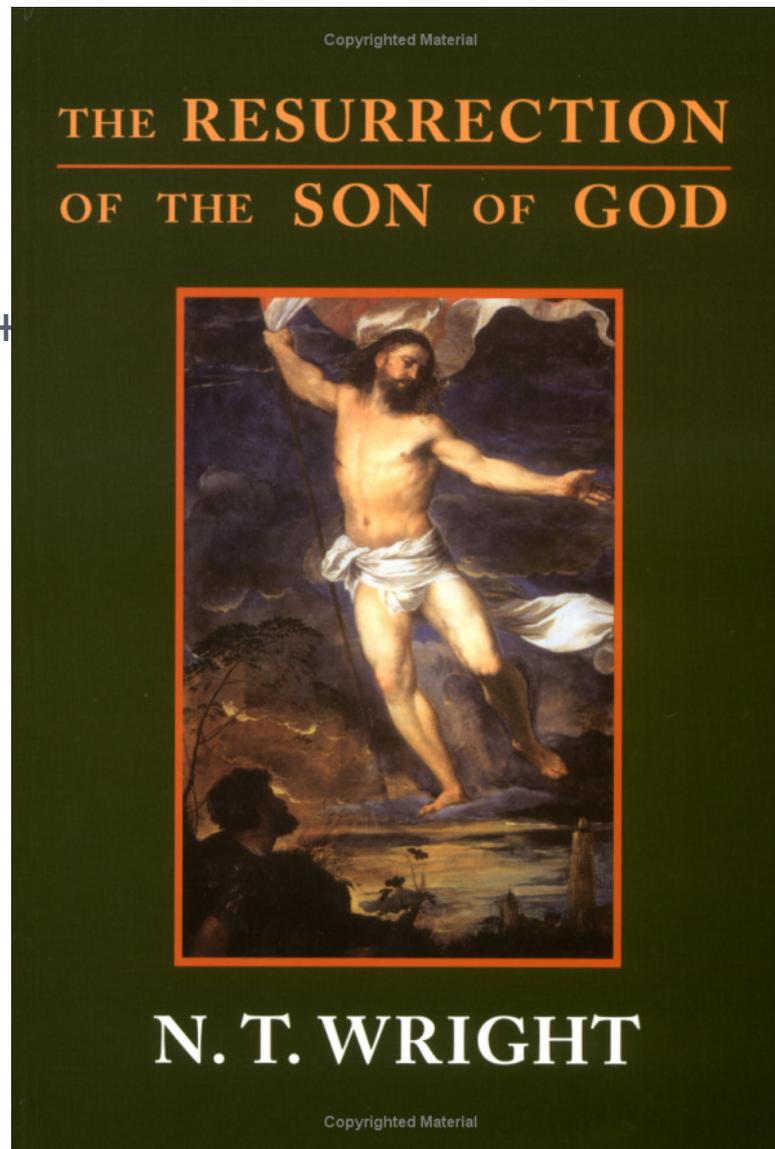


# N.T. WRIGHT EN DE OPSTANDING

Derde avond Wright-cursus AKZ+

Cees-Jan Smits  
Theologische Universiteit  
Apeldoorn



# 1. DE VRAAG NAAR HISTORICITEIT

- Ernst Troeltsch: **Kritiek - analogie - correlatie**
- Josh McDowell: ‘How do you evaluate this **overwhelming historical evidence**? What is your decision about the fact of Christ's empty tomb? What do you think of Christ?’
- Rudolf Bultmann: ‘Der Mensch, der an Gott als seinen Gott glauben will, muß wissen, daß er nichts in der Hand hat, woraufhin er glauben könnte, daß er **gleichsam in die Luft gestellt** ist und keinen Ausweis für die Wahrheit des ihn anredenden Wortes verlangen kann. Denn Grund und Gegenstand des Glaubens sind identisch. Die Sicherheit findet nur, wer alle Sicherheit fahren läßt, wer – um mit Luther zu reden – bereit ist, in die inneren **Finsternisse** hineinzugehen’.



- ‘Instead of leading to an historical-critical method worthy of the name it leads to an **historical-sceptical method**, in which historical facts must not be knowable, lest anyone should attempt to base his faith on them and so cease to be a ‘Protestant’. At this point it could be argued that the method ceases to have any claim on the word ‘historical’ at all: it has to find ‘myth’ in the gospels (for instance), because only myth will do for its sort of faith. Historical facts imperil the doctrine of justification. But this is **justification by doubt**, not by faith: and faith is opposed to ‘doubt’ no less than to ‘sight’. Of course faith must be prepared to walk in the dark: but being in the dark is not equivalent to having faith. And in fact, for Paul, justifying faith has clear historical facts as its object – facts whose denial is not faith but unbelief.’
- ‘The remaking will not be less real, nor less historical, than the first making. And since the Messiah represents *Israel*, there is as much continuity between Israel BC and AD as between Jesus on Good Friday and Jesus on Easter Sunday. **What you do with the resurrection you do with the church** – as is apparent from those theologians who take the easy way out and remove both from true historical existence.’



## 2. METHODE

- ‘Faith in Jesus risen from the dead **transcends but includes** what we call history and what we call science.’
- ‘The fact that Jesus’ resurrection was, and remains, without analogy is not an objection to the early Christian claim. It is **part of the claim itself.**’
- ‘Despite their ingenuity, the (...) solutions (...) are not, as we shall see, capable of answering the questions in terms which **make sense within actual first-century history.**’
- ‘(...) to establish (1) a different view of the Jewish context and materials, (2) a fresh understanding of Paul and (3) all the other early Christians, and (4) a new reading of the gospel stories; and to argue (5) that the *only* possible reason why early Christianity began and took the shape it did is that the tomb really was empty and that people really did meet Jesus, alive again, and (6) that, though admitting it involves accepting a challenge at the level of worldview itself, the best historical explanation for all these phenomena is that Jesus was indeed bodily raised from the dead.’



### 3. KERNARGUMENTATIE

- 1. To sum up where we have got so far: the world of second-Temple Judaism supplied the concept of resurrection, but the striking and consistent Christian mutations within Jewish resurrection belief rule out any possibility that the belief could have generated spontaneously from within its Jewish context. When we ask the early Christians themselves what had occasioned this belief, their answers home in on two things: stories about Jesus' tomb being empty, and stories about him appearing to people, alive again.
- 2. Neither the empty tomb by itself, however, nor the appearances by themselves, could have generated the early Christian belief. The empty tomb alone would be a puzzle and a tragedy. Sightings of an apparently alive Jesus, by themselves, would have been classified as visions or hallucinations, which were well enough known in the ancient world.'
- 3. However, an empty tomb and appearances of a living Jesus, taken together, would have presented a powerful reason for the emergence of the belief.
- 4. The meaning of resurrection within second-Temple Judaism makes it impossible to conceive of this reshaped resurrection belief emerging without it being known that a body had disappeared, and that the person had been discovered to be thoroughly alive again.
- 5. The other explanations sometimes offered for the emergence of the belief do not possess the same explanatory power.
- 6. It is therefore historically highly probable that Jesus' tomb was indeed empty on the third day after his execution, and that the disciples did indeed encounter him giving every appearance of being well and truly alive.
- 7. This leaves us with the last and most important question: what explanation can be given for these two phenomena? Is there an alternative to the explanation given by the early Christians themselves?



## 4. OPSTANDING EN POLITIEK

- ‘The resurrection and exaltation of Jesus proclaim and install him as the world’s true lord and saviour; in other words, according to Paul’s gospel **it is because of the resurrection that Jesus is lord and Caesar is not.** The future resurrection and glorification of Jesus’ followers will vindicate them as the true people of the one true God, despite their present suffering and humiliation, and herald the victory of the gospel over the powers of the world through the final act of new creation. As in Pharisaic belief, **resurrection challenges the powers of the world**, as no other theology or spirituality can do, with the news of the kingdom of their creator and covenant God.’



## 5. SLOTBESCHOUWING

- Tertullianus: ‘Hij toonde zich niet voor het volk, opdat de goddelozen niet van hun dwaling bevrijd zouden worden en opdat het geloof, dat een niet geringe beloning mag verwachten, moeite zou kosten.’
- Athanasius van Alexandrië: ‘Als nu de werken ontbreken, dan hechten ze terecht geen geloof aan het onwaarneembare; maar als de werken luide roepen en klaar bewijzen, waarom loochenen zij dan moedwillig het zo klaarblijkelijke leven der opstanding? (...) Want het is duidelijk, dat Christus de demonen niet zou hebben verjaagd en de afgoden niet zou hebben beroofd, als Hij dood was geweest. Want een dode zouden de demonen niet hebben gehoorzaamd. Maar als ze openlijk verjaagd worden door het noemen van zijn naam, dan is het duidelijk, dat Hij niet dood is.’

