the dead was ever found anywhere in Greek history. But a lack of precedents alone does not explain why the Corinthians and the Athenians found the idea of a general resurrection impossible when they so readily accepted the individual resurrection of Jesus.

The Requirement of Physical Continuity

A possible explanation for why the Corinthians and the Athenians were skeptical toward the general resurrection of the dead is nevertheless

also found in the logic of traditional Greek beliefs. The key seems to be *physical continuity*. All the Greek cases of resurrection we have been looking at involved absolute physical continuity. Whenever someone was resurrected and made immortal, this meant that one's present body was made incorruptible and was simultaneously translated to some distant part of the universe.

If we look once again at the story of the dismembered Pelops, who was resurrected after being put into the cauldron, we find to what degree the aspect of physical continuity was crucial. As the gods put his limbs on the dining table, "among the last dishes," they not only divided his flesh, "they ate it."[101] But this was no case of the gods consuming the entire body. Before the immortals became aware that the dainty dish put before them was not just a normal meal, only Demeter had tasted of the meat, having devoured the shoulder blade of the poor boy.[102] This unfortunate accident would have serious consequences. When the shoulder had been eaten, it was forever lost. Not even this mighty assembly of Olympian gods could recreate a body part that had been consumed. Although the gods could heal certain wounds[103] or reassemble the body that had been neatly cut up, they could not recreate any part of the body that had been annihilated. Instead they had to do with what they had at hand. Pelops was therefore resurrected with a prosthesis, a gleaming piece of ivory where his shoulder had once been.[104] The story of Pelops' substitute limb was widely known, and in the end his ivory shoulder blade was brought to Olympia where it was displayed for a long time, though in Pausanias' time the ivory prosthesis had finally disintegrated and was no more.[105]

How most Greeks considered that any immortalization would have to include the entire body is also demonstrated by a first-century B.C. rationalistic writer, who himself did not believe in it. Diodorus of Sicily used what he saw as one popular superstition to explain another. According to Diodorus the popular conviction that a physical disappearance often indicated physical immortalization explained why people ever thought that Heracles had been turned into a god. After the funeral pyre of Heracles had burned down, "the companions of Iolaüs [Heracles' nephew] came to gather up the bones of Heracles and did not find a single bone." This absolute absence of any physical remains was the reason why "they assumed that . . . he had passed from humans to the company of the gods."[106] That not the smallest trace of Heracles' body was left behind was, according to Diodorus, proof to most people that Heracles had been translated with his entire body to the sphere of the gods.[107] As Heracles became a god, there had

to be absolute physical continuity between his mortal and immortalized body. Parallel to how Pelops had to have his annihilated shoulder blade replaced, no part of Heracles' body could be left behind when he was physically immortalized.

As we have seen, a body that had been destroyed outside of a funerary context was even problematic in connection with the soul's survival. One's soul would forever reflect the form of the body at the point of death or obsequies. The terror of dogs and fish devouring one's body translated into the knowledge that this equaled complete annihilation. But even though proper obsequies assured a future existence of the soul in Hades or some other place, these rituals also meant the way of no return to the Greeks, both in ancient and Hellenistic times. That one's form had managed to reach Hades was of no avail if one hoped for physical resurrection. The obsequies equaled the final annihilation of the physical body through fire or decay. According to traditional Greek belief, everybody who had achieved physical immortality had done so before there was any chance of their bodies being destroyed. Physical immortality always required absolute physical continuity. For all those dead whose bodies had been burned, buried, reduced to dust or white bones, or even worse, eaten by various beasts, the very idea of a physical resurrection would appear absurd. One simply could not retrieve any part of a body that had been annihilated. When not even a single shoulder blade could be recreated by any of the gods, how could anyone have one's entire body physically resurrected? No wonder that both Corinthians and Athenians found the idea of a general resurrection absurd and distinctly unconvincing.[108]

Whereas a general resurrection was considered absurd, the Greeks could easily recognize the major aspects of the story about the resurrected Christ from the many ancient stories about men and women who had been raised from the dead and made physically immortal. From a Greek perspective, physical continuity was what distinguished Christ's resurrection from the future resurrection of all dead. Contrary to how most dead ended up disintegrated, reduced to white bones or mere dust, the physical continuity of Christ was absolute. He was buried with his entire body and resurrected just a couple of days after he had died. Although Paul, of course, denied that the resurrected Jesus consisted of the flesh, the aspect of physical continuity was nevertheless highlighted by many others of the earliest Christians and would soon end up as a pivotal Christian dogma. The emphasis on the stigmata of Jesus first witnessed in the *Gospel of John*[109] can also be seen as referring to a similar logic as that in the story of Pelops. Dying with his

hands and feet pierced and the wound in his side, the resurrected Christ would naturally bear these marks forever. Because his wounds could not be healed, they would remain as an eternal memento of his death, just as the gleaming ivory shoulder of Pelops.

We should also note that there is no mention of the Corinthians being skeptical toward Paul's assertion in his epistle addressed to them that "we all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound." This is when those who are still alive will "put on incorruptibility" and "put on immortality."[110] Paul also told the Thessalonians that "we the living who are left . . . will be snatched up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."[111] As Dale Martin observes, the Corinthians "seem to expect that those still living at the coming of Jesus will . . . join Christ in his kingdom, whereas those who have died before the coming will miss out on the party."[112] But why was there no protest against this claim of Paul if both Corinthians and Athenians were so skeptical toward the idea of the general resurrection? Just like only a few people in the Greek tradition were raised from the dead and immortalized, only a very limited number of men and women were ever snatched away and made immortal this way. The belief that all who are still alive at some future point in history could expect to be immortalized was, moreover, just as unprecedented in the Greek world as the belief in a general resurrection. But, then, why was not this, too, controversial to the Greeks?

There was, indeed, a question of the flesh both in the case of resurrection and translation. As absolute physical continuity was required for any resurrection or translation, this continuity was, at the same time, also what made an absolute difference between the notion of a general resurrection of the dead and a general immortalization of the living. Contrary to the idea of a general resurrection, which involved countless people whose bodies at some point had been annihilated, there was no reason to worry about physical continuity in the matter of living people being made immortal. It is again the principle of physical continuity that explains why one phenomenon was acceptable to the traditional Greek believers and the other rejected.

It is quite possible to see the disaccord between Paul and the Corinthians who received his message as a clash of traditional Jewish and Greek ideas, but the other way around from what usually has been claimed. Both the skepticism of the Corinthians and Luke's presentation of the Athenian reaction at the Areopagus may be explained by how Greeks for centuries had held that any physical resurrection

required absolute bodily continuity. This also explains why the promise of immortalization to those who were still alive when Jesus will be returning did not raise any controversy. That Paul advocated some form of spiritual resurrection apparently did not get through to the Greeks who first encountered him. They did not understand him this way and certainly did not *want* to understand him this way. Greeks had generally always deplored a fleshless existence. Paul's understanding of a resurrection that somehow excluded the flesh was, on the other hand, very much in agreement with contemporary Jewish ideas. Perhaps the majority of those Jews who believed in the resurrection saw no future at all for the flesh and advocated instead a more spiritual form of resurrection similar to that preached by Paul. Even for the small minority of Jews who at this time did believe in the resurrection of the flesh, physical resurrection represented no dilemma as God would easily recreate any part of the body that was missing. The traditional Greek concern that any resurrection was dependent on the absolute continuity of our present bodies appeared as irrelevant to Paul as it did to the Jews believing in the resurrection at this time, most of whom, just like him, did not believe in the resurrection of the flesh.

The clash between Jewish and Greek ideas found in *First Corinthians* is a distinct one. When the Hellenistic Corinthians seem to have been perturbed over the fate of all those bodies that had fallen victim to decay, fire, or consumption, they did not find much understanding in the Pharasaic Paul. Apparently Paul did not even apprehend their concern.

Although the notion of physical continuity may serve as an explanation to the Corinthian riddle, it also opens up a whole new box of dilemmas. If the first Christians chose to stick with Paul's belief in a fleshless resurrection, they would not only have to convince the Greeks that a resurrection really did *not* have to include the flesh, contrary to what they had held to be true for centuries; they would have to make the Greeks forget their ancient conviction that man was a psychosomatic unity of both body and soul, flesh and spirit. They would also have to demonstrate that the Pauline version of a fleshless afterlife was preferable to our present existence—and that to a group of people who had always believed in some form of fleshless afterlife anyway, which they usually viewed as something not particularly positive, at least not in comparison with an existence of flesh and bones.

If the Christians instead chose to keep to the way the Corinthians and Athenians apparently believed that Paul preached about the resurrection

of the flesh, they had to persuade their Hellenistic followers that the physical restoration of the flesh was possible—and that to a group of people who did not think it possible for the gods even to recreate a single limb.

This was the challenge of the flesh that Christians would face for centuries.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Success of Immortal Flesh

Whereas the resurrection of the flesh is clearly denied in the epistles of Paul, the same cannot be said about the gospels. As Alan Segal asserts, the gospels "strongly assert a physical, fleshly notion of Jesus' bodily resurrection" in "flat contradiction to Paul."[1] Looking at the various gospels, we find that the emphasis on the physical aspects of the resurrection seems to be increasingly emphasized as we chronologically get further away from the epistles of Paul. "The Church moved gradually toward a doctrine of the fleshly postmortem body of Christ, away from the 'spiritual' conception," the American early Christian scholar Gregory Riley observes.[2]

The notion of the resurrection of the flesh was, as we have seen, not unknown to certain parts of Judaism in antiquity. But if Paul really is representative of the earliest form of Christianity, we find that the notion of immortal flesh was not anything that Christianity originally brought with it from Judaism. The Judaism that the Pharisaic Paul based himself on did not include any belief in the resurrection of the flesh, as he himself rejected the idea. But we cannot be sure that Paul's resurrection belief really was the original Christian belief. We are thus faced with two possibilities. Either Pre-Pauline Christians believed in the resurrection of the flesh and continued with this belief in spite of Paul's ideas, or early Christians picked up the belief after Paul. As we have no sources on whether Christians believed the resurrection to include the flesh prior to Paul, it is impossible to draw any absolute conclusions here. But the way the gospels gradually increased the stress on the physical dimension of the resurrection in general, and the resurrection of the flesh in particular, indicates that these beliefs were not there in the beginning, as in Paul, or were in no way strongly articulated.

But what were the religious and cultural forces that made this extraordinary preoccupation with the flesh possible? If Paul himself had witnessed this, he would probably have been greatly surprised, probably also greatly dismayed, by the role flesh played in Post-Pauline Christianity. For there is nothing in Pauline Christianity that should indicate that such a development should ever take place. How, then, did a belief in a fleshless resurrection change into a resurrection of the flesh?

The Vanished Resurrection Body of Mark

As for resurrection in the gospels, it is first of all the resurrection of Jesus we learn about. This is the historical event, the divine manifestation of how God does not refrain from intervening directly into the world, the turning point in human history that heralds a real hope of resurrection for all mankind. It is therefore just the more remarkable that we never meet the resurrected Christ in the original *Gospel of Mark*, the oldest of the gospels. The very last thing we learn is that three women who have just found the tomb of Jesus empty, flee the scene in fear.[3] These three followers of Jesus have clearly not been convinced by the "young man . . . in a white robe," presumably an angel, proclaiming that Jesus "has been raised, he is not here. Look! The place where they put him."[4] The young man also asks the women to go to the disciples and tell them that they will see Jesus in Galilee. But the women are simply too scared to tell anyone anything.[5] Nowhere are the numerous people mentioned by Paul to have encountered the resurrected Christ.[6] All we have are some frightened followers, an empty tomb, and an unidentified male figure who, with no proof at hand, claims that Jesus has been raised from the dead.

Although the resurrected Christ never makes an appearance in Mark, the disappearance of his dead body is just the more tangible. This is the first extant source ever mentioning the empty grave. The women even enter the tomb itself to assure that the body is no longer there. The empty tomb makes it clear that to Mark the dead body mattered. One cannot speculate, as with Paul, whether the resurrection really did involve the flesh. Although Mark says nothing about the future role of the flesh, the missing body demonstrates that the resurrection really meant that the flesh either must have been preserved or gone through some radical transformation. Not the tiniest piece of flesh, bone, or any other part of the body is left behind.

By making the empty tomb the apex of his narrative, what was it Mark wanted to stress? Obviously he wanted us to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. But how could he expect that just an empty tomb should persuade anyone? The reaction of the women can hardly be considered exemplary. They were so frightened that "they told nobody anything."[7] Unless we see this gospel as some proto-Gothic tale, we cannot expect that Mark wanted his readers to react in a similar fashion.

Although Mark clearly was Jewish himself, he was a distinctly Hellenized Jew with a solid grasp of classical genres and literature. As New Testament scholar Richard Burridge remarks, "The four canonical gospels and Graeco-Roman *bios*," the classical biographical genre, "exhibit a clear family resemblance."[8] This observation has a particular bearing on Mark as this is the oldest canonical gospels. Dennis MacDonald has in a remarkable study demonstrated how Mark seems to have modeled his work on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* both in style and content. According to MacDonald, Mark "imitated, adapted and transformed Homer's epics—as well as biblical texts and oral traditions"[9] with such a result that a number of episodes in Mark may be connected directly to parallel episodes in Homer. Although MacDonald does not discuss any possible connection between Mark's presentation of the resurrection and ancient ideas on physical immortality, we may assume that Mark probably also was aware of how Greek literature dealt with this issue as well.

Adela Yarbro Collins argues that "the focus on the tomb in Mark may have been inspired by the importance of the graves of the heroes in the Greco-Roman world."[10] This, however, is unlikely. The heroes' graves were the object of cult because they were *not* empty, exactly the opposite of what was the case with the tomb of Jesus in the gospels. But the *empty* tomb would nevertheless represent a potent symbol to the traditional Greek believer. Although classical and New Testament scholar Hans Dieter Betz, too, is not really accurate when comparing what he calls "disappearing heroes" with the empty tomb (people who became heroes normally did not disappear but died), he also connects the vanished and deified Jesus with men and women who disappeared and became gods according to Pagan beliefs.[11] As we have seen, such examples of missing bodies indicating some form of physical immortalization were legion. If he had a Hellenistic audience in mind, Mark really could have certain expectations as to what they would believe. A body missing in some miraculous way represented in itself a powerful topos in the Hellenistic world, an indication that the body could

have been physically immortalized. Comparing the various gospels, Eugene Boring, Klaus Berger, and Carsten Colpe point to possible parallels in the physical disappearance and subsequent immortalization of Heracles,[12] Romulus,[13] and Aristeas.[14] As Adela Yarbro Collins argues, "The narrative pattern according to which Jesus died, was buried, and then translated to heaven was a culturally defined way for an author living in the first century to narrate the resurrection of Jesus."[15] As we have already witnessed, Heracles, Achilles, and Memnon all disappeared from their funeral pyres as they were made immortal, while the dead body of Alcmene was miraculously replaced by a large stone.[16] The historical incidents of Aristeas of Proconnesus, Cleomedes of Astypalaea, Romulus, and perhaps also King Croesus and his daughters demonstrate how beliefs in physical immortality were still connected with a missing body. The empty tomb really was crucial to this narrative. The absence of a body had for centuries been something indicating physical immortalization. If there were any grave of Jesus, it had to be empty. For if the tomb was not empty, there could be no question of physical continuity, and thus it would be impossible to assume that any resurrection had taken place at all according to Greek assumptions.

If we turn to another text roughly contemporary with the *Gospel of Mark*, we find another empty tomb and perhaps the most comprehensive Greek speculations as to what an empty grave really implied. In Chariton's romantic novel *Callirhoe*, the protagonist dies as a young bride on her wedding day. She is buried that same night, and the wedding party turned mourners finds her grave empty the day after. With the body gone, the crowd displays confusion, despair, and some remarkable suggestions as to what may have happened.

> All felt helpless, and one of those inside [the tomb] said, "The funeral offerings have been stolen! This is the work of tomb robbers. But where is the corpse?" Many different speculations were offered by the crowd. But Chaereas [the groom turned widower], looking up to heaven, stretched forth his hands and said, "Which of the gods has become my rival and carried off Callirhoe and now keeps her with him, against her will but compelled by a mightier fate? Is this then why she died suddenly, that she might not succumb to disease? In this way did Dionysus once steal Ariadne from Theseus, and Zeus Semele from Actaeon."[17]

We should make a particular note of the initial reaction to the absent body in Chariton's novel. Although it seems clear to all that the opening

of the grave and the stealing of the funeral offerings must be the work of grave robbers, no one concludes that they had taken the body, as well. The possibility of someone wanting to steal a dead body is, however, not unheard of, even in this specific genre of romantic novels. In Xenophon of Ephesus' second-century A.D. *Ephesian Tale* everyone seems immediately to accept that grave robbers have stolen the corpse of another equally beautiful young girl, along with the grave goods.[18] But in Chariton's tale the crowd insists that something else must have happened to the body. And this is where things start to appear strangely familiar. No doubt is expressed as to whether Callirhoe had really been dead when she was buried. No one suggests that the young woman had somehow been buried alive. Instead, since the dead body has vanished the groom Chaereas suspects that some god has taken Callirhoe away to live forever together with him, something that usually would involve the resurrection of the dead body and its being made physically immortal. Indeed, Chaereas believes that Callirhoe had "died suddenly so that she might not succumb to a disease," apparently because this god, whoever he may be, wanted her body immortalized in no way disfigured or ruined by a prolonged illness. As was the case with the dismembered Pelops whose shoulder blade Demeter had devoured,[19] it was not in the gods' power to fix a body or a body part that had been destroyed beyond a certain point. To ensure that the fair Callirhoe preserved her beauty forever when immortalized, the most expedient thing for the god was to kill her swiftly in a way not ruining her body, for then to have her physically resurrected and immortalized as she was removed from the tomb.

Considered by the groom to have been physically resurrected, Callirhoe has in his eyes become an immortal goddess who now dwells far away from the geography of ordinary mortals, just like Ariadne and Semele whom he also refers to. Convinced that Callirhoe had been made immortal, Chaereas had also been taught from history where to look for her. "You force me to live, because I shall look for you on land and sea, and, if I can, I will even climb up the sky,"[20] the groom exclaims, thus summing up three of the places where the ancient gods traditionally brought those whom they made physically immortal.

The way Charitas in his romantic novel so effortlessly presented people believing that an empty tomb really meant that the dead body had been raised and made physically immortal may be seen as connected with how Mark wanted his readers to react to the empty tomb of Christ. He wanted us to believe that Jesus had been resurrected.

Perhaps these traditional connotations of a missing body also explain why Paul did not mention any empty tomb. Maybe he did not *want* to refer to the empty tomb of Christ because of its associations. As A.J.M. Wedderburn argues, "The emptiness of the tomb could imply that the crucified and buried flesh and blood of Jesus was indeed on its way into the kingdom [of God]"—an idea Paul probably would find preposterous as he denied any resurrection of the flesh.[21]

Beyond the apparent parallel with how the Greeks usually considered a physical immortalization to take place, we have not much to go by in terms of how Mark considered the nature of the resurrected body. We never meet the resurrected Christ in the original *Gospel of Mark*. We are only promised that the disciples will meet the resurrected Jesus in Galilee later on.[22] How exactly Christ appeared after coming back from the dead is thus nowhere indicated. Prior to his death Jesus explains how he, as the Son of man, will be "sitting at the right hand of the power and coming with the clouds in the heavens,"[23] but this again says not much about the nature of his body.

One cannot, however, as the religious scholar Norman Kretzmann wants us to do, use the example of Jairus' daughter in order to say anything about the nature of the resurrected Christ in Mark.[24] What happened to Jairus' daughter was merely a resuscitation not involving any immortalization; there was never any indication that she lived forever. Another similar story is also difficult to use. Although Herod is made to believe that Jesus was "the John [the Baptist] whom I beheaded . . . raised up," there is no indication of immortalization being involved in this case either. Herod did not claim that Jesus had become immortal. There is also the very acute problem of physical continuity between the Baptist and Jesus, as John's disciples only got the headless corpse to bury. The head was the cherished possession of Herod's wife Herodias.[25] There is consequently nothing implying that the nature of the resurrected Christ in any way paralleled either that of Jairus' daughter or the way Herod considered Jesus before his death to be the resurrected Baptist.

There are, however, other clues that may indicate how Mark considered the resurrected body. He presents, for example, a certain admonition by Jesus that indicates a continuity of the flesh between the present life and what we may hope for in the afterlife. As Jesus argues,

> If ever your hand makes you stumble, cut if off, for it is better to enter into life maimed than with two hands go off to Gehenna, into the extinguishable fire . . . And if your eye makes you stumble,

> throw it away for it is better for you to enter one-eyed into the kingdom of God than with two eyes be thrown into Gehenna, where their maggot never ends and the fire is not extinguished.[26]

Although this advice is usually seen as not to be taken literally, the connection between missing limbs and the afterlife may still refer to an actual notion of physical continuity similar to that suggested by the empty tomb. But even if this is correct, this does not permit us to draw any final conclusion as to whether this eternal body consists of flesh.

Mark has, on the other hand, also Jesus saying that we will be "*as* angels in heaven" after the resurrection.[27] As New Testament scholar Crispin Fletcher-Louis demonstrates, there is an extensive Jewish tradition of considering various ancient patriarchs becoming in some way angelomorphic, a tradition that may relate to this saying in the gospels.[28] Gunnar af Hällström, on the other hand, argues, that the promise that we will live "*as* angels" only referred to the *mode* of living after the resurrection, not to the *nature* of the body.[29] What is clear is that Mark, just like Matthew and Luke, connects "to live as angels" with the absence of marriage in heaven.[30] Either way, it is difficult to claim that Mark believed that we in the resurrection simply *become* angels.

Both the body of the resurrected Christ and the immortal body we all may receive upon his return should probably also be seen in connection with the transfiguration or, as it is called in the original Greek text, the *metamorphosis* of Jesus. Having brought three of his disciples to a mountain, Jesus suddenly "was metamorphosed in front of them" and his garments became "far whiter than any clothes cleaner on earth could whiten them."[31] This miraculous event is referred to in all three synoptic gospels. As John Anthony McGuckin notes in his comprehensive study on the transfiguration, almost all Greek and Latin authorities concur in regarding the transfiguration "as a revelation of what the Resurrection will be like for both Christ . . . and for his church in the age to come."[32] In another study on the transfiguration, John Paul Heil simply concludes that Jesus' temporary metamorphosis "anticipates his future and permanent attainment of glory in heaven as promised to the righteous after their death."[33] That the transfigured Jesus appeared together with Moses and Elijah,[34] two figures who according to Jewish tradition often were seen as having already been translated to heaven, supports this really being the case.

The way Jesus is changed from his ordinary body into the transfigured body, and then back again, demonstrates that to Mark there were certain limits to the difference between the mortal body and

the resurrected body, that is, if we are right in assuming that Mark really thought the transfiguration body foreshadowed the resurrection body. Regardless of whether it consisted of flesh, according to Mark the immortalized body is of a nature that really is the mortal flesh *transformed* and that may again be turned back into mortal flesh. As this transfiguration of Jesus is nowhere mentioned by Paul, it may thus be considered another way Mark chose to put more stress on the bodily continuity between the mortal body and the resurrection body.

The transfigured Jesus' encounter with Moses also leads our attention to an episode in Moses' life before he, according to various sources, was miraculously translated. When descending from Mount Sinai "the skin of his face was shining because he had been talking with God."[35] This change was, just as with the transfigured Jesus, only temporary.

John Paul Heil demonstrates how the terms used by the evangelists about the metamorphosis of Jesus on the mountain reflect terms used in the *Book of Daniel*, the Jewish Apocrypha, and the Pseudepigrapha.[36] Thus, the transfiguration is another New Testament event that clearly is rooted in Judaism, but that would very much make sense also to a common Hellenistic audience. This is particularly obvious in the way Jesus through his metamorphosis apparently foreshadowed what he would be like when resurrected, for thereupon to *return* to being his ordinary, mortal self. The transfiguration did not mean any lasting immortality. This represents a close parallel with what happened to certain figures within Greek tradition. Such a state of temporary physical immortality was, as we have seen, definitely the case with Tantalus and Pelops, the father and son who were both considered to have achieved physical immortality only to lose it again somewhat later, ending their lives very much dead like any other mortals.[37] Jesus, too, as we all know, died soon after having been transfigured for a short time.

The Tangible Resurrection Body of Matthew

The story of the empty tomb did not remain unchanged after Mark. One way the *Gospel of Matthew* elaborated the older story was by ensuring that no one should be able to claim that the followers of Jesus had just taken his body away in order to make it look like a physical resurrection. It is as if Matthew is responding to some unknown critics occupied with bodily continuity. That the dead body was no longer there was of absolute importance. Ingeniously, Matthew made "the chief priests and the Pharisees," the most virulent enemies of Jesus,

the ones to certify that the body of Jesus truly vanished miraculously. Pointing out how Jesus had claimed that he would rise again "after three days," these prominent Jews went to Pilate asking him to make sure that the disciples of Jesus should not "come and steal him away, and say unto the people, 'He is risen from the dead'."[38] Apparently apprehending their concern, Pilate let the supplicants themselves seal the tomb and provide a guard for it.[39] The guards who were to ensure that nobody took away the body were thus turned by Matthew into firsthand witnesses to how, miraculously, an angel "came and rolled away the stone," something that made the guards tremble and become "as dead."[40] Any rumors saying that the disciples came at night and stole the body away while the guards were sleeping, Matthew pinned to that the Jewish leaders bribed the guards to say so.[41] The idea of the stolen body was surely a response to the rumors of the resurrection. As German Biblical scholar Gerd Luedemann remarks, "The *information* about a theft of the body of Jesus is certainly historical, but not the theft itself."[42]

Regardless of whether it was intentional or not, Matthew's insistence on how the body of Jesus really had vanished fitted traditional Greek immortalization beliefs. As we have seen so often now, a physical resurrection or immortalization required a body of flesh and bones. After the resurrection had taken place there could consequently be no corpse or body parts remaining. In Judaism this, as we have seen, was not of any importance. From a Greek point of view, however, it was crucial to be able to deny that Jesus' followers had themselves done anything to destroy or hide the body. If the dead body could be said to have been willfully annihilated, or to be somewhere else, it would be impossible to defend the resurrection for a Hellenistic audience.

Like Mark, Matthew is not explicit about what happens to the flesh in the resurrection. The indication that the resurrection really involves the flesh is nevertheless even stronger in Matthew. Not only does Matthew repeat the transfiguration story from Mark,[43] but on another occasion he compares the resurrection of Christ with an event where there was nothing but absolute physical continuity: "For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so the Son of man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."[44] Matthew is, indeed, adamant that the resurrected body really is a physical entity. Contrary to Mark who does not even let his readers meet the resurrected Christ, Matthew recounts how the women at the grave "took hold of his feet."[45] Regardless whether he considered the resurrected body to be of the flesh or not, Matthew demonstrates that

it was at least similar to touch as a mortal body. Matthew's women taking hold of the feet of the resurrected Christ pointedly demonstrate an increased emphasis on the physical continuity between the mortal body of Jesus and that with which he was resurrected.

For all his stress on the physical nature of the resurrected Christ, Matthew's depiction still seems full of contradictions. The miraculous resurrection involving both angels and earthquakes is followed by Christ appearing in a rather pedestrian manner to the women and the eleven disciples. The resurrected Christ simply "encountered" the women outside the tomb and greeted them by saying "*chairete,*" the equivalent of "good morning."[46] Not much drama there. Later on the resurrected Christ rather unassumingly just "came up to" the disciples in a mountain in Galilee, where he had been waiting for them.[47] But Christ also told the women, "Have no fear,"[48] as is usual in Biblical epiphanies, thus clearly indicating that his status was no longer the same as before. The last act of Christ in Matthew is not at all ordinary either, as he proclaimed that "all authority has been given me in heaven and on earth" and that "I am with you all days until the end of times."[49] There is even more drama to come. Already before the resurrection, Jesus told how he would return as the Son of Man, suddenly, "like a lightning strike in the east and flashing far into the west,"[50] "in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he will reward each one according to his behavior."[51] After the resurrection, everything was certainly not just as before.

The apparent contradictions of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances still follow a certain pattern. The way the resurrected Christ one moment would appear as a mighty deity, and the next just as a normal man, would not be unfamiliar to a Hellenistic audience. This was, as we have seen, how both the originally immortal gods and the humans who had been immortalized appeared. Immortal figures repeatedly appeared as ordinary mortals, although their true physical nature outshone anything human. Examples from historical times indicate, as we have seen, how this was still considered possible. Right after Aristeas of Proconnesus had been miraculously resurrected, a man could tell that "he had met Aristeas going towards Cyzicus and spoken with him."[52] This encounter had been so unexceptional, that the man disputed that Aristeas could have died in the first place. On a number of later occasions, there was little ordinary with the resurrected Aristeas. He appeared more like some *deus ex machina* acting in the last scene in a classical tragedy, for example bidding the Italic Metapontians to set up an altar to Apollo and a statue

of himself. This last appearance of Aristeas also ended with his sudden disappearance.[53] The Dioscuri also appeared in quite different ways after their immortalization. In the tragedy *Helen,* Euripides had them simply appear as *dei ex machina* prophesying about the future.[54] In 684 B.C. the Dioscuri intervened in historical events, appearing with such might to the Messenian tyrant Aristomenes that he was deterred from attacking Sparta.[55] Castor and Polydeuces would also appear as ordinary mortals, and around the same time two finely dressed Messenian horsemen, with no actual signs of divinity, were taken for being the Dioscuri by the Lacedaemonians.[56] On another occasion the Dioscuri appeared as two rather unassuming visitors to the house they once inhabited before they were deified.[57]

The resurrected Jesus thus fitted in a traditional Greek pattern. Regardless whether the remarkable nature of the resurrected and physically tangible Christ was the result of Hellenization or not, Matthew had changed the presentation of the resurrected Christ in a way that would made him appear decidedly more familiar to the Hellenistic readers. Whereas Paul does not seem even to care about the empty grave and Mark does not say anything about what happened after the body vanished, to Matthew the whole resurrection story is depending on the body really being the same physical and physically tangible body that had been buried.

Luke's Resurrection Body of Flesh and Bones

Whereas the increased stress on physical continuity found in Mark and Matthew indicates that the flesh could have been preserved in the resurrection, in the *Gospel of Luke* there is no doubt. The resurrection body is definitely consisting of flesh. Foreshadowing the resurrected bodies we all will receive, the body of the resurrected Jesus is to Luke definitely of "flesh and bones."[58] To Luke "*all* flesh will see the salvation of God."[59] It is difficult to see how much more Luke could possibly differ from Paul who maintained that "*no* flesh should glory before God."[60] Comparing Luke's claims about the general resurrection with his beliefs about the resurrected Christ, we find that that he most probably really means the *flesh* when referring to "all flesh," and not just all *people* in general, as often was the case in Judaism. This passage in Luke is, of course, also a direct quote from Isaiah,[61] but Luke alters its meaning completely by letting it stand alone, pointedly omitting how the Jewish prophet added, "All flesh is grass and all its beauty is like the

flower of the field."[62] In this way Luke removed the original indication that flesh must remain corruptible.

We do not learn much more from Luke directly on the nature of the general resurrection. But he has a definitely more elaborate story to tell about the resurrected Jesus than Mark and Matthew. Not only is the body of the resurrected Christ in Luke of "flesh and bones."[63] When the risen Christ suddenly appeared among his apostles, they refused to see anything positive in his return before they were all assured of the absolute physicality of his body. His sudden appearance initially made the disciples just "terrified and afraid," thinking "they saw a spirit, a *pneuma*."[64]

Luke uses the disbelief of the disciples to demonstrate to his readers that the resurrected body truly was the same that had been taken down from the cross and buried, even having Christ encourage them to touch him. "Feel me and see me," the resurrected Jesus demands of his disciples, "because a spirit, *pneuma*, does not have flesh and bones just as you can see that I have."[65] Luke makes Jesus himself insist on his own "flesh and bones," in absolute opposition to what Paul ever believed. This really put the ideas of the Pharisaic Paul in an awkward position. Whereas Paul insisted that we at the resurrection will receive a pneumatic body,[66] the disciples in Luke recoil in terror at the very thought of it. As Alan Segal argues, Luke "explicitly denies the very terms which Paul used to describe the resurrected presence of Christ."[67] Some later editors probably found this blatant contradiction of Paul problematic, something that may explain why the sixth-century Codex Bezae manuscript has the disciples believing they encountered not a *pneuma*, a spirit, but a *phantasma*, a ghost.[68]

Just as the disciples in Luke, the typical Hellenistic reader would be perturbed about the suggestion that the resurrected Christ was merely a spirit, a *pneuma*. Regardless of his motivation, Luke's assertion of the flesh and bones of the resurrected Jesus was something that would effectively alleviate traditional Greek concerns. Jesus' insistence that he really was flesh and bones, even encouraging the disciples to touch him, would, however, probably not be enough in order to convince everyone. Many Hellenistic readers would, as we have seen, be familiar with how ghosts and heroes really could *appear* quite physical, although they really had no body and certainly no flesh. The profound uneasiness displayed by the disciples could very well be connected with the traditionally Greek belief that no return from death but a truly physical resurrection was really anything to be happy about. Many readers would probably find that the disciples had considerable reason to worry

when meeting a figure looking just like the dead and buried Jesus. As Lucian reported, there was a popular belief that someone who had died violently, had "hanged himself, had his head cut off, or," for that matter, "was *crucified*," would easily come back as a ghost.[69]

That Luke presents the disciples as still in doubt should therefore come as no surprise. Watching Christ actually eating a piece of broiled fish is what finally convinced the apostles that this truly was the resurrected Jesus.[70] Luke puts great emphasis on how the resurrected Christ not only ate but drank together with the disciples, having this claim repeated by Peter when preaching in Caesarea about how he and others "ate and drank with him [Christ] after he rose from the dead."[71] The *Gospel of John* concludes the story about the resurrection of Lazarus in a similar manner, explaining how Lazarus was one of those who had supper with Jesus six days before Passover.[72] Although Lazarus of course did not share the immortality of the resurrected Jesus, he could still have had a similar need to prove his physical nature, that he had not merely turned into some terrible ghost. Also Phlegon of Tralles used the consumption of an ordinary meal in order to prove a story about a physical resurrection. In the case of the fourth-century B.C. Macedonian girl Philinnion, who returned from the grave to sit on the bedside of the young man she loved, Phlegon is very explicit about describing her as eating and drinking as proof of this being a resurrection that involved her body.[73]

Luke does not want us to believe that Jesus had returned as a fleshless angel either. According to Australian theologian Gerald O'Collins, the eating scene is the "highpoint of Luke's realistic presentation of the Easter appearances." O'Collins, too, connects this event with the reception of the Greeks, arguing that "Luke's Gentile readers would presumably hold that spirits and angels do not eat and hence be satisfied that eating the fish establishes the risen Jesus' bodiliness."[74] Jews also held similar ideas about angels and food, as demonstrated in the second-century B.C. text of *Tobit* where the archangel Raphael, after having revealed his true nature, informed the astonished Tobit that he really "neither ate nor drank," but when it had appeared that he had done so, this had only been a "vision."[75] Here abstaining from eating was proof of a body *not* consisting of flesh, similar to how eating in Luke proved that a resurrected body *did* consist of flesh. The corresponding understanding that eating could prove the physicality of supernatural figures is, however, absent in Jewish tradition.

Luke is truly an advocate of the attraction of the flesh. What finally fills the disciples with "great joy" in Luke is when they are convinced

that the body of the resurrected Christ is of the *flesh*.[76] Before this point, they have only been terrified. This insistence on the flesh and bones of the resurrected Christ gives considerable reason to believe that he was going to remain this way forever. When Jesus proclaimed that "I am *myself*" while insisting on his own physical nature, he seems to assert that his personal identity was inseparably tied to physical continuity. "See my hand and my feet, that I am *myself*," he maintains, assuring that he was exactly the same who was crucified and buried; "feel *me*" he insists, again indicating that it is the continuous union of body and soul that makes him who he is.[77] Just as in traditional Greek religion, preserving one's flesh for eternity is presented as the only way one may preserve one's complete personal identity. "A spirit, *pneuma*, does not have flesh and bones as you see *I* have," Luke has the resurrected Jesus insisting.[78] Without his flesh and bones he would merely be a spirit, a *pneuma*, and consequently no longer truly himself. That the resurrected Jesus at any point should discard his flesh and bones or be so radically transformed that he no longer consisted of flesh and bones therefore seems highly improbable. If we are to take Jesus' insistence in Luke literally, to be no longer of flesh and bones would mean that he was no longer himself. A fleshless spirit or *pneuma* is an existence not at all identical with the psychosomatic unity a person is when alive. According to Luke, a *pneumatic* body was a halfway inhuman mode of existence, a monster and an object of terror to the living, as could be seen from the reaction of the disciples. Who wanted to be resurrected like a ghost and forever roam the earth as a fleshless shadow?

When all the disciples meet Jesus after the resurrection, it is not the first time in Luke terror gives way to relief and joy as people become convinced of the physical nature of Christ. The initial fright of the women at the tomb only subsided as they were assured that the empty tomb really was proof of a physical resurrection.[79] As pointed out by American New Testament scholar John Gillman, the two disciples on their way to Emmaus similarly changed from regarding the resurrection first as "nonsense," then simply as a report, and finally as true as they themselves became aware that they had encountered the physical body of the resurrected Christ.[80] Again we see that it is the conviction that the resurrection is in all manner a physical event that brings relief and joy.

Luke does not just insist on the flesh of the resurrected Jesus, he is also concerned with the *state* of the flesh. Whereas Matthew, when having the Jewish leaders asking Pilate to guard Jesus' grave for only three days,[81] perhaps is referring to the conviction that a body could not be

resurrected if the process of decay had gone too far, Luke addressed this concern directly. Although Jesus certainly was dead, Luke had Peter insisting to the polyglot multitude in Jerusalem that "his flesh did not see corruption."[82] Most Greeks would quite probably not be aware of that Luke here was referring to a certain verse in *Psalms*,[83] but they would certainly find it reassuring. Physical decay was, as we have seen, an irreversible process to the Greeks. This insistence that Jesus in no way had suffered corruption therefore saved him from unsavory speculations about in what state his body had been immortalized.

This specification that Jesus did not suffer any corruption truly made the resurrection of Jesus more plausible. At the same time it made it more difficult to argue about the *general* resurrection promised all believers. If it was vital that the flesh of Jesus did not see corruption, what, then, about the flesh of all those others who are hoping for resurrection and about whom it is impossible to claim that they will never see decay. This, as we have already seen in the Corinthian reaction to Paul, represented a major dilemma and would remain so for quite some time.

Luke is the first Christian writer to make the ascension a distinct and separate event.[84] He actually gives us two slightly different presentations of the event. In the gospel Jesus simply "was parted from" the disciples just as he had blessed them on the same day he had risen from the dead. According to some, but not all ancient manuscripts, he was then "borne up to heaven."[85] In *Acts* Luke offers a more detailed account. After showing himself to the apostles several times throughout forty days, the resurrected Jesus "was lifted up and a cloud caught him up." The disciples are here presented as the perfect witnesses, "looking steadfastly into heaven as he went."[86] Right after Jesus had disappeared, "two men in white garments," obviously angels, appeared suddenly and assured the disciples that "this Jesus who has been taken up from you into the heaven will come in just the same way as you have watched him going into the heaven."[87] Christ is to return in the *same* manner as the disciples saw him leaving. The resurrected Christ of flesh and bones will remain the same when he returns.

A witnessed ascension can be considered a good way for Luke to stress the corporeality of the resurrected Christ even in heaven. In this way he made clear that the eternal state of the risen Jesus was not something he wanted speculations about. Luke's presentation of the ascension also paralleled the contemporary popular Greek beliefs criticized by Plutarch about how various celebrated figures had had their flesh immortalized and brought to heaven.[88] As we have already seen,

people who were taken up into heaven with both body and soul represented nothing new to the Greeks. They had for centuries held that certain fortunate men and women were immortalized, with flesh and bones, and translated to various distant parts of the universe. Later on church fathers like Justin Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch, Tertullian, and Origen would also compare the ascension of Jesus with the physical translation of figures like Asclepius, Heracles, Dionysus, Romulus, Antinous, Aristeas of Proconnesus, and Cleomedes of Astypalaea.[89] These earlier parallels to Jesus' ascension are also readily accepted by some modern scholars. In his commentary on *Acts*, Hans Conzelmann quite simply refers to a number of these parallels in a footnote without finding it necessary to refute any of them.[90] Pheme Perkins considers the physical ascension of Jesus as something that already "would be familiar to a wide variety of readers" because of the parallels to *both* Greek and Jewish antecedents.[91] The ascension in Luke was clearly also connected to how the Jewish figures of Enoch, Moses and Elijah had been taken up into heaven, although not everyone, as we have seen, held that these figures really ascended with flesh and bones.

When looking closer at how Luke presents Christ after the ascension, we find that he appears in no uniform manner. There are, for example, three references to the resurrected Christ showing himself to Paul on the way to Damascus, all rather similar. Paul is struck to the ground by either "a light from heaven,"[92] "a great light out of heaven,"[93] or "a light from heaven beyond the brilliance of the sun."[94] Nowhere is there any indication that Paul sees anything like a body of flesh or even a bodily form. Paul recognizes no one and is even at loss as to who is asking him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" "Who are you, Lord," Paul wonders, and only then he is informed, "I am Jesus."[95]

Luke describes two other encounters with the post-ascension Christ. About to be martyred, Stephen witnessed "God's glory and Jesus standing at the right side of God," or, as Stephen is made describing it himself: "the Son of man standing at the right side of God."[96] Apparently Stephen had no problem recognizing the resurrected Jesus. The brilliant light from Paul's experience is nowhere mentioned, though we cannot exclude that Jesus' body in some way was shining brightly. Paul, too, sees Jesus on another occasion. When in ecstasy in the temple in Jerusalem, he simply "saw him," that is Jesus, again without any reference to any miraculous light and without any problem recognizing the resurrected Christ, as when he was on his way to Damascus.[97] It seems like Christ had no unison way of appearing after his ascension.

But why would the resurrected Christ appear in a number of different ways when showing himself after the ascension? Did this ability reflect a new nature of his body achieved as he ascended into heaven? That Jesus' body after the ascension is no ordinary body is obvious. Immortal flesh is obviously not exactly the same as mortal flesh. Already prior to the ascension do we find that the body of the resurrected Christ was of an extraordinary nature. Although Luke insists that Jesus still consists of flesh and bones, Jesus appears at times as out of nowhere only to later on equally miraculously disappear or become invisible. His first appearance after the resurrection is to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, the same day the women found the tomb empty. The disciples did not recognize him until just before he all of a sudden vanished or became invisible before their very eyes.[98] Somewhat later Christ reappears just as fantastically in the midst of the disciples when they are discussing the events in Emmaus.[99]

As such, Luke's account of the resurrected Jesus may be seen as paralleling a number of similar incidents in Greek sources. As we have already seen, neither closed doors nor solid walls could prevent the immortalized figures of Aristeas of Proconnesus, Cleomedes of Astypalaea, and (some time after Christ) Apollonius of Tyana from vanishing in similar and equally miraculous ways as the Jesus of Luke. Aristeas disappeared from a locked fuller's shop,[100] Cleomedes from a chest,[101] Apollonius from a temple where all doors were closed, although this last incidence happened some decades after the resurrection of Jesus.[102] There is, however, little reason to be surprised by this contrast between the miraculous disappearance of the resurrected Jesus and his rather pedestrian reappearances to his followers. This is no different from what we saw in Matthew and in what was regularly the case with divine beings in traditional Greek religion.

Almost nobody Luke refers to has any problem recognizing the resurrected Christ as a *human* figure. It is only Paul on his way to Damascus who Luke describes as so blinded with light that he is not able to distinguish any bodily form at all. This may, if one looks closer at this depiction, just as well be read as an argument in *support* of the flesh and bones of the ascended Christ. As the only gospel writer mentioning Paul, Luke not only obviously considered Paul a powerful figure within the Christian movement, but even traveled with him for some time, as he in *Acts* sometimes uses "we" when referring to Paul's retinue.[103] It is therefore likely that Luke knew of Paul's letters and was aware of how he denied that the resurrected body in any way consisted of flesh. This represented a challenge to Luke, as there was

a fundamental difference between Paul's resurrection beliefs and those of his own. The way Luke, as we have seen, at two places almost paraphrases Paul's arguments on the fleshless resurrection body, only in order to insist on the absolute opposite, indicates to what degree Luke really was aware of Paul's beliefs. Whereas Paul argued that "*no* flesh should glory before God,"[104] Luke insisted that "*all* flesh will see the salvation of God,"[105] and while Paul referred to the resurrection body as "a *pneumatic* body,"[106] Luke made the disciples "terrified and afraid" at the very thought of the resurrected Jesus being a *pneuma*.[107]

Luke's description of Paul's encounter with Christ on the way to Damascus may represent just another criticism of how Paul considered the resurrection body. It would be impossible to ignore Paul meeting the resurrected Christ, without taking away all of Paul's authority. Paul who never met Jesus before the crucifixion based his very discipleship on his encountering the resurrected Christ. But presenting Paul as seeing just "a light beyond the brilliance of the sun,"[108] having him literally so blinded by this light that he was unable to distinguish anything, Luke subtly discredits Paul as a reliable witness to the *nature* of the resurrected Christ. According to Luke, Paul simply admits that "I could not see anything for the glory of that light."[109] Who, then, was Paul to argue anything about the nature of the resurrection body? By blinding Paul, Luke effectively reduced Paul's assertion about the fleshless resurrection body to an unreliable claim from a witness who could not possibly have distinguished the true nature of the resurrected Christ, which, as Luke insisted, consisted of flesh and bones. The way Luke refers to those who traveled with Paul to Damascus does nothing to strengthen Paul as a witness. When he had Paul refer to these companions, the apostle explains how they "saw the light but did not hear the voice speaking to me."[110] In Luke's own account "the men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one."[111]

When Paul referred to his encounter with the resurrected Jesus, he put himself at the end of a long line of such witnesses, thus indicating that his own encounter really was, as A.J.M. Wedderburn remarks, "of the same kind as the experiences of the other witnesses."[112] Luke, on the other hand, insists on this not being the case. Although Luke never denied that Paul met the resurrected Jesus, the blinded Paul was simply not a reliable witness to the nature of Jesus' resurrected body. On the other hand, Luke's description of Paul's second encounter with Jesus, when he just "saw him" in the temple in Jerusalem without any problem recognizing him, complicates this picture a bit.[113]

Luke is clearly aware of how people still believed that divine figures could appear just as ordinary mortals. Having made a lame man walk in Lystra in Lycaonia, Paul and Barnabas, according to Luke, were both considered gods by the crowd. "The gods have become like humans and have come down to us," the Lycaonians exclaimed. The crowd "were calling Barnabas Zeus and Paul Hermes, since he was taking the lead in speaking."[114] As was proper when gods come visiting, a sacrifice was also about to be prepared.

The people in Lystra only suspected that Paul and Barnabas were no ordinary mortals because of their ability to heal. It was nothing in the mere appearance of Paul and Barnabas that indicated their divinity. This was, of course, typical of how the gods repeatedly appeared in guise of ordinary men and women. As we have seen, there was no opposition between being divine and having a physical body. Enhanced physicality was an indication of divinity, a notion that is also found reflected in Luke's depiction of the resurrected Jesus. When having Paul protesting against his own and Barnabas' divinity, Luke consequently does not let Paul point to the fact that everybody should be able to discern that they really are of flesh and bones. The Lycaonians have obviously already realized this, something that did not stop them from considering the disciples immortal. Paul argues instead that "we are humans having the same *infirmities* or same *nature* (*homoiopatheis*) as you do."[115] It is the imperfect human nature and subsequent mortality of Paul and Barnabas that convince the Hellenistic crowd that the two apostles are not two *gods* of flesh and bones going around healing people, but two *mortals*.

That Luke without doubt is the best versed in Greek of all New Testament writers may also relate to how he argued in a way that so well could reach the common Greeks. As Crispin Fletcher-Louis points out, the *Gospel of Luke* has "traditionally been regarded as the gospel of the Gentiles."[116] Robin Lane Fox more simply calls Luke "a man of the Gentile world."[117] Luke's presentation of the resurrection of Jesus explicitly involving his flesh, his depiction of the remarkable nature of the resurrected Christ and the physical ascension to heaven, and his insistence that man was not really man without both body and soul were all in accordance with traditional Greek ideas on immortality. Although one cannot claim that this represented a deliberate attempt of Luke to form Christianity more in agreement with Hellenistic expectations, one cannot rule out any influence either. Luke can hardly have been ignorant of the parallels. Regardless of how it came about, Luke's presentation of how Jesus died, was resurrected, and became

physically immortal, flesh and bones included, was easily recognizable to Greeks.

Luke's repeated insistence on the flesh being part of the psychosomatic unity of body and soul that comprised human identity and the way he reiterated his direct or indirect criticism of Paul's belief about the *pneumatic* resurrection body make it hard to claim anything but that to Luke the resurrected body was of the flesh and would always remain that way.

To Luke the resurrection body was a miraculous body of flesh and bones with a recognizable corporeality that may appear and vanish, apparently at will. At times the body seems quite ordinary, at times it is so bright that it is actually impossible to discern its form. While emphasizing the fantastic, the immortal and the divine aspect of the resurrected Christ, Luke wanted to make sure that we did not forget that the resurrected Jesus really had the same body of flesh and bones that had been crucified, that he was no fleshless spirit. Insisting on the physical continuity of flesh and bones as important in regard to the continuous identity of the resurrected person, Luke really promised all believers a fantastic existence where everyone will soar in heaven with their miraculously transformed but yet physical bodies. According to Luke we are going to keep the flesh forever, though radically transformed in a way that makes it eternally incorruptible and glorious.

The Pierced Resurrection Body of John

In spite of its complex theology, the *Gospel of John*, the newest of the canonical gospels, has also a similar preoccupation with physical continuity as Luke. As Oscar Cullmann maintains, one cannot understand John as referring to a supremacy of the soul.[118] Although the first to talk of the preexistence of Christ, John is explicit about in what way Jesus as the incarnated Word is related to flesh. Contrary to the Greek gods who were still considered by many to have bodies of flesh and bones, the Word is not originally of the flesh but "the Word *became* flesh, and dwelt among us."[119] How exactly this divine transformation into flesh took place is not quite clear. Whether this meant that the Word only took abode in a body generated by Mary and Joseph, or whether it was a question of a virginal conception remains uncertain. On one occasion Jesus himself proclaims that "I am the bread that have come down from heaven," whereas some critical Jews point out that "is this not Jesus the *son of Joseph*, whose father and mother we know."[120]

Contrary to Luke, John does not say anything explicitly about whether he considered the resurrected Christ to be of the flesh. Being the only one of the evangelists who let Jesus demand of his followers to consume his flesh and blood, not just his body,[121] John nevertheless held that the flesh of Christ has a role to play in the future: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day," Jesus proclaims.[122] John is also the only evangelist in this way directly connecting the eating of body of Christ with the resurrection.

The stress on physical continuity is also greater in John than in any of the other gospels.[123] Here we find the oldest direct references to how the resurrected Christ still carried the stigmata, his wounds in his hands and feet. First he only "showed them his hands and his side,"[124] similar to how he in Luke said, "See my hands and my feet."[125] Not unlike how this was not enough to convince the apostles in Luke, John makes Thomas explicitly express this incredibility: "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."[126] The resurrected Christ then returns and gives Thomas a peculiar offer: "Take your finger, and see my hands; and take your hand, and put it into my side."[127] The stigmata serve not only as a powerful token of recognition but as proof of his physical nature.

To the Hellenistic reader these wounds would also be proof of the authenticity of the resurrected Jesus, demonstrating that this was no ghost nor imitator. As any form of physical resurrection required absolute physical continuity, the resurrected Christ would have to bear these wounds for eternity. Greeks who were told about how the crucified Jesus had been resurrected from the dead would expect him to still have the wounds of his execution. Just like that ivory shoulder of Pelops bore witness about how the gods had resurrected him by means of the cauldron, Jesus' wounds would forever demonstrate that this immortalized figure was indeed the same crucified preacher who, when still mortal, had traveled around Palestine proclaiming the salvation of mankind.

John seems well informed about the general practice of crucifixion, and uses this knowledge in a way that assuages any other worries about physical continuity that Greek readers may have. In order to hasten the death of those who were crucified, the executioners would regularly break the legs of their victims. John has both robbers crucified on either side of Jesus having this happen to them: "The soldiers therefore came, and broke the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with him." But the soldiers proceeded no further because

"when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs."[128] This detail on the death of Jesus was crucial. Just the suspicion that the bones of the crucified Christ should have been broken would prove devastating to any attempt of preaching about the resurrected Jesus in a Hellenistic world. The traditional belief that no body part could be recreated, would mean that a crucified Jesus with his bones broken would forever remain this way, just as the wounds he received would last for eternity. This was no different from how Hephaestus forever had to live with his mangled feet. That John also connected this to how none the bones of the paschal lamb were to be broken, thus making this the fulfillment of a prophecy in *Exodus*,[129] is indeed a point, but the conviction that a bodily resurrection always entailed absolute physical continuity would probably represent a more serious point to the contemporary reader. This notion seems supported by the *Gospel of Peter*, an apocryphal text perhaps contemporary with John. Here the crucified thief who defends Jesus also escaped the fate of having his bones crushed. Interestingly, the guards did this to punish him for his remarks, commanding "that his legs should not be broken, so that he might die in torment."[130] Many readers, on the other hand, would consider this a blessing for the good thief, thus having better hopes not only for the future general resurrection but also for the existence of his dead soul prior to this. As we have seen, the Greeks had for centuries held that the soul would forever reflect the form of the body at the moment of death. If, indeed, the good thief, as promised by Jesus in Luke, would go directly to heaven,[131] this would be difficult if the soul had the form of a mangled piece of flesh.

More Emphasis on the Flesh

Regardless of how it came about, with the gospels Christianity made a distinct change toward a greater emphasis on the flesh in a way that closely resembled traditional Greek ideas on resurrection and physical immortality. In complete contrast to Paul who deemed the flesh something negative, the evangelists gave increasingly prominence to the notion of physical continuity in general and to immortal flesh in particular. A number of aspects connected to the story of the resurrected Christ would to traditionally inclined Greeks seem as clear indications that he had been raised with the same body as that which was buried: the empty tomb, the tangibility of the resurrected Christ, Christ's own insistence on his flesh and bones, his eating in front of the disciples, the

stigmata and the wound in his side, and, finally, the emphasis that his bones in no way got crushed.

Texts dealing with the resurrection written not much later than the gospels tend either to reflect a similar preoccupation with how the resurrection must involve the flesh, or to simply not discuss the issue. The otherwise extremely graphic *Revelation of John* is, for example, silent on whether the resurrection included the flesh. When we, for example, are told that at the end of times "the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works,"[132] we realize that there is nothing explaining in what state these dead return. The flesh is nowhere mentioned. Biblical scholar Wilfrid J. Harrington claims instead that this insistence on the Hades and the sea giving up the dead probably refers to how in Judaism "it was widely believed that those lost at sea had no access to Sheol."[133]

The *Gospel of Peter* does not mention the flesh either, but does, on the other hand, elaborate the resurrection of Christ in a way that even more strongly emphasizes the continuity between the body that was buried and that which was raised. Whereas Matthew explained how guards were put at the tomb and became witnesses to the angel rolling away the stone of the tomb, the *Gospel of Peter* expanded the number of witnesses with a centurion and a number of elders. This impressive assembly did not just see the arrival of angels but "three men" coming out from the tomb, "two of them supporting one, and a cross following them."[134]

In the *Epistle of Barnabas* from the beginning of the second century there is a strong indication that the resurrection must include the flesh, as the power of death could only be destroyed by Christ being "manifested in the flesh."[135] Apparently it was primarily the flesh that needed to be rescued from the power of death, something that is in complete agreement with traditional Greek beliefs about immortality. Death could only be checked by saving the flesh from decay. Polycarp, the contemporary bishop of Smyrna, put a similar emphasis on the flesh, connecting the incarnation of Christ with the general resurrection: "For everyone who does not confess that Jesus Christ came in the flesh is Antichrist; . . . and anyone who . . . says that there is neither resurrection nor judgment, that man is the firstborn of Satan."[136]

The apocryphal *Third Epistle to the Corinthians*, a text probably from the end of the second century and definitely not written by Paul, also considered the belief in the resurrection of the flesh as an inseparable

part of Christianity, pointedly denying resurrection in the flesh to anyone who did not believe in it.[137] Indeed, as the text argues, Christ came to "this world to redeem all flesh through his own flesh;"[138] "through his own body Christ Jesus saved all flesh."[139]

Similar ideas are reflected in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, also from the second century. Here the flesh is explicitly what "may be justified."[140] As Pheme Perkins remarks, the "*Shepherd of Hermas* tied resurrection to a paraenetic tradition that emphasized the purity of the flesh":[141] The flesh that walked "honourably in holiness and purity" did not in any way defile the Spirit[142] as "all flesh in which the Holy Spirit has dwelt shall receive a reward if it is found undefiled and spotless."[143]

The *Epistula Apostolorum* from the middle of the second century has the resurrected Jesus ask the disciples, "Why do you still doubt and not believe? I am he who spoke to you about my *flesh*, my death, and my resurrection."[144] Physical continuity is more than ever what assures the disciples:

> "But so that you may know that it is I, Peter, put your finger in the nailprints of my hands, and you also, Thomas, put your finger into the spear-wound in my side; but you, Andrew, look at my feet and see whether they touch the earth; for it is written in the prophet: 'The foot of a ghost or a demon does not touch the ground.'" And we [touched] him so that we might truly know that he [had risen] in the flesh.[145]

The first formal Christian creeds, the *Rule of Faith*, quoted by Irenaeus at the end of the second century, and the *Old Roman Creed* and the *Apostles' Creed*, which may have been written in the late second century, also refer clearly to the future resurrection of the *flesh*. Whereas the *Rule of Faith* describes how God will "resurrect all flesh of the whole human race,"[146] both the *Old Roman Creed* and the *Apostles' Creed* use the explicit formula "resurrection of the flesh," "*sarkos anastasin*" in Greek or "*carnis resurrectionem*" in Latin. As these creeds were used as declarations of faiths by those who were baptized, we realize to what degree the belief in immortal flesh at this point had become central in the dominating form of Christianity.

From the late second century we have also identifiable Christian epitaphs.[147] Just as we saw was frequently expressed in Pagan funerary inscriptions, these early Christian epitaphs demonstrate that Christians, too, held that the buried bodies really represent parts of

the persons' identity.[148] The difference was, of course, that to the Pagan Greeks this rupture of body and soul, which together comprised the complete person, was a permanent state, while Christians could hope for the reunion of body and soul as promised in the future resurrection. As the Finnish classics scholar Iiro Kajanto remarks, although "the resurrection of the body was seldom explicitly mentioned [on Christian epitaphs], it was tacitly assumed."[149] Christian funerary art also referred to the hope of resurrection by depicting dolphins, known for their particular care of their dead, peacocks, which Christians considered to have incorruptible flesh, and the singular phoenix bird, which was connected to the resurrection.[150] Often the dead body was said only to be sleeping until the future resurrection;[151] the tomb itself was also referred to as a *koimêtêrion*, literally a sleeping place. *Koimêtêrion,* the same word as cemetery, was also inscribed on many Christian tombs in Attica, Thessaly, and Corinthia.[152] The implication of the sleeping dead body was that it would wake up for the resurrection, and reunite with the soul that had left it at the point of death.[153] The veneration of the relics of the martyrs similarly shows how many Christians believed these body parts were eternally identical with these holy men and women.

These first texts after the gospels generally maintained the emphasis on the flesh. The discussion was, however, not at all over. Taking this course, which made the resurrection of Christ seem so much more plausible to the Hellenistic contemporaries, led these first Christians simultaneously into increasingly direr straits. If the resurrection of Christ fit so well with the traditional Greek pattern of absolute physical continuity always being the case when anyone was raised from the dead, how then could one explain how everybody else also was to be resurrected. If the resurrection of this only Son of God, who was raised before his body in any way had countered corruption, represented the ultimate miracle in human history, how should the first Christians be able to convince anyone that millions of people whose flesh had been completely annihilated should ever be resurrected. The ancient Greek conviction that no flesh could be recreated, had led these earliest Christians into troubled waters. When defending the physical continuity of the resurrected Christ, they had at the same time made the idea of the general resurrection appear more improbable than ever. Those who believed in the resurrection of the flesh had still not got any proper solution to the dilemma behind the Corinthian riddle. How could the flesh be raised if it had been annihilated?

The Ever-Present Alternative of a Fleshless Resurrection

The first Christians could have chosen to stick to the Pauline gospel, insisting that flesh was simply no good and what happened to the body did not really matter in the way of resurrection. Many did. The increased stress on the flesh was not caused by want of alternatives. Among those who considered themselves Christians in the first centuries, quite a few agreed with Paul and rejected the entire notion that the flesh would be raised to eternal life. There was a number of influential groups and individual thinkers, most of them later defined as Gnostics, who all denied that we were to be resurrected in the flesh. The belief in the fleshless resurrection remained a force within the main church for a couple of centuries, and for an even longer time outside of it.

It is difficult to classify the various movements connected to what often is defined as a Gnostic corpus. In this case it should suffice to try to get an overview over what kind of ideas that were expressed in opposition to the increased stress on the physical resurrection. There were two main approaches, one focusing on the body of Christ and another one on the nature of the general resurrection. If we first turn to the body of Christ, we find that there existed a number of different understandings of his nature. This, of course, also related to how people understood the general resurrection. Docetism represents an early tenet held by a number of otherwise very differently opined Christians. Asserting that the body of Christ was only illusory and never truly human in the first place, docetics definitely held that his resurrection was not physical. Tertullian claimed that Marcion and Basilides were among those who did not believe in the resurrection of the flesh because of some form of docetism.[154] Hippolytus of Rome maintained that Marcion held that Christ "appeared as a man though not being a man, and as incarnate though not being incarnate,"[155] while Irenaeus of Lyons said that Marcion denied the human birth of Christ.[156] Irenaeus also argued that Basilides held that Christ had really been incorporeal and merely *appeared* as a man on earth.[157] Saturninus of Antioch allegedly believed that "the Savior was without birth, without body, and without figure, but was, by supposition, a visible man."[158] In the second-century *Ascension of Isaiah* Christ similarly descended and only took upon himself human form, so that "they will *think* that he is flesh and is a man."[159]

Other Christians focused on the nature of the future resurrection bodies. Pseudo-Justin refers non-specifically to people who argue that since the angels, "have neither flesh, nor eat, nor have sexual

intercourse . . . there shall be no resurrection of the flesh."[160] Both Hippolytus and Irenaeus asserted that the followers of Valentinus also excluded flesh from salvation.[161]

Gunnar af Hällström finds these spiritualizing understandings of the resurrection germane in how the concrete physical understanding of the resurrection developed, arguing that "the word 'caro' ['flesh' in Latin] was taken into Christology for anti-docetic purposes, and was later adopted in eschatology to reject spiritualizing interpretations of resurrection."[162] The problem with such an understanding is that already Paul explicitly rejected the flesh as having any part in the world after the resurrection. The Gnostic and other early Christian belief in a spiritualized resurrection was no new belief within Christianity, but a reflection of the Pauline denial of the resurrection of the flesh. Indeed, no one came up with these non-Pauline ideas about the resurrection of the flesh in order to defend Pauline orthodoxy. As we have seen, it was really the other way around. The Pauline rejection of immortal flesh was there from the very beginning, it was the insistence on the resurrection of the flesh that set Christianity off in a new direction.

Many of these groups later defined as heretics really advocated a resurrection that was extremely close to what Paul had preached. Similar to the way Paul held the flesh in low esteem, the Valentinians believed that this present body was not worthy of resurrection, and argued for a different kind of corporeality in the future.[163] According to the *Exegesis on the Soul*, from the Nag Hammadi library, the resurrection from the dead in no way involves the body, but equals the soul's rejuvenation and ascent to heaven.[164] In the late second-century *Treatise on the Resurrection*, the anonymous writer tells us of a "spiritual (pneumatic) resurrection which swallows up the psychic in the same way as the fleshly."[165] This would leave us with something that "is better than the flesh" and something that is completely in accordance with Paul's pneumatic body. Even docetism was seen by some as supported by Paul who claimed that God had sent "his own Son in the *likeness* of sinful flesh."[166] Indeed, many of these thinkers later defined as Gnostics put a great emphasis on how they were correctly following the tenets of Paul. The *Treatise on the Resurrection* and the *Gospel of Philip*, which both deny the resurrection of the flesh,[167] are for example full of direct and indirect quotations of Paul, as pointed out by A.J.M Wedderburn.[168] According to Irenaeus, the Ophites used Paul's assertion that flesh and blood had no place in God's kingdom to argue that Jesus, too, must have been resurrected without flesh and blood.[169] This was no farfetched idea, as Paul himself held the resurrected Christ

to be "the firstborn from the dead"[170] and "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."[171]

These proto-heretic Christians denied the resurrection of the flesh because they argued that the Bible did not mention such a thing. As such, they were partly right. As Gunnar af Hällström points out, there was truly no mention of the term "the resurrection of the flesh" in any part of Scripture.[172] Even Luke, who insisted on the flesh and bones of the resurrected Christ and professed that "all flesh will see the salvation of God,"[173] did not use the exact term "the resurrection of the flesh."

Many rejected a bodily resurrection altogether. Tertullian observed that a number of Christians held that the resurrection promised by Jesus was not anything that took place after one's physical death, but was what happened "when a man is reanimated by access to the truth."[174] There were, still according to Tertullian, also "a great many" claiming that the resurrection equaled the soul's escape "out of the body itself," holding that the soul is detained in the body "as in a grave."[175] Sometime in the third century, the author of the *Acts of Thomas* claimed similarly that death "is not death, but deliverance and release from the body."[176] In the *Book of Thomas the Contender*, another work from the Nag Hammadi library, Jesus himself is presented as chastising those "who hope in the flesh and in the prison that will perish."[177] Justin Martyr mentioned others "who are called Christians . . . who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven." The second-century *Apocryphon of John* propounded accordingly that the soul alone would be saved.[178]

According to Tertullian the Carpocratians believed, quite Platonically, that the body was the prison where the soul would serve its sentence for its sins.[179] This indication that some Christians really believed in reincarnation finds support also in the Nag Hammadi *Apocalypse of Paul*, where Paul is made the witness of how a soul "that had been cast down went to a body which had been prepared for it."[180] The *Apocryphon of John* similarly explained how the saved soul escaped this cycle and "does not enter another flesh."[181]

Many Gnostics held that their teaching had been transmitted directly from Paul and other New Testament figures. Valentinus, who would become the founding father of a distinct group of Gnostic Christians, was, for example, said to be the student of a certain Theudas who, as he claimed, had been a follower of Paul. Basilides, another Gnostic, was allegedly the pupil of Peter's disciple Glaucia.[182] None of these claims has been disproved and may actually be true.

There seems to have been a greater acceptance among Christians in general for rejecting the flesh at an early point. This is also indicated by the way many holding what would later be considered Gnostics beliefs in the beginning operated within the greater church. They were only gradually ousted. In the early second century Ignatius first commended the community of Magnesia for its unity, for thereupon chastising part of it for its false teaching.[183] Apparently at this time unity did not always equal agreement. Around 200 Tertullian indicated how many of whom he considered heretics were still within the Christian community, as they could appear as "the most faithful and wisest and most experienced members of the church."[184] Tertullian also maintained that the church in Rome even accepted a significant contribution from Marcion, the heretic par excellence, before a rupture for some reason appeared between Marcion and the rest of the church.[185] The African church father similarly claimed that the Gnostic Valentinus only left for Alexandria and set up his own school there, after he had lost his bid to become the Bishop of Rome.[186] If this story of the papal election really is true, we find that it seems more likely that the church at that time was much more open to Valentinus' denial of the resurrected flesh, than that Valentinus all of a sudden should have rejected everything he had previously believed in.

Also within what later has been seen as the orthodox fold, there were in the late second- and early third-century people who advocated an understanding of the resurrection difficult to distinguish from what many Gnostics held to be true. If we are to believe the ninth-century patriarch Photius, Clement of Alexandria in his early work *Hypotyposeis* sometimes swerved far way from what later was held as orthodoxy. Clement "drivels on about transmigrations of souls" and held that the Logos did not really become flesh "but only appeared so."[187] Origen advocated a belief in physical continuity in the resurrection combined with a rejection of the resurrection of the flesh. In his criticism of Celsus, he argued that "we do not assert, however, that God will raise men from the dead with the same flesh and blood."[188] Origen also held that the fleshly existence of Christ was limited to his time on earth, as afterwards he would lead "those who are flesh" "upwards to see him as he was before he became flesh."[189] The Alexandrian church father argued that even as the body was resurrected spiritually there was still a principle of continuity.[190] But, again, this was hardly news, as Paul, too, when rejecting the resurrection of the flesh, referred to the metaphor of the seed in order to secure such an aspect of continuity.[191] The way Origen also used the metaphor of the seed showed that he

actually was most of all close to the original Pauline understanding of the resurrection.[192]

But as most Christians at this moment no longer adhered to Paul's rejection of the flesh, Origen's use of this traditional image was of little avail. The ambiguity of the metaphor of the seed had by the third century already contributed to its limited use. Origen's theologically sound argument that Paul's image of the seed metaphor was indeed connected with the apostle's insistence that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"[193] may really have led to its falling further into disuse. As Caroline Walker Bynum argues, "Origen's understanding of the potential of the seed metaphor for expressing both radical change and a nonmaterial solution to the identity issue clearly contributed to the metaphor's decline in popularity."[194]

It is only in historical hindsight that these Gnostics and other believers in a fleshless resurrection appear as heretics. As scholar in early Christianity Walter Bauer pointedly demonstrated, "Certain manifestations of Christian belief that the authors of the church renounced as 'heresies'" were originally no such thing at all.[195] This was fundamentally a question of belief. As all heresies were seen as originating from people swerving away from the original truth, what constituted a heresy depended entirely on what was considered "the original truth." The denial of the resurrection of the flesh was among these beliefs that only later had been defined as heresies. The Gnostics were, indeed, right in their claim that their denial of the resurrection of the flesh made them more true followers of Paul than their opponents. Those who vehemently denied the resurrection of the flesh did of course not see themselves as abandoning true Christianity. To them the real heretics were their opponents, those who abandoned Paul's anti-flesh stand and who victoriously defined themselves as eternally orthodox in the end. It is indeed the way the proto-Orthodox writers in various ways tried to interpret Paul as really talking about the resurrection of the flesh that truly represented a distortion of the Apostle's original ideas.

Taking into account the development of the belief in the resurrection, Caroline Walker Bynum asks, "One cannot argue that the refutation of Gnosticism or Docetism required bodily resurrection, for the question is exactly: why *not* Docetism? Why did the powerful voices among the Christians of the later second century reject more spiritual or gnostic interpretations of the resurrected body?"[196] Realizing that these "spiritual or gnostic interpretations of the resurrected body" actually appeared to be much closer to what Paul believed, one have

to push the issue even further: Why did Christianity *leave* its original more spiritualized understanding of the resurrection?

The original diversity of Christian belief in the resurrection does not make the emphasis of the flesh less central in early Christian history. Although Gnostics, Origenists, and a number of other Christians offered an understanding of the resurrection that lay closer to the teaching of Paul, they would not prove successful. But with these many Christians advocating various more spiritualized versions of the resurrection, the idea on the resurrection of the flesh cannot be seen as victorious merely because Christianity succeeded. Indeed, the great variety of Christian alternatives demonstrates that there had to be something with the very notion of immortal flesh that attracted the denizens of the eastern parts of the Roman Empire.

How the Struggle between Philosophers and Multitude Continued within Christianity

Whereas the Christians later considered Orthodox may be seen as trying to respond to the physical hopes and expectations of traditional Greek religion, the intricate speculations of the Gnostics and Origenists on how the flesh was not to be included in the resurrection seem to have had a greater appeal among the vocal few who really felt attracted to philosophy. But just as none of the philosophical schools ever managed to evolve into mass movements, neither did the Christian movements that espoused similar philosophical ideas. Though influential critics of the fledgling Christian belief in the resurrection of the flesh, the Gnostics never represented a real threat. As most people already dismissed the speculations of the philosophers as irrelevant, the Gnostic denigration of the body did little to draw adherents away from that other Christian promise of physical immortality. When bodily continuity for centuries had equaled ultimate salvation, the promise of a fleshless body, or no body at all, was simply not in any way appealing. While traditional Greek believers had held that true survival always had to include the flesh, they had simultaneously believed that most souls remained forever in some fleshless frame, either in Hades or in some brighter place. What, then, was the use of a fleshless resurrection as offered by Pauline, Gnostic and Origenist Christianity?

According to Werner Jaeger, Pauline Christians could consider the Greek philosophers as their "predecessors" in their opposition to traditional religion as Paul "chose the Greek philosophical tradition" as

the way to present his message in a Hellenistic culture.[197] Looking at the extent to which Paul denies the survival of the flesh, Danish New Testament scholar Troels Engberg-Pedersen argues that this does not only make Paul sound Platonic, it makes him Platonic.[198] It is difficult to claim that Paul deliberately built on Greek philosophical ideas, although a number of scholars more recently has emphasized to what degree Paul must be seen in the context of his Hellenistic environment. But we must not forget how much of contemporary Judaism seems to have been influenced by aspects of Greek philosophy, and the beliefs of Paul clearly resonated some of these more philosophical aspects within Judaism.

One of the most striking ways Paul reflects the Greek philosophical tradition is his devaluation of the flesh. His more spiritual approach toward the body stands at the same time in sharp contrast to the attraction of the flesh found in traditional Greek religion. In the struggle between Gnostics and others Christians who defended the more Pauline views, and those who gradually abandoned the original Pauline rejection of the flesh, we may recognize the classical Greek disagreement on whether the human body represented something positive or not. In the struggle between the Christians who embraced the flesh and those who spiritualized or outright rejected the resurrection body, one may actually recognize the opposition between traditional Greek religion and the minority view of Greek philosophy. As Pseudo-Justin observed about the belief of those who denied the resurrection of the flesh, "If the Savior . . . proclaimed salvation to the soul alone, what new thing, beyond what we heard from Pythagoras and Plato and all their band, did he bring us?"[199]

Caroline Walker Bynum argues that "at the end of the second century the resurrection of the body had become a major topic of controversy among Christians and between Christians and their vocal pagan critics."[200] We realize now that the Pagan critics whom Bynum refers to were, of course, only representing a small philosophical elite. The disagreement on the body had, as we have seen, already gone on *within* Paganism for centuries. The philosophical elite, who criticized the Christians for their unsavory fixation with the body, was just as critical toward Pagans who kept to their traditional beliefs, as we witnessed for example in the vexation expressed by the philosophical Plutarch for the continuous beliefs of "the masses" in the carnal resurrection of certain mythical and historical figures.[201] The body-bashing philosophers in the early Christian era even found opposition among Pagans who were highly educated, as the traditionally inclined Pausanias who remained

puzzled by the essentially un-Greek ideas of those who considered the soul immortal.[202]

How the fight between the proto-Orthodox and their opponents represented a continuation of the traditional resistance toward philosophical ideas was not lost on Christian apologetics. Around 200 Tertullian maintained that Pagan philosophy was behind all contemporary heresies.[203] Philosophy was the wisdom of the heretics "which they share with the Pagans."[204] Discussing Plato's teachings on the ideas, Tertullian asked rhetorically, "Can you not catch a gleam there of the heretical teaching of the Gnostics and the Valentinians?"[205] And, of course, he was right. To Tertullian, the gravest offence was that "no philosophers admits" the resurrection of the flesh.[206] Although Tertullian of course would never admit to himself that Paul loathed the flesh, he recognized how the Christian anti-flesh position at his own time was connected with ideas considered typical of Greek philosophy.

The perceived connection between philosophy and those who did not believe in the resurrection of the flesh was also indicated by the way all these proponents were lumped together along with other "wrong-believers" under the term heretics, *hairesis* or "school." This is a term that, as French Biblical scholar Alain le Boulluec points out, was originally applied to different philosophical teachings as a neutral term.[207] To be a heretic was originally just to be a philosopher.

Also philosophically inclined Pagans recognized how the struggle between traditional and more philosophical ideas was perpetuated within Christianity. According to Origen, Celsus argued that Christianity in the second century A.D. was "successful only among the uneducated because of its vulgarity and utter illiteracy."[208] Though Celsus in no way is a neutral witness, this is still an important example of how someone with a certain degree of philosophical training generally deemed the leading Christian movement as having its major appeal among the more traditionally inclined, those who were generally unmoved by philosophical arguments. However, Celsus also admits that "among them there are some moderate, reasonable, and intelligent people who readily interpret allegorically."[209] Here he might have had those in mind who considered the resurrection not to include the flesh, those who had a more spiritual approach toward the human existence after the resurrection, as would be the more philosophical approach.

Parallel to how many church fathers criticized Greek philosophy for its negative attitude toward the flesh, others recognized that traditional Greek believers considered resurrection always to involve the flesh. Reflecting the traditional stand that man comprised both body

and soul, Tertullian claimed that "every *uneducated* or *simple* (*simplicior*) person agreeing with our opinion will be apt to suppose that the flesh will have to be present at the final judgment."[210] Origen whose own skepticism to the flesh would later brand him a heretic, similarly pointed out that only "more simple people" or "the common people" would understand the resurrection of the flesh literally.[211] According to Origen, Paul's claim that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"[212] referred to the "secret meaning" of the resurrection and was only said to "more simple people" so that "we might not misunderstand his meaning."[213] "More simple people" was apparently so attracted to the flesh that they were in need of such crass admonition. Writing himself to the more philosophically educated, Origen felt that he could be more frank, arguing that "we do not say that God will raise men from the dead with the same flesh and blood."[214] Indeed he claimed, arguing against what would be the very core of Christian resurrection beliefs, that the soul does not "desire a body that has decayed."[215]

The Promise of the Flesh and the Dilemma of Annihilation

In spite of all the possible alternatives, the increasing tendency within Christianity toward considering the resurrection in physical terms did not cease. Quite the opposite. Flesh and salvation became even more intimately intertwined. As Gunnar af Hällström makes clear, "during the second century it becomes increasingly common to speak of the resurrection of the *flesh*."[216] Around 110, Ignatius of Antioch insisted that humans are "made of flesh and spirit"[217] and that an eternal existence that did not include both of these aspects of human nature simply did not comprise immortality. Just as Ignatius "knows and believes" that Christ "exists in the flesh even after the resurrection,"[218] our ultimate prize is that of "incorruption and eternal life," Ignatius maintained.[219] The author of the *Second Epistle of Clement*, too, stressed how it was impossible to operate with human nature without the flesh. In this text from the middle of the second century incorrectly ascribed to Clement of Rome, we are told that "in the same way as you were called in the flesh, you shall also come back in the flesh."[220] Human nature simply cannot exclude the flesh. There is in *Second Clement* also the same connection as in Ignatius between the nature of the resurrected Christ and our nature when we will be resurrected: "If Christ the Lord who saved us, . . . then became flesh, and so called us, in the same manner shall also

we receive our reward in this flesh . . . And let not anyone of you say that this flesh is not judged nor rises again."[221]

Although both Ignatius and the author of *Second Clement* insisted that only the resurrection of the flesh preserved one's personal identity, their approach toward how to take care of the flesh may at first seem as diametrically opposed to each other. In *Second Clement* we are admonished to "guard the flesh as a temple of God."[222] The author of *Second Clement* was, of course not, unique when calling for the protection of the flesh. Other Christians even embraced Pagan symbols connected with such care. The dolphin, known for his pious treatment of the bodies of their dead,[223] was, as we have seen, a motif commonly found in Christian funerary contexts.[224]

But Ignatius, on the other hand, prayed for the annihilation of his own flesh as he faced execution for being a Christian:

> Let me be food for the wild beasts, for through them is it possible to reach God. I am God's wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts so that I may become pure bread of Christ. Rather entice the wild beasts, so that they may become my tomb and may leave no part of my body behind, so when I have fallen asleep I am not burdensome for anyone. Then I shall truly be a disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world shall not so much as see my body. Pray to Christ for me, so that through these instruments I may become a sacrifice.[225]

Reflecting that ancient horror of having one's flesh devoured by beasts and birds, the desire of Ignatius must have truly seemed like proof of courage to Hellenistic readers. At the same time it may have seemed a foolish wish, as Ignatius nowhere indicated how he believed he would get his flesh back.

From a Greek perspective, the ultimate hope of most Christians represented simultaneously one of the most difficult aspects of this new creed. If salvation equaled the resurrection of the flesh, the annihilation of the flesh would, in a culture where not even the gods were considered to be able to recreate the flesh, put an effective stop to any hope of salvation. In their attempt to wipe out the new cult, Pagan persecutors would therefore at times not only maim and violently disfigure the bodies of their Christian victims, but do everything to annihilate them. In a firsthand witness from the persecution in Lyons and Vienne in Gaul in 177, we learn about what efforts were made to dishearten the Christians: "For those who had been strangled in the jail

they threw to the dogs, and watched carefully night and day that none should be cared for by us." But even dogs would leave behind scraps. Therefore "the bodies of the martyrs, after having been exposed and insulted in every way for six days, and afterwards burned and turned to ashes, were swept by the wicked into the river Rhone which flows near by, so that no remains of them might still appear on earth."[226] The motivation of the Pagans was clear: "And this they did as though they could win over God and take away their rebirth, so, as they said, 'that they might not even any hope of the resurrection . . . Now let us see if they will rise again and if their God is able to help them.' "[227] This scene is still not unfamiliar to us. It is indeed, similar to that of the men being annihilated in the very beginning of the *Iliad*, when Achilles "made the warriors themselves the prey for dogs and birds of all kinds."[228] Certain beliefs really remained virtually unchanged in the classical world through the centuries.

At first, *Second Clement* may seem the more prudent when emphasizing how we should guard the flesh, not least with the fate of Ignatius in mind, ending up in the bowels of fierce circus animals. But when we look again at the pious call to guard the flesh by moral means, we find that this admonition may perhaps only increase the exasperation of many. Who would guard the flesh once you were dead? How could one prevent the flesh from falling victim to decay? Was there really such a difference between what could happen to the flesh in the act of martyrdom and what would happen over time?

Indeed, the perils of martyrdom represented only an accentuation of the dismal fate that awaited every Christian. As the resurrection became postponed further and further into the future, the destruction of nature left practically nobody with any hope of having one's present flesh survive intact to the time of resurrection. As such, the threats of the Pagan persecutors were essentially idle threats. It was only a question of time. All flesh would be destroyed sooner or later whatever was done to protect it. The ardent believer had thus no more reason to fear being martyred even in the most horrendous manner, than being devoured by worms in a cold tomb. Facing his own instant annihilation in the arena, Ignatius only reflected the same basic belief in God's ability to resurrect the flesh as those who were only gradually annihilated trough decay under the ground.

But that it did not really matter whether one was buried, burnt, or devoured by ravenous beasts in public service was of little comfort to the many Christians who still adhered to the traditional Greek ideas on bodily continuity. Although the promise of an eternal future for the

flesh sounded wonderfully *appealing* to the traditional inclined Greek whose very identity was inseparably tied to the psychosomatic unity of body and soul, it was in no way a *convincing* message to people who were used to think of any annihilation of the flesh as final. Neither Ignatius' optimistic conviction that the destruction of his flesh did not matter, nor *Second Clement*'s admonition to guard the flesh gave in any way any, answer to this more ancient dilemma. The resurrection of the flesh still remained distinctly unconvincing.

As voices expressing doubts about the possibility of a general resurrection were already found in the opposition to Paul in *First Corinthians*, one may assume that these objections grew steadily louder as Christianity increasingly became a Greek religion and more and more expressed their hopes for the resurrection of the flesh, which as always was the only means of true immortality. Christian converts who themselves had grown up in a Hellenistic world must have found the logical impossibility of a general resurrection of the flesh perplexing. As Christian theology also grew more complex it became obvious that one could no longer ignore this dilemma. How could one ever expect to retrieve one's flesh if it had been annihilated? Someone, somewhere, had to come with an answer.

The Divine Recreation of the Flesh

When Ignatius and the author of *Second Clement* confidently asserted that God would raise our flesh without in any way indicating how he would do it, a possible solution on this issue had just been launched. The first extant Christian attempt to resolve the challenge of the flesh is found in the *First Epistle of Clement*, most probably written by Clement of Rome at the end of the first century. That Christ had been raised from the dead just a couple of days after his death was, as we have seen, not really controversial from a Greek point of view. But in order to explain how we all may have a hope of the resurrection of the flesh, Clement turned to contemporary biology:

> Let us look at the strange sign which is seen in the regions of the east, that is, in the parts about Arabia. There is a bird, which is named the phoenix. This is the only one of its kind and lives for five hundred years; and when it reaches the time of its dissolution in death, it makes a coffin for itself of frankincense and myrrh and other spices, which in the fullness of time it enters and dies. But,

> as the flesh rots, a certain worm is engendered, which is nourished from the moisture of the dead creature and puts forth wings. Then, when it is grown strong, it takes up that coffin where are the bones of its parent, and carries them from the country of Arabia until it reaches as far as Egypt, to the place called the Heliopolis; and in daytime in the sight of everyone, flying to the altar of the Sun, it puts them there, and then starts going back again. Then the priests examine the registers of the times, and they find that it has come at the fulfillment of the five hundredth year.[229]

It is a fantastic story, and we really are supposed to be impressed. More important, however, is the direct parallel to the human resurrection that Clement sees in this image. "Do we then consider it something great and marvelous, if the creator of the universe will bring about the resurrection of those who served him in holiness, in the confidence of a good faith, seeing that he shows to us the magnificence of his promise even through a bird?"[230]

Clement thus contributed to making the phoenix a popular symbol of the resurrection in Christian art,[231] but he was certainly not making up this marvelous nature of this remarkable bird. His account reflects rather accurately what was related about the phoenix by the Roman scientist Pliny in the middle of the first century A.D. Pliny even informed his readers that a phoenix, indeed, had been recently observed in Egypt, in 36 A.D. The remains of the parent of this particular specimen had been displayed in the Comitium in Rome, though Pliny himself doubted the authenticity of this artifact.[232]

The comparison between the phoenix and the resurrection of the flesh demonstrates that to Clement the resurrection is, in fact, an act of recreation from the most minute remains. Somehow God will *recreate* us, just like what happened to this fabled bird.

In the middle of the second century, Justin Martyr expressed similar beliefs as Clement. Having compared the resurrection with the way the human body initially is engendered, Justin argued, "would anything appear more incredible, than, if we were not in the body, and someone were to say that it was possible that from a small drop of human seed, bones and sinews and flesh will be created into what we see?"[233] To elaborate his beliefs, Justin referred to Paul's metaphor of the seed, arguing how "the bodies of men, after they have been dissolved, and like seeds dispersed in the earth, should rise again in God's appointed time and put on incorruption."[234] Ignoring the flesh-bashing of Paul and other authoritative figures, Justin insisted that "I and others, who

are right-believing Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the flesh."[235] Justin expected "to receive again our own bodies, even though they should be dead and buried in the earth,"[236] meaning that even the body that is utterly destroyed by decay will be resurrected so that it resembles its previous self. The explanation as to how this is to come about, is as simple as it is radical: "for we say nothing is impossible with God."[237] Similar to how God "created us when we were not,"[238] he also had it within his powers not only to recreate something that had been annihilated but at the same time preserve an essential identity between the dissolved flesh and that which is recreated. What we will get back is our own bodies, even if they had been entirely destroyed.

At the end of the second century Theophilus of Antioch reflected very much the same ideas about the flesh in his use of Paul's metaphor of the seed: "Is there not a resurrection going on of seeds and fruits? . . . A seed of wheat, for example, or of the other grains, when it is cast into the earth, first dies and rots away, then is raised, and becomes a stalk of corn."[239] The resurrection of man is also to be compared with "the resurrection of the moon" as it "wanes, dies, and rises again" every month.[240] Apparently our flesh will be recreated in a similar way, from nothing or next to nothing.

Drawing on human nature to explain the process of the resurrection, Theophilus discerned an analogy between the resurrection and how a body is healed. All bodies will be recovered in the resurrection similar to how new flesh comes miraculously from God when a sick person recovers and gains weight. Indeed, the resurrection of the flesh is an ongoing process constantly demonstrated in nature:

> Hear further, man, about the process of resurrection going on in yourself, even though you are unaware of it. For perhaps you have sometimes become sick, and lost flesh and looks and strength; but then you again by the mercy of God and by healing, recovered your body and looks and strength.[241]

The ultimate implication of Theophilus' belief is that God will recreate one's flesh even if nothing is left of it whatsoever. The resurrection is, as an act of partial or complete recreation, presented as no more incredible than how God initially "created you out of nothing, and brought you into being."[242]

We find similar ideas about recreation reflected in the *Sibylline Oracles*. These were a set of prophetic books allegedly going back to the

beginning of Rome, though the Greek texts we have preserved were written entirely in the late first or second century A.D., or were at this time the object of radical editing by Christian writers. Advocating similar ideas on the resurrection as other Christian texts from this time, the *Oracles* proclaimed that "God himself will fashion again the bones and ashes of men, and he will again raise mortals up, just as they were before."[243]

It is no accident that Clement of Rome, Justin Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch and the *Sibylline Oracles* in their attempt to explain how the resurrection of the flesh would take place, all turned to recreation and the absolute powers of God. That it was in God's power to recreate the flesh just as he had once created the universe from nothing had for some time been claimed by those Jews who believed in the resurrection of the flesh. Already the first-century B.C. Jewish author of the *Second Maccabees* had, as we saw, insisted on this.[244]

The Christian embrace of this originally Jewish explanation of the resurrection of the flesh did nevertheless not represent a satisfying solution to a Greek audience. The Christians had instead taken over a serious dilemma. While responding in the affirmative to the Hellenistic attraction of the flesh, the solution offered did not hold water according to the same Greek worldview these early Christians to a great degree had to maneuver within. From a Greek point of view, the claim that God would recreate the flesh was distinctly unconvincing. It was simply contrary to nature. That the Biblical God was considered to be so much more powerful than each and one of the traditional Greek gods is not that surprising as he replaced a whole pantheon, but that God should be able to recreate even a physical body that had been completely lost to decay, fire or hungry animals would be to push his abilities not only to the extreme but to the absurd. Greeks also attacked these ideas when found among the Jews. When the alleged omnipotence of the Jewish God was criticized, it was exactly this belief that he could recreate flesh that was singled out as the most incredible. As the scientist Galen commented in the late second century A.D., Moses "believes everything to be possible with God, even if he should want to make a bull or a horse out of ashes. We however do not hold this. We say that certain things are impossible by nature and that God does not even attempt to do such a thing at all."[245] As it implied various degrees of recreation of the flesh, Paul's metaphor of the seed was clearly incompatible with traditional Greek ideas, and these first- and second-century Christian attempts to use this to explain the resurrection proved unsuccessful. No wonder that Origen, as we have seen,

was even less successful when reemploying the seed metaphor in the third century.

That Christians could answer that *anything* is possible to God, would therefore not make their claims in any way more plausible to those who still adhered to the basic logic of traditional Greek religion. Certain rules were so fundamental that even if the Christians convinced the Greeks that these rules were made by God, to argue that the same divine figure would break these most basic rules would seem perfectly absurd. The anonymous Pagan critic quoted in Macarius' *Apocriticus* (identified as Porphyry by some) argued against the possibility of the resurrection of the flesh by pointing out that the natural laws, which have been established and approved by God, are not to be overturned by the one who made them.[246] Why should God reverse the natural process of decay which he himself has established? Anything that had been in any way annihilated could therefore not be recreated. It was lost for eternity. As Pseudo-Justin remarked about his opponents probably in the late second century B.C., those who "say that there is no resurrection of the flesh" argue "that it is impossible that what is corrupted and dissolved should be restored to the same as it had been."[247] Or as put it by the Pagan critic in Macarius: "take a body that has been food for worms: How can these bodies be restored to the essence of what they were originally?"[248]

To the Greek the comparison of the resurrection of the flesh with how a seed sprouted and with what became of the phoenix would therefore represent a distinctly unconvincing explanation as to how we are to regain the flesh. Even if the early Christians *had been* able to convince most Greeks that God would recreate our bodies, a recreated body was not in itself any satisfying solution either. Neither recreation, nor the idea that the body could grow once more again complete out of the tiniest fraction, would in any way seem assuring to people to whom individual identity depended upon the continuous union of soul and body, the present flesh included. The physical remains lying under the tombstones were, as we witnessed from Pagan epitaphs, still part of the very identity of the person that had once been alive.

If your resurrected flesh was not identical with that which you had had when you were mortal, there was a lack of identity, and you were not really *you*. That the body would be recreated would to the Hellenistic mind seem more like reincarnation, a notion, as we have seen, which never convinced the average Greek. Interestingly the Latin Tertullian referred to the reincarnation belief as an imperfect form of resurrection, as "the soul actually returns into bodies, although not the same bodies."[249]

When the identity of the individual equaled the psychosomatic unity of body and soul, having one's soul united with a new body represented a rupture, not continuity, in one's personal existence. To have one's body *recreated* was thus no viable solution to this dilemma. If God recreated the flesh, this simply did not suffice. It did not equal immortality. As Gunnar af Hällström points out, the "fundamental premise" for both critics and defenders of the resurrection of the flesh was that "if the body is to rise again, it has to be *absolutely identical* with the previous one."[250] As humans were complete only with their original bodies and souls, physical immortality required the preservation or reconstitution of the very same body one originally had been born with.

Answers to the Challenge of the Flesh

The challenge of physical continuity required a different set of answers than recreation to the question of how God are going to resurrect the dead and make them physically immortal. The extremely literal understanding of what comprised immortality required equally literal explanations as to what happened to the flesh.

We find a very different attempt to solve this challenge of the flesh in the mid-second-century *Address to the Greeks* by Tatian, a student of Justin Martyr.[251] Here, for the first time, do we sense an explanation on the resurrection of the flesh that preserves both the principle of physical continuity and the notion of personal identity connected to the flesh. In the text written explicitly to win Greeks over to Christianity, Tatian discussed what happened when "fire destroy all traces of my flesh," when the flesh is "dispersed through rivers and seas, or torn in pieces by wild beasts."[252] But there is no reason to worry. The flesh is never really annihilated, Tatian argues. When burnt, "the world receives the dispersed matter."[253] Even if one is devoured by animals, one's flesh is still not lost forever. Somehow God will see to that not the tiniest bit of our flesh get lost but is "stored" in some miraculous "storehouses."[254] It does not matter how much our flesh is dispersed, as "God the King, when he pleases, will restore the substance that is visible to him alone to its pristine condition."[255] Probably aware of the ancient fear that there sometimes could be "not enough to bury,"[256] Tatian insisted on the divine ability to reassemble even the most minute fragments. Having gathered every little piece of us, God will then put our flesh back together again at the end of times. This is no act of recreation; this is a restoration of the bodies we originally were born with.

That Tatian went to such great lengths to explain how exactly the flesh is resurrected must be seen as connected with how he had that same traditional Greek understanding that one's personal identity equaled the psychosomatic unity of body and soul. Without its partner its body, the soul has no real existence, and vice versa. "The soul is not in itself immortal . . . but mortal,"[257] Tatian stressed, echoing the traditional Greek conviction, that the soul without the body was quite simply dead. If your body and your soul were severed from each other, the totality of *you* simply did no longer exist. Tatian, however, took this a bit further and argued that "through death" he would be "existing no longer and seen no more." He considered death, the state of separation of body and soul, as parallel with when "I was not existing before I was born," when "I knew not who I was, and only existed in potentiality of the material flesh."[258] The process of resurrection would therefore be like "just as before I was not, but was afterwards born."[259] Only with the reunion of the reassembled body with the soul, flesh with spirit, "shall *I* exist again."[260] This was the only way to immortality. Just as how immortality in the Greek world traditionally was inseparably connected with the continuous union of body and soul, to Tatian immortality depended on the dead soul's reunion with the resurrected body.

Reading the late second-century treatise of Pseudo-Justin on the resurrection, we sense a frustration, which very well may stem from an attempt to convince people deeply imbued in a traditional Greek worldview. It is, indeed, remarkable to what degree the argument in defense of the resurrection of the flesh, as stressed by British New Testament scholar Christopher Francis Evans, generally "appeal to the natural reason and is almost devoid of scriptural reference."[261] When Pseudo-Justin, just like Justin Martyr and Theophilus of Antioch,[262] argues for the resurrection by pointing to how God in his omnipotence created man from nothing, he is told "that it is impossible for God to raise it [the flesh]"[263] because "it is impossible that what is corrupted and dissolved should be restored to the same as it had been."[264] Pseudo-Justin was thus clearly aware that just pointing to God's omnipotence when countered by some of the most basic natural principles was not enough to convince most people. But he did not give up and tried another way to win over those who refused to believe in the general resurrection of the dead: "Since these men are extremely unbelieving, we will use an even more convincing argument—not drawn from faith, for they are not within its scope, but from their own mother unbelief—I mean, of course, from worldly or physical arguments."[265]

Recognizing how those he tried to reach insisted on physical continuity in the case of resurrection, Pseudo-Justin made use of a number of scientific theories to explain how the physical resurrection was quite possible even when one's body had been destroyed. "Plato says that all things are made from matter by God, . . . but Epicurus and his followers say that all things are made from the atom and the void by some kind of self-regulating action of the natural movement of the bodies; and the Stoics, that all are made of the four elements."[266] Instead of going into detail about the differences between these theories, Pseudo-Justin observed that

> while there is such discrepancy among them, there are some doctrines acknowledged by all of them in common, one of which is that nothing can be created from what does not exist, nothing can be destroyed nor dissolved into what has not any being, and that the elements, out of which all things are created, are indestructible.[267]

Ingeniously the Christian apologist then combined these scientific ideas on continuity of physical particles, which originally had little to do with human survival, with the more traditional Greek notion that any resurrection required a complete body:

> The regeneration of the flesh will, according to all these philosophers, appear to be possible. . . . According to Plato, neither will it be impossible for God, who is himself incorruptible, and has also incorruptible material, even after that which has been first formed of it has been destroyed, to make it anew again, and to make the same form just as it was before. But according to the Stoics the body is created by the mixture of the four elementary substances. When this body has been dissolved into the four elements, which are incorruptible, it is possible that they receive again the same combination and composition . . . and so remake the body which they formerly made. . . . Again, according to Epicurus, as the atoms and the void are incorruptible, it is by a created order and arrangement of the atoms as they come together that both all other formations and the body are created; and it [the body] being in time dissolved, is dissolved again into those atoms from which it was also created. And as these remain incorruptible, it is not at all impossible, that by coming together again and receiving the same order and arrangement, they should make a body identical to the one that was formerly made by them.[268]

In his use of these various scientific theories, Pseudo-Justin ends up with an understanding close to how Tatian referred to the way "the world receives the dispersed matter."[269] A problem with referring to various philosophers to explain the resurrection was that for most people these philosophers were really irrelevant. But the most basic principles on the nature of matter were actually common to philosophers and traditional religion. That nothing could appear from nothing, ex nihilo, was a belief found already in the most ancient Greek texts. Creation was always depicted as acts of things being reshaped or distinguished from one another. Both Homer and Hesiod indicated that humans really constituted of earth and water in a certain fashion. In *Work and Days* Hephaestus made Pandora, the world's first mortal woman, from earth and water,[270] whereas in the *Iliad* Menelaus chastised his crew by wishing that "may you all turn into earth and water."[271] That nothing really could be annihilated, only dissolved or dispersed, can easily be seen as following logically from this first fact. None of these philosophical theories had really brought anything new to the Greek perspective on physical nature, but must instead be considered attempts to offer more precise explanations to how the constant changes of the world took place.

Obviously aware that the subtleties of the philosophers could easily elude the more common believer, Pseudo-Justin tried to explain this principle with more simple allegories as well. "That which is formed of matter, be it an image or a statue, is corruptible; but matter itself is incorruptible."[272] This could also be illustrated with how "the artist designs in clay or wax, and makes the form of a living animal" and then "if his handiwork is destroyed, it is not impossible for him to make the same form, by working up the same material, and fashioning it anew."[273] Pseudo-Justin also drew more parallels to art:

> As if a jeweler should make the form of an animal in mosaic, and the stones should be scattered either by time or by he who made it, when still having the stones and bringing the scattered stones together again, it is not impossible to gather and arrange them to make the same form of an animal . . . And shall not God be able to collect again the dissolved parts of the flesh, and make the same body as was formerly made by him?[274]

Interestingly, most people adhering to the philosophical teachings Pseudo-Justin first referred to would, of course, not worry at all about what would become of the flesh, finding the very idea of a physical resurrection preposterous. Pseudo-Justin accordingly distinguished

between those who just "assert that it [the resurrection of the flesh] is *impossible*," like traditional Greek believers, and those "who, considering the flesh worthless and despicable, claim that it is not *proper* that God should raise it," like the philosophically inclined.[275]

While trying to respond to the Greek disbelief, Pseudo-Justin nevertheless challenged the traditional conceptions in the way of people who were missing a limb or in other ways were physically challenged. When operating with the notion of physical immortality, Greeks expected the form of the immortalized body to be absolutely identical with the original mortal body in regard of body parts. The body was, indeed, fortified and could even be rejuvenated when being made physically immortal, but a limb missing was lost forever. The eternally pierced body of Christ would to the Greeks represent, as we have seen, a typical example of such traditional ideas. Also Pseudo-Justin referred to this ancient belief: "Well, they say, if then the flesh rise, it must rise the same as it falls; so that if one dies with one eye, one must rise one-eyed; if lame, lame; if defective in any part of the body, in this part the person must rise deficient."[276] Although recognizing this traditional belief, Pseudo-Justin himself insisted that the lame and blind also would be raised with complete bodies, as God is able to make any body perfect. He supported this claim by referring to how Jesus healed the sick.[277] Indeed, Pseudo-Justin was in no way patient with those who held that the resurrection did not mean that the bodies would be perfect:

> How truly blinded are they in the eyes of their hearts. For they have not seen blind men on the earth seeing again, and the lame walking by his word. All things which the Savior did, he did firstly so that what was spoken about him in the prophets might be fulfilled, "that the blind should receive sight, and the deaf hear," and so on; but also for the belief that the flesh shall rise perfect in the resurrection. For if he on earth healed the diseases of the flesh, and made the body perfect, so much more will he do this in the resurrection, so that the flesh shall rise complete and perfect.[278]

Pseudo-Justin was not the only one who gave hope to people who died with acquired disformities. In the North African *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* from the beginning of the third century, Perpetua observes in a vision how the horrible cancer wounds of the soul of her dead brother were healed after her prayers.[279] This represents a radical break with the traditional Greek belief that the soul of the dead remained forever in the same state as at the point of death, and should probably also

be connected with how physical healing was so central in the mission of Jesus.

In his discussion on how we shall "rise complete and perfect" it is still remarkable that Pseudo-Justin did not distinguish between those who were born lame, blind and so on, and those who had become this later on. As God would reassemble the minute pieces of our bodies wherever they had ended up, it seems actually logical that he should also be able to reassemble the particles that constituted limbs, which had been lost before one died. People who had been *born* without certain limbs would, on the other hand, have to have these limbs created from scratch if they were to rise with complete bodies.

This discussion of what was to become of those born with disabilities did, however, never attract the greatest attention. The Greeks were already familiar with immortal figures being disabled, for example lame like Hephaestus, or visually impaired, like the three Graeae or Phorcides who had but a single eye between them.[280] The immortal state of these figures far outshone their physical disabilities, and as such the eternal fate of the minority of people born with disabilities probably did not worry most people. There was little reason to consider that after the resurrection there would not be place for disabled people as well, whether or not they also remained disabled for eternity.

Irenaeus of Lyons, a contemporary of Pseudo-Justin, seems to have operated with a similar understanding of God reassembling the particles of human flesh in the resurrection:

> For surely it is much more difficult and incredible that someone created something which is a living and rational man out of previously nonexistent bones and nerves and veins and all the other things which constitute man, than that he reassembled what had been created and thereupon dissolved in the earth . . ., having thus turned into those [elements] from which man, who had no previous existence, was formed.[281]

The logical solution offered by Tatian, Pseudo-Justin, and Irenaeus to the challenge physical continuity represented in the matter of resurrection, that human flesh never disappeared but was merely dissolved or dispersed, exhibited at the same time a much more fundamental dilemma from a traditional Greek perspective than the issue of people with disabilities. Neither one of them offered any explanation as to what would happen if part of one's flesh somehow had been devoured by someone else, either directly, through cannibalism, or indirectly,

through people eating plants or animals that again had nourished on human flesh. As one's body was completely dissolved, what would keep these minute particles from becoming part of some other human body? This represented a serious problem in connection with the resurrection of the flesh as, of course, no particle can be in two places at the same time. As true immortality in Greek religion meant the perpetual union of the soul with that exact body one had when alive, these objections represented not just the fickleness of certain people who could not stomach the idea that they by mischance had devoured parts of other human beings. As one could imagine how human flesh for millennia had been dissolved into the various elements, this was also an issue that did not just concern a few. This was a serious dilemma, a threat to the individual identity of practically everybody. Few expressed this problem more clearly than the anonymous Pagan critic quoted in Macarius' *Apocriticus*:

> Many have perished at sea, their bodies eaten by scavenging fish. Hunters have been eaten by their prey, wild animals, and birds. How will their bodies rise up?
>
> Or let us take en example to test this little doctrine, so innocently put forward [by the Christians]: A certain man was shipwrecked. The hungry fish had his body for a feast. But the fish were caught and cooked and eaten by some fishermen, who had the misfortune to run afoul some ravenous dogs, who killed and ate them. When the dogs died, the vultures came and made a feast of them.
>
> How will the body of the shipwrecked man be reassembled, considering it has been absorbed by other bodies of various kinds?... How can these bodies be restored to the essence of what they were originally?[282]

In the late second century Athenagoras of Athens also summed up the true horror the idea of a free flow of particles, which had once constituted a human body, represented to people who considered true survival to depend on the exact reconstitution of the physical body. Here we find not only again that most macabre scenario of beasts glutting themselves on human flesh, but the even more dire emphasis of what this really entailed.

> And they say that many bodies of those who die miserably in shipwrecks and rivers have become food for fishes, and many of

> those who perish in war, or who because of some other sad cause or circumstances are deprived of burial, lie exposed to become the food of any animals which may happen to find them. Then the bodies are consumed, and the members and parts composing them are broken up and distributed among a great many animals, and by means of nutrition become incorporated with the bodies of those that are nourished by them. . . . When animals of the kind suitable for human food, which have fed on human bodies, pass through their stomachs, they become incorporated with the bodies of those who have eaten them. It is then an absolute necessity, they say, that the parts of the bodies of men which have served as nourishment to the animals which have fed on them should pass into other human bodies.[283]

Not all examples were as complex as this. Athenagoras consequently considered the threat of outright cannibalism as well:

> Then to this they tragically add the devouring of offspring perpetrated by people in famine and madness, and the children eaten by their own parents through the schemes of enemies, and the celebrated Median feast [when the Median king Astyagus punished his servant Harpagus by killing his son and serving the unsuspecting father the flesh],[284] and the tragic banquet of Thyestes [when the equally unknowing Thyestes was served and ate the flesh of his own son];[285] and they add, moreover, other such like unheard-of occurrences which have taken place among Greeks and barbarians. And from these things they consider the resurrection impossible, since it is not possible for the same parts to rise again with one set of bodies, and with another as well.[286]

If the most basic elements of the world were to intermingle freely, there is nothing to keep particles once constituting the flesh of one individual from becoming the flesh of another. There was, indeed, little anyone could do not to end up as indirect cannibals, not even strict vegans could be sure that the plants they ate had not at some point nourished on something that had once been someone else's flesh. If this really was the case, the dreadful consequence of this from a Christian point of view was that many people would be resurrected with incomplete bodies, while others would be resurrected with flesh that partly belonged to someone else. One should perhaps suppose that to be resurrected with someone else's flesh was to prefer over being resurrected without

all one's flesh; but to be raised with someone else's flesh also represented a fundamental threat to one's very identity.

The solution offered by Athenagoras to the excruciating concerns of those who feared what would happen with the flesh was as simple and ingenious, as it was logical. As God "has adapted to the nature and kind of each animal the nourishment suitable and correspondent to it," the bodies of men were "removed from ability of nourishing" any other body, human or animal.[287] Nothing could keep animals or even men from feeding on human flesh, but this grisly consumption would have no consequence for the ultimate resurrection of the flesh because

> what is against nature can never pass into nourishment for the limbs and parts requiring it, and what does not pass into nourishment can never become united with that which it is not adapted to nourish. Then can human bodies never combine with bodies like themselves, to which this nourishment would be against nature, even though it were to pass many times through their stomach, owing to some most bitter accident.[288]

Even when pulverized into the smallest particles possible, human flesh was in itself not only indestructible, as claimed by Tatian, Pseudo-Justin and Irenaeus, but immutable. Indeed, Athenagoras maintains that the very nature of the human body means that it is to be resurrected.[289]

As human flesh could neither be destroyed nor become a part of something else, there was no limit to how much the chain of consumption could be expanded. The whole chain was actually irrelevant because of the essential immutability of human flesh. At the end of time whatever part of a human body that had either "become food for fishes" or "food of any animals which may happen to find them"[290] would therefore be regurgitated. Although it may seem like an impossible task, God keeps track, knowing "where each of the dissolved particles goes, and what part of the elements has received that which is dissolved."[291] These particles were then reassembled by God at the resurrection and "united again with one another, they [the particles of the human flesh] occupy the same place for the exact construction and formation of the same body."[292]

In his explanation of the physical resurrection, Athenagoras effectively responded to the traditional Greek objections that neither could flesh be recreated, nor could a body of recreated flesh in any way preserve the identity of the individual. Without in any way deflating the omnipotence of God, Athenagoras argued that God chose to keep

within the limits of what was traditionally possible to the nature of human flesh in order to preserve the psychosomatic unity of each individual. The body we would get back at the resurrection would really be exactly the same we have had when alive.

In his attempt to explain the rational of the resurrection of the flesh, Athenagoras offered solace to those dead who previously had had none hope at all. In his attempt to explain how the bodily particles of each individual were to be reassembled at the end of the time, Athenagoras took away much of the horror connected to what traditionally had been considered "worst case scenarios," to the hapless men and women who had been devoured by beasts, birds, fish, or other men, and thus not been able to even get proper obsequies. As we have seen these people were traditionally considered to be completely beyond any hope of any for survival as even their souls had been annihilated along with the very form of their bodies. When human flesh was said to be immutable, the fate of consumption no longer represented a hopeless scenario. The tragic scenes of birds and dogs eating the dead at the battlefield and of fish devouring the shipwrecked now became mirrored in expectations of beasts at the time of the resurrection disgorging whatever body parts they had devoured.

Later artistic depictions presented this joyful moment of various beast, birds and fish regurgitating miscellaneous body parts, feet, hands, and heads, the latter, of course, with happy faces. The oldest extant iconographic depictions are probably from the early eleventh century, as part of a larger work of the last judgment in the Panagia tôn Chalkeôn Church in Thessalonica. Here we see fish and beasts spew up human body parts alongside allegorical presentations of the sea and the earth.[293] Although these two symbolical figures connect to how *Revelation of John* prophesied that, prior to the last judgment, "the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them,"[294] there are, as German art historian Georg Voss argues, "no Biblical passages" offering an explanation for the animals regurgitating "devoured human limbs."[295] As we realize, these depictions could, however, very well have served as illustrations to Athenagoras' second-century description of the resurrection. Voss maintains that these depictions must be based on later Christian texts, particularly the fourth-century writings of Ephraem Syrus:[296] "All whom the sea had devoured, whom the wild beasts have eaten, whom the birds have torn asunder, whom the fire has burnt, all these will awaken and arise and come forth in a twinkling of an eye," Ephraem proclaimed.[297] This, of course, is essentially nothing different from

what Athenagoras maintained two centuries previously. Also Caroline Walker Bynum observes how "the motif of fish, beasts, and birds giving up dismembered parts . . . is not original with Ephraem."[298]

Regardless whether the paintings in Thessalonica are the oldest depictions of animals disgorging human flesh, very soon this motif is found over a large geographical area. Dramatic eleventh- or twelfth-century mosaics from the Santa Maria Assunta basilica in Torcello, close to Venice, exhibit fish, and beasts and birds of pray, gulping up various human limbs, alongside dead corpses disentangling themselves from their funerary wrappings.[299] The same motif is found on thirteenth-century icons from Sinai and equally old frescoes in the Sveti-Tskhoveli Cathedral in Mtskheta in Georgia, and on fourteenth-century frescoes in churches in Anisaraki in Crete, and Gračanica and Prizren in Kosovo. Later depictions are found all over the orthodox realm, for example in the Lavra monastery in Athos, the Roussanou and Varlaam monasteries in Meteora, Greece, the Church of St. Nicholas of the Roof in Kakopetria, Cyprus, the Voronet and Humor churches in Romanian Moldavia, and in Our Lady of Balamand Patriarchical Monastery in Lebanon.

As Caroline Walker Bynum points out, art historians do not agree on how far back this as an iconographic motif goes back in time.[300] Similar to how the paintings in the Panagia tôn Chalkeôn probably must be related to more ancient texts, it may also have been formed on the model of earlier pictures that are lost today. There may also be historical links to the ancient Christian depictions of Jonah being spewed up by the sea monster going back at least to the third century. Art historian Robin Margaret Jensen makes clear how "the figure of Jonah was by far one of the most reproduced in early Christian art."[301] Some of these images closely resemble the later depictions of animals disgorging human limbs at the resurrection, as only the legs or the head of Jonah are visible.[302] There was as we have seen a thematic connection as well. Already Matthew had connected Jonah with the resurrection of Jesus,[303] and by the time of Athenagoras the story of Jonah had become a wonderful image of the physical resurrection promised us *all*. Not only Irenaeus and Tertullian insisted on this[304] but, as Caroline Walker Bynum observes, "Throughout the Middle Ages, . . . the promise of resurrection to all humankind" was "associated with the story of Jonah, swallowed and regurgitated intact by the whale."[305]

The image of beasts, birds and fish regurgitating human flesh was no example of either morbidity or absurdity, or, for that matter, just a Patristic metaphor. This was the literal fulfillment of the ancient Greek

longing of physical immortality, a wonderful answer to the attraction of immortal flesh. As physical continuity equaled salvation, these apparently macabre scenes were the fulfillment of the ultimate hope. No matter what unfortunate things would happen to you, you were assured that God would always be able to track down all the parts of your body, reassemble them, and raise it, once again complete but now incorruptible and impervious to any harm.

Athenagoras was in no way the last to discuss the challenge of the flesh. But with Athenagoras the Christian presentation of the resurrection had dealt successfully with the most serious challenges the flesh represented to traditionally inclined Greeks. Through the insistence that human flesh was really immutable and could not in any way be destroyed, the resurrection was now presented in a way that was compatible with traditional Greek beliefs. Remarkably, the basis of this argument would not change for centuries. As Caroline Walker Bynum demonstrates in her book *The Resurrection of the Body*, the general lines of the explanation found in Athenagoras would not only remain in the Greek Orthodox realm but would survive a cultural shift into western and northern Europe where it proved dominant far into the Middle Ages: "From the second to the fourteenth centuries, doctrinal pronouncements, miracle stories, and popular preaching continued to insist on resurrection of exactly the material bits that were laid in the tomb."[306]

Immortal Flesh and Why the Greeks Left Zeus

There is no single reason that can explain why the Hellenistic communities left Zeus and the numerous other deities for the Christian God. The notion of immortal flesh must nevertheless be considered an important factor in this process. In the form it finally succeeded, Christianity put the resurrection of the flesh at the very centre of its belief system. And this really reflected, as we have seen, both Greek beliefs and desires. Not only was the belief that a number of people had been physically immortalized, with or without a previous resurrection, widespread in the Hellenistic realm, but there was a pronounced attraction of the flesh witnessed both in the ideas on the afterlife and in the hopes and prayers for divine intervention in this realm.

That there was a connection between Greek beliefs on immortal flesh and Christianity is also strongly indicated by how Christian resurrection beliefs seem to have evolved gradually according to Greek

expectations. Through these changes the new religion soon became not just generally appealing, but particularly attractive according to the inherent logic of Greek religion. When Christian resurrection beliefs had found their final form around the end of the second century, they not only fulfilled the ultimate Greek longing of physical immortality but the way the future resurrection was considered to happen was in accordance with how this was possible according to traditional Greek beliefs.

The attraction of a new creed may not by itself explain why people leave an ancient religion. As Rodney Stark remarks in his sociological study on the breakthrough of Christianity, "It is obvious that people do not embrace a new faith if they are content with an older one."[307] But if we again turn to the notion of immortal flesh, we find that this represented not only a possible explanation for some of the attraction of Christianity but also a seed of discontent and destruction within ancient Greek religion. Insisting on the absolute bliss of the few individuals who received physical immortality, the religion of Homer, Euripides, and Pausanias had sown the longing of eternal flesh in the hearts of millions of people, a desire that it, at the same time, was in no way able to fulfill. The many speculations the Greeks launched about the afterlife, the ideas of reincarnation, of the soul's immortality, and of a better existence of the dead soul due to various mysteries, may all be considered inadequate answers to what people really longed for: Eternal life with body and soul.

Whereas texts from Homer to Plutarch demonstrate that the ultimate desire in traditional religion was one of physical immortality, these texts simultaneously depicted a worldview that may seem decidedly unfair to those who believed in it. Physical immortality was always reserved for the eclectic few, a small number of people, selected for neither their moral nor heroic achievements, but simply because of the gods' capricious whims. These few fortunate men and women who were immortalized must most of all have functioned as a depressing reminder of how physical immortality was unobtainable to almost everybody. As physical immortality required absolute bodily continuity, everyone knew that even the slightest hopes of immortalization decomposed along with one's dead body.

What defined humans as humans was their mortality, contrary to the immortality of the gods. Many, if not all, of the most basic duties of humans in traditional Greek religion assured that they also would remain mortal. The essentially human community of the *polis* was defined by how it spatially was distinct from the uncultivated surroundings where,

as we have seen, immortality was theoretically possible. The ritual of sacrifice perpetuated the separation between men and gods, which it once was said to have established, giving humans the corruptible flesh and gods the immortal form of the sacrificial victims.[308] The eating of bread as another corruptible commodity equally assured that the human body also remained corruptible. As Jean-Pierre Vernant argues, "The fabric of human life is cut from the same material that forms the food that sustains it."[309] Humans were in their very nature destined for brief lives on earth with bodies that would be lost to corruption and an eternal existence as dead and disembodied souls.

Ramsay MacMullen connects the general Greek desire for greater physical health as so often expressed in their religious practices with that of physical immortality. Because of this, "the modern observer expects" to find among the wants expressed "the need for life, promised for ever." But as MacMullen also points out, these expectations are just the same not fulfilled, as "assurances of immortality prove unexpectedly hard to find in the evidence."[310] But we should not be too surprised by this, nor by MacMullen noting that "even the *longing* for it [immortal life] is not much attested."[311] This lack of testimony was not just a question of not asking for that which one could not possibly have. This was also a question of religious piety. Humans were *not supposed* to raise themselves above their mortal state. Indeed, any human attempt to break the bonds of mortality enforced on them by the gods equaled *hubris*, man's ultimate sin. Whoever committed this capital offence was the target of horrific penalties exacted by jealous gods. Tantalus who pilfered ambrosia and gave it to his pals was eternally punished in Hades. As Bellerophon wanted to "reach the abodes of heaven and share the company of Zeus," he was killed, thrown to the ground by his flying horse Pegasus.[312] And Asclepius, of course, was struck dead by Zeus' thunderbolt when he raised people from the dead.[313]

In her book on Greek beliefs on healing from Homer to the New Testament, Louise Wells argues that the healing cult of Asclepius "was so widespread that some early Christians regarded the god Asklepios, and his healing cult, as Christianity's greatest rival."[314] As a god,

> Asklepios was unique among the Greek gods for his constant benevolence towards mankind, for his constant availability to mankind, and the constant morality of his personal relationships. The parallel with the life and work of the man Jesus of Nazareth, and with the post-resurrection nature of the Christian Jesus, are obvious.[315]

Just like Jesus, Asclepius had even tried to break the power of death. But there was a major difference, which stressed the basic ethics of Greek religion. Whereas Jesus was slain and resurrected as part of a divine plan that offered everybody the opportunity of physical immortality, Asclepius was killed exactly because he tried to save people from death. The cult, established after he himself had been resurrected and immortalized, consequently functioned as a reminder of the limitations of man. Although there was apparently no malady which the deified Asclepius could not help against, people were not to ask for immortality and did not do it either. The founding myth of this cult firmly established the limits of what one could ask for and the retribution measured out to anyone who tried to go beyond this.

When Diomedes physically attacked the gods, he was duly cautioned by Apollo: "Reflect, son of Tydeus, and fall back; do not try to be the equal of the gods. Never is the race of immortal gods on a level with earthbound men."[316] The very basis of Greek religion lay in the demand of humans to know their place and to live so that they did not abandon the limits of their mortal existence. Pindar expressed this very clearly: "A man must seek from heaven only that which is fitting for mortal minds, perceiving well the path before his feet, the lot that is our portion."[317]

The way Odysseus, a man generally noted for his greed, deceitfulness, and vengeful nature, still was presented as the ultimate heroic figure, connects to how humans were to remain within their limits. The singular act leading to the gods punishing Odysseus was his claiming responsibility for blinding the divine cyclops, the son of Poseidon, an act that clearly qualified as a human transgression on the divine realm.[318] But generally Odysseus was the man who not only kept to the rules of the jealous gods designed to keep mortals mortal, he even turned down the chance of immortality when offered him by the divine Calypso.[319] Sitting on the shores of Calypso's island, Odysseus wept as he longed for his home, for his wife, for his whole existence, which eventually would only lead him to a miserable and disembodied state as a dead soul in Hades. His yearning for being human was so strong that he even was "longing to die,"[320] as this was the one thing that could reconfirm his human nature on this distant isle.

The victorious form of Christianity was, as we have seen, not the only challenger to traditional Greek religion. But none of these others rival movements offered any proper solution to the tragic Greek attraction of immortal flesh. The philosophical answer, that people should not worry about the flesh at all or even eschew it, failed miserably in

getting attention among people at large. Renouncing the flesh was no proper solution to the dilemma. When people for centuries had deemed an eternal existence with immortal flesh as the best possible existence, there was scarce comfort in just trying to rejoice about the fleshless existence they actually were despairing over.

The more original and more spiritualized ideas on resurrection within Christianity, from Paul to the so-called Gnostics, perpetuated essentially the same solution as the Greek philosophers. Indeed, as Pseudo-Justin observed when referring to the Christians who denied the resurrection of the flesh, "that the soul is immortal, but the body mortal, and incapable of being revived" was something "we used to hear from Pythagoras and Plato, even before we learned the truth."[321] Although these more spiritualizing Christians often referred to a resurrection body, the denial that the flesh in any way was to play a part in the future could still not appear very attractive to people who considered that one's personal identity really comprised the psychosomatic unity of the soul and the entire body, the flesh included. As most people already dismissed the speculations of the philosophers as irrelevant, these spiritualizing forms of Christianity never gained ascendancy with the Greeks either.

We have seen how Christianity represented nothing new to a Hellenistic audience in its insistence that Jesus had been resurrected from the dead and made physically immortal. But the fledgling religion did more than recycle old notions about miraculous acts of individual resurrection, it answered directly to the longing nurtured by centuries of Paganism. Contrary to how traditional Greek religion expressed an attraction of the flesh while at the same time refusing to fulfill it, Christianity must have appeared a literal godsend. In the form that eventually would gain ascendancy, Christianity not only offered a promise of immortal flesh, but argued, still in accordance with the logic of the traditional Greek worldview, how this was possible also to all these destroyed bodies for whom all hope apparently had been lost. Christianity offered everybody the recipe for physical immortality. In its final form the Christian resurrection also preserved physical continuity, maintaining the psychosomatic unity of body and soul that for most Greeks comprised the individual identity of each and every human being.

Greek religion was in no way moribund at the time when Christianity appeared, but Christianity with its promise of the flesh really got Paganism at its most vulnerable. Christianity offered a fulfillment of the attraction of the flesh which the Greeks had harbored for centuries

while at the same time only seeing as a futile desire. With Christianity physical immortality was no longer an unattainable state, but something that Christ suddenly had put within reach of everybody.

In her momentous study on the early Christian and medieval belief in the resurrection, Caroline Walker Bynum looks for meaning, arguing that "material continuity cannot *account for* self; it cannot *be* salvation."[322] This is an interesting claim, but as we have examined what actually drew the traditional Greek toward the new creed of Christianity we must reconsider this. Looking at traditional Greek beliefs we find a worldview where material continuity indeed did *equal* salvation. Material continuity was the only way to immortal life. This was the attraction of the flesh. The promise that the flesh would once be made immortal can therefore be seen as one of the main reasons why the Greeks became Christian. As Ramsay MacMullen argues, "No pagan cult held out promise of afterlife for the worshipper as he knew and felt himself to be. Resurrection in the flesh was thus a truth proclaimed to the decisive advantage of the Church."[323]

The introduction of Christianity did not equal the desertion of everything the Greek converts had ever believed, but only the revelation of a supreme and uncreated deity that had been previously unknown. Even the ancient gods remained where they had always had been, as mighty figures, who wanted man to remain in his miserable mortal state. Even when clearly redefined as demons by writers such as Justin Martyr, Minucius Felix, and Athenagoras,[324] the ancient gods were actually not much changed within early Christianity. The Christian missionaries did not have to do much to reveal the fundamentally vicious nature of the old gods. Appealing to the attraction of the flesh already present in the ancient beliefs, they could merely point out how the Greek gods jealously withheld physical immortality for almost everybody. Zeus, Hera, and Athena had not played their cards well when apparently running the universe, making themselves stand out as capricious tyrants who most of all had used their power to keep men and women away from the one thing that truly equaled eternal happiness, that of physical immortality. As Justin Martyr argued about these old gods he considered demons, "be on your guard, so that those demons . . . do not deceive you . . . For they strive to keep you their slaves and servants."[325] The ancient gods would see to that one would never escape death and physical corruptibility.

The Christian God could not appear more different. As he entered or, more correctly from a Christian point of view, revealed his eternal presence, he did so with the promise that everyone now should be able

to live forever with both body and soul, flesh and spirit. The ancient deities also knew the recipe for physical immortality, but contrary to Jesus who demonstrated just how we all could achieve this, the Greek gods jealously kept their knowledge away from practically everybody and even punished those who tried to escape mortality by their own means.

In the fourth century Athanasius of Alexandria could argue that God "became human so that we might become divine."[326] All of a sudden an omnipotent god had not only appeared in a mortal body, but through his own death, resurrection, and immortalization, had demonstrated the exact way to physical immortality, turning it into a general promise for everyone who believed in him. As our flesh and bones will be made incorruptible, we will all become divine, as pointed out by Athanasius. That humans explicitly became divine by attaining physically immortal, a conviction we also find in Justin Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch, and Hippolytus of Rome,[327] was completely in agreement with traditional Greek belief. At the same time this heralded a new humanity, where man was meant for immortality and incorruptibility, not mortality, death, and decay. As Athenagoras maintained, putting the original understanding of human nature on its head, human flesh is by nature meant to resurrect to physical immortality: "It is impossible for God to be ignorant of the nature of our bodies which are destined to be resurrected."[328]

Unable to fulfill the longing it itself had planted in the hearts of its adherents, traditional Greek religion would have to watch this desire grow to completion within the fold of Christianity—while it sadly withered away itself. The attraction of immortal flesh first expressed by the most ancient Greek poets is what Christians are carrying with them, bringing this most basic part of ancient Greek religion up to the present era and, in the hope of millions, to the end of time.

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NOTES

Introduction: Dilemmas of the Flesh

1. *Il.* 1.1–5, my emphasis.
2. *Il.* 22.66–71.
3. *Il.* 21.122–127.
4. *Il.* 21.203–204.
5. Sakellaraki 1995:fig. 62 (Museum of Eretria, ME 16620–16621).
6. Boardman 1998:fig. 161 (Pithecusae Archaeological Museum in Ischia).
7. Athenag. *De Resur.* 8.4.
8. Athenag. *De Resur.* 8.4.
9. Athenag. *De Resur.* 4.1.
10. Martin Luther *Large Catechism* 10.3.
11. Just. Mart. *Dial. Tryph.* 80.
12. Tert. *De Resur.* 1.1.
13. Bremmer 2002:41.
14. Long 1967:401.
15. Ware 1997:108.
16. Hatch 1892:4.
17. *1 Cor.* 15.50.
18. Af Hällström 1988:10.
19. Dewart 1986:58.

One Where Do We Stand?

1. Ringgren 1987:347–348.
2. Cullmann [1955]:19.
3. Ware 1997:108.
4. Bynum 1995:5.
5. In his Hibbert Lectures of 1888, published as Hatch 1892.
6. Nash 1984:13.
7. Nash 1984:263.
8. Nash 1984:173.
9. I return to a more comprehensive discussion of Frazer in the section "The gods who were not resurrected."

10. Rahner [1957]:131–132, 173–174, 323–324.
11. Dunn 1985:53.
12. Conzelmann [1972]:7n26; Perkins 1984:150.
13. Betz 1990:246.
14. A.Y. Collins 1993:126, 130.
15. Boring, Berger & Colpe 1995.
16. Fiorenza 1997:229.
17. D.B. Martin 1995:111, 113–114.
18. Porter 1999:71–79.
19. Farnell 1921:386.
20. Plut. *Mor.* 328de.
21. Strabo *Geogr.* 1.2.8.
22. Orig. *C. Cels.* 6.2.
23. Paus. *Descr.* 4.32.4.
24. Paus. *Descr.* 1.30.3.
25. Chadwick 1980:xi.
26. MacMullen 1981:77.
27. MacMullen 1981:71.
28. MacMullen 1981:77.
29. MacMullen 1981:72.
30. MacMullen 1981:72.
31. MacMullen 1981:72.
32. A number of the most powerful deities of the Greek pantheon is found already on Mycenean tablets from the second millennium B.C. But this is not sufficient to speculate to what degree Mycenean beliefs really reflected an extensive continuity with later religious ideas.
33. Plut. *Alex.* 2.1. That is, if you did not believe that Alexander was the son of Zeus. Either way, Philip of Macedonia was considered a true descendant of Heracles.
34. Strabo *Geogr.* 1.2.7–40; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 11.
35. Veyne [1983]:112.
36. Orig. *C. Cels.* 1.42.
37. Jaeger 1961:85, 71–72.
38. Jaeger 1961:91. In his stress of Homer as the very basis for the Greek *paidea*, Jaeger, however, contradicts himself when he also claims that this *paideia* equals "the Greek philosophical tradition," calling this "the most representative part of that which was in Greek culture" at the time when Christianity was first introduced (Jaeger 1961:11). As we have already seen, philosophy never played such a role.
39. There was little in Greek culture that prevented such divine assimilation. Indeed, the Greeks had always been open to what they considered foreign deities, even seeing some of their most ancient gods, like Dionysus, Apollo, and Artemis, as intimately connected to various barbarian parts of the world. Ramsay MacMullen points to the peculiar practice in the Hellenistic and Roman periods of gods frequently referred to with whole strings of names synthesizing various deities as one, and how this also was reflected in artistic depictions (MacMullen 1981:90–91).
40. MacMullen 1981:115.
41. Isoc. *Or.* 4.50.
42. Livy 38.17.11.
43. Frend [1984]:164.
44. Fox [1986]:75.
45. Pliny *Ep.* 10.96.
46. Brown 1964:109.
47. Fox [1986]:72.
48. MacMullen 1981:134.
49. MacMullen 1997:31.

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1. MacMullen 1981:51.
2. MacMullen 1981:49.
3. MacMullen 1981:57.
4. Angus [1929]:414.
5. MacMullen 1981:51–52.
6. Chambers 1980:17.
7. Cf. Gardiner 1930:46.
8. Cf. Endsjø 2008a:113–114.
9. *Il.* 23.382–400.
10. *Il.* 23.546–547.
11. *Il.* 23.768–783.
12. Pind. *Isth.* 2.12–19; cf. *Anth. Graec.* 13.18 referring to a certain Parmenon who won a horse race due to the Dioscuri.
13. Kyle 1987:124–125.
14. Pleket 1998:324.
15. Cf. Pfitzner 1967:28; Endsjø 2008a:102.
16. Although Homer operates with a rather complicated understanding of what today comprises the soul, the main idea that the rupture between body and soul equals death remains the same.
17. Pl. *Gorg.* 524b; cf. Pl. *Phd.* 64c.
18. *Od.* 11.541.
19. *Od.* 10.521, 10.536, 11.29, 11.49.
20. Clarke 1999:115.
21. Rohde [1921]:5.
22. Rohde [1921]:55.
23. *Od.* 11.488–491.
24. Rohde [1921]:9.
25. *Od.* 11.491.
26. *Il.* 1.1–5.
27. Clarke 1999:157, 115.
28. *Od.* 11.582–600.
29. *Hymn. Hom. Cer.* 2.480–482.
30. Ar. *Ran.* 312–414.
31. *IG* (*Inscriptiones Graecae*) 12.1.141.
32. *EG* (*Epigrammata Graeca ex lapidibus conlecta*) 560.
33. Rohde [1921]:535.
34. *Anth. Graec.* 7.166, 7.218, 7.222. 7.223, 7.232, 7.323, 7.337, 7.343, 7.345, 7.378, 7.388, 7.398, 7.402, 7.419, 7.456, 7.462, 7.476, 7.551, 7.572, 7.578. 7.589, 7.631, 7.693, 7.708, 7.747, 7.597, 13.3, 13.14, 13.21, 13.23, 13.26; *Epigrammata Graeca ex lapidibus conlecta* (*EG*) 106, 195.1; *Inscriptiones Graecae* (*IG*) 14.1900.
35. *Anth. Graec.* 7.477, 7.292, 7.560, 7.600; *EG* 88b, 242b, 297a, 618b; *IG* 12.1.151.
36. Cf. *Anth. Graec.* 7.155, 7.178, 7.185, 7.307, 7.324, 7.341, 7.558, 7.569, 7.577, 7.678, 7.737, 13.15; *EG* (*Epigrammata Graeca ex lapidibus conlecta*) 119, 120, 134, 137, 186, 195, 200.2, 278, 373, 386, 513.2, 526, 613, 619b, 653, 713; *IG* (*Inscriptiones Graecae*) 12.5.305, 14.900; *IPE* (*Inscriptiones orae septentrionalis Ponti Euxini*) 4.317; *SEG* (*Supplementum epigraphicum Graecum*) 7.69, 8.11.
37. *Anth. Graec.* 7.371.
38. *EG* 200.
39. *Anth. Graec.* 7.278, cf. 7.279, 7.287.

40. *Anth. Graec.* 7.329.
41. *Anth. Graec.* 7.461. cf. 7.321, 7.470, 7.554, 7.628, 7.632; *EG* 195.1, 569; *IG* 12.1.151, 12.1.153.
42. *Anth. Graec.* 7.401.
43. *IG* 2.3.4054.
44. *Anth. Graec.* 7.176, cf. 7.280.
45. *EG* 75, 438.
46. Rohde [1921]:544, 578n167.
47. *EG* 646 = *CIG* (*Corpus inscriptionum Graecarum*) 6298.
48. *IG* 3.1380.
49. *Anth. Graec.* 7.331.
50. *EG* 425.
51. *Anth. Graec.* 7.477, cf. 7.476, 7.582; *EG* 653; *IG* 12.1.153.
52. *Anth. Graec.* 7.178.
53. *Anth. Graec.* 7.476.
54. *Anth. Graec.* 7.232.
55. *Anth. Graec.* 7.185, 7.551.
56. *Anth. Graec.* 7.374, 7.600.
57. *Anth. Graec.* 7.377.
58. *Anth. Graec.* 7.495.
59. *Anth. Graec.* 7.271, my emphasis.
60. *Anth. Graec.* 7.286, cf. 7.393, 7.497, 13.27.
61. *Anth. Graec.* 7.397.
62. *Anth. Graec.* 7.374, cf. 7.285, 7.392, 7.537, 7.539, 7.592, 7.653.
63. Vermeule [1979]:49; cf. Bremmer 1983:83.
64. Arist. *PA* 641a.
65. *EG* 153, 340, *IG* 5.1,1187.
66. Lattimore 1942:184–196.
67. *Anth. Graec.* 7.495.
68. *EG* 201.
69. *SEG* 1.464.
70. *Inscriptiones Creticae* (*IC*) 8.18.34, my emphasis.
71. Sophocles according to Stob. *Anth.* 4.53.1.
72. Sophocles according to Stob. *Anth.* 4.52.10.
73. *Anth. Graec.* 7.365.
74. *Anth. Graec.* 7.308.
75. *Od.* 11.40–41.
76. Soph. *Oed. Tyr.* 1371–1373.
77. Aesch. *Eum.* 103.
78. Paus. *Descr.* 10.31.1.
79. Plut. *Menippus* 10.
80. Paus. *Descr.* 8.11.3.
81. *Sch. Ap. Rh.* 4.223–230a.
82. *Il.* 23.185–191.
83. *Il.* 24.414–415.
84. *Il.* 19.23–27, 19.33, 19.38–39.
85. *Il.* 22.335–336, 23.21, 23.182–183.
86. *Il.* 17.240–242, 17.254–255.
87. *Il.* 17.125–127.
88. *Il.* 16.836.
89. *Il.* 23.182–183.
90. *Il.* 22.42–43.

91. Paus. *Descr.* 2.34.7.
92. Eur. *Suppl.* 538–540.
93. Paus. *Descr.* 10.21.6.
94. Aelian *Anim.* 12.6.
95. Arist. *Hist. Anim.* 631a.
96. Aelian *Anim.* 12.6.
97. *Anth. Graec.* 7.383.
98. *Anth. Graec.* 7.273, my emphasis.
99. *Anth. Graec.* 7.274.
100. *Anth. Graec.* 7.500, my emphasis.
101. *Anth. Graec.* 7.388.
102. *Anth. Graec.* 7.506, cf. 7.542.
103. *Anth. Graec.* 7.276.
104. Rohde [1921]:115; Porph. *Abst.* 4.22.
105. Hes. *Op.* 121–142.
106. Hes. *Op.* 121–142.
107. Nilsson 1971:443.
108. Paus. *Descr.* 4. 28.6.
109. Paus. *Descr.* 7. 17.14.
110. Paus. *Descr.* 8.9.9.
111. Paus. *Descr.* 2.9.4.
112. Plut. *Alex.* 72.2.
113. Cf. Rohde [1921]:531.
114. *IC* 1.8.33.
115. *SEG* 1.453.
116. Joseph. *BJ* 6.1.5.
117. Paus. *Descr.* 6.6.10.
118. Paus. *Descr.* 4.32.4.
119. Plut. *Thes.* 35.5.
120. Paus. *Descr.* 1.32.5.
121. Paus. *Descr.* 10.23.2.
122. Paus. *Descr.* 9.38.5.
123. Phlegon *Mir.* 2.9–10.
124. Rohde [1921]:74.
125. *Il.* 5.334–340.
126. *Il.* 5.858.
127. *Il.* 5.868–870.
128. *Il.* 15.315–17, cf. 8.298, 11.457, 20.100. 21.568. 22.322, 23.805.
129. *Il.* 11.437.
130. *Il.* 19.27, my emphasis.
131. *Il.* 23.185–191.
132. The flesh of Helius' cattle, *Od.* 12.395; roasted meat in general, *Il.* 4.345, 8.162, 8.231, 9.217, 11.776, 24.626; the raw flesh devoured by beasts of prey, *Il.* 12.300, 17.660.
133. *Il.* 22.346–347.
134. *Od.* 12.395–396.
135. Plut. *Pyrrh.* 3.5.
136. *Od.* 5.346–347.
137. *Il.* 2.447.
138. *Il.* 5.724.
139. *Il.* 23.346–348; Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.6.8; Paus. *Descr.* 8.25.8–11.
140. Ps-Lucian *Charidemus* 19.
141. *Il.* 16.149–151.

142. *Il.* 17.443–444.
143. *Il.* 16.148–149.
144. Nilsson 1971:623.
145. Xenophanes according to Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 5.109.2.
146. Pl. *Phdr.* 246c–d.
147. Char. *Chall.* 3.3.5–6.
148. Athenag. *Leg. pro Christ.* 21.
149. Athenag. *Leg. pro Christ.* 15.
150. Vernant [1986]:27, 35–36.
151. Vernant [1986]:31.
152. Paus. *Descr.* 3.16.2–3.
153. Paus. *Descr.* 1.13.8.
154. *Acta* 14.11–12.
155. Char. *Call.* 3.3.5–6.
156. *Il.* 5.844–845.
157. *Il.* 1.197–198.
158. *Il.* 7.58–60.
159. *Od.* 3.372–373.
160. *Il.* 5.381–402.
161. Paus. *Descr.* 8.28.5–6.
162. *Il.* 5.900–901.
163. *Il.* 5.395–402.
164. *Il.* 5.416–417.
165. Hes. *Theog.* 523–525. The same story is related in Aesch. *Prom.* 1021–1025, Ap. Rh. *Arg.* 2.1247–1259, 3.851–853, Diod. Sic. 4.15.2, Philostr. *VA* 2.3, and in Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.7.1, 2.5.11.
166. *Il.* 1.590–594.
167. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.3.5.
168. See, for example, a hydria from Caere in Etruria (Vienna 3577), and a probably Sicilian black figure vase (Würzburg H 5352) both from around 530 B.C.
169. *Il.* 20.37.
170. *Hymn. Hom. Cer.* 2.237–239; Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.5.1; Ap. Rh. *Arg.* 4.865–879.
171. Pind. *Ol.* 1.62–63; Ps-Apollod. Ep. 1.24.1.
172. *Il.* 23.185–191, 24.414.
173. *Il.* 19.23–27, 19.33, 19.38–39.

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1. Pind. *Pyth.* 3.54–58.
2. Panyassis according to Ps-Apollod. *Lib.* 3.10.3 and Sext. Emp. *Prof.* 1.261.
3. Panyassis according to Ps-Apollod. *Lib.* 3.10.3 and Sext. Emp. *Prof.* 1.261.
4. Diod. Sic. 4.71.2–3.
5. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.10.3.
6. Verg. *Aen.* 7.761–782; Ov. *Met.* 15.533–535.
7. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.3.1. According to Melesagoras, it was Asclepius, not Polyidus, who resurrected Glaucus as well (Melesagoras according to Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.10.3–4).
8. Eur. *Alc.* 840, 1139–1142.
9. For the use of a veil at the point of dying, see, for example, Eur. *Hipp.* 1458; Pl. *Phd.* 118a.
10. Pl. *Symp.* 179b–c, 180b.
11. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.3.3.

12. In Euripides' *Rhesus*, Rhesus' mother explains how Persephone will "send up his soul, *psyche*" so that it again can be united with his body (Eur. *Rhes.* 964–65). The parallel with Persephone is also supported by Euripides having Rhesus' mother claim that Persephone must "show that she honors the relatives of Orpheus" (Eur. *Rhes.* 965–66).
13. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.3.3. According to Diodorus of Sicily, it was Persephone who promised to let Eurydice go (Diod. Sic. 4.25.1).
14. Paus. *Descr.* 9.30.6.
15. Ps-Apollod. *Ep.* 3.30.
16. Pl. *Resp.* 614d.
17. Procl. *In Rem Pub.* 2.115–116.
18. Procl. *In Rem Pub.* 2.115.
19. Procl. *In Rem Pub.* 2.116.
20. Phlegon *Mir.* 1.15.
21. Phlegon *Mir.* 1.10.
22. Phlegon *Mir.* 1.11–12, my emphasis; cf. Procl. *In Rem. Pub.* 2.116.
23. Phlegon *Mir.* 1.14–15; cf. Procl. *In Rem. Pub.* 2.116.
24. Phlegon *Mir.* 3.4–5.
25. D.B. Martin 1995:111. Among the cases of people returning to mortality Martin also includes Heracles' sojourn to Hades to fetch the infernal hound Cerberus, an event which is nowhere referred to as his resurrecting from the dead.
26. Porter 1999:80, 77–79. That Porter also refers to various Greek ideas on reincarnation and the immortality of the soul to support his argument unfortunately does not strengthen his claim (Porter 1999:71–77).
27. Sometimes, however, with the exception of Hippolytus who was raised by Asclepius. I will return to this later.
28. *Mt.* 9.18–26; *Mk.* 5.22–43; *Lk.* 8.41–56.
29. *Lk.* 7.12–15.
30. *Jn.* 11.17–44.
31. *Mt.* 27.52.
32. Pind. *Ol.* 1.48–51.
33. *Sch. Lyc. Alex.* 152. The same story is related in *Sch. Pind. Ol.* 1.26 and referred to by Lycophron in his normally convoluted manner (Lyc. *Alex.* 152–157).
34. *Sch. Lyc. Alex.* 152.
35. *Sch. Lyc. Alex.* 152.
36. Pind. *Ol.* 1.25–27; Bacchylides according to *Sch. Pind. Ol.* 1.24; Ps-Apollod. *Ep.* 2.3.
37. Lyc. *Alex.* 1315; cf. Staphylus according to *Sch. Eur. Med.* Arg.; Eur. *Med.* 482.
38. *Nostoi* according to *Sch. Eur. Med.* Arg.
39. Aeschylus according to *Sch. Eur. Med.* Arg.; *Sch. Ar. Eq.* 1321.
40. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.27; cf. Paus. *Descr.* 8.11.2; and hydria by the Copenhagen painter (British Museum E 163, *ARV* 258.26) depicting Medea with a young lamb about to leap out of the cauldron with an old man named "Iason" watching. This name seems nevertheless to have been written on after the vase was originally made.
41. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.27.
42. Paus. *Descr.* 8.11.3.
43. Paus. *Descr.* 8.11.2–3; Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.27.
44. Ar. *Eq.* 1321–1336.
45. Paus. *Descr.* 5.17.8.
46. Paus. *Descr.* 6.22.1.
47. Tripp [1970]:26.
48. Eur. *Med.* 1386–1387.
49. Look at the references in Wedderburn 1987:183.
50. Eur. *Alc.* 989–90.

51. Plutarch relates how "a serpent was once seen lying stretched out by the side of Olympias [the mother of Alexander the Great] as she slept," something that allegedly led to her husband pondering whether "she was the mate of a superior being" (Plut. *Alex*. 2.4). Olympias herself insisted that Zeus was the father of her son, and related how the great god had visited her in the shape of a snake (Arrian *Anab*. 151). Perhaps because Augustus did not want to appear less important than his Hellenistic role model, a parallel story circulated about Atia, the mother of the Roman emperor, being impregnated by Apollo, also in the guise of a serpent (Suetonius 94.4). Appearing as snakes was also the means various gods employed to become the father of the Messenian tyrant Aristomenes (Paus. *Descr.* 4.14.7) and of the celebrated Sicyonian general Aratus (Paus. *Descr.* 2.10.3), according to common belief. These stories were not limited to the most powerful figures either. Although there were enough skeptics, a fourth-century B.C. woman from Pontus actually managed to persuade quite a number of people that the child she was carrying was truly the result of her union with Apollo (Plut. *Lys*. 26.1–4). Also the boxer Euthymus of Locri, who defeated the murderous hero in Temesa in 472 B.C., was supposed to have the river-god Caecinus as his father (Paus. *Descr.* 6.6.4). Just as was the case with the figures of semidivine ancestry of mythical times, nowhere is there any indication that neither Alexander, Aristomenes, Aratus, Euthymus, nor the child of the Pontic woman, escaped death because of their ancestry.
52. *Aethiopis* according to Procl. *Chrest*. 4.2.198–200.
53. Just like the *Aethiopis,* Euripides placed the immortal Achilles in Leuce where he rather conveniently had his own racing ground (Eur. *Andr.* 1259–62; Eur. *IT* 435–438). But not everyone agreed that this was the exact spot where Achilles ended up. Ibycus in the seventh century B.C., Simonides in the fifth, and Apollonius of Rhodes in the third, all translated Achilles not to Leuce but to the Elysian Plain (Ibycus and Simonides according to *Sch. Ap. Rh*. 4.811–14; Ap. Rh. *Arg.* 4.811–814). But whether Achilles was translated to Leuce or Elysium did not really matter. As if he wanted to stress this, Pindar had Achilles brought to Leuce in one ode, and to the Island of the Blessed in another (Pind. *Nem*. 4.49–50; Pind. *Ol*. 2.68–80).
54. One must be aware that this version of what happened to Achilles does not at all harmonize with Homer, who never held that Achilles was resurrected. Homer said nothing about Thetis saving the body of her son from the pyre, instead he had Odysseus simply meeting the dead and disembodied soul of Achilles in Hades (*Od*. 11.465–540). There were, however, few who followed Homer's version of Achilles' fate, in spite of his usually absolute authority. Classics scholar Anthony T. Edwards explains Achilles' mortality in the Homeric epics by pointing out how this was crucial for the whole plot of the *Iliad*, and notes that "the only post-Homeric reference I have encountered to Achilles in the underworld is the description at Paus. [*Descr.*] 10.30.3 of Polygnotos' *Nekyia*, painted in the Cnidian Lesche at Delphi" (Edwards 1985:221n). I may, however, also add that in the sixth- or seventh-century B.C. *Nostoi* as well as in the third-century A.D. Philostratus' *Vita Apollonii*, Achilles returned as a bodiless shadow after his demise, something that seems to rule out his being physically immortal somewhere at the end of the world (*Nostoi* according to Procl. *Chrest*. 4.5.291–293; Philostr. *VA* 4.16). Also Pseudo-Apollodorus considered Achilles forever mortal, having his bones buried in the very island of Leuce most others believed he remained forever alive (Ps-Apollod. *Ep.* 5.5). Late in the fourth century A.D. Quintus of Smyrna similarly described how the corpse of Achilles was burnt to ashes and the white bones subsequently buried (Quint. Smyrn. 3.716, 3.723–42). In Elis on the Peloponnesus there was similarly a grave (*taphos*) that the locals claimed belonged to Achilles (Paus. *Descr.* 6.24.1). However, as we have seen, important authors like Ibycus, Simonides, Pindar, Euripides, and Apollonius of Rhodes all repeated the tale of the *Aethiopis* of how Achilles was translated to some place at the end of the earth to be resurrected and receive an eternal life there.
55. *Aethiopis* according to Procl. *Chrest*. 4.2.188–190.
56. Pind. *Ol*. 2.79–80.

57. Amphora by the Painter of the Vatican Mourner from the end of the sixth century B.C. (Vaticans Museum 350, *ABV* 140.1).
58. A cup by Douris from around 500 B.C. (Louvre G 115, *ARV* 434.74).
59. See e.g. four vases attributed to the Diosphos Painter from around 490 B.C. (Metropolitan Museum 56.171.25, *ABL* 239.137; Metropolitan Museum 1924.97.29; London, British Museum, 1910.4–15.2; and Syracuse, Museo Arch. Regionale Paolo Orsi, 23784); she is perhaps also depicted on another black figure vase from the end of the sixth century B.C. (Paris, Cabinet des Médailles 260 *ABV* 378,253).
60. Plut. *Rom*. 28.6, cf. 28.7–8.
61. Plut. *Rom*. 27.8, 28.8.
62. Plut. *Rom*. 28.7.
63. Plut. *Rom*. 28.7.
64. Plut. *Rom*. 28.4.
65. *Il*. 4.193–94, my emphasis.
66. Paus. *Descr*. 2.26.10.
67. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl*. 3.10.3. The identity of his mother varies.
68. Orig. *C. Cels*. 3.22.
69. Rohde [1921]:253.
70. On finding the Sicyonians sacrificing to Heracles as a hero, Phaestus, a legendary king of Peloponnesian Sicyon, would for example insist on their sacrificing to him as to a god (Paus. *Descr*. 2.10.1). The general rule was that heroes received victims who were consumed entirely by the flames, whereas sacrifices to the gods meant that the meat was distributed among the denizens of the community. This difference in sacrificial practice contributed to making the distinction between gods and heroes stick.
71. Already Homer and Hesiod show great differences on the heroic and divine fate of several prominent men and women, and other writers would continue to rearrange these stories far into the Christian era. Particular figures could shift between being placed in one category or another—different writers were, for instance, at variance whether Achilles ended up as a lesser deity, a hero, or simply one of the many hapless souls of Hades.
72. Celsus according to Orig. *C. Cels*. 3.24, my emphasis.
73. Theoph. Ant. *Autol*. 1.13.
74. Just. Mart. *1 Apol*. 21.2.
75. Pind. *Ol*. 2.25. As always, not everyone agreed. Some held that Semele was brought up from Hades by her son (Paus. *Descr*. 2.31–32, 2.37.5), while Pausanias doubts that she died at all (Paus. *Descr*. 2.31.2).
76. Plut. *Pelopidas* 16.5, Ps-Lucian *Charidemus* 6, Orig. *C. Cels*. 3.22.
77. *Il*. 18.117. Also in *Od*. 8.224–225 do we find the mortality of Heracles stressed by Homer.
78. *Od*. 11.601–602, my emphasis.
79. Eur. *El*. 1280–1283; Eur. *Hel*. 31–35.
80. Soph. *Trach*. 1255–1278.
81. Eur. *Heracl*. 912–914.
82. Eur. *Heracl*. 910–911.
83. Eur. *Heracl*. 12, 9–10, 871–872.
84. Soph. *Philoct*. 727–729.
85. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl*. 2.7.7.
86. Theocr. 24.83–84.
87. Theoph. Ant. *Ad Autol*. 1.13.
88. Plut. *Pelopidas* 16.5, Orig. *C. Cels*. 3.22.
89. On the Ricci hydria from sixth century B.C. Etruria we see Heracles about to mount a chariot driven by either Hebe or Athena (Rome, Villa Giulia 80983, see Boardman 1998:fig. 488.1). On two Attic vases from the late sixth century B.C., a column crater (Tampa 86.38, *ABV* 16559), and a neck amphora (Malibu 86.AE.85, *ABV* 10152), Heracles and Athena

are about to mount her chariot. On a bell crater by the mid-fifth-century B.C. Painter of London, Nike takes Heracles to Olympus (Ruvo, Jatta 422, *ARV* 1420.4). An oinochoe by the Nikias painter even has a comic version of Nike and Heracles in the chariot (Louvre N 3408, *ARV* 1334.34).

90. Paus. *Descr.* 3.18.11.
91. On a lip cup by the sixth-century B.C., Phrynos Painter (British Museum B 424, *ABV* 169.3).
92. On a sixth-century B.C. pyxis by Nicosthenes (Museo Firenze 76931, *ABV* 229) and on a cup by the fifth-century B.C. Sosias Painter (Berlin, Staatliche Museum 2278, *ARV* 21.1). On a sixth-century B.C. throne and a fourth-century B.C. altar in Lacedaemonian Amyclea, Pausanias witnessed depictions of Heracles being led to heaven by Athena and other gods (Paus. *Descr.* 3.18.11, 3.19.5).
93. Munich 2360, *ARV* 1186.30.
94. Isocr. *Or.* 5.32.
95. Callim. *Dian*. 159–161, my emphasis.
96. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl*. 3.4.3.
97. Paus. *Descr.* 1.44.7.
98. Eur. *Rhes*. 962–973.
99. Paus. *Descr.* 3.19.13. This story was first recorded by Stesichorus, who allegedly got the firsthand account from Leonymus himself. In his reference to this visit of Leonymus to Leuce, Pausanias placed the island by the mouth of the Danube. That this marvellous island originally at the ends of the earth suddenly is found in waters familiar to the Greeks should come as no surprise as this placing of originally unplaceable places represents a trend in Classical and Hellenistic times (cf. Endsjø 1997). We must therefore not take for granted that this ancient account referred to by Pausanias originally claimed that Leuce was found in the Black Sea, although Pausanias says so centuries afterward.
100. The death of his beloved Patroclus was what brought Achilles back into the fighting against the Trojans, Antilochus was killed by Memnon who in turn was slain right afterward (*Aethiopis* according to Procl. *Chrest*. 4.2.188–189), whereas Ajax, the son of Telamon, killed himself after a brief fit of madness (Soph. *Aj*. 852–865). The other Ajax, the son of Oileus, was drowned by Poseidon after boasting that he had saved himself in spite of any god (*Od*. 4.499–511).
101. Lyc. *Alex*. 1204. A.W. Mair, the Loeb translator of Lycophron, argues that the Islands of the Blessed referred to by Lycophron represented only a place in Thebes (Mair & Mair [1955]:419).
102. *EG* (*Epigrammata Graeca ex lapidibus conlecta*) 366.
103. Paus. *Descr.* 1.34.2.
104. Pind. *Nem*. 10.75–90, 10.55–59; cf. Pind. *Pyth*. 11.61–64.
105. *Cypria* according to Procl. *Chrest*. 4.1.106–109.
106. Pind. *Nem*. 10.82–83.
107. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl*. 3.11.2.
108. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl*. 3.11.2.
109. *Od*. 11.298–304.
110. *Cypria* according to Procl. *Chrest*. 4.1.106–109.
111. Eur. *Hel*. 1659.
112. Ps-Lucian *Charidemus* 6; Isocr. *Helen* 61.
113. Orig. *C. Cels*. 3.22.
114. Eur. *Hel*. 1666–69.
115. Ps-Lucian *Charidemus* 6.
116. Isocr. *Helen* 61.
117. Ps-Apollod. *Epit*. 6.29.
118. Paus. *Descr.* 3.19.13.

119. Paus. *Descr.* 1.34.2.
120. Paus. *Descr.* 8.2.4.
121. Plut. *Pelopidas* 16.5
122. Ps-Lucian *Charidemus* 6.
123. Orig. *C. Cels.* 3.22.
124. Hdt. 4.14.
125. Clarke 1999:294.
126. Hdt. 4.15.
127. Hdt. 4.15.
128. Celsus according to Orig. *C. Cels.* 3.27.
129. Plut. *Rom.* 28.4.
130. Tac. *Hist.* 2.8, 1.2.
131. Suet. *Nero* 57.
132. Dio Cassius 80.18.1.
133. *Cypria* according to Procl. *Chrest.* 4.1.106–109; Pind. *Nem.* 10.79–90.
134. *Od.* 4.561–565.
135. Rohde [1921]:56.
136. Eur. *Hel.* 1676–1679.
137. Ps-Apollod. *Ep.* 6.29.
138. Athenag. *Leg. pro Christ.* 14.
139. Eur. *Bacch.* 1355.
140. Eur. *Bacch.* 1330–1339.
141. Eur. *Andr.* 717, 1081, 1222.
142. Eur. *Andr.* 1253–1258, my emphasis.
143. *Od.* 5.333–335.
144. *Od.* 5.337–338.
145. *Od.* 5.351.
146. Pind. *Ol.* 2.28–32 cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 11.2.
147. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.4.3.
148. Paus. *Descr.* 4.34.4. Pausanias also refers to Ino's status as a goddess in *Descr.* 3.26.1 and 9.5.2.
149. Paus. *Descr.* 7.23.4.
150. Theocr. 13.43–54.
151. Ap. Rh. *Arg.* 1.1234–1239.
152. Theocr. 13.59–61.
153. Theocr. 13.53–54.
154. Ap. Rh. *Arg.* 1.1324–1325.
155. Theocr. 13.73.
156. Paus. *Descr.* 2.30.3, cf. 8.2.4. Diodorus of Sicily refers to a similar story, although denying the truth of it (Diod. Sic. 5.76.3–4). Callimachus in the third century B.C. also tells the story of Britomartis, but presents her as a nymph fleeing the advances of Minos and says nothing of her immortalization (Callim. *Dian.* 3.190–205).
157. Paus. *Descr.* 9.22.7. Nonnus recounts roughly the same story in the fifth century A.D. (Nonnus *Dion.* 35.72).
158. Strabo *Geogr.* 9.2.
159. Ap. Rh. *Arg.* 1.1324–1325.
160. Most sources claim that this happened in Boeotian Aulis, whereas the Megarians held that she died in *their* territory (Paus. *Descr.* 1.43.1).
161. Aesch. *Ag.* 1523–1529, 1555–59; Soph. *El.* 530–551.
162. Eur. *El.* 1020–1026.
163. Hesiod according to Paus. *Descr.* 1.43.1.
164. *Cypria* according to Procl. *Chrest.* 4.1.141–143.

165. Paus. *Descr.* 9.19.6.
166. As the classical scholar David Kovacs points out, the large number of metrical errors in these last lines of the play cannot be Euripides' original text but must be the result of some form of restoration (Kovacs 2002:157, 337n28).
167. Eur. *Iph. Aul.* 1608, 1622. In *Iphigenia among the Taurians* from around 413 B.C., Euripides has Iphigenia neither being sacrificed nor turned into a goddess. Instead he has her transferred alive and still mortal to the northern coast of the Black Sea from where she was later to return to Greece (Eur. *Iph. Taur.* 783–785). Pausanias, too, refers to this version of the story (Paus. *Descr.* 1.33.1).
168. Plut. *Pelopidas* 16.5; Orig. *C. Cels.* 3.22.
169. Tripp [1970]:205.
170. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.4.3; Diod Sic. 3.64.4.
171. Paus. *Descr.* 3.18.11.
172. Cf. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.4.3; Diod. Sic. 3.65.4–5.
173. Hes. *Theog.* 942.
174. *Hymn. Hom. Cer.* 2.237–239.
175. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.5.1.
176. *Hymn. Hom. Cer.* 2.241.
177. *Hymn. Hom. Cer.* 2.260–262.
178. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.5.1.
179. Plut. *De Isis et Os.* 15–16.
180. Ap. Rh. *Arg.* 4.865–879.
181. Ptolemy Hephaestion according to Photius *Myriobiblon* 190.
182. Lyc. *Alex.* 178–179.
183. *Schol. Aristoph. Nub.* 1068a.
184. *Aegimius* according to *Sch. Ap. Rh. Ar.* 4.816.
185. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.4.3.
186. Statius *Achilleid* 1.25, 1.478.
187. The Achilles plate in the treasury in the Römermuseum, Augst, Baselland, Switzerland.
188. Eumelus according to Paus. *Descr.* 2.3.11.
189. Cf. e.g. Long 1967; Detienne [1985]; Smith [1993]; Mettinger 2001:221.
190. Frazer [1922]:325.
191. Frazer [1922]:325, my emphasis.
192. Hesiod according to Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.4.
193. Panyassis according to Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.4; *Sch. Theocr.* 1.107; Plut. *Mor.* 310f-311a; Ovid *Metam.* 10.298.
194. Hes. *Op.* 156–165.
195. Frazer [1922]:325.
196. The ritual mourning of the dead Adonis can at least be traced back to the late seventh century B.C. when Sappho in a fragment proclaims, "The delicate Adonis is dying, . . . what can we do? Beat your breasts maidens and rend your garments" (Sappho *Frag.* 103 *Loeb* = Hephaestion *On Metre* 10.4). In the probably second-century B.C. lament for Adonis usually attributed to the poet Bion, we find only references to the death of Adonis (Bion 1.87–98). Around 200 A.D. Athenaeus, too, speaks of nothing but his death (Athenaeus *Deipn.* 69b). Ovid in his Latin rendition of this Greek story mentions no resurrection either, letting instead anemones spring up where the blood of the unfortunate youth soaked the ground (Ovid *Met.* 10.731–739). With his proclivity for choosing the more dramatic versions of a story, it seems not very likely that Ovid should have ditched a spectacular resurrection, if there ever was one, for just an episode of postmortal horticulture.
197. Theocr. 15.136–137.
198. Odysseus' sojourn to Hades is, of course, first of all known from book 11 of the *Odyssey*. Heracles going to Hades in order to fetch up the infernal hound of Cerberus is referred to

in a number of different places (*Il.* 8.366–69; *Od.* 11.623–625; Eur. *HF* 23–25, 610–622; Diod. Sic. 4.25.1, 4.26.1; Paus. *Descr.* 2.35.10–11, 3.18.13, 9.34.5; Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.12). Heracles was also the one who rescued Theseus from Hades, after he had been trapped there still very much alive (Eur. *HF.* 619–622; Diod. Sic. 4.26.1, 4.63.4–5; Paus. 1.17.4, 9.31.5, 10.29.9–10; Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.12; Ps-Apollod. *Ep.* 1.24). The futile rescue trip of Orpheus to the land of the dead, we have already looked at.

199. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.4.
200. Smith [1993]:522, my emphasis.
201. Ovid *Met.* 700.
202. Paus. *Descr.* 2.20.6.
203. Ammianus Marcellinus 22.9.15.
204. Pl. *Phdr.* 276b.
205. Julian *Or.* 329c–d.
206. Detienne [1985]:135–136.
207. Orig. *Selecta in Ezech.* 8.12, my emphasis.
208. Smith [1993]:522.
209. Luc. *Syr. D.* 6.
210. Mettinger 2001:80–81, 108–111. Mettinger shows caution in regard to whether there are any historical connection between the Christian ideas on resurrection and the beliefs he has examined: "There is, as far as I am aware, no *prima facie* evidence that the death and resurrection of Jesus is a mythological construct, drawing on the myths and rites of the dying and rising gods of the surrounding world" (Mettinger 2001:221).
211. Mettinger 2001:33.
212. Heli 2003:59–67.
213. Frazer [1922]:347.
214. Smith [1993]:523.
215. Paus. *Descr.* 7.17.10.
216. Paus. *Descr.* 7.17.12.
217. Paus. *Descr.* 7.17.12.
218. Frazer [1922]:362.
219. Smith [1993):524–525.
220. Smith [1993]:525.
221. Plut. *De Isis et Os.* 18, cf. 20.
222. Plut. *De Isis et Os.* 19.
223. Diod. Sic. 6.2.3.
224. Frazer [1912]:12.
225. Diod. Sic. 3.63.2.
226. Long 1967:402.
227. Nonnus *Dion.* 6.204–207, 7.319–68, 9.1–24.
228. Nonnus *Dion.* 1.4.
229. Diod. Sic. 3.62.6.
230. Julian *Od.* 16.187.
231. *Od.* 12.395–396.
232. Just. Mart. *1 Apol.* 21.2.
233. Pind. *Ol.* 1.36–42. Pseudo-Lucian and Philostratus also mention the love of Poseidon for Pelops (Ps-Lucian *Charidemus* 9; Philostr. *Imagines* 1.17.2, 1.30.3).
234. Pind. *Ol.* 1.46.
235. Pind. *Ol.* 1.65–66.
236. Ps-Lucian *Charidemus* 6, my emphasis.
237. Cf. Paus. *Descr.* 5.17.8, 6.22.1.
238. Pind. *Ol.* 1.60–63; Philostr. *VA* 3.25; Ps-Apollod. *Ep.* 1.24.1.
239. Pind. *Ol.* 1.62–63.

240. *Od.* 11.582–592; Pind. *Ol.* 1.55–60; Pind. *Isth.* 8.10; Pl. *Crat.* 395d; Eur. *Orest.* 4–10; Paus. *Descr.* 10.31.12; Philostr. *VA* 3.25; Ps-Apollod. *Ep.* 2.1. Pausanias also referred to two different tombs of Tantalus (Paus. *Descr.* 2.22.2–3, 8.13.7).
241. Pind. *Pyth.* 9.62–63.
242. Cf. Diod. Sic. 4.81.1; Paus. *Descr.* 8.2.4.
243. Paus. *Descr.* 9.22.7.
244. *Od.* 7.254–257.
245. Eur. *Iph. Aul.* 1608.
246. *Cypria* according to Procl. *Chrest.* 4.1.141–143.
247. Cf. Endsjø 1997.
248. Pind. *Pyth.* 10.29–30.
249. Pind. *Pyth.* 10.41–44; cf. Roloff 1970:125–126.
250. Callim. *Dion.* 4.281–282.
251. Strabo *Geogr.* 15.1.57.
252. *Od.* 5.35–36.
253. *Il.* 1.423–424, 23.205–207; *Od.* 1.25–26, 7.200–206.
254. Hdt. 3.24; cf. Endsjø 2000:373.
255. Ctesias according to Photius *Lib.* 72.
256. Iambulus according to Diod. Sic. 2.57.
257. *Argon. Orph.* 1107–1108.
258. Cf. Endsjø 2008a:133–140.
259. Hes. *Theog.* 1011–1014, though this verse may be a later interpolation (cf. Frazer 1921:288n2); Eugammon of Cyrene *Telegony* according to Procl. *Chrest.* 4.6.327–329; Ps-Apollod. *Epit.* 7.16.
260. Eugammon of Cyrene *Telegony* according to Procl. *Chrest.* 4.6.324–329.
261. Ps-Apollod. *Ep.* 7.37.
262. Hes. *Op.* 161–173.
263. *Il.* 20.232–235.
264. *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 5.202–206. The *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* has a presentation of this story strikingly similar to that of the *Iliad*.
265. Pind. *Ol.* 1.43–45.
266. Ps-Lucian *Charidemus* 7.
267. See, for example, the following fifth-century B.C. Attic red figure artifacts: an amphora by the Pan Painter (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 10.184, *ARV* 443.39), a vase by the Painter of Florence (Adolphseck 134, *ARV* 875.17), and a cup by the Penthesilea Painter (Ferrara 9351, *ARV* 880.12).
268. Sophocles according to Athen. *Deipn.* 3.602e.
269. *Od.* 15.249–251.
270. *Il.* 11.1–2; *Od.* 5.1–2.
271. *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 5.218–227. Ibycus, too, observed how "Eos carried off Tithonus" (Ibycus according to *Sch. Ap. Rh.* 3.158).
272. Hes. *Theog.* 986–987.
273. Paus. *Descr.* 1.3.1, 3.18.12.
274. Xen. *Cyn.* 1.5.
275. Eur. *Hipp.* 454–456, my emphasis.
276. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.3.
277. Tripp [1970]:540.
278. *Od.* 15.403–14.
279. Hes. *Theog.* 987–991.
280. Hes. *Theog.* 947–949.
281. Paus. *Descr.* 1.20.3. True to himself, Pausanias offers several different versions on what happened to Ariadne. In one highly rationalized version Dionysus appeared leading a mightier

force than Theseus with which he captured Ariadne (Paus. *Descr.* 10.29.4). Pausanias also describes what the Argives considered the grave of Ariadne, in contradiction to all those who thought Ariadne to have been immortalized (Paus. *Descr.* 2.23.8). In the *Odyssey* we learn that Ariadne is in Hades, killed by Artemis "in the sea-girt island of Dia because she had witnessed Dionysus" (*Od.* 11.324–325).

282. Plut. *Thes.* 20.5.
283. *Od.* 4.563–564.
284. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.1.2.
285. Cf. Endsjø 2000; Endsjø 2008c.
286. Scully 1990:25. Although the city walls were symbolically essential as how they encircled the space of the *polis*, in reality the borders were often not that razor-sharp; some Greek *poleis* did not even have city walls. Whether the landscapes were properly cultivated or not is again a more precise key indicator for what would be considered part of the *polis*. The agrarian land or the *chôra*, with its ploughed fields and domesticated plants and livestock, definitely belonged to the area of cultivated geography; the mostly untouched landscape of the shepherds, the wilderness, the sea, and all barbarian lands, did not.
287. Arist. *Pol.* 1253a.
288. Arist. *Pol.* 1253a.
289. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.7.5.
290. Paus. *Descr.* 5.1.5. The neighboring Eleans displayed their own cenotaph, *mnêma*, in honor of Endymion.
291. Callim. *Ep.* 24.
292. Ps-Apollod. *Ep.* 1.9.
293. Ovid *Fasti* 6.743–756; Ovid *Met.* 15.531–46; Verg. *Aen.* 7.761–777. Pausanias tells a similar story about how Hippolytus after being resurrected went to the Aricians in Italy where he became king, but the crucial aspect of immortality is left out of Pausanias' tale (Paus. *Descr.* 2.27.4.).
294. Bacch. 7.31.48–62.
295. Pind. *Pyth.* 10.41–44.
296. Pind. *Pyth.* 10.29–30.
297. Cf. Roloff 1970:125.
298. Eur. *Rhes.* 962–973.
299. *Od.* 11.298–304; Pind. *Nem.* 10.75–90, 10.55–59.
300. Pind. *Nem.* 9.23–27. Pindar also refers to this happening in Pind. *Nem.* 10.8–9.
301. Diod. Sic. 4.65.8–9.
302. Philostr. *Imagines* 1.27.1.
303. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.6.8; Paus. *Descr.* 2.23.2.
304. Paus. *Descr.* 9.8.3, 9.19.4, 1.34.2.
305. Paus. *Descr.* 1.34.2.
306. Eur. *Suppl.* 925–926, my emphasis. Euripides also referred to how "a chasm swallowed up the seer [Amphiaraüs], engulfing his four-horse chariot in its gaping hole" (Eur. *Suppl.* 500–501). Sophocles more simply maintained that Amphiaraüs "now is under the earth" (Soph. *El.* 839).
307. Xen. *Cyn.* 1.8.
308. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.6.8.
309. Paus. *Descr.* 1.34.2.
310. Strabo *Geogr.* 2.9.10.
311. Strabo *Geogr.* 2.9.11.
312. Paus. *Descr.* 1.34.4, my emphasis.
313. Paus. *Descr.* 9.37.6–7.
314. Paus. *Descr.* 1.34.2.

315. Paus. *Descr.* 9.39.11–14. Croesus was also supposed to have consulted this oracle according to Herodotus 1.46.
316. Celsus according to Orig. *C. Cels.* 7.35.
317. Celsus according to Orig. *C. Cels.* 7.35.
318. Ps-Apollod. *Ep.* 6.19.
319. Plut. *Mor.* 434 f.
320. Celsus according to Orig. *C. Cels.* 3.35.
321. Plut. *Mor.* 434 d–f.
322. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.3.2.
323. Pindar according to *Sch. Ap. Rh. Arg.* 1.57–64a.
324. Ap. Rh. *Arg.* 1.57–64; Ps-Apollod. *Ep.* 1.22.
325. Louvre G55, *ARV* 201756.
326. British Museum E182, *ARV* 580.2; Musée Royaux, Brussels, A 134, *ARV* 1027.1; Harrow School 50, *ARV* 516.5.
327. *Orph. Arg.* 171–175.
328. *Od.* 1.241–43. Also the loyal swineherd Eumaeüs believes that Odysseus has been swept away by the harpies (*Od.* 14.371).
329. *Od.* 1.236.
330. Thetis, for example, does *harpazein* Achilles in the *Aethiopis* according to Procl. *Chrest.* 4.2.198–200; Dionysus Ariadne in Paus. *Descr.* 1.20.3; Artemis Iphigenia in *Cypria* according to Procl. *Chrest.* 4.1.141; Zeus Ganymede in *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 5.203; Eos Cleitus in *Od.* 15.250; Eos Tithonus in *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 5.218; Hemera Cephalus in Paus. *Descr.* 1.3.1; and the gods Amphiaraüs in Eur. *Suppl.* 926.
331. *Od.* 20.63–66.
332. *Od.* 20.77–78.
333. Hesiod according to Strabo *Geogr.* 7.3.9.
334. Hesiod according to *Sch. Ap. Rh.* 2.178–182c.
335. Ap. Rh. *Arg.* 2.353.
336. Ap. Rh. *Arg.* 2.183.
337. Ap. Rh. *Arg.* 2.187–189.
338. Ap. Rh. *Arg.* 2.199–201.
339. Ap. Rh. *Arg.* 2.197–199.
340. Ap. Rh. *Arg.* 2.446–447.
341. Eur. *Phoen.* 808–809. That the encounter with the sphinx could mean some form of prolonged miserable existence was not at all universally agreed upon. Pseudo-Apollodorus maintained that after snatching away her hapless men who could not answer her riddle, she simply devoured them (Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.5.8). Most others left out any reference to a translation whatsoever and simply claimed that the sphinx killed or ate her victims (Hes. *Theog.* 326; Paus. *Descr.* 9.26.3–4; Diod. Sic. 4.64.4).
342. *Il.* 24.602–617.
343. Athenag. *Leg. pro Christ.* 14.
344. *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 5.218–238.
345. Mimn. *fr.* 4.
346. *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 5.218–38. In a newly discovered poem by Sappho, published by Martin West in *Times Literary Supplement* June 24, 2005, she, too, refers to the sad fate of Tithonus.
347. *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 5.206–214.
348. Ap. Rh. *Arg.* 1.1257–1272.
349. Lohfink 1971:46.
350. Paus. *Descr.* 1.22.1, 2.32.1.
351. Paus. *Descr.* 1.42.7.
352. Paus. *Descr.* 2.1.3, 2.2.1.

353. Paus. *Descr.* 2.23.8.
354. Pind. *Pyth.* 9.62–63.
355. Diod. Sic. 4.81.1.
356. Paus. *Descr.* 8.2.4.
357. Athenag. *Leg. pro Christ.* 14.
358. Strabo *Geogr.* 6.3.9.
359. Strabo *Geogr.* 5.1.9.
360. Pind. *Nem.* 10.7.
361. Paus. *Descr.* 1.19.5.
362. Paus. *Descr.* 5.19.1.
363. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.15.2.
364. Hdt. 7.189.
365. As to what happened to Oedipus the sources, as usually, disagree. Homer, for example, does not even agree with himself. In the *Iliad* he refers to the funeral of Oedipus (*Il.* 23.679–680), while in the sequel, the *Odyssey*, Oedipus is apparently still alive (*Od.* 11.271–80). Pseudo-Apollodorus simply claimed that Oedipus died in Colonus (Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.5.9), while Pausanias maintained that the bones of the legendary king were buried in Athens, something which of course ruled out any physical immortalization (Paus. *Descr.* 1.28.7).
366. Soph. *Oed. Col.* 1508–1591, 1551–1552.
367. Soph. *Oed. Col.* 1656–1664.
368. Edwards 1985:223.
369. Plut. *Rom.* 28.4–5.
370. Celsus according to Orig. *C. Cels.* 3.33.
371. Paus. *Descr.* 6.9.7–8.
372. Plut. *Rom.* 27.8, 28.8.
373. Plut. *Rom.* 27.6.
374. Dion. Hal. 2.56.2–3.
375. Plut. *Rom.* 27.5.
376. Plut. *Rom.* 28.8.
377. Dion. Hal. 2.56.4–5.
378. Plut. *Rom.* 27.8.
379. Dio Cass. 11.3; *Hist. Aug. Hadr.* 14.5–6; Sext. Aur. *Caesarib.* 14.8.
380. Celsus according to Orig. *C. Cels.* 3.36.
381. Lambert 1988:155.
382. Clem. Al. *Cohoratio ad Gentes* 4.14.
383. Hegesippus according to Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 4.8.2.
384. Epiphan. *Ancoratus* 106.
385. Lambert 1988:155.
386. Rohde [1921]:78, 538.
387. Lambert 1988:166, 180, 184–85, 191–95.
388. Orig. *C. Cels.* 3.36, 5.63.
389. Athan. *Contr. Gent.* 9; Athenag. *Leg. pro Christ.* 30; Hegesippus according to Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 4.8.2; Orig. *C. Cels.* 3.36–38.
390. Paus. *Descr.* 8.9.7–8; 8.10.1.
391. *Anth. Graec.* 7.587.
392. Philostr. *VA* 5.42, 8.31.
393. Philostr. *VA* 8.30.
394. Philostr. *VA* 8.30.
395. Philostr. *VA* 8.31
396. Lucian *Peregr.* 35.
397. Lucian *Peregr.* 39.

398. Lucian *Peregr.* 39.
399. Lucian *Peregr.* 40.
400. Dio Cassius 80.18.1.
401. Arr. *Anab.* 7.27.
402. Just. Mart. *1 Apol.* 21.1, my emphasis.
403. Just. Mart. *1 Apol.* 21.2. It is remarkable that Justin also included Perseus and Bellerophon among those who were considered to have achieved physical immortality, as this makes him the only extant source doing so.
404. Just. Mart. *Dial. Tryhp.* 124.
405. Just. Mart. *Dial. Tryph.* 69.
406. Just. Mart. *1 Apol.* 23.1–2.
407. Just. Mart. *Dial. Tryph.* 63.
408. Theoph. Ant. *Ad. Autol.* 1.13.
409. Theoph. Ant. *Ad Autol.* 2.27.
410. Tert. *Apol.* 21.23.
411. Tert. *Apol.* 21.23.
412. Tert. *Adv. Marc.* 4.7.3.
413. Orig. *C. Cels.* 2.56.
414. Wright 2003:83.
415. Orig. *C. Cels.* 3.26–28.
416. Orig. *C. Cels.* 5.63.
417. Orig. *C. Cels.* 8.9.
418. Orig. *C. Cels.* 3.36.
419. Orig. *C. Cels.* 3.33.
420. Orig. *C. Cels.* 3.33.
421. Dinkler 1979:402.
422. Dinkler 1979:402.
423. *Mt.* 12.40; cf. *Lk.* 11.29; *Jonah* 2.1–11.
424. Mathews 1993:33.
425. Iren. *Adv. Haer.* 4.34.3.

Four New Beliefs, Old Beliefs

1. Bremmer 2002:1.
2. Jaeger [1958]:98.
3. Tugwell 1990:14.
4. Pl. *Phd.* 64c, cf. Pl. *Gorg.* 524b.
5. Hdt. 2.123.
6. Pl. *Resp.* 608d.
7. Cic. *Tusc.* 1.38–39.
8. Rohde [1921]:335.
9. Hdt. 2.81.
10. Hdt. 4.94, 5.4.
11. Philostr. *VA* 8.7.4.
12. Diod. Sic. 10.6.2–3.
13. Pl. *Phd.* 113a.
14. Pl. *Phdr.* 249b.
15. Pl. *Resp.* 620a–d.
16. Pl. *Ti.* 90e–92b.
17. Pl. *Phd.* 64c.

18. Peck [1952]:36, referring to Arist. *PA* 641a.
19. Pl. *Gorg.* 493a.
20. Pl. *Phd.* 81d; Pl. *Phdr.* 250c.
21. Pl. *Crat.* 400c.
22. Pl. *Phd.* 69c.
23. Pl. *Phd.* 82b–c.
24. Rohde [1921]:254.
25. Rohde [1921]:538.
26. Rohde [1921]:544.
27. *Epigrammata Graeca ex lapidibus conlecta* (*EG*) 120, my emphasis.
28. Lattimore 1942:53–54.
29. Rohde [1921]:542.
30. Rohde [1921]:542.
31. *EG* 304.
32. *EG* 653.
33. *EG* 651.
34. *EG* 491.
35. *EG* 650.
36. *EG* 125.
37. Peek *Mnem.* 4 (1936–1937), 13.
38. *Supplementum epigraphicum Graecum* (*SEG*) 4.727.
39. Pind. *Ol.* 9.33–35.
40. Pind. *Pyth.* 11.17–22.
41. Pind. *Ol.* 2.68–71.
42. Pl. *Gorg.* 523e–524a.
43. Celsus according to Orig. *C. Cels.* 7.28, my emphasis.
44. *EG* 243, cf. *EG* 516, 649.
45. *SEG* 4.727.
46. *Anth. Graec.* 7.362.
47. *Anth. Graec.* 7.241, my emphasis; cf. *Anth. Graec.* 7.362.
48. *EG* 648, my emphasis.
49. Luc. *Ver. Hist.* 2.12.
50. Luc. *Ver. Hist.* 2.10, my emphasis.
51. *Anth. Graec.* 7.690.
52. *EG* 338, cf. *EG* 618a.
53. Chadwick 1980:141.
54. Paus. *Descr.* 4.32.4, my emphasis.
55. Celsus according to Or. *C. Cels.* 1.16.
56. Philostr. *VA* 8.7.4.
57. Plut. *Rom.* 27.8.
58. Luc. *Herm.* 7.
59. Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.5.1.
60. Paus. *Descr.* 6.9.8.
61. Plut. *Rom.* 27.8, 28.8.
62. Orig. *C. Cels.* 3.25, and Celsus according to Or. *C. Cels.* 3.33.
63. Paus. *Descr.* 6.11.6–9; cf. Athenag. *Leg. pro Christ.* 14.
64. Rohde [1921]:99.
65. Gabra 1932:68.
66. *SEG* 8.473–475.
67. Clem. Al. *Cohoratio ad Gentes* 4.14.
68. Ar. *Pax.* 832–833.
69. *Inscriptiones Graecae* (*IG*) 12.7.123.

70. Nock [1928]:134–135.
71. Plut. *Eum*. 13.3–4; Diod. Sic. 18.60.5.
72. Plut. *Lys*. 18.3, referring to the late fourth-century B.C. historian Douris. According to Athenagoras the Samians honored Lysander as a god "notwithstanding all the slaughters and all the crimes" committed by him (Athenag. *Leg. pro Christ*. 14).
73. *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae* (*OGI*) 6.28f.
74. Klauck [1995–1996]:259.
75. Klauck [1995–1996]:278.
76. Nock [1957]:835.
77. Pausanias mentions a temple dedicated to the emperors in Elis (Paus. *Descr*. 6.24.10), temples of Caesar and Augustus in Sparta (Paus. *Descr*. 3.11.4), and a temple of Octavia, the sister of Augustus, in Corinth (Paus *Descr*. 2.3.2).
78. *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* (*SIG*) 3.760.
79. Suet. *Jul*. 88.
80. Suet. *Vespasian* 23.
81. Theocr. 17.45–52, cf. 15.106–108.
82. Dio Cassius 56.42.4, 56.46.2.
83. Plut. *Rom*. 28.1.
84. Dio Cassius 59.11.4.
85. Just. Mart. *1 Apol*. 21.3.
86. In Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques.
87. The Apotheosis of Lucius Verus in the Ephesus-Museum in Vienna.
88. Euseb. *V. Const*. 4.73. The coin itself can be viewed at Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques.
89. Munich 2360, *ARV* 1186.30.
90. Dio Cassius 56.43.3.

Five Jewish Beliefs on the Afterlife

1. Cf. Davila 2005, passim.
2. *Mt*. 22.23; *Mk*. 12.18; *Lk*. 20.27; *Acta* 23.8; Joseph. *AJ* 18.1.4; Joseph. *BJ* 2.8.14.
3. Joseph. *AJ* 18.1.4.
4. Setzer 2004:13.
5. *Gen*. 37.35, 42.38, 44.29, 44.31; *Numb*. 16.30, 16.33; *Deut*. 32.22.
6. *Isa*. 38.18.
7. *Job* 26.6; *Psalms* 139.8; *Amos* 9.12.
8. Segal 2004:138.
9. *Lev*. 20.27, 20.6.
10. *1 Sam*. 28.15.
11. Cf. Setzer 2004:7.
12. Cavallin 1974:23.
13. Cohn-Sherbok 1987:25.
14. *Is*. 26.19.
15. Cavallin 1974:106.
16. Dahl 1962:21.
17. Segal 2004:263.
18. *Dan*. 12.2–3.
19. Segal 2004:265; Lona 1993:12.
20. Cavallin 1974:27.

21. A.Y. Collins 1993:113.
22. *Dan*. 12.3.
23. A.Y. Collins 1993:113.
24. Segal 2004:265, referring to *Judg*. 5.20 and *Job* 38.7.
25. Nickelsburg 1972:172.
26. *Psalms* 48.15.
27. *Wisd*. 2.23–24.
28. *Wisd*. 3.4.
29. *Wisd*. 3.4.
30. Nickelsburg 2003:131.
31. *T. Jud*. 25.
32. *T. Ben*. 10.
33. *T. Jud*. 25.
34. *T. Zeb*. 10.
35. *Test. Abr*. 7.
36. Lona 1993:16.
37. Perkins 1984:306.
38. *Test. Abr*. 13.
39. *Test. Abr*. 11–12.
40. *2 Baruch* 30.2, my emphasis; cf. Lied 2008:189.
41. *2 Baruch* 50.2.
42. *2 Baruch* 51.5.
43. *4 Ezra* 7.31.
44. *4 Ezra* 7.32.
45. Segal 2004:493.
46. *1 Enoch* 61.5.
47. *1 Enoch* 61.12.
48. *1 Enoch* 62.15–16.
49. *1 Enoch* 103.4, my emphasis.
50. *1 Enoch* 22.13.
51. *Apoc. Mos*. 13.3.
52. Cf. Lona 1993:13.
53. *Ez*. 37.4–6.
54. See e.g. Riesenfeld 1948:3; Dahl 1962:21; Mc Elwain 1967:421; Cavallin 1974:107, 110n26; J.J. Collins 1998:131; Segal 2004:256.
55. *Ez*. 37.11.
56. *Ez*. 37.12.
57. Riesenfeld 1948:27; Segal 2004:257.
58. *2 Macc*. 7.11.
59. *2 Macc*. 7.28.
60. Segal 2004:270.
61. Perkins 1984:37.
62. Cavallin 1974:103.
63. Segal 2004:197.
64. *Arda Viraf* 5.11; *Shayest Na-Shayest* 8.5; *Yavisht i Friyan* 4.19.
65. *Bundahishn* 30.6, my emphasis.
66. Hinnells 1994:83, 99; Hinnells 2005:510.
67. Grabbe 2000:183.
68. Joseph. *C. App*. 1.162.
69. Joseph. *C. App*. 1.165.
70. Hdt. 4.94, 5.4.
71. Orig. *C. Cels*. 1.15.

72. Just. Mart. *1 Apol.* 44.8–9.
73. Numenius according to Clem. Al. *Strom.* 1.22.
74. Geels 1967:406.
75. Jacobs 1997:72.
76. Perkins 1984:38.
77. *4 Mac* 16.13.
78. *4 Mac* 17.12.
79. *4 Mac.* 7.19.
80. Ps-Phocyl. 115, 104–105.
81. *Jub.* 23.31.
82. Nickelsburg 2003:131.
83. Philo *Opif.* 135.
84. Philo *Gig.* 61, *Leg. All.* 1.107–108, *Sacr.* 5–6, *Spec. Leg.* 1.345.
85. Philo *Sacr.* 5.
86. Philo *Spec. leg.* 4.188; see also Philo *Mut.* 36–37.
87. Perkins 1984:54.
88. Joseph. *BJ* 7.8.7.
89. Joseph. *BJ* 2.8.11.
90. *Messianic Apocalypse* (*4Q521*) 11.
91. Segal 2004:299. It is difficult to agree with Segal when he argues that Josephus, when discussing the Essenes, "used the term 'soul' when he meant the resurrection of the body" (Segal 2004:383).
92. Davies 2000:209; cf. J.J. Collins 1998:148.
93. Joseph. *BJ.* 2.8.11.
94. Fletcher-Louis 1997:184–98; Segal 2004:303–308.
95. *2 Baruch* 51.5.
96. Philo *Sacr.* 5.
97. Philo *Somn.* 1.138–139.
98. Philo *Plant.* 14.
99. Joseph. *BJ* 2.8.14.
100. Joseph. *AJ* 18.1.3.
101. Joseph. *Vita* 2.
102. Joseph. *BJ* 3.8.5.
103. Joseph. *BJ* 3.8.5.
104. Segal 2004:367.
105. Cohn-Sherbok 1987:32–33.
106. Ps-Just. *De Resur.* 10.
107. Af Hällström 1988:26.
108. Cf. Stendahl 1965:6; Jeremias 1970:194; Schubert 1974:207.
109. Craig 1997:267–268.
110. *1 Kings* 17.17–23; *2 Kings* 4.19–35.
111. *2 Kings* 13.21.
112. *1 Sam.* 2.6.
113. *Gen.* 5.24.
114. *2 Kings* 2.11.
115. *Deut.* 34.6.
116. Joseph. *AJ* 9.2.2.
117. Joseph. *AJ* 4.8.48.
118. *Matth.* 27.49, see also *Mk.* 15.36.
119. *2 En.* 22.8–10.
120. *Ascension of Isaiah* 9.8.
121. *1 En.* 71.1.

122. *1 En* 71.11, my emphasis.
123. *1 En* 71.14.
124. Segal 2004:358.
125. Philo *Virt*. 76–78.
126. Philo *Mos*. 2.288.
127. Philo *Mut*. 36–38.
128. Philo *Post*. 43.
129. Philo *Abr.* 18; see also Cavallin 1974:138.
130. *Test. Ben*. 10.
131. Joseph. *AJ* 9.2.2.
132. Cavallin 1974:160.
133. Cf. Spittler 1985:232–233.
134. *Test. Job* 9.8–13.
135. Dutch New Testament scholar Joost Holleman simply argues that "the children have been taken up with body and soul" (Holleman 1996:153). It is a bit difficult to draw such an absolute conclusion, as the children's bodies already have been reduced to mere bones.
136. Wedderburn 1999:42.
137. *Test. Job* 9.9.
138. *Test. Job* 1.25–26.
139. *Test. Job* 12.9–10.
140. Dahl 1962:7.
141. *Jonah* 2.1–11.
142. *Hos*. 6.3.
143. Dahl 1962:22n4.
144. *Acta* 23.8.
145. Hipp. *Ref.* 9.27.
146. Cavallin 1974:72n11.
147. Cavallin 1974:199.
148. Frend [1984]:126.
149. Fox [1986]:271, 296–97, 318, 479.
150. Juv. *Sat*. 14; Just. Mart. *Dial. Tryph*. 122.

Six The Challenge of Immortal Flesh

1. *1 Cor.* 15.50. This very passage may, however, also be seen as more generally referring to humanity in its mortal state, connected with how the term "flesh and blood" sometimes, as we have seen, in the Jewish tradition refers to humans in general (Perkins 1984:306).
2. *Col.* 2.11.
3. *1 Cor.* 1.29.
4. Robertson & Plummer 1914:375–376; Cullmann [1955]:35; af. Hällström 1988:10; Bynum 1995:6; D.B. Martin 1995:123; Russell 1997:45; Engberg-Pedersen 2001:71; Wright 2003:359; Segal 2004:412, 430.
5. Af Hällström 1988:10.
6. *Rom*. 7.18.
7. *Rom*. 7.25.
8. *Rom*. 8.8.
9. *Rom*. 8.3, my emphasis.
10. *Rom*. 1.3.
11. *Col.* 2.11.
12. *Rom*. 6.19, *astheneia*.

13. *1 Cor.* 15.53.
14. *1 Cor.* 15.35.
15. *1 Cor.* 15.37.
16. Ringgren 1987:348.
17. A.Y. Collins 1993:112.
18. Wedderburn 1999:144.
19. Lampe 2002:113.
20. Bynum 1995:6.
21. *1 Cor.* 15.44.
22. D.B. Martin 1995:6–15.
23. *Phil.* 3.21.
24. *1 Cor.* 15.49.
25. *1 Cor.* 15.20.
26. *Colos.* 1.18; cf. *Rom.* 8.29.
27. Cf. *Rom.* 8.29.; *1 Cor.* 15.49; *2 Cor.* 3.18; *Phil.* 3.21.
28. *Gal.* 1.1, 1.11–12.
29. *1 Cor.* 15.5–7.
30. *Gal.* 4.4.
31. *Rom.* 8.3.
32. *Phil.* 3.21.
33. *1 Cor.* 15.4.
34. Bultmann 1963:290.
35. *1 Cor.* 15.51–52.
36. *1 Thess.* 4.16–17.
37. *1 Cor.* 15.51, my emphasis.
38. *1 Cor.* 15.54.
39. *1 Cor.* 15.50.
40. *1 Thess.* 4.17.
41. *1 Cor.* 15.40–42.
42. *2 Cor.* 5.1–4.
43. Marrow 1967:423.
44. *1 Cor.* 15.38.
45. *Acta* 23.6.
46. *Acta* 23.8.
47. Joseph. *BJ* 2.8.14.
48. Joseph. *AJ* 18.1.3, *BJ* 3.8.5.
49. *1 Cor.* 15.40–42.
50. *Dan.* 12.3, *2 Baruch* 51.5.
51. *1 En.* 62.15–16.
52. *1 Cor.* 15.53.
53. *2 Cor.* 5.1.
54. *1 Cor.* 15.54.
55. *2 En.* 22.8–10.
56. Philo *Mos.* 2.288.
57. *2 En.* 22.8–10.
58. *1 Cor.* 15.51.
59. *1 Cor.* 15.12, my emphasis.
60. Robertson & Plummer 1914:346; Conzelmann [1969]:265; Perkins 1984:224; D.B. Martin 1995:121; Engberg-Pedersen 2001:70.
61. Ahern 1974:425.
62. Ahern 1974:425; cf. Holleman 1996:38.
63. Pearson 1973:17, 16.

64. *Acta* 26.24; Michel 1936:2515.
65. D.B. Martin 1995:123.
66. Michel 1936:2515.
67. Lütgert 1908; see also Jewett 1971:34–40; Pearson 1973:1.
68. Cf. Stendahl 1965:6; Schubert 1974:207; Holleman 1996:194–95; Osborne 1997:91–92.
69. Conzelmann [1972]:199.
70. *Acts* 5.30–33.
71. *Acta* 23.6.
72. *Acta* 24.5.
73. Cf. Setzer 2004.32.
74. Wedderburn 1987:37.
75. D.B. Martin 1995:105.
76. D.B. Martin 1995:105.
77. *2 Tim*. 2.18.
78. Økland 2000:128, 199.
79. Økland 2000:130n375.
80. *Acta* 18.1–11.
81. *1 Cor.* 1.24, 20.32, 12.13.
82. Dahl 1962:7.
83. Cf. Ahern 1974:425; D.B. Martin 1995:123; Wright 2003:316.
84. Fascher 1941:187.
85. Cf. Evans 1970:20.
86. *1 Cor.* 15.42, 15.53.
87. Eur. *Andr.* 1253–1258.
88. Just. Mart. *1 Apol*. 21.2; Theoph. Ant. *Ad. Autol.* 1.13; Tert. *Apol*. 21.23; Orig. *C. Cels.* 3.26–28.
89. *1 Thess*. 4.17.
90. *1 Thess*. 4.17.
91. *1 Thess*. 4.17.
92. *1 Cor.* 15.51–52.
93. *Acta* 17.18.
94. *Acta* 17.19–20.
95. *Acta* 17.18.
96. *Acta* 17.20.
97. *Acta* 17.31.
98. *Acta* 17.32.
99. *Acta* 17.31.
100. Dunn 1980:34.
101. Pind. *Ol.* 1.51.
102. *Sch. Lyc. Alex*. 152. The pious Pindar delivers a protest when retelling this popular story, maintaining that it was "impossible for me to call one of the gods a glutton" (Pind. *Ol.* 1.52).
103. *Il.* 5.416–417, 5.447–448.
104. Pind. *Ol.* 1.25–27.
105. Paus. *Descr.* 5.13.4–6. There was, as we have seen, also an Elean tradition that the bones of Pelops were still kept in a chest in the ruined city of Pisa (Paus. *Descr.* 6.22.1).
106. Diod. Sic. 4.38.4–5.
107. "The taking up of Heracles into heaven represents a theme of Greek mythology since the sixth century BCE (going to heaven; traveling through the air; transport by means of a cloud; being mixed with the either; flying to the gods)... But Diodorus is the first to bring the motif of the vain search for the corpse into this context" (Boring, Colpe & Berger 1995:162).

108. Cf. Endsjø 2008b.
109. *Jn*. 20.27.
110. *1 Cor.* 15.51–53.
111. *1 Thess*. 4.16–17.
112. D.B. Martin 1995:121; cf. Perkins 1984:224.

Seven The Success of Immortal Flesh

1. Segal 2004:442.
2. Riley 1995:9.
3. *Mk*. 16.8.
4. *Mk*. 16.5–6.
5. *Mk*. 16.7–8.
6. *1. Cor.* 15.5–7.
7. *Mk*. 16.8.
8. Burridge 1992:258.
9. MacDonald 2000:190.
10. A.Y. Collins 1993:126.
11. Betz 1990:246.
12. Boring, Colpe & Berger 1995:162. Along with drawing parallels between Jesus and Heracles, Boring, Colpe, and Berger also compare the fate of Jesus with that of various disembodied heroes, like Theseus, a young Roman boy, and Augustus, and with how later sources talked about the immortalized body "being mixed with the either" (Boring, Colpe & Berger 1995:168, 166, 309, 162).
13. Boring, Colpe & Berger 1995:163–165, 235–237.
14. Boring, Colpe & Berger 1995:165. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza draws similar parallels a couple of years later (Fiorenza 1997:229).
15. A.Y. Collins 1993:130. Collins' approach is nevertheless somewhat unsystematic, as she connects Mark's presentation of the resurrected Jesus to "the translation and apotheosis of heroes, rulers, and emperors." Although she is aware of the belief that certain men and women were considered to have been physically immortalized, she still confuses these with dead disembodied souls who were revered as heroes. Deified "rulers and emperors" also just got their souls immortalized according to most sources. To confuse the apotheoses of Roman emperors with the traditional Greek beliefs in physical immortalization is, however, not uncommon among modern scholars, most prominently in Gerhard Lohfink (1971:42–46).
16. Plut. *Rom*. 28.6.
17. Char. *Call*. 3.3.4–5.
18. Xen. *Eph*. 3.9.
19. Pind. *Ol*. 1.25–27.
20. Char. *Call*. 3.3.7.
21. Wedderburn 1999:87.
22. *Mk*. 16.7.
23. *Mk*. 14.62.
24. Kretzmann 1993:149; *Mk*. 5.41–42.
25. *Mk*. 6.27–29.
26. *Mk*. 9.43–47. Matthew incorporated this advice into the Sermon on the Mount (*Mt*. 5.29–30).
27. *Mk*. 12.25, my emphasis.
28. Fletcher-Louis 1997:140–250.

29. Af Hällström 1988:30.
30. *Mk*. 12.25, *Mt*. 12.25, *Lk*. 20.36.
31. *Mk*. 9.2–3.
32. McGuckin 1986:123.
33. Heil 2000:260.
34. *Mk*. 9.4.
35. *Ex*. 34.29. Matthew seems to stress the connection with Moses by maintaining that also the face of the transfigurated Jesus "shone as the sun" (*Mt*. 17.2),
36. Heil 2000:80–92.
37. Pind. *Ol*. 1.36–42, 1.57–66; Ps-Lucian *Charidemus* 6.
38. *Mt*. 27.62–65, referring to *Mt*. 12.40.
39. *Mt*. 27.66.
40. *Mt*. 28.2–4.
41. *Mt*. 28.12–15.
42. Luedemann 1994:124, my emphasis.
43. *Mt*. 17.1–8.
44. *Mt*. 12.40, cf. *Jonah* 2.1–11. The reference to Jonah was both in Matthew and Luke an elaboration of how Christ, according to Mark, proclaimed that "there shall be no sign given unto this generation" (*Mk*. 8.12) into his saying that "there shall be no sign given it [this generation] but the *sign of Jonah*" (*Mt*. 12.39; *Lk*. 11.29, my emphasis).
45. *Mt*. 28.9.
46. *Mt*. 28.9.
47. *Mt*. 28.16–18.
48. *Mt*. 28.10.
49. *Mt*. 28.18–20.
50. *Mt*. 24.27.
51. *Mt*. 16.27.
52. Hdt. 4.14.
53. Hdt. 4.14–15.
54. Eur. *Hel*. 1642–1679.
55. Paus. *Descr*. 4.16.9.
56. Paus. *Descr*. 4.27.2–3.
57. Paus. *Descr*. 3.16.2–3.
58. *Lk*. 24.39.
59. *Lk*. 3.6, my emphasis.
60. *1 Cor*. 1.29, my emphasis.
61. *Is*. 40.5.
62. *Is*. 40.6.
63. *Lk*. 24.39.
64. *Lk*. 24.37.
65. *Lk*. 24.39.
66. *1 Cor*. 15.44.
67. Segal 2004:459.
68. See Johnson 1991:401.
69. Luc. *Philops*. 29, my emphasis.
70. *Lk*. 24.42–43.
71. *Acta* 10.41.
72. *Jn*. 12.1.
73. Phlegon *Mir*. 1.10.
74. O'Collins 1988:39, 44.
75. *Tob*. 12.19.
76. *Lk*. 24.41–43.

77. *Lk.* 24.39, my emphasis.
78. *Lk.* 24.39, my emphasis.
79. *Lk.* 24.5–10.
80. Gillman 2002:184.
81. *Mt.* 27.62–65, referring to *Mt.* 12.40.
82. *Acta* 2.31.
83. *LXX Ps.* 15.10.
84. Cf. Perrin 1977:72.
85. *Lk.* 24.51.
86. *Acta* 1.9–10.
87. *Acta* 1.11.
88. Plut. *Rom* 28.6–7.
89. Just. Mart. *1 Apol.* 21.2; Theoph. Ant. *Ad. Autol.* 1.13; Tert. *Apol.* 21.23; Orig. *C. Cels.* 3.26–28, 3.33, 5.63.
90. Conzelmann [1972]:7n26.
91. Perkins 1984:150, my emphasis.
92. *Acta* 9.3.
93. *Acta* 22.6.
94. *Acta* 26.13.
95. *Acta* 9.4–5, 22.7–8, 26.14–15.
96. *Acta* 7.55–56.
97. *Acta* 22.17–18.
98. *Lk.* 24.31.
99. *Lk.* 24.36.
100. Hdt. 4.14.
101. Paus. *Descr.* 6.9.7–8; Celsus according to Orig. *C. Cels.* 3.33; Plut. *Rom.* 28.4–5.
102. Philostr. *VA* 8.30.
103. Cf. *Acta* 16.10–16, 20.5–15, 21.1–18, 27.1–28.16. According to tradition, Luke the evangelist is identical with a companion of Paul mentioned in *Coloss.* 4.14, *2 Tim.* 4.11, and *Philem.* 24, but this is not at all certain.
104. *1 Cor.* 1.29.
105. *Lk.* 3.6.
106. *1 Cor* 15.44.
107. *Lk.* 24.37.
108. *Acta* 26.13, cf. 9.3, 22.6.
109. *Acta* 22.11.
110. *Acta* 22.9.
111. *Acta* 9.7.
112. Wedderburn 1999:71.
113. *Acta* 22.17–18.
114. *Acta* 14.11–12.
115. *Acta* 14.15, my emphasis.
116. Fletcher-Louis 1997:18.
117. Fox [1986]:109.
118. Cullmann [1955]:11.
119. *Jn.* 1.14, my emphasis.
120. *Jn.* 6.41–42, my emphasis.
121. *Mk.* 14.22–24; *Mt.* 26.26–28; *Lk.* 22.19–20.
122. *Jn.* 6.54.
123. When the resurrected Jesus in John says to Mary Magdalene, "Stop clinging to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father" (*Jn.* 20.17), this is probably no indication of a lack of physical nature. It may just as well be understood as a way of Jesus to assure Mary that he

was still going to be there for a while: there was no need to *hold on to him* as he had not yet ascended to the Father (cf. Moule 1977:102; Fuller 1980:137–138).

124. *Jn*. 20.20.
125. *Lk*. 24.39.
126. *Jn*. 20.25.
127. *Jn*. 20.27.
128. *Jn*. 19.32–33.
129. *Jn*. 19.36; *Ex*. 12.46.
130. *Gospel of Peter* 4.
131. *Lk*. 23.43.
132. *Rev*. 20.13.
133. Harrington 1993:203n13.
134. *Gospel of Peter* 10.
135. *Barn*. 5.6.
136. Polycarp 7.1.
137. *3 Cor.* 3.24–25.
138. *3 Cor.* 3.6.
139. *3 Cor.* 3.16.
140. *Hermas Sim*. 5.7.1.
141. Perkins 1984:337.
142. *Hermas Sim*. 5.6.5.
143. *Hermas Sim*. 5.6.7.
144. *Epistula Apostolorum* 11, my emphasis.
145. *Epistula Apostolorum* 11–12.
146. Iren. *Adv. Haer.* 1.10.1.
147. McLean 2002:279. Before this time Christians epitaphs "cannot be differentiated from the mass of pagan inscriptions" (McLean 2002:279).
148. E.g. *Anth. Graec*. 1.104; *Epigrammata Graeca ex lapidibus conlecta* (*EG*) 729; *Inscriptiones Graecae* (*IG*) 2.2.5768, 2.2.6859, 2.2.6873, 2.2.7180, 2.2.7711, 2.2.7839, 2.2.7873, 2.2.10864, 2.2.11103, 2.2.11162, 3.1384, 3.3525, 5.1.822, 5.2.359; *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua* (*MAMA*) 6.227; Peek *GV* 1212; *Supplementum epigraphicum Graecum* (*SEG*) 14.476, 20.294, 22.1967; *Stud. Pont*. 11; Guarducci 1995:figs. 105, 161, 166.
149. Kajanto 1978:53.
150. Jensen 2002:159. For the traditional beliefs about dolphins see Aelian *Anim*. 12.6 and Arist. *Hist. Anim*. 631a; for Christian beliefs about peacocks see Augustine *De civ. D*. 21.7; for the beliefs about the phoenix see Plin. *Hist. Nat*. 10.2 and *1 Clem*. 25.1–5.
151. Marucchi [1911]:55.
152. McLean 2002:281.
153. McLean 2002:281–282.
154. Tert. *De Resur.* 2.3.
155. Hipp. *Ref.* 15.
156. Iren. *Adv. Haer.* 4.33.2.
157. Iren. *Adv. Haer.* 1.24.4.
158. Iren. *Adv. Haer.*1.24.2.
159. *Ascension of Isaiah* 9.13, my emphasis.
160. Ps-Just. *De Resur.* 2.
161. Hipp. *Ref.* 9; Iren. *Adv. Haer.* 5.1.2.
162. Af Hällström 1988:13.
163. Tert. *De Resur.* 60.1; Ps-Tert. *Adv. Omn. Haer.* 4.
164. *Exegesis on the Soul* 134.6–16.
165. *Tr. Resur.* 46. Using the term Hellenistic as synonymous with philosophical, Alan Segal calls Valentinus "an extreme Hellenistic interpreter of Paul" (Segal 2004:547).

166. *Rom.* 8.3, my emphasis.
167. *Tr. Resur.*, see above; *Gosp. Philip* 55.29–32; 66.16–20.
168. Wedderburn 1987:213.
169. Iren. *Haer.* 1.30.13.
170. *Colos.* 1.18; cf. *Rom.* 8.29.
171. *1 Cor.* 15.20.
172. Af Hällström 1988:9.
173. *Lk.* 3.6.
174. Tert. *De Resur.* 19.4.
175. Tert. *De Resur.* 19.7.
176. *Acta Thom.* 160.
177. *Thomas Contender* 143.
178. *Apocr. John.* 23.
179. Tert. *De Anim.* 35.1.
180. *Nag Hammadi Apoc. Paul.*
181. *Apocr. John.* 23.
182. Clem. Al. *Strom.* 7.17.106.
183. Ign. *Magn.* 6–11.
184. Tert. *Praescr. Haer.* 17.
185. Tert. *C. Marc.* 4.4.
186. Tert. *Presc. Haer.* 30.
187. Photius *Lib.* 109.
188. Orig. *C. Cels.* 6.29.
189. Orig. *C. Cels.* 6.68.
190. Orig. *C. Cels.* 6.29, 5.18–19.
191. *1 Cor.* 15.37.
192. Cf. Carrier 2005:144.
193. Orig. *C. Cels.* 5.18–19; *1 Cor.* 15.50.
194. Bynum 1995:10.
195. Bauer [1934]:xxii.
196. Bynum 1995:27.
197. Jaeger 1961:11.
198. Engberg-Pedersen 2001:74.
199. Ps-Just. *De Resur.* 10.
200. Bynum 1995:21–22.
201. Plut. *Rom.* 28.7–8.
202. Paus. *Descr.* 4.32.4.
203. Tert. *De anim.* 3.1
204. Tert. *De Resur.* 3.6.
205. Tert. *De anim.* 18.4.
206. Tert. *Adv. Marc.* 5.19.7.
207. Le Boulluec 1985:41–44.
208. Celsus according to Orig. *C. Cels.* 1.27, cf. 4.10.
209. Celsus according to Orig. *C. Cels.* 1.27.
210. Tert. *De Resur.* 17.1, my emphasis.
211. Orig. *C. Cels.* 5.19.
212. *1 Cor.* 15.50.
213. Orig. *C. Cels.* 5.19.
214. Orig. *C. Cels.* 6.29.
215. Orig. *C. Cels.* 5.20.
216. Af Hällström 1988:11.
217. Ign. Ant. *Ad Polyc.* 2.2.

218. Ign. Ant. *Smyrn*. 3.1.
219. Ign. Ant. *Ad Polyc*. 2.2.
220. *2 Clem*. 9.1–5.
221. *2 Clem*. 9.1–5.
222. *2 Clem*. 9.1–5.
223. Aelian *Anim*. 12.6.
224. Jensen 2000:159.
225. Ign. Ant. *Rom*. 4.1–2.
226. Euseb. *Hist. Eccl*. 5.1.62.
227. Euseb. *Hist. Eccl*. 5.1.62.
228. *Il*. 1.4–5.
229. *1 Clem*. 25.1–5.
230. *1 Clem*. 26.1.
231. Jensen 2002:159.
232. Plin. *Hist. Nat*. 10.2.
233. Just. Mart. *1 Apol*. 19.1.
234. Just. Mart. *1 Apol*. 19.4.
235. Just. Mart. *Dial. Tryph*. 80.
236. Just. Mart. *1 Apol*. 18.6.
237. Just. Mart. *1 Apol*. 18.6.
238. Just. Mart. *1 Apol*. 10.3.
239. Theoph. Ant. *Ad Autol*. 1.13.
240. Theoph. Ant. *Ad. Autol*. 1.13.
241. Theoph. Ant. *Ad Autol*. 1.13.
242. Theoph. Ant. *Ad Autol*. 1.8.
243. *Or. Sib*. 4.181–82.
244. *2 Macc*. 7.11, 7.28.
245. Galen *De usu part*. 11.14.
246. Macarius *Apocriticus* 4.24.
247. Ps-Just. *De Resur*. 2.
248. Macarius *Apocriticus* 4.24.
249. Tert. *De Resur*. 1.5.
250. Af Hällström 1988:29.
251. According to Euseb. *Hist. Eccl*. 4.29.3.
252. Tatian *Orat. ad Gr*. 6.
253. Tatian *Orat. ad Gr*. 6.
254. Tatian *Orat. ad Gr*. 6.
255. Tatian *Orat. ad Gr*. 6.
256. Paus. *Descr*. 8.11.3.
257. Tatian *Orat. ad Gr*. 13.
258. Tatian *Orat. ad Gr*. 6.
259. Tatian *Orat. ad Gr*. 6.
260. Tatian *Orat. ad Gr*. 6, my emphasis.
261. Evans 1970:6.
262. Just. Mart. *1 Apol*. 10.3, 18.6; Theoph. Ant. *Ad Autol*. 1.8.
263. Ps- Just. *De Resur*. 5.
264. Ps-Just. *De Resur*. 2.
265. Ps-Just. *De Resur*. 5.
266. Ps-Just. *De Resur*. 6.
267. Ps-Just. *De Resur*. 6.
268. Ps-Just. *De Resur*. 6.
269. Tatian *Orat. ad Gr*. 6.

270. Hes. *Op.* 60–63.
271. *Il.* 7.99.
272. Ps-Just. *De Resur.* 6.
273. Ps-Just. *De Resur.* 6.
274. Ps-Just. *De Resur.* 6.
275. Ps-Just. *De Resur.* 5, my emphasis.
276. Ps-Just. *De Resur.* 4. These unbelievers could, of course, also refer to how Jesus in Mark and Matthew had indicated that eternal life might be with a limb or an eye missing, if these members were lost when one was still mortal (*Mk.* 9.43–47; *Mt.* 5.29–30; cf. af Hällström 1988:29n13).
277. Ps-Just. *De Resur.* 4.
278. Ps-Just. *De Resur.* 4.
279. *Mart. Perp. et Felic.* 7–8.
280. Aesch. *Prom.* 794–97; Lyc. *Alex.* 846; Ps-Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.4.2.
281. Iren. *Adv. Haer.* 5.3.2.
282. Macarius *Apocriticus* 4.24.
283. Athenag. *De Resur.* 4.1–3.
284. Cf. Hdt. 1.119.
285. Cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 1590–1602; Eur. *Orest.* 15; Ps-Apollod. *Ep.* 2.13.
286. Athenag. *De Resur.* 4.4.
287. Athenag. *De Resur.* 5.1, 8.3.
288. Athenag. *De Resur.* 8.3.
289. Athenag. *De Resur.* 2.5.
290. Athenag. *De Resur.* 4.1.
291. Athenag. *De Resur.* 2.5.
292. Athenag. *De Resur.* 8.4.
293. Papadopoulos 1966:63–64, fig. 5.
294. *Rev.* 20.13.
295. Voss 1884:64.
296. Voss 1884:64. Also later scholars agree with Voss, cf. e.g. Jónsdóttir 1959:15–16.
297. Ephraem *Sermon.* 1.508–15 in Beck 1972:13.
298. Bynum 1995:75n59.
299. See e.g. Niero 1968:plates 24, 29, 30, Bynum 1995:plate 6.
300. Bynum 1995:188.
301. Jensen 2000:172.
302. Leclercq 1927:figs. 6289, 6306, 6311.
303. *Mt.* 12.39; cf. *Lk.* 11.29.
304. Iren. *Haer.* 5.5.2; Tert. *De Resur.* 32.3.
305. Bynum 1995:text to plate 14.
306. Bynum 1995:10.
307. Stark 1996:37.
308. See Detienne [1979]:7; Endsjø 2003.
309. Vernant [1979]:37.
310. MacMullen 1981:53.
311. MacMullen 1981:53, my emphasis.
312. Pind. *Isth.* 7.44–47.
313. Pind. *Pyth.* 3.54–58.
314. Wells 1998:14, referring to Just. Mart. *1. Apol.* 54.10, 22.6; Just. Mart. *Dial. Tryph.* 69; Orig. *C. Cels.* 3.25.
315. Wells 1998:15–16.
316. *Il.* 5.440–42.
317. Pind. *Pyth.* 3.59–60.

318. *Od*. 9.502–35.
319. *Od*. 7.255–58.
320. *Od*. 1.59.
321. Ps-Just. *De Resur.* 10.
322. Bynum 1995:9.
323. MacMullen 1981:136.
324. Just. Mart. *1 Apol*. 5.1–4, 14.1; Just. Mart. *Dial. Tryph*. 73; Minucius Felix *Octavia* 27; Athenag. *Leg. pro Christ*. 26–27.
325. Just. Mart. *1 Apol*. 14.1.
326. Athan. *Inc*. 54.11–12.
327. Just. Mart. *Dial. Tryhp*. 124; Theoph. Ant. *Ad Autol*. 2.27; Hipp. *Ref.* 10.34.
328. Athenag. *De Resur.* 2.5.

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