The Corinthian Opponents of the Resurrection in 1 Cor 15:12. The Epicurean Hypothesis Reconsidered

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Abstract: The paper contributes to the discussion regarding the Corinthian opponents of the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:12). In particular, it attempts to re-examine the thesis of the Epicurean framework of this controversy. The first part focuses on the main lines of interpretation of 1 Cor 15:12 and the presentation of the Epicurean thesis. It is followed by an analysis of Paul's polemical statements against the thesis of his Corinthian opponents, "there is no resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor 15:12; cf. vv. 19, 29-34, 35). It is assumed that Paul clearly says that his opponents deny a bodily resurrection and future life – there is nothing after death. The third part of the paper reconsiders some hermeneutic factors concerning the identity of the Corinthian opponents of the resurrection. 1 Cor 15 contains terminological and ideological parallels to Epicureanism, especially, by way of opposition. Yet, the valuation of these data remains an open question.

Keywords: 1 Cor 15:12, resurrection, resurrection of the dead, New Testament vs. Epicureanism

The problem of identifying the Corinthian opponents of the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:12) has repeatedly been undertaken, being well known and discussed in numerous publications. Attempts to identify the opponents and describe their views have continued. Nevertheless, progress and, above all, new research results justify rethinking this issue as some solutions have been questioned or even completely defied, while others have again grown in importance. In this context, the present article principally aims at assessing the Epicurean framework of the Corinthian dispute.

1. Major Interpretative Positions of 1 Cor 15:12

Scientific debate on the Corinthian opponents of the resurrection of the dead in 1 Cor 15:12 seems endless, and even a detailed discussion of the results would

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not reflect the confusion over this issue. Nevertheless, a general classification and concise presentation of the leading opinions on the Corinthian opponents of the resurrection of the dead can be provided.[1]

(1) According to a view that has recently been popular, in the case of the Corinthian opponents we are dealing with an assertion that the resurrection of the dead has already happened and there will not be another one (realized eschatology). Its followers were the Corinthian enthusiasts and pneumatics. In their opinion, Christians have already achieved desired perfection and goal since their resurrection occurred when they were baptised and received the Holy Spirit. Usually we speak of the spiritualisation of the resurrection in the sense of 2 Timothy 2:18 (ἀνάστασιν ἤδη γεγονέναι). Until recently, this opinion had many supporters.[2]

Currently, this proposal is being questioned for many reasons and actually being refuted since it is based on texts outside 1 Cor 15, in the light of which members of the Corinthian Church have already gained knowledge and wisdom, as well as they have already become kings and abounded in spiritual gifts (πνευματικοί) (1 Cor 3-4; 6-7; 12-14). Similarly, the confusing reference to 2 Tim 2:18 has been called into question.[3]

1 See G. Sellin, *Der Streit um die Auferstehung der Toten. Eine religionsgeschichtliche und exegetische Untersuchung von 1 Korinther 15* (FRLANT 138; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1986) 17-37; see also A.C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2000) 1172-1175; J.A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AYB 32; New Haven, CT – London: Yale University 2008) 559-560, 565-567; D. Zeller, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (KEK 5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2010) 456-459; cf. also J. Delobel, "The Corinthians' (Un-)belief in the Resurrection," *Resurrection in the New Testament. Festschrift J. Lambrecht* (eds. R. Bieringer – V. Koperski – B. Lataire) (BETL 165; Leuven: University Press – Peeters 2002) 343-344. See also some Polish publications: G. Rafiński, "Problem przeciwników św. Pawła w 1 Kor," *STV* 23 (1985) 151-168; S. Szymik, *Problem polemiki antyepikurejskiej w pismach Nowego Testamentu* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL 2003) 241-244; A. Posadzy, "Przeciwnicy Pawłowej doktryny o zmartwychwstaniu w gminie korynckiej," *CTO* 2 (2007) 17-47; M. Rosik, *"W Chrystusie wszyscy będą ożywieni" (1 Kor 15,22b). Rola cytatów ST w Pawłowej argumentacji za zmartwychwstaniem (1 Kor 15,12-58)* (Bibliotheca Biblica; Wrocław: TUM 2010) 225-231; M. Rosik, "«Dlaczego twierdzą niektórzy z was, że nie ma zmartwychwstania?» (1 Kor 15,12b). Przyczyny odrzucenia wiary w zmartwychwstanie w Kościele korynckim," *Zmartwychwstał prawdziwie* (eds. A. Paciorek – A. Tronina – P. Łabuda) (ScrLum 2; Tarnów: Biblos 2010) 233-246.

2 See Delobel, "The Corinthians' (Un-)belief in the Resurrection," 350. Besides the cited literature see K.A. Plank, "Resurrection Theology: The Corinthian Controversy Reexamined," *PRSt* 8 (1981) 41-54; A.J.H. Wedderburn, "The Problem of the Denial of the Resurrection in 1 Corinthians XV," *NovT* 23 (1981) 231-232; G.D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans 1987) 10-15, 715; R.F. Collins, *First Corinthians* (SP 7; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 1999) 541; W. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther.* IV. *Teilband (15,1-16,24)* (EKKNT 7/4; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener 2001) 113-119, 137-139; cf. Thiselton, *The First Epistle*, 1173 with n. 32; Rosik, *"W Chrystusie wszyscy będą ożywieni" (1 Kor 15,22b)*, 228; Rosik, "Dlaczego twierdzą niektórzy," 239-241.

3 See discussions and corrections concerning this opinion: D.J. Doughty, "The Presence and Future of Salvation in Corinth," *ZNW* 66 (1975) 61-90; J.H. Ulrichsen, "Die Auferstehungsleugner in Ko-

At this place, we should mention the former opinion about the gnostic sources of the denial of the resurrection of the dead in Corinth. Although Gnosticism assumes an extreme anthropological dualism (see below), the Gnostics considered themselves saved and already in the divine realm, which factually resembles the views of the previous religious group. The Gnostic hypothesis reminds mainly of the ephemeral nature of many theories that once dominated and seemed to be obvious, and today they belong to the history of exegesis.[4]

(2) A large group of authors assume an anthropological dualism as a reason for denying the resurrection of the dead in Corinth. The Corinthian Christians denied a bodily resurrection, but believed in the immortality of the soul. This anthropological dualism would be of Hebraic-Hellenistic or pagan (Greek) provenance; the Gnostic concept has been mentioned above.[5] One of the supporters of the thesis on anthropological dualism as the cause of the Corinthian errors was G. Sellin. In his opinion, the Corinthian opponents of Paul did not deny the possibility of life after death, which was guaranteed by the possession of πνεῦμα, but denied the bodily resurrection of the dead, and their arguments were based on the dualistic anthropology of Judeo-Hellenistic provenance, which had no connection with *gnosis*. The Corinthians succumbed to the influence of the wisdom tradition of the Alexandrian Jews, above all the thoughts of Philo of Alexandria, whose views reached Corinth thanks to Apollos.[6] The dualistic direction of inter-

rinth: Was meinten sie eigentlich?," *Texts and Contexts. Biblical Texts in Their Textual and Situational Contexts. Essays in honor of Lars Hartman* (eds. T. Fornberg – D. Hellholm – C.D. Hellholm) (Oslo – Boston, MA: Scandinavian University 1995) 782 with n. 3, 791-793; Zeller, *Der erste Brief*, 456-457; for a Polish publication see Szymik, *Problem polemiki antyepikurejskiej*, 280-284.

4 W. Schmithals, *Die Gnosis in Korinth. Eine Untersuchung zu den Korintherbriefen*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1969); L. Schottroff, *Der Glaubende und die feindliche Welt. Beobachtungen zum gnostischen Dualismus und seiner Bedeutung für Paulus und das Johannesevangelium* (WMANT 37; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener 1970); cf. E.H. Pagels, "'The Mystery of the Resurrection': A Gnostic Reading of 1 Corinthians 15," *JBL* 93 (1974) 276-288; this proposal has recently been reconsidered by S. Hultgren, "The Origin of Paul's Doctrine of the Two Adams in 1 Corinthians 15:45-49," *JSNT* 25/3 (2003) 343-370.

5 J.H. Wilson, "The Corinthians Who Say There is No Resurrection of the Dead," *ZNW* 59 (1968) 103: "In all probability, they denied a Hebraic, monistic resurrection of the body in favor of a Hellenistic, dualistic concept of after-life current among the sacramentally-oriented popular cults"; the thesis of the Greek, dualistic framework of the denial of resurrection has also been defended by J.H. Ulrichsen ("Die Auferstehungsleugner in Korinth," 782, 793-797), according to whom Paul did not understand the stand of his opponents, and thus his argumentation in 1 Cor 15 is meaningless (p. 794); see also Wedderburn, "The Problem of the Denial," 230-231 with n. 7; Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, IV, 112 with n. 516; Zeller, *Der erste Brief*, 457; Rosik, "Dlaczego twierdzą niektórzy," 241-244. This issue has been taken up again by D.Ø. Endsjø, who proposes completely new conclusions, D.Ø. Endsjø, "Immortal Bodies before Christ: Bodily Continuity in Ancient Greece and 1 Corinthians," *JSNT* 30 (2008) 417-436.

6 Sellin, *Der Streit um die Auferstehung*, 30-35, 65-69, 290-294; The Corinthians claimed that "eine dualistische Anthropologie mit Abwertung des Leibes zugunsten der pneumatisch inspirierten Seele" (p. 35).

preting 1 Cor 15 has also been adopted by D. Martin, who, however, referred to the popular Greek philosophy and its distinction between the body and the soul as the ground for denying the resurrection.[7]

As a side note, let us admit the isolated opinion of J.B. Asher, according to whom Paul did not have any opponents, but a group of "misinformed students" who needed fuller instruction because they did not understand how the physical and destructible body can exist in the celestial sphere, which is spiritual and indestructible.[8]

(3) According to another opinion, the Corinthian opponents of the resurrection of the dead denied the existence of anything after death: they did not believe in the existence of afterlife. The earlier thesis on the Sadducees' influence on the members of the Church in Corinth has been refuted,[9] while the materialistic and Epicurean sources of the denial of the resurrection are taken into account.[10]

Recently, a completely new hypothesis has been put forward by P.J. Brown,[11] who himself describes it as "a fourth position for the problem of the deniers of the resurrection at Corinth." In his opinion, the denial of the resurrection of the dead results from the conviction of ordinary people that only the heroes they worship enjoy immortality, while immortality does not concern them. They believe in the resurrection of Jesus – a hero, but they do not believe in their own resurrection. This isolated opinion certainly requires a separate and in-depth discussion.[12]

7 D. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1995) 108-123, 129; cf. Rosik, *"W Chrystusie wszyscy będą ożywieni" (1 Kor 15,22b)*, 229-231; Rosik, "Dlaczego twierdzą niektórzy," 245.

8 J.B. Asher, *Polarity and Change in 1 Corinthians 15. A Study of Metaphysics, Rhetoric, and Resurrection* (HUT 42; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2000) 48: "In a manner of speaking what we find are not opponents or enemies of Paul, but misinformed »students« who need more detailed instruction on the resurrection of the dead. The search for the identity of the opponents and their alternative doctrine to the resurrection of the dead is ultimately a mistaken approach because there 'are no opponents.'" In the present paper, on pp. 32-35, the author discusses the proposals of the identification of the opponents of the resurrection of the dead.

9 The influence of the Sadducees on the Corinthian community was postulated mainly by the Fathers of the Church (Tertullian, Origen); for contemporary opinions see, Wedderburn, "The Problem of the Denial," 230 with n. 4; Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, IV, 111 with n. 513, also 137 with n. 617 and 618; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 559.

10 See Rosik, "Dlaczego twierdzą niektórzy," 236-238.

11 P.J. Brown, *Bodily Resurrection and Ethics in 1 Cor 15. Connecting Faith and Morality in the Context of Greco-Roman Mythology* (WUNT 2/360; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2014).

12 Brown, *Bodily Resurrection*, 102: "This popular religion allowed for a belief in the resurrection of Jesus, but neither assured them of their own resurrection nor was connected to their present behavior"; see particularly 66-102; on p. 94 he writes: "Yet it was only the heroes, the ones who were worshiped and sometimes immortalized bodily, who attained a special destiny and thus, the Corinthians could deny their own future resurrection while still embracing the resurrection and worship of Jesus, the Messiah, as one with hero status"; cf. P. Perkins, *First Corinthians* (Paideia; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2012) 176-177: "It would be easy enough for his converts in these romanized cities to imagine the risen Christ as a divinized human comparable to the emperor."

A brief review of the research on 1 Cor 15:12 shows that the Epicurean framework of the Corinthian denial of the resurrection of the dead was rarely taken into account, and the presence of anti-Epicurean rhetoric in Paul's argument was only exceptionally postulated. The Epicurean influence in the case of 1 Cor 15 was suggested by M.W.L. de Wette,[13] similarly later by A. Robertson and A. Plummer[14] as well as E.-B. Allo (1935).[15] In turn, N.W. DeWitt took the Epicurean basis of the controversy in 1 Cor for granted; in his case we can speak of "Pan-Epicureanism" in Paul's epistles.[16] Recently G. Tomlin referred to this concept.[17] He does not only return to the thesis of the Epicurean framework of conflicts in the Corinthian Church, but also he treats his study as a reaction to the excessive dominance of rhetorical and sociological research and a return to the question about the ideological controversy in the Corinthian Church.[18] Also, Polish publications on the Bible have raised the issue of the anti-Epicurean polemic in 1 Cor 15.[19] Understandably, the Epicurean thesis has repeatedly met with criticism from various scholars.[20]

The aforementioned discussion of the leading opinions on historical, religious and philosophical sources of the denial of the resurrection of the dead in 1 Cor 15 does not reflect the real situation in the literature on this subject. Not only is there any consensus, but one can hardly speak of some convergence of scholars' views in this field.

13 M.W.L. de Wette, *Kurze Erklärung der Briefe an die Korinther* (Leipzig: Weidmann 1845) 129, 139.

14 A. Robertson – A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: Scribner's Sons 1911; reprint 2018) 346, 362-363.

15 E.-B. Allo, *Saint Paul. Première épître aux Corinthiens*, 2nd ed. (EtB; Paris: Gabalda 1956) 411, 417.

16 N.W. DeWitt, *St. Paulus and Epicurus* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota 1954) 113-123; cf. N.W. DeWitt, *Epicurus and His Philosophy* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota 1954) 338-339.

17 G. Tomlin, "Christians and Epicureans in 1 Corinthians," *JSNT* 68 (1997) 51-72.

18 Tomlin, "Christians and Epicureans," 70: "There are good grounds for believing that some Christians in Corinth were influenced by the ideas and practice of trends in Graeco-Roman Corinth most strongly represented by Epicureanism."

19 Szymik, *Problem polemiki antyepikurejskiej*, 241-293, esp. 284-293; the analyses led to advanced reflections on the Epicurean setting of the denial of the resurrection of the dead in 1 Cor 15:12.

20 Wilson, "The Corinthians Who Say," 91-92; Ulrichsen, "Die Auferstehungsleugner in Korinth," 782, 788-790; but cf. Wedderburn, "The Problem of the Denial," 241: "In the latter verses [i.e. xv 32-34] he may indeed be using conventional arguments originating in polemic against Epicureans, but now used more widely and inappropriately."

2. Paul's Polemic with the Thesis of the Corinthian Opponents

Paul's argumentation for the resurrection of the dead is very precise. This is made evident first in the literary composition of his apology that should be divided into two major parts: the message of the resurrection of the dead (vv. 1-50) and the revelation of the secret of the last day (vv. 51-58). The first part has three argumentative sections: the Gospel of the Risen Christ (vv. 1-11), the defence of the resurrection of the dead (vv. 12-34), the question about the nature of the resurrected body (vv. 35-50).[21] Forced by the circumstances Paul again proclaims to the Corinthians the fundamental truth of Christ who died, was buried and raised to life, the gospel that the Corinthians already received and believed in (vv. 1-11). After establishing the grounds for presenting his arguments,[22] the Apostle addresses the issue that was the direct reason for his speech, i.e. the assertion of some members of the Church in Corinth that there is no resurrection of the dead. His apology refers to this view for a number of times.

V. 12 ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν οὐκ ἔστιν ("there is no resurrection of the dead")

Paul cites the opinion of the Corinthian opponents of the resurrection: "Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?" (v. 12). He reflects on the question posed by some members of the community in Corinth (λέγουσιν ἐν ὑμῖν τινες) claiming that there is no resurrection of the dead. This view was not certainly shared by the whole community.[23] It is not known who the opponents of the resurrection were and what their position in the community was. In his apology, Paul does not allow them to speak anymore, nor does he address them directly (see, however, τίς in v. 35), but he speaks to the entire community having in mind the good of the whole Church. This means that the Apostle's reasoning is not a direct polemic

21 Szymik, *Problem polemiki antyepikurejskiej*, 248-252; cf. R. Fabris, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi. Nuova versione, introduzione e commento* (I libri biblici 7; Milano: Paoline 1999) 192-193; Zeller, *Der erste Brief*, 455; J.P. Heil, *The Rhetorical Role of Scripture in 1 Corinthians* (SBL; Leiden – Boston: Brill 2005) 10-15; cf. also M. Rosik, *Pierwszy List do Koryntian. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz* (NKB.NT 7; Częstochowa: Edycja Świętego Pawła 2009) 468-470.

22 Fabris, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 193, points to the significance of this introductory fragment for the understanding and interpretation of Paul's arguments in 1 Cor 15; similarly, J.D.G. Dunn, "How Are the Dead Raised? With What Body Do They Come? Reflections on 1 Corinthians 15," *SwJT* 45 (2002) 6-7.

23 With the use of the preposition ἐν ὑμῖν instead of the *genetivus partitivus* (τινες ὑμῶν). Analysing the use of the indefinite pronoun τίνες, we can conclude that Paul usually uses it to describe a small group that cannot be identified with the whole Church. See Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 562; Zeller, *Der erste Brief*, 477: "eine Minderheit."

with the views of those who do not believe in the resurrection, but it is a theological interpretation of the truth about the resurrection of the dead delivered to the entire Church in Corinth.

Similarly, he enigmatically presents the view of the opponents of the resurrection, but here scholars' opinions regarding the interpretation of this statement are fairly consistent. The assertion that there is no resurrection of the dead, that there is no such thing as resurrection (ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν οὐκ ἔστιν), points to the denial of any form of life or man's existence after death. At this point, we can recollect the words of Apollo, not of Epicurus, who expressed the basic experience of the ancients: ἅπαξ θανόντος, οὔτις ἔστ᾽ ἀνάστασις (Aeschylus, *Eum.*, 436-437).[24] The statement of the Corinthian opponents must have come out of pagan circles or among Gentile Christians since Jews (except the Sadducees) and Jewish Christians believed in a bodily resurrection (Dan 12:2; 2 Macc 7:14; 12:43).[25] Earlier this Christian message evoked polemics and protests of the Sadducees (Acts 4:2; cf. 23:6-8) and of the pagans (Acts 17:31; 26:23-24). The Greek knew the term ἀνάστασις that meant "placing or setting up" a pedestal, monument or other object. Here the pagan world was confronted with a new sense of the term: "raising man up/bringing back to life."[26] Referring to his opponents' statement, Paul uses formulations in negative clauses (ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν οὐκ ἔστιν) (vv. 12, 13), (νεκροὶ οὐκ ἐγείρονται) (vv. 16, 20, 29, 32), and also in affirmative clauses (ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν) (vv. 21, 42 with an article), (ἐγείρονται οἱ νεκροί) (vv. 35, 42, 52). Nevertheless, he always means "raising from the dead" in the literal sense.[27] In Paul's reasoning there is no anthropological dualism nor any thought of the immortal soul, and this idea is directly confirmed by all analogous

24 "But when once a man has died, and the dust has sucked up his blood, there is no rising again" – see Aeschylus, *Oresteia: Agamemnon. Libation-Bearers. Eumenides* (ed. and trans. A.H. Sommerstein) (LCL 146; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University 2009) 436-437; further texts Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 562.

25 See Robertson – Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 329, 364; Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, IV, 122-123; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 560-561, also 562-563; Rosik, *Pierwszy List do Koryntian*, 502-508; it is also worth consulting the paper by J.G. Cook, "Resurrection in Paganism and the Question of an Empty Tomb in 1 Corinthians 15," *NTS* 63 (2017) 60-74.

26 A new, Christian meaning of the word was expressed by a non-Christian at the turn of the 2nd and the 3rd centuries AD, i.e. a Jew and Epicurean residing in Eumeneia: οἱ δὴ δείλαιοι πάντες εἰς ἀνάστασιν ... βλέποντες. See J.H. Moulton – G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament. Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1985) 37-38.

27 Collins, *First Corinthians*, 543: "In context this phrase indicates not so much the general resurrection of the dead as the possibility of rising from the dead." In 1 Cor 15, the term νεκρός appears 13 times in its literal sense, in the first part without an article (vv. 12-34), while in the second part, always with an article (vv. 35-58), which influences its interpretation although in this case scholars have expressed different opinions. See Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, IV, 128 with n. 574; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 561-562; Zeller, *Der erste Brief*, 477; Rosik, *Pierwszy List do Koryntian*, 483.

Jewish and pagan texts. The denial of the resurrection of the dead in 1 Cor 15:12 was a non-belief in a dead person being raised in his body.[28]

V. 19 εἰ ἐν τῇ ζωῇ ταύτῃ ("if for this life only")

The last verse of the first part of Paul's argumentation (vv. 12-19) lays a key, dramatic emphasis on the regrettable situation of Christians if there is no resurrection of the dead. The Apostle writes: "If for this life only (εἰ ἐν τῇ ζωῇ ταύτῃ … μόνον) we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied" (v. 19). Paul shows the resurrection dispute from a new perspective because he points to the final consequences of the denial of the resurrection for Christian existence. Thus, he also reveals what the Corinthian denial of the resurrection really meant: a denial of everything that exceeds "this life only," that goes beyond the material world. The refutation of the resurrection of the dead presents death as a culmination and end of everything. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christians live and die in this world, and they can therefore expect nothing more (cf. vv. 29-32).[29]

Vv. 29-34 argumentation *ad hominem*

Having shown God's decisive victory over the powers of evil and death (vv. 20-28), the Apostle uses some arguments *ad hominem* (vv. 29-34) to reveal the practical consequences of the assertion that there is no resurrection of the dead and that the dead do not rise to life. It is the closing argumentation in defence of the resurrection of the dead (vv. 12-34). Paul raises a number of rhetorical questions, characteristic of his diatribe. First, he recalls the Corinthian custom of being baptised for the dead (v. 29), then he points to the example of his own life as an apostle and missionary (vv. 30-32), to draw parenetic conclusions in the final part (vv. 33-34).[30]

28 It is extremely instructive to read the results of the research on the semantic field of the verbs ἀνίστημι and ἐγείρω in the ancient Jewish and pagan texts published by J.G. Cook, "Resurrection," 59: "Both verbs imply a physical motion upward from the state of sleep, lying down or death – in contexts where individuals are sleeping, lying down or dead" […] "Physical motion upward (usually 'standing up') is implied in all these texts"; for further interesting examples from Greek literature see Endsjø, "Immortal Bodies before Christ," 419-431.

29 See Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 564-565; Rosik, *Pierwszy List do Koryntian*, 485. An interesting parallel to 1 Cor 15:19 can be seen in the 2 (Syriac) Baruch: "For if only this life exists which everyone possesses here, nothing could be more bitter than this" (2 Ba 21:13; trans. A.F.J. Klijn), see J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1983) I, 628.

30 Incidentally, let us also note the isolated opinion of W.O. Walker, who recognised vv. 29-34 as a non-Pauline interpolation: W.O. Walker Jr., "1 Corinthians 15:29-34 as a Non-Pauline Interpolation,"

V. 29 εἰ ὅλως νεκροὶ οὐκ ἐγείρονται ("if the dead are not raised at all")

In the cited verse 29b, the anti-Epicurean trace has possibly been preserved in the presence of the adverb ὅλως, which again testifies to the fact that Paul meant death as an ultimate end of life and existence "if the dead are not raised at all" (1 Cor 15:29b).[31]

However, the significance of v. 29 for identifying the Corinthian opponents of the resurrection is more profound, which results from the content of v. 29 and the huge confusion over its interpretation.[32] What was baptism for the dead? Who were those "being baptised" (οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι)? Were they a separate group or did Paul think of the whole Church in Corinth? What was the relation between those who were baptised for the dead (v. 29) and the opponents of the resurrection of the dead (v. 12)? If they had been the same groups – which has often been suggested in various analyses – why did they deny the resurrection of the dead and at the same time accept baptism for the dead?[33]

In my opinion resulting from the content of v. 29 and Pauls' argumentation, those who were baptised for the dead created a separate, small group in the Church in Corinth (οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι – note the article).[34] On the other hand, in Paul's discourse, baptism on account of the dead proves the resurrection.[35] This

CBQ 69 (2007) 84: "The purpose of this study is to argue that 1 Cor 15:29-34 is an interpolation, neither composed by Paul nor included by him in his Corinthian letter."

31 In most translations, but see the commentary: Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 581: "In 5:1; 6:7 ὅλως is set immediately before the word it modifies." In the New Testament, the adverb ὅλως occurs only four times (1 Cor 5:1; 6:7; 15:29; cf. Matt 5:34) in the meaning: "completely, wholly, totally, altogether; to being really so, actually, in fact" (see BibleWorks 10, BDAG Lexicon).

32 See R.E. DeMaris, "Corinthian Religion and Baptism for the Dead (1 Corinthians 15:29): Insights from Archaeology and Anthropology," *JBL* 114 (1995) 661-682; M.F. Hull, *Baptism on Account of the Dead (1 Cor 15:29). An Act of Faith in the Resurrection* (SBL. Academia Biblica 22; Leiden: Brill 2005) 7-49; J.R. White, "'Baptized on Account of the Dead.' The Meaning of 1 Corinthians 15:29 in Its Context," *JBL* 116 (1997) 488-492; cf. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 578-580, who is discussing "most commonly proposed explanations"; see also Rosik, *Pierwszy List do Koryntian*, 490, 493.

33 These presumptions are made and discussed by DeMaris, "Corinthian Religion and Baptism," 678: "In this case, some at Corinth might have rejected an afterlife but practiced baptism for the dead, not realizing what the rite implied"; again p. 679: "More likely, the Corinthians saw no connection and thus no contradiction between baptism for the dead and scepticism about resurrection" [...] "In other words, a ritual marking the transition from life to death says little if anything about what lies beyond death and nothing at all about bringing the dead back to life. Hence, baptism for the dead may not be relevant for interpreting 1 Cor 15:12." One should ask the author whether this was really the intention of Paul writing: "Otherwise, what will those people do who receive baptism on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?" (1 Cor 15:29).

34 Collins, *First Corinthians*, 557: "Paul's unusual use of the third person plural in a rhetorical question suggests that the practice may not have been widespread among the Corinthian Christians. Only a few of them may have practiced vicarious baptism on behalf of the dead."

35 Against the opinion of R.E. DeMaris and other authors. Cf. Hull, *Baptism on Account of the Dead*, 224: "Whatever 'baptism on account of the dead' is, it is an affirmation of the resurrection, and that

baptism might have been received by pious women to whom the fate of the dead was very important.[36] Anyway, v. 29 introduces a meaningful element to discussing 1 Cor 15:12, namely, the question about the Corinthians' beliefs in an afterlife as well as rituals and practices that were related to them, which is significant in the context of the Corinthian opponents of the resurrection of the dead.[37]

V. 32b: φάγωμεν καὶ πίωμεν ("let us eat and drink") *(epicureorum vox)*

Paul refers to the example of his own life so that he can ask the Corinthians a rhetorical question about the sense of his apostolic mission if the dead are not going to be raised (vv. 30-32). Using hyperbolic phrases, the Apostle describes his life: "why are we putting ourselves in danger every hour?" (v. 30; cf. 2 Cor 11:23-27), "I die every day!" (v. 31a) and "I fought with wild animals at Ephesus" (v. 32a; por. 2 Tim 4:17) to bring up a final question whether his motives were only human ones (εἰ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον), and if so, "what would I have gained by it?" (v. 32).[38]

Paul contrasts the Epicurean attitude of *carpe diem* ("seize the present") with the regrettable fate of the apostle and missionary since what is after is only death (v. 32b: "for tomorrow we die"). The Apostle finds the struggles and hardships for the Gospel meaningless and useless if there is no resurrection, and therefore, he recalls the words of the prophet Isaiah: "If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'" (φάγωμεν καὶ πίωμεν, αὔριον γὰρ ἀποθνῄσκομεν) (cf. Isa 22:13).[39] The quotation from Isaiah did not so much recall the Old Tes-

affirmation is directed to those who need to hear it"; see also p. 226: "What is abundantly clear is that the βαπτιζόμενοι and Paul are both in the process of some practical activity that is affirmative of the resurrection."

36 See DeMaris, "Corinthian Religion and Baptism," 680-681: "Funerary rituals in Greco-Roman society were overwhelmingly in the hands of women"; cf. Hull, *Baptism on Account of the Dead*, 19-20 with n. 55.

37 DeMaris, "Corinthian Religion and Baptism," 671: "This study suggests that first-century Corinthians were preoccupied with the world of the dead, so they attached themselves to deities that would allow them to address that concern"; p. 676: "Set against this background, vicarious baptism was one among several funerary rituals the Corinthian Christians used to help the deceased community member through the difficult transition between life and death."

38 Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 582: "[…] why should he as a human being have faced such danger, if there were not the motivation that the resurrection of the dead promises?" The phrase κατὰ ἄνθρωπον occurs six times in Paul's letters (1 Cor 3:3; 9:8; 15:32; cf. Rom 3:5; Gal 1:11; 3:15). For the subject of Paul's understanding of κατὰ ἄνθρωπον, see D. Litfin, *Paul's Theology of Preaching: The Apostle's Challenge to the Art of Persuasion in Ancient Corinth*, Revised and Expanded Edition (IVP Academic; Downers Grove, IL: InterVasity 2015) 161-164.

39 Cf. Heil, *The Rhetorical Role*, 221-229: "Paul's audience is to recognize the quotation in 1 Cor 15:32b as a popular slogan, which is incidentally very aptly expressed in Isa 22:13b, that characterizes a lifestyle practiced and promoted by many at the time of Paul – one that has no hope in a resurrection of the dead" (p. 228); this text is competently analysed by Rosik, *"W Chrystusie wszyscy będą ożywieni" (1 Kor 15,22b)*, 197-235.

tament significance of the text, but first and foremost, the Epicurean slogan that was vivid in the pagan community of Corinth. The formula "let us eat and drink" was synonymous with a promiscuous and raucous lifestyle, associated mainly with the Epicureans. Although this did not correspond to Epicurus' authentic views on a pleasant life, this stereotypical opinion was, nevertheless, common and popular with the ancients in the first century AD.[40]

V. 33 ὁμιλίαι κακαί ("bad company")

After referring to the examples of Christian life in faith in the resurrection, Paul addresses the Corinthians with a final admonition and a call to repentance (vv. 33-34). Quoting the sentence of the comedian Menander (or Euripides),[41] "Bad company (ὁμιλίαι κακαί) ruins good morals" (v. 33), the Apostle warns them against bad circles and improper conversations. In addition, he warns them against the views and behaviour of those who have had a negative impact on the life of the Church of Corinth; therefore, he calls them for repentance, coming to their senses and breaking with sin (v. 34a). Accusing "some" (τίνες) unknown people of ignorance of God he ends his arguments *ad hominem* (v. 34b).[42]

What is significant for further analyses is the remark of "bad company" in which the Corinthian Christians were engaged. Their pagan origin had an impact on the daily life of the Church as they continued maintaining contacts with their pagan circles. Although there were not many wise and influential people among

40 See A.J. Malherbe, "The Beasts at Ephesus," *JBL* 87 (1968) 77: "His quotation from Isa 22: 13 [...] in this context would be reminiscent of the slogan attributed to the Epicureans and reflects the contemporary anti-Epicurean bias." See more examples: G. Strecker – U. Schnelle (eds.), *Neuer Wettstein*. II/2. *Texte zum Neuen Testament aus Griechentum und Hellenismus* (Berlin – New York: de Gruyter 1996) 396-400; cf. Allo, *Saint Paul*, 417: "Il semble que l'Apôtre assimile bien ici le scepticisme qu'il combat à un certain épicuréisme gros de conséquences immorales"; Wedderburn, "The Problem of the Denial," 16: "In the latter verses [vv. 32-34] he may indeed be using conventional arguments originating in polemic against Epicureans, but now used more widely and inappropriately"; Fee, *The First Epistle*, 772; Fabris, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 206: "slogan di sapore epicureo"; Heil, *The Rhetorical Role*, 221-228. That here we are dealing with the Epicurean idea ("epicureorum vox") was formulated by J.J. Wettstein, *Novum Testamentum Graecum*… (1751) II, 169.

41 Fabris, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 207; Rosik, *"W Chrystusie wszyscy będą ożywieni" (1 Kor 15,22b)*, 233; Rosik, *Pierwszy List do Koryntian*, 492; cf. S. Longosz, "Czy Paweł Apostoł cytował komediopisarza Menandra [1 Kor 15,33]. Opinie Ojców Kościoła," *VoxP* 9 (1989) 907-924.

42 See Collins, *First Corinthians*, 561: "For Paul the well-being of the community (1:2) demands its radical separation from evil (cf. 5:5, 6, 9, 13)"; cf. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 583; Zeller, *Der erste Brief*, 455-456. It is usually accepted that the metaphorically understood appeal for sobriety and coming to one's senses (v. 34a: "Come to a sober and right mind") is a call to abandon the state of pneumatic rapture and spiritual enthusiasm and to return to a sober mind, capable of grasping the realism of the resurrection of the dead. It is not only theoretical ignorance about God and his nature (ἀγνοία) (cf. Acts 17:30), but also a bad behaviour and way of life resulting from a misunderstanding of God's matters (ἀγνωσία) (cf. Wis 13:1). That would be the sin of ignorance of God. And yet, should Paul's call be understood literally (cf. 1 Cor 11:22)?

the Corinthian Christians (1 Cor 1:26), we cannot deny the presence of Gentile Christians in the Church of Corinth, who were familiar with the wisdom of this world (cf. 1 Cor 3:18).[43]

V. 35 πῶς ἐγείρονται οἱ νεκροί; ("how are the dead raised?")

The introductory question indicates a fundamental problem that is discussed in this part of Paul's apology (vv. 35-50). It concerns the manner of the resurrection: "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" (v. 35). Does Paul refer to the beliefs of the opponents of the resurrection, or does he rather make a personal reflection on the nature of the resurrected body, not related to the objection raised in v. 12? The second opinion is highly unlikely because it is difficult to accept, if only due to the length of his arguments, that it does not relate to the claims of the opponents of the resurrection. Paul takes up a specific problem posed by his opponents: the possibility of a bodily resurrection.[44]

V. 52 ἐν ἀτόμῳ ("in a moment")

Finally, let us note the term ἄτομος ("indivisible, non-divisible") (a *hapax legomenon* in the entire Bible), which earlier occurred in the materialistic philosophy of Democritus and Epicurus, but to which Paul gives a sense of time in 1 Cor 15:52, and therefore, a possible Epicurean context of the term is refuted.[45] Nevertheless, we can ask whether Paul, showing his profound knowledge of the Stoics and citing the ancients (v. 33; cf. Acts 17:28; Tit 1:12), could not have creatively reached for ἄτομος, referring this term to the "indivisible moment" during which the dead will be raised.

43 See Fabris, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 27: "Quelli che frequentano senza scrupoli di coscienza i banchetti sacri presso i templi sono i cristiani che intrattengono buoni rapporti con l'ambiente pagano per ragioni professionali o per il loro ruolo sociale (1Cor 8,1-13)."

44 The obvious connection between the question (v. 35) and the dispute over the resurrection of the dead has been accepted by many scholars. Among the cited works: Allo, *Saint Paul*, 421: "Paul arrive au cœur du problème"; Fee, *The First Epistle*, 775-778: "This section, therefore, is absolutely crucial to the argument of chap. 15, since it responds to the real issue that led to their denial of the resurrection"; Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, IV, 271 with n. 1332: "die Fragen etwas mit der korinthischen Sicht der Dinge zu tun haben"; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 586-587. However, some authors assume that Paul did not know the true views of the Corinthian opponents of the resurrection of the dead, thus his argumentation is irrelevant. Cf. Ulrichsen, "Die Auferstehungsleugner in Korinth," 790 with n. 27, 794-796; Rosik, "Dlaczego twierdzą niektórzy," 244-245.

45 See DeWitt, *St. Paulus and Epicurus*, 117; cf. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 605. According to DeWitt, there would be more Epicurean terms in 1 Cor 15 (e.g. φθορά – ἀφθαρσία, κέντρον); see DeWitt, *Epicurus and His Philosophy*, 339; see also: Szymik, *Problem polemiki antyepikurejskiej*, 284 with n. 258.

Summing up, our observations have not been intended to simply authenticate the thesis on the Epicurean framework of the denial of the resurrection, but have aimed at capturing as faithfully as possible the real view of the opponents of the resurrection of the dead, which the Apostle recurrently exposed in his apology. The analysed texts unambiguously show that the opponents of the resurrection of the dead denied the existence of any afterlife as death meant the end of everything. Their claim continues to recur in Paul's argumentation (vv. 12, 19, 29, 32b).[46] The next remark concerns a bodily resurrection. The opponents' problem was a future resurrection of the flesh, which is clearly evident from analysing ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν and ἐγείρονται οἱ νεκροι as well as the second part of Paul's arguments (vv. 35-50). 1 Cor 15 does not contain any trace of anthropological dualism. On the other hand, it shows anthropological monism (of the Old Testament provenance?).[47] What is less important in this context is the question of whether the Corinthian opponents believed in the resurrection of Christ, at the same time doubting the general resurrection of the dead and their own resurrection.[48]

3. 1 Cor 15:12 as a Hermeneutic Problem

The latest publications focus on the thesis that in 1 Cor 15 Paul speaks to the whole Church in Corinth, and that the denial of the resurrection of the dead (v. 12) was directly the reason for speaking on this topic. There are several factors to consider when asking about the religious, social or ideological context of the dispute.

At first, it is worth examining the social structures of the Church in Corinth. Undoubtedly, Paul writes to the entire community in Corinth (ἀδελφοί in 1 Cor 15:1, 50, 58; the personal pronoun ὑμεῖς), but specifically, his apology is directed to some members of the Church (ἐν ὑμῖν τινες). Moreover, in the Church there was a separate group made up of those who were baptised for the dead

46 This view has been adopted even by those who opt for the thesis of realised eschatology or anthropological dualism. So long ago Doughty, "The Presence and Future of Salvation," 75: "Death is the end of everything," also n. 56: "Paul clearly assumes that the Corinthians deny the resurrection and the reality of future life as such"; cf. Plank, "Resurrection Theology," 42: "That this was Paul's perception of the Corinthian position is attested beyond 15:12 by 15:19 and 32. Paul perceives himself to be engaged in polemic against the denial of life after death."

47 Dunn, "How Are the Dead Raised?" 8: "[…] the deniers could not conceive of the mode of existence of the raised dead; they could not conceive of it as a bodily existence"; Brown, *Bodily Resurrection*, 104: "By these means, he seeks to convince them firstly of their future resurrection and then of the nature of the future transformed body"; cf. Cook, "Resurrection," 75: "Paul's readers from pagan backgrounds would have viewed resurrection (as opposed to the immortality of the soul) as bodily."

48 See Collins, *First Corinthians*, 543; Endsjø, "Immortal Bodies before Christ," 417, 419, 431-432; this distinction is rejected by Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, IV, 125-129 with n. 564.

(οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι). Not all of the Corinthian Christians but only a small section denied the resurrection of the dead, and not all of the believers but only a small part accepted baptism for the dead. Although Paul mentions "someone" (v. 35: ἐρεῖ τις), this phrase should be considered a literary component of his diatribe; the "someone" (τίς) could possibly belong to a group that denied the resurrection (τίνες).[49] The stratification of the Corinthian Church, the existence of numerous groups and the factionalism within the community are clearly confirmed (cf. σχίσματα in 1 Cor 1:10; 11:18).[50] This state of affairs forces us to pay attention to the *milieu* of the Corinthian Christians – the city of Corinth and its inhabitants. This port city, a Roman colony, was dominated by Roman colonisers and their culture. It was inhabited by both educated elites and ordinary citizens, by labourers and slaves. In turn, the socio-political structures of the agglomeration had an impact on the structures of the local Church and their diversity.

The structures of the Christian community, including church authorities, reflected the social structures of the city and its secular establishments.[51] Subsequently, we can assume the presence of Corinthian Christians "who were from the higher classes of Graeco-Roman society." This interaction covered many different spheres of church life, which is well illustrated by the institution of patronage.[52]

Yet, the social diversity of the Corinthian Church raises questions to which we do not have adequate answers. Let us refer to the aforementioned examples. In the context of the disputes over the resurrection of the dead in 1 Cor 15, the Corinthians' views on life after death and human immortality reconstructed on the basis of their rituals of death, sepulchral inscriptions and the existing cult of the dead that are not without significance[53]; some authors depreciate the value of

49 See Fabris, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 207; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 586: "[…] more likely they are simply part of Paul's diatribe-like rhetorical style"; *ibidem*, 587: "The 'someone' might be one of the 'some' of v. 12b."

50 Hull, *Baptism on Account of the Dead*, 224: "[…] the rampant factionalism within the community is a major concern of Paul's throughout 1 Corinthians."

51 See D.W.J. Gill, "In Search of the Social Elite in the Corinthian Church," *TynBul* 44 (1993) 323-337, which concludes: "It is at Corinth that the élite can be found to have played an important role in the ekklesia"; A.D. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth. A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1-6*, 2nd ed. (Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock 2006) 41-57.

52 Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 57; cf. Fabris, *Prima Lettera ai Corinzi*, 26-28.

53 DeMaris, "Corinthian Religion and Baptism," 666-670: "The rise of the Palaimon cult at Isthmia and the orientation of Demeter devotion in the Roman period point unequivocally to a development transcending cult boundaries: the emergence during the middle of the first century CE of a religious outlook focused intensely on the dead and the world of the dead" (p. 670); cf. Endsjø, "Immortal Bodies before Christ," 419-431: "Greek texts all through antiquity and far into the Christian era would continue to reflect the notion of the resurrected and immortalized body" (p. 431); cf. E. Håland, *Rituals of Death and Dying in Modern and Ancient Greece. Writing History from a Female Perspective* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars 2014) 485-549, see particularly 502-504.

these witnesses.[54] Similar disputes are sparked off by the presence of the popular Greek philosophy, including Epicureanism, in Corinth. Some scholars point to the knowledge of philosophy in the Corinthian elites, while others underestimate its impact.[55] However, in Corinth the presence of Epicurus' followers and the Epicurean thought is quite likely, given the political and social changes that took place after 44 BC, when Corinth became a Roman colony inhabited by newcomers from Italy, many of whom must have known the philosophy of Epicurus.[56]

At this point, we are only interested in one assertion of the founder of the Garden: "Death is nothing to us; for the body, when it has been resolved into its elements, has no feeling, and that which has no feeling is nothing to us" (Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. phil.* X, 139).[57] Following Democritus' materialistic views, Epicurus proclaimed the ultimate end of man's life at the moment of death. There is no future existence for the dead because with death the body falls apart and everything ends. Epicurus' view of death as the definitive end to everything was shared by his disciples, of which we find numerous traces in the writings of ancient authors.[58] Regardless of the direction of interpreting 1 Cor 15:12, this is exactly the way Paul understood the erroneous thought of some Corinthians when he defended the truth concerning the resurrection (see above). Moreover, Epicurus' sentence and similarly, Paul's argumentation contain a two-part structure based on the contrast: ὁ θάνατος – νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται (vv. 12-34) τὸ διαλυθέν – ἐγείρεται σῶμα πνευματικόν (vv. 35-50). The occurrence of *vox epicureum* (v. 32) and Paul's mention of bad company [and conversations] (v. 33) constitute

54 Brown, *Bodily Resurrection*, 85-89: "With all the recent research, what becomes clear is that any clues from epithets, inscriptions, and tomb art pertaining to afterlife expectation are debatable, and what that afterlife might look like is unclear."

55 See Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 30-31; differently in Brown, *Bodily Resurrection*, 81, 83: "There is, however, less evidence to suggest that the church contained people from the philosophically educated social elite"; cf. Zeller, *Der erste Brief*, 458: "Die korinthischen Zweifler wären also nicht von hochphilosophischen Vorurteilen motiviert gewesen, sondern von der heidnischen Durchschnittsmentalität."

56 The presence of Epicureanism not only in Rome but also in Greece and Asia Minor in the first century AD was many a time confirmed by ancient Greek and Roman authors (Cicero, *De fin.* I, 25; Seneca, *Ep. Luc.* LXXIX, 15; Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. phil.* X, 9). See Tomlin, "Christians and Epicureans," 53-56, p. 55: "If Epicureanism was widespread in Greece and Asia Minor, there are good reasons for thinking that this was especially so in Corinth"; cf. numerous commentaries on the same topic to Acts 17:18-34.

57 Ὁ θάνατος οὐδὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς· τὸ γὰρ διαλυθὲν ἀναισθητεῖ· τὸ δ' ἀναισθητοῦν οὐδὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς; see Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. II. *Books 6-10* (trans. R.D. Hicks) (LCL 185; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University 1925) 664-665; similarly in The Letter to Menoeceus (Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. phil.* X, 124-125). Epicurus' views on death have been discussed among others by H.-J. Klauck, *Die religiöse Umwelt des Urchristentums*. II. *Herrscher- und Kaiser-kult, Philosophie, Gnosis* (KohlST 9/2; Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln: Kohlhammer 1996) 119-120.

58 Lucretius, *De rerum* III, 445-842, 624-633, 831-832; cf. Seneca, *Ep. Luc.* XXIV, 17-18, 22-23; LIV, 4; Plutarch, *Non posse* 1103C-1105F.

further hints that suggest an ideological source of the denial of the resurrection of the dead.[59]

The obstacle to accepting the Epicurean hypothesis in 1 Cor 15:12 is not the inability to reconcile Epicurean materialism with Christian views, as some authors claim.[60] Ultimately, it is a hermeneutic problem. Having no definitive conclusions, why should we deny the influence of the popular current of Greek philosophy on the Corinthian Christians, a philosophy discussed in the streets and squares of ancient cities, and in return accept the conclusions that are often hypothetical scholarly constructions?[61]

It is still undisputed that in the second half of the first century AD, two different civilisations: Christianity, originating from the Bible and Judaism, and the pagan world, being a conglomerate of cultures and religions, entered into contact and confronted each other. Luke unquestionably testified that at the early stage of the proclamation of the Gospel, Christianity faced Greek culture and philosophy, including Epicurus' ideas (Acts 17:18). There were many philosophical schools during this period, but the author of Acts mentioned only Epicurean and Stoic

59 The observations of D.Ø. Endsjø ("Immortal Bodies before Christ") do not repudiate the aforementioned statements but seem to complete and confirm them. The Norwegian author based his observations on the events in Athens (Acts 17:16-34) and the Athenian philosophers' negative reactions to the message of the general resurrection of the dead, not *explicite* mentioning the Epicureans and Stoics. See Endsjø, "Immortal Bodies before Christ," 431-433; see p. 432: "If the resurrection of Jesus represented nothing new, what was it about the general resurrection of the dead that would make the Corinthians sceptical and the Athenians laugh?" However, we should note that those who sneered were not the Athenians but the Athenian philosophers, predominantly the Epicureans: "Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, 'We shall hear you again concerning this'" (Acts 17:32). N.C. Croy commented on this verse: "The contrast of vs. 32 should therefore be understood as open rejection versus sincere, if still somewhat hesitating, interest" – see N.C. Croy, "Hellenistic Philosophies and the Preaching of the Resurrection (Acts 17:18,32)," *NovT* 39 (1997) 28.

60 Cf. Sellin, *Der Streit um die Auferstehung*, 21: "Kann es aber solche «Epikuräer» unter Christen gegeben haben? Kann Paulus das überhaupt angenommen haben?"; Wedderburn, "The Problem of the Denial," 233: "[…] perhaps even they shared the materialistic views of the Epicureans, though quite how they reconciled other Epicurean doctrines with their Christian faith is a mystery." Here we have a wrong assumption that the impact of one element of the system necessarily means acceptance for the entire philosophical system, while it is a great simplification. K. Müller draws attention to this methodological error and its effects, K. Müller, "Die religionsgeschichtliche Methode. Erwägungen zu ihrem Verständnis und zur Praxis ihrer Vollzüge an neutestamentlichen Texten," *BZ* 29 (1985) 190: "Die Folge sind wirre Simplifikationen und Identifikationen auf der Seite der zeitgenössischen Umweltreligionen, die etwa den «Korinthern» zumuten, «sie hätten ungefähr alles geglaubt, was zwei Jahrtausende Religionsgeschichte der Mittelmeervölker hervorgebracht haben»."

61 See Fee, *The First Epistle*, 779: "There still remains the philosophical objection that must have lain behind their denial of the resurrection in the first place"; cf. Szymik, *Problem polemiki antyepikurejskiej*, 291.

philosophers. We may ask, why?[62] His message seems to be programmatically significant (Acts 17:16-34).

Not only did Luke record the beginnings of the Church, but he also kept in mind her current problems (the third *Sitz im Leben*). As in Athens and Corinth Paul preached a teaching that was completely different from Epicurus' views, so in the pagan world Christianity preached a message that was incompatible with the philosophy of the Garden. Finally, it may be worth referring the reader to A.J. Malherbe's important opinion (1992)[63]:

> While the Stoics have been in preponderance as sources for New Testament scholars, other schools have not entirely been neglected. In addition to Plutarch, the Peripatetics and Neopythagoreans have begun to make their appearance in the literature. Cynicism has received increased play, and the Epicureans continue to tantalize us.

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62 The problem has correctly been formulated by Klauck, *Die religiöse Umwelt des Urchristentums*, 75: "Gab es zur Zeit des Paulus nur diese beiden philosophischen Schulen? Wenn nicht, warum wählt Lukas gerade sie aus, und warum bewertet sie nicht völlig gleich?"; cf. H.-J. Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* (London – New York: T&T Clark 2000) 332.

63 A.J. Malherbe, "Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament," *ANRW* II, 26.1, 331.

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