The City

RESURRECTION

A Publication of Houston Baptist University

Spring 2016

THE CITY

A selection from Article 4, Question 54, Third Part of the Summa Theologiae, *written by Thomas Aquinas in the 13th Century A.D. From the Blackfriars translation, edited and translated by Thomas Gilby, et al., McGraw Hill, 1976.*

It was fitting that in the resurrection Christ's soul take up once more a body with wounds. This was so first of all for the sake of his own glory, for Bede tells us that he persevered his wounds not from any inability to cure them, *but that there might be a perpetual sign of his glorious triumph.* Augustine continues this line of reasoning, *Perhaps in the kingdom of God we shall see on the bodies of the martyrs marks of those wounds which they received for the sake of Christ's name; in their bodies this will not be a sign of deformity but of dignity. From these wounds, though they are in the body, will shine forth a beauty which is not from the body but is the result of virtue.*

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The City *Volume IX, Issue 1*

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Resurrection

Editor's Note

Jeffrey Green

I am proud to present to you the Spring 2016 issue of *The City*. This issue has been a joy to work on as the theme has been resurrection. I have had a long standing academic interest in resurrection, both with reference to Christ's resurrection but also the general resurrection of the dead. No doubt some of this interest is because of the way in which other philosophical areas I am interested in interact with the rich theological themes in these discussions. For example, resurrection brings to mind questions involving the mind-body problem, personal identity, philosophy of time, and composition.[1] More importantly, however, is that the idea of resurrection itself is one I find to be a particularly celebratory concept.

The raising of the dead is not always thought of in a celebratory context. Indeed, I would argue that our current culture's most salient reference point to the dead rising is the vast amount of television, video games, comics, books and other media that are focused on narratives involving various undead monsters and in particular vampires and zombies. While these examples are not technically cases of resurrection (the term "undead" itself gestures at the common trope in the various mythologies that the monsters are still dead but somehow animated) I think in this case the technicality is often missed and beside the point. Whether dead or in some other state, the creatures that occupy these stories act very much like a living thing in that they move, feed, speak, show intelligence, etc. Thus, whether actually resurrected or not, they are in some sense raised and it behooves us to distinguish the resurrection promised by the Bible with the corpses on our television.

I think it is hard for some Christians to feel joy in discussing resurrection

[1] For those interested in learning more about analytic philosophy and its intersection with resurrection, I encourage you to see my Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy article on this subject: http://www.iep.utm.edu/resurrec/

because it does involve death. There is a sense of morbidness about such discussions. Augustine, for example, feels compelled to address in chapter 20, book 22 of the *The City of God* what would happen to the body in the resurrection if a cannibal had digested parts of the corpse. That is not a discussion one likes to have at the dinner table. In addition, the media that I referenced before often paints existence after death as, at best, a tormented existence. The cravings of the undead never are sated and a strong sense of alienation is part of their lives. Even in a non-monstrous portrayal of reborn life we find a dark lining. The eponymous character of the television series *Dr. Who* is close to immortal given his numerous "regenerations" (again, not quite resurrection) and is portrayed not just with happiness but also a deep sense of sadness at such loss and pain his long life brings.

The Christian story about resurrection is much different than what our culture offers. It is not just another shot to live longer with the same cravings. Rather, it is the fruit of Christ's work that reconciled us with God. The existence we look forward to is not more of the same but a life where we live with God in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

Without Christ's death and resurrection this hope is worthless. As Paul writes "If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied." (1 Corinthians 15:19, NASB). Christ's resurrection is the foundation of our hope. In this issue we bring you articles that are focused on Christ's resurrection and the general resurrection of the dead. The articles pursue a wide range of topics from the Shroud of Turin to the various eye-witness accounts of Christ's resurrection to the way Christ's resurrection was understood by early Christians. I hope that you are blessed as much as I was by reading the works of these great scholars. He is risen!

JEFFREY GREEN, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Houston Baptist University where he serves as the director of the Institute of Christianity and Scholarship and the interim dean of The Graduate School.

The Resurrection of Jesus

in the Light of Jewish Burial Practices

Craig A. Evans

The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, who was put to death on a Roman cross, in Jerusalem, in the early spring of either AD 30 or 33, lies at the very heart of Christian faith and is the principal datum that accounts for the emergence of the Christian church. Skeptics, not surprisingly, express doubt. They usually say that the resurrection story is legend, myth, inadequately supported by eyewitness testimony, or the result of some elaborate hoax or conspiracy. In recent years a number of skeptics, including scholars who ought to know better, have charged that the story of the burial of Jesus itself is unhistorical, that Roman law did not in fact permit the burial of the crucified, and that the story of the burial is therefore simply part of early Christian apologetic, designed to confirm the story of the resurrection. A few of these scholars have suggested that in all probability the body of Jesus was not buried but left hanging on the cross or at best was cast into a ditch where it was mauled by animals.

Skepticism regarding the burial of Jesus is ill-founded, in the light of Roman law and Jewish law, custom, and practice. The present essay will review both of these elements.

Roman Law According to the *Digesta*

Roman law regarding the burial of the executed is far more nuanced — and lenient — than many suppose. In the *Digesta*, compiled by Roman emperor Justinian in the sixth century (AD 530–533) but comprising a great deal of law from the first and second centuries, we find important

and relevant material in chapter 24 of book 48. All three of the paragraphs that make up chapter 24, the final chapter, entitled *De cadaveribus punitorum* ("On the bodies of the punished"), are helpful. I shall treat paragraphs §1 and §3, both of which directly bear on the question of the burial of the executed.

> §1 Ulpian, *Duties of Proconsul*, book 9: The bodies of those who are condemned to death should not be refused their relatives; and the Divine Augustus, in the Tenth Book of his *Life*, said that this rule had been observed. At present, the bodies of those who have been punished are only buried when this has been requested and permission granted; and sometimes it is not permitted, especially where persons have been convicted of high treason. Even the bodies of those who have been sentenced to be burned can be claimed, in order that their bones and ashes, after having been collected, may be buried.
>
> §3 Paulus, *Views*, book 1: The bodies of persons who have been punished should be given to whoever requests them for the purpose of burial.

More than forty percent of Justinian's *Digesta* has been drawn from the writings of the jurist Ulpian (c. AD 170–223). One of his frequently cited works is his *officio proconsulis (Duties of Proconsul)*. In the first paragraph of chapter 24 the *Digesta* quotes an opinon from the ninth book of *officio proconsulis*: "The bodies of those who are condemned to death should not be refused their relatives." Ulpian supports his opinion by appealing to the precedent of the great emperor Augustus (ruled 31 BC – AD 14), which was expressed in his autobiography written near the end of his life. Ulpian goes on to say that "the bodies of those who have been punished are only buried when this has been requested and permission granted." A statement in the *lex Puteolana* (at II.13) gives the impression that Romans, as did Jews in Israel, had burial pits reserved for criminals and others buried without honor.

Both Ulpian's legal opinion and the practice that apparently was observed during the rule of Augustus are directly relevant for the juridical process concerning Jesus we see in the Gospels. Burial of the bodies of the executed was permitted in the Roman Empire in the approximate time of Jesus. It was the practice of the Augustan administration and it was the opinion of Ulpian who lived two centuries later and, as we see in

paragraph §3, it was also the opinion of Paulus, a younger contemporary of Ulpian's. The Gospel narratives are fully consistent with Roman practice and legal opinion.

But what about Ulpian's comment, "sometimes it [burial] is not permitted, especially where persons have been convicted of high treason?" Was Jesus "convicted of high treason" (*maxime maiestatis causa damnatorum*) and therefore permission might not have been granted for the burial of his corpse? It seems most unlikely that Jesus was condemned for "high treason," given the discussion of treason (*maiestas*) in *Digesta* 48.4.1–11. Cited authorities include Ulpian, Marcian, Scaevola, and others. Almost all of the examples discussed in chapter 4 of book 48 involve serious violence against the state, "against the Roman people or against their safety," including plotting the death of the emperor, plotting or attempting to assassinate a Roman official, raising an army, failing to relinquish command of an army, siding with an enemy of the empire, fomenting armed rebellion, turning an ally against Rome, etc. Jesus did nothing that approximated these kinds of actions.

Some have contended that Jesus's demonstration in the temple precincts (Mark 11:15–18 parr.) may well have been viewed as an attempt to overthrow Jewish authority and Roman government. For several reasons this argument has persuaded few. For one, Jesus had no armed following. Had he and his following attempted a violent takeover, many would have been killed and injured, which would have been mentioned by Josephus and other writers. But all we have is the crucifixion of Jesus, not the rounding up and execution of dozens, if not hundreds of followers. Josephus describes Jesus as a teacher and wonder-worker (*Ant*. 18.63–64). There is no hint that Jesus had engaged in violence. Had Jesus been involved in some treasonable action, especially one involving arms, one would have expected Josephus to tell a very different story. It is likely too that the Roman writers who mention Jesus and the rise of Christianity (e.g., Suetonius and Tacitus) would have mentioned a violent takeover attempt had there been one.

Opinion §3 on the laws relating to bodies of the executed is quite brief. The opinion of Paulus (*Views*, book 1), or Julius Paulus Prudentissimus, a jurist who flourished in the late second and early third centuries AD, is cited without qualification or exception: "The bodies of persons who have been punished should be given to whoever requests [*petentibus*]

them for the purpose of burial." Bodies of the executed should be allowed burial, but official requests must be made; bodies cannot simply be taken down from crosses or gibbets without permission. Josephus (AD 37 – c. 100) himself makes such a request of Titus, son of Vespasian, and it is granted (*Life* 420–21).

It is clear from the early laws and opinions cited in the *Digesta* that in most cases the bodies of the executed, including those crucified, were permitted burial, if requests were made. We see this in the case of Jesus, whose body for burial was requested by Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish council (Mark 15:42–47 parr.). This is completely consistent with Jewish law and custom, which placed the burden of burial on the Jewish council (or Sanhedrin) when it condemned and executed someone.

JOSEPHUS ON CRUCIFIXION AND BURIAL

The most pertinent statement comes from Josephus, who complains of the crimes of the rebels during the great Jewish revolt (AD 66–73). He finds particularly heinous the rebels' treatment of the ruling priests, whom they murdered:

> They actually went so far in their impiety as to cast out the corpses without burial, though the Jews are so careful about funeral rites that even malefactors who have been sentenced to crucifixion are taken down and buried before sunset. (*J.W.* 4.317)

What Josephus says here is especially relevant for the question of the burial of the crucified Jesus. Josephus is speaking of his own time, that is, from the time of Pontius Pilate, prefect of Samaria and Judea, to the time of the Jewish revolt. He clearly states that those executed by crucifixion were "taken down and buried before sunset." Because only Roman authority in Samaria and Judea could execute anyone (Josephus, *J.W.* 2.117; *Ant.* 20.200–203; John 18:31), we must assume in the statement by Josephus that those who do the crucifying are the Romans. Though executed by the Romans, those crucified were buried. If condemned by the Jewish council, it was incumbent on the council to arrange for the burial of the executed (*m. Sanhedrin* 6.5–6; more on this below). This was done out of concern for the purity of the land, not out of pity for the executed or his family (Deut 21:23).

Josephus also states that those executed by crucifixion were "buried

before sunset." Here we must assume that Josephus refers to his own people who do the burying, for the concern to bury the executed person "before sunset" is a Jewish concern not a Roman one. This Jewish practice was based on Deut 21:22–23 (". . . his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall bury him the same day . . ."; RSV), a law very much in force in the time of Jesus, as seen in contemporary literature, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls (e.g., 11Q19 64:7–13). What we have here is fully consistent with what we see in the Gospels: *The Romans* crucify Jesus and two other men and the *Jews* bury them. To argue that because a malefactor was executed by Roman authority he likely would not be buried flies in the face of the evidence that Roman authority in Jewish Palestine, during peacetime, in fact did accommodate Jewish customs and sensitivities, which included doing nothing that defiled the land.

There is also archaeological evidence that corroborates the literary evidence. One thinks of the crucified remains of one Yehohanan, crucified under the authority of Pontius Pilate. Though crucified, he was nevertheless properly buried (with an iron spike still embedded in his right heel). The skeletal remains of at least three other executed persons have been recovered from tombs and ossuaries, as well as dozens of nails and spikes, many of which had been used in crucifixion.

The evidence in hand probably represents only a small fraction of what existed at one time. This is because the small bones (hands and feet), which provide evidence of crucifixion, rarely survive intact. Moreover, we should assume that the remains of most of those crucified were from the lower classes and so would not have been placed in ossuaries in secure tombs, as were the remains of Yehohanan, who evidently belonged to a family of means. The archaeological evidence, as limited as it is, supports the literary evidence in suggesting that in Palestine in the time of Jesus the crucified were in fact buried.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The burial narratives of the New Testament Gospels are not only "consistent with archaeological evidence and with Jewish law," as archaeologist Jodi Magness has said,[1] they are consistent with Roman law

[1] J. Magness, "Jesus' Tomb: What Did it Look Like?" in H. Shanks (ed.), *Where Christianity Was Born* (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 2006) 212–26, with quotation from p. 224. Magness is rightly contradicting John Dominic Crossan's claim that the burial of Yehohanan was unusual and that Jesus of Nazareth probably was not buried.

and with Roman literary and archaeological evidence. The legal opinions provided in the sixth-century *Digesta* 48.24 are early and are corroborated by first century literary and archaeological evidence. Joseph's request to bury the body of Jesus was fully in keeping with law and practice throughout the Roman Empire and, especially, in the Jewish homeland, where a corpse left unburied overnight was seen as a defilement of the land. (This equally applies in an eschatological setting; see 4Q285 frag. 5 = 11Q14 frag. 1, col. i, where after the Kittim [= Romans] are defeated in battle, the priests give oversight to purification "from the guilty blood of the corpses" of the enemy.)

Every source we have indicates that the practice in Israel, especially in the vicinity of Jerusalem, in peacetime, was to bury the executed before nightfall. This was a practice that Roman authority permitted. War was another matter, of course. When Titus besieged Jerusalem from AD 69 to 70, thousands of Jews were crucified and very few of them were buried. The whole point of these thousands left unburied in plain view of the inhabitants of Jerusalem was to terrorize the resistance and bring the rebellion to an end (as recounted by Josephus, *J.W.* 5.289, 449). This was the true "exception that proves the rule": Roman authority in Israel normally did permit burial of executed criminals, including those executed by crucifixion (as Josephus implies), but it did not during the rebellion of 66–70.

There is another important point that needs to be made. The process that led to the execution of Jesus, and perhaps also the two men crucified with him, *was initiated by the Jewish Council*. According to law and custom when the Jewish council (or Sanhedrin) condemned someone to death, by whatever means, it fell to the council to have that person buried. This was the role played by Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish council (Mark 15:43). The executed were to be buried properly, but not in places of honor, such as the family tomb. This is clearly taught in the earliest writings of the rabbis: "They did not bury (the executed criminal) in the burying-place of his fathers. But two burying-places were kept in readiness *by the Sanhedrin*, one for them that were beheaded or strangled, and one for them that were stoned or burnt" (*m. Sanhedrin* 6:5, emphasis added; "strangled" would include those hanged and those crucified). The place reserved for burial of criminals was sometimes referred to as a "wretched place": "Neither a corpse nor the bones of a

corpse may be transferred from a wretched place to an honored place, nor, needless to say, from an honored placed to a wretched place; but if to the family tomb, even from an honored place to a wretched place, it is permitted" (*Semahot* 13.7).

Not only was the body of a criminal not to be buried in a place of honor, no public mourning for executed criminals was permitted: "they used not to make [open] lamentation . . . for mourning has place in the heart alone" (*m. Sanhedrin* 6:6). None of this law would make any sense if executed criminals were not in fact buried. There would have been no need to set aside tombs for executed criminals. There would simply be no remains to transfer from a "wretched place" to an "honored place."

The Jewish council was responsible to oversee the proper burial of the executed because the bodies of the executed were normally not surrendered to family and friends. The burial of the executed in "wretched places," that is, in tombs set aside for criminals, was part of the punishment. No public mourning and lamentation were permitted. The remains of the executed could not be transferred from these dishonorable tombs for one year. After one year (see *b. Qiddushin* 31b), the remains could be taken by family members to the family tomb or to some other place of honor.

The terse, almost matter-of-fact burial narrative we find in Mark 15 exhibits realism at every point. The narrative agrees with what is known of the relevant literature and archaeological data, both Jewish and Roman, both Palestinian and elsewhere in the empire. That the body of Jesus was taken down from the cross and placed in a known tomb, under the direction of someone acting on behalf of the Jewish Council, should be accepted as historical.

In view of the evidence relating to burial, whether in the Roman Empire in general or more specifically in Israel whose Jewish population was greatly concerned with protecting the purity of the land, it seems highly probable that Jesus and others who were executed were in fact buried. Discussion of the resurrection of Jesus should assume that Jesus had been buried. One must then ask in what sense the first Christians would have spoken of "resurrection," had the body of Jesus remained in a tomb, awaiting the future gathering of its skeletal remains for interment in the family tomb? It seems to me that the burial of Jesus has profound implications for the discussion of his resurrection.

The resurrection of Jesus launched the Christian movement. Its proclamation was the initial message, and along with it was the assumption, as well as knowledge, of the burial of the body of Jesus. Debate centered on the question of the resurrection will make no progress by gratuitously asserting that no burial took place or, if it did, no one knew where it took place. Believers and skeptics alike should judge the burial tradition as early and highly probable tradition.

CRAIG A. EVANS, PhD, DHabil, is the John Bisagno Distinguished Professor of Christian Origins and dean of the School of Christian Thought at Houston Baptist University. He has published extensively on Jesus and the Gospels and has appeared in several television documentaries and news programs.

The Resurrection of Jesus

in Contemporary Theology

Gary R. Habermas

During my several decades of specializing in studies regarding the resurrection of Jesus, many theological and philosophical trends have come and gone. Why broad changes take place is any field of study is an intriguing study in itself, though this is not the emphasis of this essay. Rather, in this article, we will demarcate a half dozen new "resurrection-conducive emphases" that have emerged fairly recently, most of which have contributed to the more positive, scholarly assessment of this event.

To begin with a couple of examples from personal experience, while attending graduate school in the early 1970s, if a classmate believed in the empty tomb and/or *bodily* appearances of Jesus, that individual could not only be numbered among a small minority of researchers, but could often be identified as either an evangelical or a conservative Catholic. On the other hand, not too many years later, both views now seem to be the majority stances! Did new data emerge during this time? Did the times simply change? Perhaps neither, both, or still other reasons can best account for these shifts, but something definitely has been happening.

As noted, we will enumerate a half dozen of these new directions that have dominated research in recent years. Together, they will help to explain some of the developments throughout the current theological and philosophical terrain.

CHALLENGES TO NATURALISM

While not necessarily the case throughout the rest of the world, philosophical Naturalism has been the dominant world view expressed in western universities for quite some time. Along with this outlook there was often a disparaging of certain religious, metaphysical, or related positions, especially those that accept the reality of supernatural occurrences.

However, during the last two or three decades, both scientific and popular developments that oppose the dominant Naturalistic views have made the news frequently. Some of these include the huge popularity of Near-Death Experiences, documentaries and videos on the intricate levels of design in nature, several detailed studies of unexplained medical healings, at least a couple of successful double-blind prayer experiments, as well as cognitive studies dealing with what some researchers have dubbed the "God spot" in the human brain that seems to be consistent with the desire for religious experiences. As recent polls have indicated, the cumulative effect of these and other developments has been to wear down the confidence that there is no reality beyond this world.

In spite of what they may be taught in their college classes, students today are increasingly much more religious, though not in an institutional sense. Perhaps some of this has to do with the apparent aggregate influence of these recent developments in the West, elevating the positive level of belief in supernatural or religious topics such as God's existence, life after death, the importance of morality, prayer, worship, and at least a greater interest in the belief in miracles. In turn, these attitudes have no doubt created more of an open atmosphere when Christians have proclaimed beliefs like the resurrection.

THE THIRD QUEST FOR THE HISTORICAL JESUS

During the early to mid-twentieth century, many of the most influential theological voices, such as Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann, frequently disparaged any interest in historical Jesus studies. Often dubbed the "No Quest" period, historical studies and

especially the study of any evidences for faith were often treated with near-disgust. In the middle of the century, this negativity gave way to a more limited and short-lived movement known as the Second Quest for the Historical Jesus, largely instigated by Bultmann's own students, who recognized that history was still a necessary cognate of faith, at least in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Out of this milieu, the last quarter of the century witnessed the birth of the Third Quest for the Historical Jesus. Beginning with several studies by major scholars, this movement has bloomed into the dominant topic in contemporary theological and historical studies. Engaging liberal, moderate, and conservative scholars across the board, the chief idea uniting this widespread trend is to anchor Jesus within the Jewish history, culture, and practices of his day. As was the case in the nineteenth century during the dominant reign of the First Quest for the Historical Jesus, a plethora of books have been published in recent years with the words "Historical Jesus" located somewhere in the title.

With the current emphasis on what can be known historically about Jesus's life and teachings, virtually no subject is off limits. Good arguments and insights get published no matter how liberal or conservative the author may be. Yet another example that tended to single out conservative graduate students in the 1970s was considering Jesus to be a miracle-worker and exorcist. Yet at present, this realization is currently conceded in some sense by virtually every scholar writing today, no matter how skeptical! So the atmosphere is quite open to resurrection studies, as well.

THE CURRENT STATE OF GOSPEL STUDIES

While the scholarly opinion regarding the four canonical Gospels is still not close to the level of critical preference for Paul's "authentic epistles," there seems to be a growing recognition emerging, that the Gospels are at least better historical sources than was often acknowledged in earlier decades. Largely augmented by the implementation and application of the historical rules known as the critical criteria—in spite of some recent doubts concerning these—the situation began looking up, at least slightly.

Cambridge University scholar Richard Bauckham's volume *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (2008) probably provided the greatest boost here, indicating that more than just American evangelicals and conservative Catholic scholars alone were involved in these sorts of historical studies. Along with Bauckham's work is an earlier text by another British author, Richard Burridge's *What are the Gospels?* (1992), which championed the argument that all four Gospels are closer to Greco-Roman biographies than previously thought, bringing these texts more into a recognizable historical setting.

Strangely enough, a hint in a different direction was contributed by a few agnostic and otherwise quite skeptical New Testament commentators who have moved back the date for one or more of the Synoptic Gospels. Mark's date of composition has been placed as far back as 40 AD or a little later, with Matthew being dated not long afterward. To be sure, these last developments are certainly minority moves, at least at present, and do not insure widespread agreement on the Gospel dates. Yet overall, the combined upshot of these developments may still portend a thaw in the treatment of the Gospels, creating an atmosphere that is even more conducive to resurrection studies.

EARLY NEW TESTAMENT CREEDS

This trend began a little earlier than the others, and takes a little more detail to unpack. One of the most exciting questions that can be asked regarding the embryonic church concerns the nature of the earliest apostolic preaching and teaching prior to the writing of the very first New Testament book. Our best windows into this approximately twenty-year period of time are the dozens of early creedal texts that made their way chiefly into the New Testament epistles, but which actually date from much earlier.

While not exactly synonymous terms, these creeds or traditions are generally brief sayings that were easily memorized and passed on, even in illiterate cultures. That was crucial in that it is now thought that the majority of Jesus's listeners were probably illiterate. So these creeds served in different capacities, such as preaching and teaching, along with liturgical and confessional situations where they could be

remembered easily.

Being able to locate these passages as they are embedded in New Testament texts comes from a variety of signs such as sentence structure, cadence, syntactical breaks, words not used elsewhere by the same author, and sometimes even a direct introductory comment that identifies these words specifically as traditions (such as used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:23 and 15:3).

Perhaps amazingly to some, scholars pretty much agree where these creedal texts are located. Key examples include Romans 1:3-4 and 10:9, along with 1 Corinthians 8:6 and 15:3-7. A longer text is found in Philippians 2:6-11, frequently held to be an early Christian hymn. Brief sermon summaries are located in Acts 1-5, 10, 13, and 17.

The importance of these brief reports can hardly be overestimated. Even agnostic and other skeptical New Testament scholars regularly date some of these traditional passages back into the 30s AD, often within just a year or two after the crucifixion itself! Further, in the vast majority of cases, the subject matter of these snippets concerns the gospel message of the deity, death, and resurrection of Jesus, precisely at the center of the Christian faith.

For example, the creed in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 is almost always treated as being pre-Pauline, indicating that it actually predates Paul's conversion, placing it at only one or two years after Jesus's crucifixion. Agnostic New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman asks how we can get any closer to the eyewitnesses than this?[1] Together, these items combine to provide the strongest testimony available for the resurrection appearances of Jesus. Combined with a few of the Acts sermon summaries, this is quite a powerful combination.

THE EMPTY TOMB

We have remarked that, just a few decades ago, the empty tomb was widely thought to be a legendary report and had few defenders beyond evangelical and more conservative Catholic scholars. Today it is the majority position among contemporary New Testament commentators that the tomb in which Jesus was buried was discovered

[1] Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist? The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), 144-148, especially 145.

empty just slightly later.

What accounts for this rather drastic scholarly shift? A large portion of the new attitude is due to the reassessment of the Gospels mentioned above. More particularly, the application of the critical criteria revealed several major considerations that favor the facticity of the empty tomb. Most notably, no one attempting to tell this story later and wishing to be believed would make the women their chief witnesses, due to the low esteem in the ancient Mediterranean world for women as official witnesses. It would simply have been too embarrassing of a move.

This is especially the case when one could just as easily have written the apostles or even the Jewish leaders into the original script as the discoverers of the empty tomb. Further, the fact that *four out of four* Gospel authors took the same route is absolutely unfathomable! In fact, most researchers conclude that it can basically signify only one thing: the authors told the story that way because that is exactly what happened!

As a result, this insight provided by the fact of the female testimony became one of the chief reasons why most scholars have come to recognize the strength of the empty tomb accounts. But even beyond this case of embarrassment, there are many additional critical pointers to the historicity of the empty tomb that have also emerged from the application of these critical rules along with other factors.[2] Similar sorts of reasons also have been recognized on behalf of Jesus's resurrection appearances.[3]

THE BODILY NATURE OF JESUS'S RESURRECTION APPEARANCES

The other example mentioned earlier was that of Jesus's bodily appearances. A few decades ago, perhaps the most popular view among critical scholars was that Jesus really rose from the dead and actually appeared to his followers, though he did so in less than a fully physical body. Perhaps Jesus's appearances looked more like holograms or some sort of light visions. It is questionable according

[2] Gary R. Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 23-24.
[3] Ibid., 19-31.

to such a notion whether or not Jesus's body could have been touched by his followers. Nonetheless, while Jesus was truly there with his disciples and was really alive, he did not possess a physical body.

But today the dominant view seems to have shifted in the direction of bodily appearances. A mediating position, chiefly among critical scholars who personally reject the resurrection event itself, is that at least the New Testament writers themselves believed that Jesus's appearances occurred in a real body. Even this is also a change from where scholarship was not long ago.

This shift to affirming the bodily nature of Jesus's appearances also occurred for a variety of reasons, perhaps chief among them being studies on the influence of the majority Jewish position at that time regarding the bodily resurrection of the righteous dead, as well as the emergence of several major studies championing the position that many key New Testament texts strongly supported this position regarding Jesus's resurrection body, as well.

None of these studies was more influential that N.T. Wright's hundreds of pages devoted to a painstaking analysis that detailed the meaning of the term "resurrection" and its cognate terms in the ancient world. Wright concluded after a meticulous search that whenever these words were employed throughout the period from prior to the rise of Christianity up until the end of the second century AD, whether among Christians, Jews, or others, the terms always referenced *bodily* events. While other views of the afterlife were certainly held during this time, the word "resurrection" was not used to describe those other positions, as it was reserved for bodily life.[4]

CONCLUSION

Influential New Testament historian E.P. Sanders described the overall consensus critical position by providing a list of the historical items that are regularly postulated regarding Jesus's life. Among the facts that Sanders lists is the majority critical concession that Jesus actually appeared to his followers in some form after his death![5]

[4] Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist? The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), 144-148, especially 145.

[5] E.P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993), 11, 13, 278, 280.

Although Sanders may be overly optimistic here, this general milieu is still a long way from the majority position in the scholarly arena just a few decades ago. But these changes have been embraced due to some of the scholarly developments that we have described in this article.

We have attempted here to outline some of the main contributions to the changing scene of resurrection studies in recent decades. The upshot of these and other developments generally has been quite favorable towards the historicity of this event, which has produced some fertile ground for ongoing studies. This is a good time to be studying the subject of Jesus's resurrection.

GARY R. HABERMAS, PhD, is Distinguished Research Professor and chair of the Department of Philosophy at Liberty University. He has also written more than 100 publications on the historical Jesus.

What are the Primary Sources for Jesus's Resurrection?

Michael R. Licona

In the study of history, primary sources are the documents and artifacts closest to the matter being investigated. They are dated very close to the events they describe. In contrast, secondary sources use primary sources when writing about a historical matter being investigated. Sometimes the primary sources have all perished. For example, the earliest accounts we have describing the origins of Rome and Greece were written hundreds of years later. In these cases, all historians have to work with are secondary and tertiary sources. Eyewitness sources are primary sources. However, if no eyewitness sources have survived, a second-hand source (not to be confused with a secondary source) writing close to the event can be a primary source. So, all eyewitness sources are primary sources, but not all primary sources are eyewitnesses.

Let us consider the question pertaining to whether Jesus's resurrection was a historical event. One of the first tasks of the historian is to gather a pool of sources reporting an event and assess them. Let's begin with those written later and work ourselves backward in time.

The *Gospel of Peter* was written sometime in the second century while the *Gospel of Thomas* and revelation dialogues (e.g., *Epistle of the Apostles, Treatise on the Resurrection, Apocryphon of James*) were probably written in the second half of that century. To my knowledge, no scholars regard them as having been written by Peter, Thomas, or Christians who had known the apostles. While the revelation dialogues are entirely fictitious, the *Gospel of Thomas*

and *Gospel of Peter* show awareness of the New Testament Gospels whose teachings they borrow and comingle with great literary embellishment (*Gospel of Peter*) and gnostic teachings (*Gospel of Thomas*). Therefore, none of them are primary sources. At best, the *Gospel of Thomas* and *Gospel of Peter* are secondary sources.

Writing a little earlier, three leaders of the early church named Clement of Rome, Polycarp, and Ignatius mention Jesus's resurrection. Two of them, Clement and Polycarp, probably knew the apostles Peter and John respectively. Clement of Rome and Polycarp are probably repeating some of the information they had heard from Peter and John. Though Ignatius is fairly early and was a friend of Polycarp, there is no evidence suggesting he had met one of the apostles. Although it is possible he did, historians must primarily concern themselves with matters that are probable. Since it is probable that Clement and Polycarp heard about Jesus's resurrection from Peter and John, they are primary sources related to that event. Although they mention Jesus's resurrection on a few occasions, they do not provide any details.

Going back a little earlier, it is possible the Jewish historian Josephus mentions Jesus's resurrection or more likely reports the apostles claiming that Jesus had been raised from the dead. But certainty eludes us, since a Christian in the second century altered one of the two texts in which Josephus mentions Jesus so that Josephus would appear to have spoken about Jesus in laudatory terms in one of them, the one mentioning Jesus's death and resurrection. But an early church father named Origen informs us Josephus was not a Christian. If Origen is correct, it is very unlikely that Josephus would have made such remarks as calling Jesus a "wise man, if one could even call him a man," "he was the Messiah," and that he rose from the dead "as the divine prophets foretold with ten thousand other wonderful things about him" (*Antiquities* 18:63). As a result, we are unable to decipher whether Josephus mentioned Jesus's resurrection in his original text.

The earliest literature mentioning Jesus's resurrection is found in our New Testament. Although the New Testament is purchased as a single volume and often includes the Old Testament, it is actually a collection of 27 books and letters written by no less than

nine authors within the first century of the Christian church and regarded by Christians of succeeding generations as being of special value and usually carrying divine authority. Not all of the New Testament literature mentions Jesus's resurrection. Those books and letters that do are the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—Acts, some of Paul's letters, 1 Peter, and Hebrews.

Hebrews 10:1-11 uses the present tense when referring to the temple priests offering sacrifices in the Jerusalem temple every day of every year. Since the temple was destroyed in AD 70, it seems likely that Hebrews was written before that event. But we do not know who wrote Hebrews and have not since at least the early third century. Moreover, no strong testimony exists pertaining to the author's identity. Hebrews 13:20 mentions Jesus's resurrection in passing. But no description of the event is provided pertaining to the nature of the event, such as whether it was something that involved Jesus's corpse. Thus, although Hebrews 13:20 is a primary source, it is not very helpful other than to inform us that Jesus's return from the dead, whatever the nature of the event, was being proclaimed within only a few decades of his death.

Jesus's resurrection is mentioned on three occasions in 1 Peter (1:3, 21; 3:21). Like Hebrews, 1 Peter is a primary source given its date of composition is close to the time in which Jesus would have been resurrected. Unfortunately, similar to Hebrews 13:20, none of the three references tell us much about the nature of the event.

This brings us to the Gospels. Most scholars accept the early church tradition that the Gospel of Mark was written by John Mark who received his information from the apostle Peter and that Luke's Gospel was written by a traveling companion of Paul who received his information from Paul and other eyewitnesses who had been with Jesus. There is no scholarly agreement today on the identification of the author of John's Gospel. Almost all of the early church tradition attributed its authorship to John the son of Zebedee, who was one of Jesus's three closest disciples. Although most of today's New Testament scholars reject that tradition, they still think the Beloved Disciple mentioned in John's Gospel was the eyewitness source of much of the information contained in John. Many think him to be one of Jesus's minor disciples; others continue to maintain that the

author was in fact John the son of Zebedee.

The authorship of Matthew's Gospel is a wooly matter. Few of today's scholars think Matthew wrote it. The reason is Papias from whom comes our earliest report pertaining to the authorship of Matthew and Mark likewise tells us that Matthew wrote his Gospel in the Hebrew or Aramaic dialect. The problem is that even prominent evangelical New Testament scholars, such as D. A. Carson, Doug Moo, and Dan Wallace, who have a particular expertise in the Greek language have concluded that Matthew's Gospel is not written in translation Greek. In other words, the Gospel of Matthew in our New Testament was probably not initially written in Hebrew or Aramaic then subsequently translated into Greek. But if Papias was mistaken on that matter, should we trust him on the matter of Matthew writing the Gospel?

A solution in which we can have great confidence eludes us. However, there are possibilities. Papias actually wrote, "So Matthew composed the oracles in the Hebrew dialect and each person interpreted them as best he could" (Fragments of Papias 3:16, Holmes numbering). The Greek term Papias uses for "oracles" is *ta logia* or "the teachings." Perhaps Matthew wrote a smaller treatment than the Gospel attributed to him in which he included a number of Jesus's teachings and this was subsequently translated into Greek and combined with other sources, such as Mark's Gospel. Perhaps all of this was done with Matthew's knowledge, review, and approval. We can only speculate. However, given the unanimous attribution of the early church of that Gospel to Matthew, it seems more likely that Matthew played some part in what has come down to us today as the Gospel of Matthew. Even with the challenge of authorship related to John and Matthew, all four of our New Testament Gospels were written very close to the events they purport to describe. Therefore, they are primary sources for Jesus's resurrection.

Finally, we come to Paul's letters. Since Paul was executed in AD 65 or before, all of his letters were written by that time. Paul may well have written before any of the Gospels. Moreover, not only does Paul claim to have been an eyewitness of the risen Jesus (1 Cor 9:1; 15:8), he knew the leading apostles in Jerusalem — Peter,

James, and John — and had run by them the gospel message he had been preaching to ensure it was compatible with what they were preaching. And they certified that his message was in alignment with their own (Gal 2:1-9). At least that is what Paul claimed. But should we believe him?

Historians look for sources that corroborate what is claimed in another. In this case, we have some interesting sources that strongly suggest Paul was telling the truth. Recall that Clement of Rome and Polycarp were probably acquainted with the apostles Peter and John respectively. It may, therefore, be fruitful to observe what Clement and Polycarp write about Paul. Clement refers to Peter and Paul as "the most righteous pillars" and "good apostles" (1 Clem. 5:2ff., Holmes numbering) while Polycarp calls him "the blessed and glorious Paul . . . [who] accurately and reliably taught the message of truth" (1 Clem. 3:2, Holmes numbering). These are not the sort of remarks we would expect from Clement and Polycarp if Paul had taught a message that was essentially different from what their mentors Peter and John had taught. But such remarks would not surprise us if Paul was being honest when saying he was preaching the same message as the Jerusalem apostles. So, Paul writes very early, claims to be an eyewitness of the risen Jesus, and proclaimed the same gospel message being preached by the Jerusalem apostles who had known Jesus. Thus, when we read the gospel message in Paul's letters, we are likewise able to hear the voice of the Jerusalem apostles on the matter. Paul's letters are, indeed, primary sources in terms of Jesus's resurrection.

Wouldn't it be nice if we had a letter in which Paul described the gospel message that he had been preaching? Then we could know what the earliest Christian leaders were teaching about Jesus's resurrection. That would be historical gold! It happens that we have precisely that. In 1 Corinthians 15:1, Paul writes, "Now I want to remind you, brothers, of the gospel that I preached to you" (verses in this article are the author's translation). Paul then proceeds to give an oral tradition that contains an outline of his gospel message. He says, "I delivered to you what I also received." The terms "delivered" and "received" were often employed to connote the imparting of oral tradition. Paul then proceeds,

> Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.
>
> And that he was buried.
>
> And that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.
>
> And that he appeared.

Notice the parallelism, the long-short-long-short progression that was common in oral tradition. Paul then lists six appearances of the risen Jesus: to Peter, to the Twelve, to more than 500 Christians, to James, to all of the apostles. Then Paul adds his own name to the list, "Last of all, as to one untimely born, he also appeared to me." This is remarkable. We can be certain that the apostles were proclaiming that Jesus died, was buried, was raised, and appeared on multiple occasions, to individuals and to groups, to friend and foe.

Since Paul was writing letters and not a narrative, he does not go into the detail regarding Jesus's resurrection that we find in the Gospels. For example, he never mentions an empty tomb. But what Paul tells us suggests Jesus's resurrection body was physical in its nature. In 1 Cor 15:20, Paul tells us Jesus was the first to be raised with a resurrection body. Three verses later, he tells us believers will receive their resurrection body at Jesus's second coming. Paul provides us with a short trailer for that event in 1 Thess 4:14-17 where he says God will bring with Jesus the dead who belong to Christ, that is, believers who have died and are already with Christ (2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23-24). Then the command will be given, the trumpet will sound, and the dead in Christ will rise. But how can they rise when they are already returning with Jesus? They can because they are absent from their body. So, their spirits return with Christ and are reunited with their old bodies, which are resurrected and transformed into an immortal, powerful, glorious body that is empowered by the Holy Spirit. It is a body having the same nature as the one with which Jesus was raised. This is why Paul can write in Rom 8:11, "Now if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Jesus from the dead will give life also to your mortal bodies through the dwelling of his Spirit in you." For Paul, Christ was the first to be raised from the dead with

a resurrection body and his followers will receive theirs when he returns. At that time, their mortal bodies will be transformed into immortality.

The Gospels tell us even more about Jesus's resurrection. That Jesus had risen from the dead was discovered early Sunday morning when a few of his women followers came to visit his tomb, which they discovered empty. Jesus appeared to them and his male disciples shortly thereafter. His disciples could touch him and he could eat. He could appear and disappear at will and remained with them for a while before ascending to heaven.

There is one more source we need to consider. The book of Acts was written by Luke and was a sequel to his Gospel. In the first chapter, Luke says Jesus remained with his disciples for 40 days before ascending to heaven. Also of interest are the speeches in Acts. Speeches given by principal characters in the book of Acts comprise 22 percent of the entire book. Craig Keener has recently written a magisterial commentary on Acts that appears in four volumes and is more than 4,000 pages. Keener's main concern is understanding Acts in its historical setting. He argues that Luke had been a traveling companion of Paul and, thus, was able to report first-hand many of the things he had seen. He had heard Paul preach and would have been familiar with the apostolic preaching.[1] Therefore, Acts is the primary source. Many scholars think this apostolic preaching was the source behind the speeches of Peter and Paul in Acts 2, 10, and 13. In these speeches, Jesus's death, burial, and bodily resurrection are mentioned or implied.

CONCLUSION

We have surveyed a number of sources that mention Jesus's resurrection and are able to summarize our findings. Our primary sources include some of Paul's letters, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts, Hebrews, 1 Peter, Clement of Rome, and Polycarp. Of these Hebrews, 1 Peter, Clement of Rome, and Polycarp inform us that Jesus's resurrection was being proclaimed. However, they do

[1] Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*. 4 vols. Vol. 1, *Introduction and 1:1–2:47*. Vol. 2, *3:1–14:28*. Vol. 3, *15:1–23:35*. Vol. 4, *24:1–28:31*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012–15). For Luke as author, see Vol. 1, 406-16.

not provide any details about the event itself or the nature of Jesus's resurrection. Paul's letters, the Gospels and Acts inform us that Jesus's resurrection involved his corpse and that he had appeared to others. From Paul, we have rock solid evidence that this is also what the Jerusalem apostles were proclaiming.

In all, we have a very nice collection of primary sources we can use in a historical investigation of Jesus's resurrection. At the very minimum, these inform us the apostles were proclaiming that Jesus had been raised bodily from the dead and had appeared to them in individual and group setting, to friend and foe alike.

MICHAEL R. LICONA, PhD, is Associate Professor of Theology at Houston Baptist University. He has written six books and numerous journal articles and essays. Licona has spoken on more than 70 university campuses.

Witnesses to Resurrection

THE WOMEN'S STORY

Pheme Perkins

As Paul summarizes the faith which he received and handed on to the Corinthians in 1 Cor 15:3–5, followed by an expanded list of witnesses in vv. 6–9, the important figures are men. If any women were involved, they are masked by the masculine plural "five hundred brothers at a time, most of whom are still alive" (v. 6). Couple that with the abrupt ending at Mark 16:8a, which has the women flee the tomb and remain silent rather than convey the angel's announcement to "'his disciples and Peter" (v. 7), and the women's story might seem irrelevant to our faith. But is it? It certainly was not forgotten by the evangelists, who expand their story rather than ignore it.

Matthew's solution to Mark's awkward ending disposes of the fear and silence in two moves. First, fear is followed by joy which leads them to run to tell the news to the disciples (Matt 28:8b; also reflected in Luke 24:10b, 22–23). Second, as they head off, Jesus himself appears, repeating the angel's message, "do not fear, go announce to my brothers that they should go to Galilee and there they will see me" (v. 10). Luke's narrative recrafting of the traditions that he employed (1:1–4) takes care to incorporate the women within the larger group of disciples who have followed Jesus since Galilee (Luke 8:1–3; 23:49). They are able to "remember what he said to you while still in Galilee that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, be crucified, and rise on the third day" (24:6–7). The disciples on the road to Emmaus report to the stranger (Jesus),

"some women *from among us* ... did not find his body ...saw a vision of angels who said that he lives" (v. 23). Though only Cleopas and his unidentified companion (vv. 28–31) and Peter (v. 34) have seen the Lord himself prior to his appearance to the assembled group (vv. 36–49), this narrative line includes the women among those engaged in excited discussion of the day's events when Jesus suddenly appears.

John's Gospel has the most complex set of resurrection appearance stories, which chapter 20 focused on Jerusalem (as in Luke) and chapter 21 a later encounter between Jesus and a group of male disciples at the Sea of Galilee. The Galilee location echoes the promise of Mark 16:7 and the mountain appearance of Matt 28:16–20. But the miraculous catch of fish which signals the numinous presence of Jesus echoes the calling of Peter, James and John in Luke 5:1–11. Galilean appearances do not belong to the women's story in any gospel. But John 20:11–18 transforms the brief encounter reflected in Matt 28:9–10 into a revelatory dialogue between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. Later tradition would hail her "apostle to the apostles" on the strength of this story. Unlike the meal appearances, the Emmaus story, the dawn at the Sea of Galilee story, and this encounter all employ a familiar folk pattern. The deity is hidden in the guise of a stranger until the dramatic tell-tale sign reveals the god or goddess.

MEMORY AS THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH

Scholars increasingly recognize that a positivist historicism which claims to strip away all vestiges of communal story-telling and dramatic elaboration to produce some version of what an outsider, non-believer or investigative reporter would uncover in AD 33 makes no sense. Even immediate eyewitness testimony is reshaped as it is remembered and retold. Both Luke and John acknowledge the existence of other stories about Jesus. And both evangelists describe their task as providing a foundation for faith as proclaimed within the Christian community (Luke 1:1–4; John 20:30–31). Both also insist that the Christian story rests on a foundation of reliable witnesses (Luke 24:48–49; John 21:24).

The evangelists exhibit a pattern of enhancing communal memory

of the women's resurrection experiences. Their witness contributed to securing the faith that the one whose death and burial they had seen from the margins was no longer among the dead but truly risen. Before examining the gospel accounts in more detail, it is worth remembering that these traditions can hardly be mere apologetic or narrative invention. Women have little to no credibility as witnesses in a legal setting. Luke represents that bias in noting that the disciples did not believe the women's report, though a check of the tomb proved the absence of Jesus's body (Luke 24:12, 24). For non-believers the presence of women in the Christian story provided an occasion for ridicule as Origen's reply to attacks by the second century physician and philosopher Celsus demonstrates. According to Origen's report, Celsus cast his attack on Christianity in the voice of a Jew though one clearly aware of the gospel narratives. Given the existence of myths about individuals returned from the dead, Celsus argues that the Christian story belongs in that category — not as the exception. Worse the whole death and resurrection story is the dream fiction or over active imagination of an hysterical female (*Against Celsus* 2.55). Matthew notes that even in his own day (*c.* 85 BC) Jews actively circulate a story of Jesus's disciples making a nocturnal visit to the tomb and removing Jesus's body (Matt 28:11–15). That notice is sandwiched between the women's encounter with Jesus outside the tomb and Jesus's appearance to the remaining eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee (vv. 16–20).

Clearly the women's story occupies a distinctive space in the narrative. It is associated with the death and burial of Jesus rather with than the reconstitution of the symbolic Twelve disciples, who had gone into hiding following the arrest. As a narrative detail the scattered male disciples are in no position to pull off the deceit which Jews in Matthew's Gospel anticipate, a nocturnal tomb robbery. Nor would a body missing from the tomb lead anyone in the first-century to conclude that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Bodily resurrection is a corporate, eschatological event (Dan 12:2–3), not an individual reward. Matthew's crucifixion narrative deals with that obvious objection by asserting that others were raised at the moment of Jesus's death and appeared around the city on Easter (Matt 27:52–53). That notice is clearly an apologetic legend that lacks any historical traction. But such details show that the evangelists are

aware of the objections that others would bring against the Easter message. They are not superstitious simpletons given to hysterical fantasies of reunion with a beloved leader.

Modern efforts to discredit the core Christian narrative often attack the "and was buried" line in the creed by pointing to examples of bodies left to rot or the dishonorable disposal of criminals. However they do so at the expense of the exemplary expression of Jewish piety by Joseph of Arimathea in burying the dead. (And as anyone familiar with the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca knows dealing with pilgrims who die away from home and family remains a problem.) Without men to approach authorities the women could do nothing but watch from the edges of the action. The proximity of rock cut tombs to the crucifixion site also makes the statement that they witnessed the disposal of Jesus's remains entirely plausible (Matt 27:57–61; Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55–56). Our gospel narratives are more scattered in explaining what drew the women back to the tomb in the early morning after the Sabbath. In part that reflects divergent burial customs and in part the cultural sense that the stranger may step in to bury the dead, but the stranger can never carry out rites of mourning. Mary Magdalene is the mourner in John 20:11–18. The other gospels presume that the minimalistic entombing of the corpse to avoid contaminating the city during a key religious festival left other aspects of burial incomplete. The women involved purchase spices to anoint the body but arrive without a plan to gain access to the tomb (Mark 16:1–3; Luke 23:56–24:1). Because Matthew's counter-story has Jewish officials protect against disciples staging an empty tomb by sealing and posting guards at the tomb, the evangelist shifts the purpose of the women's dawn visit from burial or mourning rites to a more generic "to see the tomb" (Matt 28:1). Contrary to the other versions in which the women find the tomb open, they actually witness an earthquake and the angel's descent, rolling away the stone, and sitting upon it (v. 2). This flash of divine power traumatizes the guards "who became like dead men" (v. 4) so that they do not witness the angel's revelation to the women.

THE WOMEN'S STORIES RECALL JESUS

For the versions of the women's testimony in the Synoptic Gospels,

the first evidence for the resurrection of Jesus comes from the angel's words coupled with the call for the women (and the gospel reader) to recall that Jesus had predicted it (Mark 16:6–7; Matt 28:5–6; Luke 24:5–7). The evangelists shape the story to contribute to the faith of their readers by challenging them to recall earlier points in the narrative. Mark 16:7 takes them back to Jesus's words at the Last Supper. After citing Zech 13:7 as a warning to the disciples that events are about to shatter them, he points beyond disaster to restoration when the risen Lord meets them in Galilee (14:27–28). The gospel ends abruptly without any Jesus's appearance stories, though Paul's list in 1 Cor 15:3b–5 indicates that some resurrection stories circulated orally from the beginnings of Christianity. If the women's terrified flight and silence at the end of the earliest version of Mark puts them in the same emotional space as Jesus's male disciples, then those words hold out a similar promise for them as well. But there is hope for readers as well. Whether the sufferings afflicting the audience projected by the narrative were spawned by Nero's scapegoating of believers after a devastating fire in Rome or by the turmoil in Galilee and Judea attendant upon the rebellion against Rome in AD 66–70, they faced fear. So the open hope of the Lord going ahead to Galilee associated with another saying in the Supper story, "I will no longer drink the fruit of the vine with you until I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25) are words of promise.

Matthew concludes his Gospel with a brief narrative of the risen Jesus's encounter with the eleven in Galilee that transfers what had been a mission to Israel (10:5–6) to the universal evangelization of the nations and with it the promise of the name the angel had given Jesus before his birth, Emmanuel (28:16–20; cf. 1:23), "I am with you all days until the end of the age" (v. 20). But the women's story ends in Jerusalem, not Galilee. Any fear or hesitation that remained after the extraordinary demonstration of divine power which accompanied the angel's arrival is quickly erased. They acknowledge the divinity of the risen Jesus in a posture of worship as soon as he greets them, "... they grasped his feet and worshipped him" (v. 9). So from the opening signs of divine power to this gesture of worship the women's experience introduces a key element in resurrection faith. Jesus's resurrection is not comparable to the popular books of those

who have experienced dying and been pulled back from the brink by medical interventions. Jesus has been raised into the reality of God which makes him present to the worshiping faithful.

Luke's narrative construction of the final chapter in his Gospel presents the women's tomb visit as the first in an unfolding triptych – each revelation of the truth that Jesus is living, not among the dead is progressively unfolded. First the women disciples hear the resurrection proclamation from the two angels while having memories brought back to Jesus's own words (24:6–7). Then two disciples headed away from Jerusalem to Emmaus in the late afternoon to repeat the events to a stranger who appears oddly unaware of what has been going on. They receive a lecture on messianic interpretation of the Scriptures as evidence that the messiah was destined to suffer in order to enter his glory (Luke 24:25–27). The stranger unveils his identity in blessing, breaking and giving bread to them at a meal (vv. 30–31). But Jesus vanishes at the moment of recognition. All of Jesus's disciples including the three women and the two from the Emmaus road are reassembled when Jesus appears in Jerusalem. There the identity of the risen One as a bodily person must be demonstrated to convince doubters (vv. 39–43). Once again there is verbal instruction both reminders of Jesus's earlier teaching and fulfillment of all the Scriptures, "Law of Moses, the Prophets and Psalms" (vv. 44–46). Thus the women experience the same sequence of growing insights into the suffering and resurrection/exaltation of Jesus as messiah as the male disciples even though the only the male disciples will be sent out "that repentance leading to forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to the nations" (v. 47; Acts 1:6–11) as was the case at the conclusion to Matthew's Gospel.

Luke's Gospel has powerful stories of women threaded through from the opening echoes of Old Testament matriarchs and widows in Elizabeth and Anna as well as Jesus's mother, Mary to the Galilean followers (8:1–3), the sisters Martha and Mary (10:38–42) and the women of Jerusalem, weeping as Jesus passes on the way to execution (23:26–31). The association of three of the Galilean women with the resurrection story triptych completes the anchoring of the narrative about Jesus in the memory of women as well as men. Luke even provides subtle hints about the importance of such memories

in the life of the community. Jesus's mother twice "ponders in her heart" the signs of her child's future greatness (2:19, 51). The pious widow, Anna, who had prayed and fasted in the Temple for most of her 84 years, "began to praise God and speak about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem" (2:38). Similarly as the Gospel draws to its conclusion women devoted to Jesus are also announcing and speaking about salvation "to the Eleven and all the others" (24:9–10). Initially the apostles treat their words as so much foolish talk (v. 11) just as the anti-Christian Celsus would do much later. But Luke's readers know by this point in the narrative that the women's story of salvation is just as reliable as that preached to the world by the apostles.

John's Gospel employs a very different narrative pattern from the other gospels. Jesus engages individuals in dramatic dialogues that some scholars suggest were inspired by the conventions of Greek drama. This art is displayed in Mary Magdalene's encounter with the risen Jesus (20:11–18). John resets the burial scenario to the garden tomb complex of a wealthy or royal figure along with the expensive spices provided by Nicodemus. Consequently Mary's initial response to seeing the open tomb was robbery or enemy hostility by an anonymous "they" (20:2). Her hopeful query to the gardener/Jesus provides John's readers with another example of his characteristic double meaning. Jesus has been or soon will be "taken away" from his disciples by the return to the Father, which formed a central theme in his supper discourses (14:1–4). She is enjoined to grasp at or cling to the bodily figure before her but to inform his disciples that Jesus is returning to the Father as he had said (v. 17). Thus the deep structure of this episode matches that in the Synoptic Gospels: the women's mission is to recall words of Jesus that anticipated and interpret the traumatic events that conclude his earthly life.

In addition, John's artistry takes readers back to two other Judean scenes that anticipate his death. The dramatic moment of recognition occurs when Jesus speaks Mary's name. Her response shows that she belongs among the sheep who hear the voice of the shepherd who gives his life for them (10:10–14). Magdalene's mourning at the tomb recalls the larger scenario of mourning by friends of Jesus, Martha and Mary. Before symbolically demonstrating his own resurrection

from the tomb by restoring life to their dead brother, Jesus, himself, experiences the anguish of mourners (11:1–44). Again with his characteristic irony, this sign that Jesus is the resurrection and life, "the one who believes in even if he dies will live" (v. 25) provokes authorities to seek his execution. But for believers this story provides consolation in their own time of mourning for a loved one.

CONCLUSION

Drawing on two recent developments in gospel studies, studies of memory and literary, reader response criticism, enables a new approach to the women's stories of the empty tomb, angels and finding the risen Lord. Rather than strip away the rich and varied details to a minimalist core structure that is subject to rigorous historical skepticism, we are invited to see a Christian memory of salvation emerging as the foundation of an unshakable faith. Literary criticism highlights the threads that the women's stories pull from earlier parts of the gospel narratives. The most evident connection in all four gospels directs the disciples and readers back to the words of Jesus at the Last Supper. Those words not only anticipated Jesus's death, they also pointed forward to a new future with the Lord who does not remain in the past, among the dead, but lives.

That precedent set in Matthew and Mark is further expanded in Luke and John. Each of these evangelists employs his distinctive literary and theological artistry to create many additional threads that tie the women's stories back into the story of Jesus's life — even to the infancy narratives in Luke. Even though women are not witness in a public trial, these developments show another side of early Christianity. The stories women tell within the household secure the faith, as was the case for Timothy (see 2 Tim 1:5).

PHEME PERKINS, PhD, is Professor of New Testament at Boston College and Associate Editor of the *New Oxford Annotated Bible*. The author of many books on the New Testament, she specializes in Paul, John and New Testament theology.

Paul as a Witness to the Resurrection of Jesus

Charles L. Quarles

Mention of the witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus brings to mind figures such as Peter, John, the remaining members of the Eleven, Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James, Salome, Cleopas, and his companion. Paul might at most be granted an honorable mention. After all, he did not see the stone that had been rolled away. He did not hear the angelic announcement, "He is not here, for he has risen!" He may have never peered into the empty tomb. In the forty days after the resurrection during which Jesus presented himself to his disciples with many infallible proofs, Paul was admittedly absent.

Nevertheless, Paul insists that he is a witness to the resurrection on a par with these other witnesses. The account of Jesus's post-resurrection appearance to Paul is given in detail three times in the Book of Acts and is repeatedly alluded to by Paul himself in his letters. These various accounts and references are remarkably consistent and early. Thus Paul is not only a valid witness to the resurrection of Jesus, at least as far as the canons of history are concerned, he is one of the most important of all of these witnesses.

THE POST-RESURRECTION APPEARANCE TO PAUL

Jesus's post-resurrection appearance to Paul is described in detail in Acts 9:1–19; 22:6–16; and 26:12–23. After the initial report of the experience, Luke might have saved significant effort and space

by simply saying, "And Paul reported to the crowd/Agrippa how Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus" or something to that effect. Luke's insistence on recording the incident in detail three times in Acts highlights the importance of the incident in Luke's thought.

Scholars sometimes become intensely focused on differences between the three accounts and overlook their great similarity. Two or more accounts agree on the following:

1. Occasion (9:2; 22:5; 26:12)–Paul was traveling to Damascus to extradite arrested believers to Jerusalem for trial.
2. Time (22:6; 26:13)–Event occurred at about noon or mid-day.
3. Place (9:2–3; 22:6; 26:13)–Event occurred on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus, near Damascus.
4. Appearance (9:3; 22:6; 26:13)–A light from heaven flashed around Paul.
5. Reaction (9:4; 22:7; 26:14)–Paul (and his companions) fell to the ground, apparently in reverence.
6. Initial Dialogue (9:4–5; 22:7–8; 26:14–15)–A voice asks, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Paul replies, "Who are you, Lord?" Lord replies, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." Only slight variation exists between the three dialogue summaries. The 22:8 account adds the title "the Nazarene." The 26:14 account adds: "It is hard for you to kick against the goads." (Verses in this article, unless otherwise noted, are from the HCSB translation.)
7. Lord's command (9:6; 22:10)–The Lord commanded Paul, "Get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."
8. Aftermath (9:8–9; 22:11)–Paul a) is blinded by the intensity of the light, b) must be led by hand into Damascus, and c) fasts for three days.

The differences relate primarily to the experience of the bystanders and Paul's call to the Gentile mission. In 9:3, the bystanders heard the voice but saw no one. In 22:9, the bystanders saw the light, but heard nothing. No real tension exists in the two accounts of the bystander's visual experience. Luke simply indicated that they saw the brilliant light but not the person (Jesus) who spoke from the light. The contradiction in the two accounts of what the bystanders heard

is merely apparent. The account in 9:3 indicates that the companions heard a voice, but the account in 22:9 clarifies that only Paul understood the words spoken by the voice.

Since 26:14 specifies that the voice spoke in the Hebrew (or Aramaic) language, one wonders if Paul's companions were Hellenists who lacked fluency in the language that Jesus spoke. Acts 6:9 and 7:58 shows that Paul partnered with the leaders of the Synagogue of the Freedmen in the stoning of Stephen. These Jews (and likely Gentile proselytes) were from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia. This specific synagogue was likely formed because of the language barrier that made participation in normal synagogue worship difficult for Hellenists. When Paul returned to Jerusalem after his conversion, he focused his ministry on Hellenistic Jews (9:29), probably from this same group. This would have been a most fitting group for Paul's message if some of their own number had seen the light and heard the noise on the Damascus Road. Although the data are not sufficient to determine why the bystanders heard but did not understand the voice that spoke to Paul, this explanation is at least plausible.

Another difference appears in that the first two accounts indicate that Ananias heard and then transmitted to Paul his divine call to take Christ's name to the Gentiles (Acts 9:6,15; 22:10, 15). However, the final account has Christ commission Paul directly:

> For I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and a witness of what you have seen and of what I will reveal to you. I will rescue you from the people and from the Gentiles. I now send you to them to open their eyes so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that by faith in Me they may receive forgiveness of sins and a share among those who are sanctified (Acts 26:16b–18).

In order to posit that this account contradicts the earlier accounts, one would have to assume that Luke forgot the content of the previous accounts even though the same essential account had been recorded twice and even though the last account only preceded the episode of Paul's appearance before Agrippa by four chapters! On the other hand, Luke would likely have mentioned Jesus's direct commission to Paul in at least the initial account if such a commission had been

given in order to set the stage for Paul's Gentile mission. Thus the best explanation for the difference between the first two accounts and the final account is that Luke retrojected the commission given by Jesus through the prophet Ananias into the Damascus Road episode in order to abbreviate the account strategically. Such "telescoping" would have been legitimate since the two earlier accounts laid out the events in their original historical sequence so that readers were prepared to spot the telescoping and since Jesus's statement "Get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do" (9:6; 22:10) verified that the charge given through Ananias did indeed bear the Lord's authority.

Luke's source for these accounts was likely Paul himself. Luke's Prologue to his two-volume work clearly states that the author engaged in careful investigation that included interviews of eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1–4). Both Acts and Paul's letters demonstrate that Luke had frequent and direct access to Paul's testimony. The first-person plural pronouns in travel narratives in Acts show that Luke was often a traveling companion of Paul. Luke was present with Paul during the time that he wrote his Prison Epistles (Col 4:14) and the two had grown so close that Paul referred to him as "the loved physician." Furthermore, Luke's reports of Paul's experience are confirmed by references in Paul's letters (1 Cor 9:1; 15:8).

THE NATURE OF THIS APPEARANCE

Scholars perennially debate whether the appearance of the resurrected Jesus to Paul was an objective or subjective experience. The Acts accounts support viewing the experience as objective. The bystanders saw the light from heaven (though they did not see Jesus) and fell to the ground along with Paul. They also heard the voice (though for reasons not explicitly identified they did not understand the words uttered by the voice). These factors indicate that the appearance of Jesus to Paul was not a mere vision experienced only in his imagination.

Some scholars argue that the evidence in Acts is at odds with statements in Paul's own letters. Bruce Chilton concluded from the words "uncover his Son in me" (Gal 1:16) that Paul's experience

was not an objective event that other people witnessed (or could have witnessed) together with him, but was a "personal moment of disclosure," a "mystical breakthrough."[1] This interpretation of the Greek preposition *en* in the phrase translated "in me" in Galatians 1:16 has become common. Those who affirm this view generally seem to assume that the Greek preposition *en* is the equivalent of the common English gloss "in." This assumption is reinforced by the gloss used in many modern translations.

"[God] was pleased to reveal his Son in me . . ." NIV

"[God] was pleased to reveal His Son in me . . ." HCSB

"[God] was pleased to reveal His Son in me . . ." NASB

Although the NRSV and the ESV (I will argue correctly) translate the clause "[God] was pleased to reveal his son *to* me" (italics mine), both refer to marginal notes that state "Gk. *in me*" and "Greek *in*" respectively. The notes give the impression that the Greek preposition is the equivalent of the English preposition "in" and would seem to suggest that the translators adopted an alternative rendering for theological purposes rather than linguistic reasons.

A surprising number of evangelical commentators have adopted this translation, although they qualify the interpretation. F. F. Bruce, Gordon Fee, Don Garlington, William Hendriksen, Bruce Longenecker, and Leon Morris argued that, although Paul's Damascus Road experience was objective, the prepositional phrase *en emoi* meant "in me" and emphasized the internal revelation that accompanied the event.

Although this interpretation is more commonly assumed than argued, the occasional arguments offered in support of the interpretation are unsatisfying. Longenecker, for example, argues that the *en emoi* of 1:16 corresponds to the *en emoi* of 2:20 ("Christ lives in me") which is equivalent to "in our hearts" in 4:6 and thus emphasizes the internal reality of the Christian experience. However, this argument fails to account for the fact that the grammatical contexts of each of these phrases is quite different. One cannot assume that the prepositional phrase functions with "God was pleased to reveal" in the same way that it functions with the

[1] Bruce Chilton, *Rabbi Paul: An Intellectual Biography* (New York: Doubleday Religion, 2004), 51.

statement "Christ lives" (2:20) or "God sent the Spirit of his Son" (4:6). Examination of the use of the preposition in combination with the verb *apokaluptō* ("reveal") or synonymous constructions in other contexts is a better approach hermeneutically than merely examining instances of *en emoi* without sensitivity to the grammatical context.

The major Greek lexica and grammars show that the Greek preposition *en* is capable of a bewildering variety of different meanings. The preposition sometimes serves as a substitute for the normal dative of indirect object or dative of advantage. Several of these resources list Galatians 1:16 as an example of this usage (Nigel Turner; BDAG; BDF). If this is correct, Paul's autobiographical statement would simply mean that "God was pleased to reveal his Son *to* me." This usage of the preposition is frequent when the preposition has a personal object and is used with verbs from the semantic domain "reveal" or "make known."

A computer search using Accordance identified 13 instances in the LXX in which verbal constructions within this semantic domain (*apokaluptō, gnorizō, phaneroō,* or *phaneros* with various copula) were modified by *en* phrases (Judg 5:2; 1 Sam 6:2; 2 Sam 6:20; 22:16; 1 Kgs 8:53; 1 Chr 16:8; 1 Macc 15:9; Ps 76:15; Prov 3:6; 11:13; Ezek 16:36; 22:10; Isa 64:1). The preposition marks location (1 Kgs 8:53; 1 Chron 16:8 [poss. indirect object]; Ps 76:15 [poss. indirect object]; Prov 3:6; Ezek 22:10; 1 Macc 15:9), identifies the means or cause (1 Sam 6:2; 2 Sam 22:16; Ezek 16:36), or serves as a marker for the indirect object (Judg 5:2 [Vaticanus]; 2 Sam 6:20; Prov 11:13; Isa 64:1).

This construction appears 19 times in the New Testament, mostly in Pauline literature. The uses likely belong to the categories of time (2 Cor 11:6; 2 Thess 2:6; 1 Pet 1:5), location (John 9:3; 2 Cor 2:14; 4:10, 11; 1 Tim 3:16; 1 John 4:9; Col 3:4), instrument or means (Rom 1:17; 1 Cor 3:13; 2 Cor 11:6; 1 John 3:10; 4:9), manner (Eph 6:19), and indirect object (Rom 1:19; 1 Cor 11:19; 2 Cor 5:11). Verses listed twice (2 Cor 11:6; 1 John 4:9) contain two *en* phrases that modify the verbal construction.

The use of the *en* phrase with verbal constructions related to revelation in the LXX, NT, and particularly elsewhere in Paul restricts the interpretive options considerably. The preposition *en* is

never used elsewhere in the LXX or the New Testament with these constructions to indicate a mere internal, subjective experience. Chilton's treatment of the preposition involves a mechanical approach to exegesis that simply equates *en* with "in" and ignores the complexity of Greek syntax. Based on other biblical uses, the *en* phrase most likely functions as the equivalent for the indirect object.

J. B. Lightfoot argued that the preposition here means "through" and serves to identify Paul as the agent through whom God revealed the Son to others. Nigel Turner acknowledged this possibility (though he affirmed the indirect object view). A few modern commentators such as Timothy George have adopted Lightfoot's interpretation. However, this view finds no support in biblical parallels. Although the *en* was used in the constructions examined above to express means or instrument, no clear examples express personal agency. In fact, some grammarians such as Daniel Wallace have argued that the preposition may never express personal agency in the NT. Thus scholars such as Udo Schnelle are correct in claiming that *en emoi* in Galatians 1:16 "is to be translated as the simple dative."[2]

Even if the use of *en* to mark an internal and subjective experience were a legitimate syntactical option, clear statements elsewhere in Pauline literature would preclude such a view. For example, Paul argued that he was as surely an apostle as were the Twelve and the Lord's brothers: "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" (1 Cor 9:1). The Greek grammar of both questions implies a positive response. The logic of Paul's argument is that Paul's status is equivalent to that of the Twelve and the Lord's brothers because the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to Paul was equivalent to that which the other apostles witnessed. This is also implied by Paul placing himself along with Cephas, the Twelve, the five hundred, James, and the rest of the apostles on the list of those to whom the resurrected Jesus appeared. Paul's statement that "He also appeared to me" (1 Cor 15:8) offers a more robust description of the nature of the Damascus Road experience than the casual reader may realize. "Appeared" is the same verb used in 15:5,6, and 7 to describe those who discovered the empty tomb, saw the resurrected Jesus in the upper room, and ate with him on the shores of the sea of Galilee. The

[2] Udo Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 90.

adjunctive "also" closely links Paul's experience with the previously listed experiences and further suggests that Paul's experience was very similar to theirs. It is important to note that both of these statements are contained in one of the letters of Paul that is most widely regarded as authentic even by skeptical critical scholars and is quite early (probably mid-50s).

CONCLUSION

Paul regarded the crucifixion of Jesus as essential to the gospel (Rom 1:1–8; 1 Cor 15:3–4) and thus crucial for the forgiveness of sinners (1 Cor 15:17). He saw the resurrection of Jesus as the basis for the believer's hope for resurrection (1 Cor 15:20–28) and courage in the face of deadly persecution (1 Cor 15:29b–34). As Paul preached the resurrection of Jesus, he did not have to rely merely on the testimony of others. Paul evidently appealed to his own eyewitness account of Jesus's post-resurrection appearance. This is implied by the charge "For I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and a witness of what you have seen and of what I will reveal to you" (Acts 26:16).

Paul clearly emphasized the fact that he "had seen the Lord on the road and that he had talked to him" when he returned to Jerusalem and it was on this basis that first Barnabas and later the disciples in Jerusalem accepted Paul (Acts 9:26–28). During his first missionary journey, Paul preached Jesus's resurrection and appealed to the eyewitness testimony of the Galilean disciples to substantiate that resurrection. His words "And we ourselves proclaim to you the good news of the promise that was made to our ancestors" (Acts 13:32) show that Paul is identifying himself as an equally reliable witness to the resurrection. Jesus's resurrection featured prominently in Paul's preaching in Thessalonica (Acts 17:3), Athens (17:31), and evidently in Corinth. Paul's question in 1 Corinthians 9:1 assumes the church's familiarity with his Damascus Road experience despite the absence of previous references to it in the extant letters to the Corinthian church and this implies that testimony to Jesus's post-resurrection appearance to Paul was standard fare in his preaching. This cumulative evidence shows that Paul should be regarded as one of the most important witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus.

CHARLES L. QUARLES, PhD, is Professor of New Testament Studies and Biblical Theology and the Director of PhD Studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has published several books on Jesus, Paul, and New Testament themes.

Jesus's Resurrection

and Ours according to Paul the Apostle

James P. Ware

The resurrection narratives in the Gospels portray Jesus as raised to life on the third day in his crucified body, leaving behind him an empty tomb. In Luke's Gospel, for example, the resurrection narrative begins with the disciples' discovery of the empty tomb (24:1–12; cf. 24:23–24). At the climax of the narrative, Jesus shows himself alive to the Twelve and the other disciples, inviting them to "touch me and see, because a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have" (Luke 24:39). In John's Gospel, Jesus invites doubting Thomas to probe the scars in his hands and side (John 20:24–29). The speeches of the apostles in Acts similarly assert that the flesh of Jesus was raised without undergoing decay (2:25–31; 13:34–37), and that the risen Jesus ate and drank with his disciples (10:40–42; cf. 1:3-4). In both the Gospels and Acts, Jesus's resurrection is portrayed as a concrete, physical event involving Jesus's flesh and bones. And the Easter event is understood as the fulfillment of the creator God's promised conquest of death, bringing the hope of bodily resurrection for all who believe (John 5:24–29; 6:39, 40, 44, 54; Acts 4:1–2; 23:7–10; 24:14–15; 26:6–8; 26:22–23; cf. Matt 27:52–53). The bodily, flesh-and-bones character of this hope of future resurrection is emphatic in the historic Christian creeds, such as the Apostles' Creed (6th century AD): *credo in . . . carnis resurrectionem* ("I believe in . . . the resurrection of the flesh"), and its direct ancestor the Old Roman Creed (c. 175 AD): *pisteuo eis . . . sarkos anastasin* ("I believe in . . . the resurrection of the flesh").

THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE REGARDING 1 CORINTHIANS 15

1 Corinthians 15 is by far the fullest treatment of the Christian hope of resurrection within the entire Bible. However, many contemporary readers of this chapter, on both popular and scholarly levels, believe they find there a form of resurrection hope radically different from the hope we find in the Gospels, the book of Acts, and the historic Christian creeds. To be sure, a number of scholars, such as Richard Hays, N. T. Wright, and Anthony Thiselton, argue that Paul's conception of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, in continuity with the Gospels and Acts, involves the resurrection (and glorious transformation to imperishability) of the once-dead body of flesh and bones from the tomb. But the mainstream view in contemporary New Testament scholarship is represented by scholars such as Dale Martin, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and Marcus Borg, who argue that Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 envisions an heavenly or "spiritual" body which excludes participation of the earthly, mortal body in final salvation.

This reading of 1 Corinthians 15 is the basis in turn for a widespread scholarly view of Christian origins in which belief in the resurrection of Jesus's crucified body from the tomb, such as we see reflected in the gospel accounts, was a later development, unknown to Paul and the earliest Christ followers. As Rudolf Bultmann famously remarked, "The accounts of an empty tomb are legends, of which Paul as yet knew nothing."[1] From this perspective, the good news of the resurrection proclaimed in 1 Corinthians 15, and the good news narrated by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are different gospels indeed. For (on this reading) they are fundamentally at variance regarding the meaning of the affirmation that Jesus has been raised from the dead on the third day, and the nature of the hope which Jesus's resurrection offers those who believe.

This debate also has extraordinarily important implications for Paul's thought. The expectation of the resurrection of the flesh is a hope for the redemption of this world and this body; an expectation of resurrection to a disembodied or ethereally embodied existence

[1] Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (9th ed.; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1984), 48.

is a hope, much like that of Plato, that this body and this world will be transcended in a world above. These contrasting claims regarding the apostle's vision of humanity's ultimate future entail radically different construals of Pauline soteriology, Christology, anthropology, and ethics. There is thus no area of Pauline theology that the debate concerning the nature of resurrection in Paul does not touch.

THE STRUCTURE OF PAUL'S ARGUMENT IN 1 CORINTHIANS 15:36–54

I believe the exegetical key to Paul's understanding of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 is the structure of Paul's own argument in that chapter's central portion, 15:36–54. I wish to offer an analysis and proposal regarding the (hitherto neglected) literary and rhetorical structure of Paul's argument. I will argue, against the grain of much contemporary interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15, that the resurrection Paul envisions in this chapter involves the eschatological restoration to life of the mortal body of flesh and bones, and its transformation to be imperishable. The structure of 1 Cor 15:36–54 may be set out as follows:

Subject	Verb	Predicate Complements
36 that which you sow	dies	_____
	is made alive	_____
42 (the body)	is sown	in decay
	is raised	in incorruption
43	is sown	in dishonor
	is raised	in glory
	is sown	in weakness
	is raised	in power
44	is sown	a body given life by the soul
	is raised	a body given life by the Spirit
49 we	were clothed with	the image of the man of dust

Subject	Verb	Predicate Complements
	will be clothed with	the image of the Man from heaven
51 we all	will be changed	_____
52 the dead	will be raised	imperishable
we	will be changed	_____
53 this perishable body	must be clothed with	imperishability
this mortal body	must be clothed with	immortality
54 this perishable body	is clothed with	imperishability
this mortal body	is clothed with	immortality

For many interpreters, Paul's series of oppositions between the present and risen body, with their reference to what is sown being *x* and what is raised being *y* (15:42–44; cf. 15:52–54), point to a radical discontinuity between the mortal body and the risen body in Paul's thought, precluding the possibility that Paul conceived of resurrection in straightforward bodily terms. However, I would propose that this assumption fails to grasp the actual function of this series of contrasts within the structure of Paul's exposition. Four observations are crucial:

1. Within 15:36–49, which is structured by twelve antithetically paired verbs (that is, six pairs of verbs) denoting death (or the mortal state) and resurrection (or the risen state), the *subject* of these antithetical verbal pairs is *one and the same* both for verbs denoting death, and those denoting resurrection (see the diagram). The subject throughout is the perishable body, which "dies" but "is made alive" again by God (15:36), which is "sown" (*speiretai*) in mortality and death, but "raised" (*egeiretai*) to imperishable life (15:42–44). This basic observation, which is nonetheless commonly ignored by interpreters, has profound exegetical implications. Paul does not describe resurrection as an

event in which *x* (the present body) is sown, but *y* (a body distinct from the present body) is raised, but in which a single *x* (the present body) is sown a perishable *x*, but raised an imperishable *x*. Paul's sequence of paired verbs in 1 Cor 15:36–49 indicates that in Paul's thought it is precisely that which perishes—the mortal body—that in the resurrection is given new, imperishable life.

2. In 15:50–58, which is structured by seven verbs denoting resurrection or transformation (see the diagram), it is again the *present perishable body* which is the subject of this resurrection and transformation (15:51, 15:52, 15:53–54). In 15:53–54, the subject which clothes itself with imperishability is explicitly "this perishable body" (*to pharton touto*) and "this mortal body" (*to thneton touto*). Paul's fourfold repetition of "this" (*touto*) emphasizes that it is *this* mortal, perishable body—corruptible human flesh—which is the subject of the transformation.
3. In addition to the verb *egeiro* (which will be discussed below), Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 employs a variety of additional verbs to denote the resurrection event: *zoopoieo* ("make alive"; 15:36, 45; cf. 15:22), *phoreo* ("be clothed"; 15:49), *alasso* ("change"; 15:51, 52), and *enduo* ("clothe"; 15:53, 54). These additional verbs are significant, for they each express, in different ways, not the annihilation or replacement of the fleshly body, but its revival (*zoopoieo*), investiture (*phoreo, enduo*), and transformation (*alasso*). Paul's affirmation that the present body will be "changed" (15:51, 52) and "clothed" (15:53, 54) of necessity implies its revivification and enhancement.
4. As we saw, the series of contrasts within 15:36–54 between the ante-mortem and risen body do not occur in the *subject* of these periods, but in their *predicates* (verbs and verbal complements). And these predicate complements (see the diagram above) invariably describe a change of *quality* rather than of *substance*, in which what was once perishable, dishonored, weak, and mortal is endowed with imperishability, glory, power, and immortality (15:42–43; 15:52–54). Paul's series of oppositions does not describe two different bodies, distinct in substance, but two contrasting modes of existence of the same body, one prior to and the other subsequent to the resurrection.

THE "SPIRITUAL BODY" IN 1 CORINTHIANS 15

Central to the readings of Martin, Engberg-Pedersen, and Borg is the assumption that the "spiritual body" (*soma pneumatikon*) in 15:44–46 refers to a body composed of spirit or *pneuma*, distinct from the body of flesh laid in the tomb. However, this claim reflects an utter misunderstanding of the actual lexical meaning of the key terms in question. The adjective which Paul here contrasts with *pneumatikos* ("spiritual") is not *sarkinos* ("fleshly"), cognate with *sarx* ("flesh"), and thus referring to the *flesh*, but *psychikos* (literally "soulish"), cognate with *psyche* ("soul"), thus referring to the *soul*. This adjective outside the New Testament is used, without exception, with reference to the properties or activities of the soul (e.g., 4 Macc 1:32; Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 3.10.2; Epictetus, *Diatr*. 3.7.5–7; Plutarch, *Plac. philos.* 1.8). Modifying *soma* ("body") as here, with reference to the present body, the adjective describes this body as *given life or activity by the soul*. The adjective has nothing to do with the body's composition, but denotes the source of the body's life and activity.

The meaning of the paired adjective *psychikos* in 1 Cor 15:44–46 is extremely significant, for it reveals that the common scholarly understanding of Paul's term "spiritual body" involves a fundamental misreading of the passage. For if the *soma pneumatikon* in this context describes the composition of the future body, as a body composed solely of spirit, its correlate *soma psychikon* would perforce describe the composition of the present body, as a body *composed only of soul*. Paul would assert the absence of flesh and bones, not only from the risen body, but also from the present mortal body as well! The impossibility that *psychikos* here refers to the body's composition rules out the notion that its correlated adjective *pneumatikos* refers to the body's composition. Contrasted with *psychikos*, the adjective *pneumatikos* must similarly refer to the source of the body's life and activity, describing the risen body as *given life by the Spirit*. The mode of existence described by the adjective *pneumatikos* is further clarified by the larger context of the letter, in which the adjective is uniformly used with reference to persons or things enlivened, empowered, or transformed by the Spirit of God: flesh and blood human beings (2:15; 3:1; 14:37), palpable manna and water (10:3–4), and a very tangible rock (10:4). Used with *soma* in 15:44, the

adjective *pneumatikos* indicates that the risen body will be given life and empowered by God's Spirit.

Both contextual and lexical evidence thus indicate that the phrase *soma pneumatikon* or "spiritual body" in 1 Cor 15:44–46 does not refer to a body composed of spirit or *pneuma*, but to the fleshly body endowed with imperishable life by the power of the Spirit. Although the expression *soma pneumatikon* is unique here in Paul, the concept of *the Spirit as the agent of resurrection life* is a major theme within Paul's theology (Rom 8:9–11; 8:23; 2 Cor 5:4–5; Gal 5:25; 6:7–8). Within this theology, the work of the Spirit in those who belong to Christ will culminate in the resurrection, when "the one who raised Christ from the dead will also *give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit* who indwells you" (Rom 8:11).

THE CENTRAL VERB FOR THE RESURRECTION EVENT IN 1 CORINTHIANS 15

The main verb that Paul employs for the resurrection event in 1 Corinthians 15 is *egeiro* (15:4, 12–17, 20, 29, 32, 35, 42–44, 52). A number of scholars hold that the verb *egeiro* is an elastic one, denoting some form of ascension to heavenly life after death, but not necessarily a revival of the earthly, mortal body. Scholars who take this approach generally interpret Paul's affirmation in the chapter that Jesus has been "raised" (1 Cor 15:4, 12–17, 20) to mean that Jesus has been *taken up* into heaven in a celestial form or body discontinuous with his earthly, flesh and bones body. On this understanding of the verb, Paul's affirmation that Jesus is "raised" is entirely consistent with the crucified body of Jesus either (on Borg's view) moldering in the grave, or (on Engberg-Pedersen's view) ceasing to exist, being replaced by a body of ethereal substance.

Surprisingly, given its central place in early Christian language for the resurrection, the verb *egeiro* has received little detailed study. However, the verb was a common term of everyday ancient life, and its specialized function as resurrection language grew out of that wider usage. That wider non-resurrection usage provides the key to understanding the meaning of *egeiro* when used to denote resurrection.

Although it is usually translated by the English verbs *raise* or *rise*, the semantic range of *egeiro* is crucially different. Like *egeiro*, these English verbs can be used of *rising* to stand from a reclining position or from the posture of sleep. However, the English verbs also frequently express the wider concept of *ascension* or *elevation*. We speak, for instance, of a spark that *rises* from the flames, of the moon *rising* into the night sky, or of a balloon that *rises* into the air. The Greek verb *egeiro*, however, has a more restricted semantic range, and cannot mean *raise* or *rise* in this wider sense of elevation or ascension. Rather, the Greek verb means to *get up* or *stand up*, that is, to *raise from a supine to a standing position*. Thus the verb is regularly used to denote the *raising* or *rising up* of one who has *fallen* (Matt 12:11; Mark 9:27; Acts 9:8), or of one *kneeling* or *prostrate* being *raised back to a standing position* (Matt 17:7; Luke 11:8; Acts 10:26), or of one *sitting* who *rises to stand* (Matt 26:46; Mark 3:3; 10:49; 14:42; Luke 6:8; John 11:29; 13:4; 14:31). The verb is also frequently used of one *lying down*, very often of one *lying sick*, who is *restored to a standing posture* (Matt 8:15; 9:5, 6, 7; Mark 1:31; 2:9, 11, 12; Luke 5:23-24; John 5:8; Acts 3:6–7; James 5:15). In no instance within ancient Greek literature does *egeiro* denote the concept of ascension, elevation, or assumption. Rather, it denotes the action whereby one who is prone, sitting, prostrate, or lying down is *restored to a standing position*.

The use of *egeiro* as resurrection language grows out of the semantic map of the verb sketched above. In resurrection contexts, the verb does not denote that the dead *ascend* or are *assumed* somewhere; rather, the verb signifies that the corpse, lying supine in the grave, *gets up* or *arises to stand* from the tomb. An inscription from Rome (*IGUR* III.1406 [date uncertain]) provides striking confirmatory evidence of this. The final line of this burial inscription reads *enteuthen outhis apothanein eg[e]iret[ai]* ("no one who has died arises from here"). In this inscription, the use of the verb *egeiro* together with the adverb *enteuthen* ("from here") unambiguously indicates the concept of getting up or arising *from the tomb*.

In view of the evidence discussed above, the assumption that *egeiro* can mean "raise" in the sense of elevation or assumption into heaven is excluded. Indeed, such an interpretation is profoundly

unhistorical, for it is founded upon associations arising from English or other modern language translations, not the actual language of 1 Corinthians 15 itself. The very semantics of this ancient Greek verb involves the concept of the mortal body's restoration to life. Within 1 Corinthians 15, this restoration to life is accompanied by a glorious transformation, from weakness and mortality to glory, power, and imperishability (cf. 15:42–44, 52–54). But, as our brief synopsis of the semantics of *egeiro* has shown, the subject of this glorious transformation is the once-dead body, which in being "raised" does not *ascend* to heaven, but *gets up* from the tomb.

CONCLUSION

Many scholars today profess to find in 1 Corinthians 15 a conception of the resurrection at variance with the Easter faith evident in the Gospels, the book of Acts, and the historic Christian creeds. However, there is no scholarly or exegetical basis for this conclusion. The specific way in which Paul shapes his argument, the structure of the syntax in which his thought is given expression, and the lexical meaning of his key terms, reveal that he conceived of resurrection as a tangible, physical event involving the body of flesh and bones. In affirming that Jesus has been "raised" (15:4), Paul affirmed the resurrection of Jesus's crucified body from the tomb. And in affirming that the faithful will be "raised" (15:42–44, 52), Paul affirmed that our present perishable bodies will be endowed, through the power of Jesus's resurrection, with imperishable life. In 1 Corinthians 15, as in the Gospels and Acts, the resurrection is understood as the miraculous revivification of the mortal body of flesh and bones, and its transformation so as to be imperishable.

JAMES P. WARE, PhD, is Professor of New Testament and Ancient Christianity at the University of Evansville in Evansville, Indiana. He is the author of books and articles on Paul's letters and theology, including a new tool for the study of Paul, the *Synopsis of the Pauline Letters in Greek and English*.

Rome and the Risen Jesus

Reading the Resurrection in Imperial Context

Daniel R. Streett

It is a common Sunday School bromide that Jesus's Jewish contemporaries were expecting a political messiah, and thus misunderstood Jesus, whose mission was not political but spiritual. He came not to liberate his people from evil rulers but to save individuals from their sins. When the Scriptures are placed in their proper historical context, however, it becomes clear that this is a grossly anachronistic way of understanding the gospel narrative. It imposes on the ancient text a modern dichotomy between religion and politics, theology and statecraft. Ancient Judaism had no such concept; nor, for that matter, did any other ancient Mediterranean culture. Further, this view cannot accommodate the transparently political nature of the message of the early church, which boldly proclaimed God's kingdom and declared Jesus to be Savior, Lord, and King, despite the fact that those roles were already claimed by Caesar.

Largely as a result of the Enlightenment, moderns tend to compartmentalize religion and politics. Politics deals with public issues: how power, money, land, and other resources are distributed and used, how society is structured, and how laws are made and justice is upheld. Religion, on the other hand, is private and interiorized. It deals with the individual's personal relationship to the divine, and is focused on providing psychological fulfillment in this life and ensuring happiness (or preventing punishment) in the next. The primary problem religion addresses is the certainty of death; religion seeks to provide assurance that death is not the end, that there is a meaning to life beyond the suffering and heartbreak intrinsic to human existence in this vale of tears.

When the early Christian proclamation of Jesus's resurrection is seen through this modern lens, a severe distortion occurs. Often the resurrection is interpreted as part of a rationalistic apologetic to prove an abstract concept of Christ's divinity. Or, in an individualistic soteriological framework, it is portrayed as an indication that Jesus's "payment" for sins was accepted. More often, it is transmogrified to fit the watered-down Platonism that characterizes so much of pop Christianity in the West. On this misunderstanding, Jesus's resurrection serves merely to make it clear that there is hope for life after death, that when the body dies, the spirit continues on, that death is just the beginning, etc.

All of this is quite far afield from the central message of Jesus and his followers, namely the kingdom of God. This message, from beginning to end, was couched in terms, stories, and symbols intended to provide a direct counterpoint to the dominant power of the day, the Roman Empire. My goal in this article is to explore the ways in which early Christian discourse on Jesus's resurrection and its implications has a clearly anti- or counter-imperial texture. My survey of the counter-imperial nature of resurrection hope begins in the Old Testament, which funds much of the early Christian message. I will then touch upon several key texts in the Gospels, Paul, and the Apocalypse that express the heart of the resurrection message as the replacement of the Roman regime with the righteous empire of God.

OT BACKGROUND

We can begin by examining three Old Testament texts that touch on resurrection in one form or another. These three, we will see, all use the imagery of resurrection in an imperial context, with clear counter-imperial force. While the dating of each of these texts is disputed, for our purposes all that matters is that they formed a significant part of the Jewish heritage and worldview inhabited by the NT authors.

EZEKIEL 37 – FROM DRY BONES TO A POWERFUL ARMY

Ezekiel 37 is situated in the wake of the Babylonian exile and the destruction of Jerusalem by the invading Babylonian army. In the

aftermath of this devastation, Ezekiel is commissioned to present a message of hope to the exiles: the desolation wrought by that idolatrous empire will not be the end. Though Israel is currently scattered like abused sheep without a shepherd, the Lord will restore Israel's fortunes and once again reunite them under a virtuous shepherd-king, a new David (34:23–24). He will avenge his people, renew the covenant, restore them to their land, and grant them security and prosperity. After these promises in chs. 34–36, Ezekiel is taken away in the prophetic spirit to a valley. A devastating battle has clearly taken place here, for the valley is full of skeletal remains, now picked clean by the vultures and dried out by the sun. This is a grim portrait of Israel in exile—a once mighty people reduced to virtual non-existence. The situation is hopeless. The Babylonian Empire has prevailed and Israel is no more.

Or so it appears. But the same spirit that hovered over the face of the abyss at creation begins to move, a mighty rushing wind summoned from the four corners of the earth. As it blows on the dry bones, a miracle occurs. Flesh, muscle, skin, and finally breath come back to the bones. They stand up, a numerous and powerful army. The point is clear: while Babylon's vicious empire may have the power to kill and destroy, it does not have the final word. Israel's God will overturn Babylon's edict and overthrow Babylon's dominion, for he alone has the power to give new life, to raise the dead, and to restore his covenant people. Here it is clear that the resurrection of God's people from the grave of exile is God's forceful rebuttal to the claims and actions of an oppressive empire.

ISAIAH 24–27

The situation is much the same in Isaiah's "little apocalypse," as chs. 24–27 are known. Likely a Babylonian-era composition, this section depicts the imperial city as a capital of chaos (24:10) and a terrifying sea-monster (27:1). This once proud and arrogant fortress city will become a city of ruins, brought down to the dust (26:5). The imperial city has taken God's people into exile and ruled oppressively over them. Isaiah depicts its power as a dark shroud or cloud, a veil of death that hangs over Israel and other nations. But, again, the empire's death sentence against exilic Israel will not stand forever. The Lord

will come as a mighty warrior to avenge his people with a terrible swift sword, slaying the serpent Leviathan, trampling the oppressing city, and crushing the idolatrous altars to dust. More than that, however, he will reverse the empire's death-dealing blow. The Lord promises to "swallow up death forever" (25:8), (verses in this article are from the NRSV translation). "Your dead shall live, their corpses shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy!" (26:19). It is possible that the resurrection imagery here is more a metaphor for national restoration than a promise of individual resurrection. But deciding that issue is less important than realizing that, like Ezekiel, Isaiah depicts resurrection as God's reversal of imperial evil.

DANIEL 12

Daniel 12 is the third key text about resurrection in the OT, and likely the latest. It is best understood as a second-century composition published in the heat of the Maccabean crisis. The Maccabean rebellion was a response to the oppression of the Hellenizing Seleucid king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Antiochus attacked Jerusalem, defiled the temple, outlawed traditional Jewish practices, and decreed the worship of Zeus. This met with a guerilla style insurgency led by Judas Maccabee and his brothers, who eventually succeeded in turning back the Seleucid onslaught.

In the midst of this, the apocalyptic circle responsible for Daniel 12 set forth a vision of hope in the face of such a great tribulation. Daniel 7–12 contains a cycle of visions which depict Israel's suffering at the hands of blasphemous, beastly, and idolatrous kingdoms which violently oppress God's people. The vision, however, assures its audience that the time of the beastly empires will come to an end. The prophet portrays the Seleucid empire and its oppression as the last, dying gasp of the bloodthirsty monster. In Daniel 12, the heavenly messenger Michael assures Daniel that this great tribulation will last only a short time. All who persevere in faithfulness to the covenant, even if they are martyred for their fidelity, will be rewarded by God. According to Michael, "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life. . . . Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever" (12:2–3).

Here is the first explicit textual witness in Israel's history to the idea of individual resurrection. But, like its textual forebears in Ezekiel and Isaiah, Daniel 12 also portrays resurrection as God's response to imperial oppression and bloodshed. God will by all means vindicate the faithful; even death cannot stand in the way. Notably, what is in view here is much more than simple resuscitation. That would not be true justice. Instead, the resurrected will be rewarded and exalted, granted a glorious existence of supernal radiance (astral immortality was a future often claimed for kings and emperors in the ancient world). Resurrection, then, is tied up with a future righting of wrongs in which the tables are turned on the empires of this world—the lowly and oppressed are exalted, while the mighty and oppressive are brought low.

NEW TESTAMENT
JESUS IN HIS CONTEXT

When we come to the New Testament, the names have changed but the story is much the same. Some of Israel's exiles may have returned to the land, but the vast majority of them were scattered throughout the Roman Empire, many living in Diaspora cities like Rome, Alexandria, Corinth, and Ephesus. The glorious visions of the prophets remained unrealized. The land promised to the fathers labored still under subjection to the Roman Empire. While Rome allowed a considerable amount of freedom to Jewish worshipers, every authority in the land, whether king, governor, or high priest, was chosen by the empire. The 10th Roman legion was a constant presence at Israel's national festivals—a clear warning to Passover celebrants not to let their hopes for a new Mosaic liberator get out of hand.

It was in this context of imperial domination that a popular Galilean prophet named Jesus stepped onto the scene, heralding the soon arrival of God's empire. The expectation of God's empire had deep OT roots, as we have seen above. Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel all looked forward to the day when the evil and oppressive kingdoms of this age would be toppled and replaced by God's righteous rule. A new Davidic king would sit on the throne, ruling the nations in justice and mercy. God's name would be treated as holy, and a new era of prosperity and joy for Israel would dawn. When the kingdom

of God came, the Jewish elite who ruled Jerusalem and profited handsomely from their oversight of the temple would be brought low, while the dispossessed poor, whose ancestral lands had been seized through oppressive taxation and usury, would be exalted to prominence.

It is no surprise, then, that Jesus's radical message and mission culminated in a Passover assault on the temple-industrial complex in Jerusalem. Here the priestly elite joined hands with Roman military power to keep a lid on the simmering discontent of the masses who had made pilgrimage to celebrate Israel's great liberation from the imperial power of Pharaoh and Egypt. Fearful that Jesus's popularity would spark an uprising and further weaken their fragile relationship with Rome, the Jewish elite had Jesus arrested and handed over to Pilate on charges of sedition. Jesus was executed with two other enemies of the state. The charge hung over his head: he claimed to be "king of the Jews."

Many popular versions of the "gospel" virtually end here. Jesus, so this truncated story goes, was tragically misunderstood. His friends and enemies mistook him for a political revolutionary. This was never his focus. Rather, Jesus came with a single mission, to die as an atonement for sin, thereby propitiating God's wrath against humans and ensuring an eternal life in heaven for all who would accept his sacrifice. While this account has slivers of truth (e.g. early Christians clearly came to interpret the death of Jesus as an atoning sacrifice), it effectively ignores the political realities of Jesus's trial and crucifixion, sidelines Jesus's central focus on the arrival of God's kingdom, and relegates his resurrection and parousia to the status of afterthought or appendix.

When we place Jesus's death into its proper first-century context—where crucifixion was a commonplace punishment meted out to enemies of the state—the resurrection and the parousia it looks forward to take on a much fuller meaning. Jesus, the blameless lamb, the healing herald and agent of God's emancipating empire, is brutally murdered by the bloodthirsty Roman beast. In this grievous miscarriage of justice, Rome's pretense of bringing peace to the world is laid bare. Rome is revealed to be just like every other tyrannical regime, wielding its truncheon of death against all meaningful

dissent. But Rome's verdict is not the final word. Jesus, God's son, the rightful king, cannot be left in the grave, his vision of the kingdom just another failed utopian fantasy. In the resurrection, God acts decisively, publicly and powerfully to overturn the judgment of Rome and to assert the impotence of Rome's ultimate weapon—death—in the face of God's life-giving Spirit. The resurrection is God's vindication of Jesus and his message. By raising his Son from the dead, God declares that Jesus, not Caesar, is the rightful ruler of the world. Easter morning, then, is so much more than the promise of an afterlife to believers in Jesus. It is God's powerful 'NO!' to violent imperial ideology, and his resounding 'YES!' to the peaceful way of Jesus.

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

We can now explore a sampling of NT texts that demonstrate the counter-imperial character of the early Christian resurrection message. Matthew's Gospel provides a compelling place to start. In Matt 28:16–20, Jesus appears to his disciples after his resurrection. He indicates that in the resurrection God has not simply restored Jesus to life, but has also invested him with ultimate and universal authority: "all authority in heaven and earth." Who, living under the dominion of the Roman Empire and its priestly puppets in Jerusalem, could fail to hear the geopolitical nature of such a pronouncement? The Roman "golden age" was coming to an end (see Jesus's reference in 28:20 to the "end of the age"). God's kingdom would dawn, bringing regime change and justice to a corrupt world in need of a righteous ruler. The twelve, who had earlier been promised twelve thrones from which they would rule Israel (19:28), are now commissioned as the new world-emperor's international ambassadors. They are to proclaim the good news that Rome's government and gods have been shown powerless, their greatest weapon—death—utterly overcome by an infinitely more powerful government. Thus we see that in Matthew's account of the good news, the death of Jesus does not shift the focus from Jewish and Roman politics to individual salvation and atonement for sins. Rather, the death and resurrection of Jesus continue the powerful narrative centering on the coming kingdom of God, and Jesus's place at the head of that kingdom.

PAULINE LETTERS

Paul's letters continue this conceptualization of Jesus's resurrection as an exaltation to the place of universal kingship, a clear counterpoint to Roman imperial claims. In Paul's magnum opus, for example, addressed to Christ-followers living in the imperial city, Paul begins his letter by summarizing his message about Jesus, which he delivers as an emissary of Jesus, the Jewish king-Messiah foretold by Israel's prophets (Romans 1:1–2). Two key facts are highlighted: first, Jesus is from the royal line, a true son of David, and thus rightful king of Israel by birth (1:3). Second, at his resurrection, Jesus was declared Son of God in power (1:4). This title would not be lost on Paul's audience, as Augustus, Tiberius, and Nero had also claimed such an appellation (*divi filius*). Noteworthy for our purposes, of course, is that it is precisely at his resurrection that Jesus is so identified. For Paul, Christ's resurrection is his exaltation and enthronement as world-ruler. It is for this reason that Paul embarks on his international journeys, namely to bring about the submission of the nations to the newly crowned emperor (1:5). Paul reiterates this point at the end of his letter, drawing on Isa 11:10: "The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the nations; in him the nations shall hope" (Rom 15:12). Here again, Jesus is described in Davidic kingly terms ("the root of Jesse"), and again his kingship is worldwide, as he rules the nations. In the midst of such lofty rhetoric, it is easy to miss a key detail in Paul's citation: this Davidic king "arises"—the same terminology used for Jesus's resurrection (*anastasis/anistemi*) elsewhere. It is as the resurrected one that Jesus is the divinely installed Lord of the world.

We find similar notes sounded in other Pauline passages. In Ephesians 1, Jesus at his resurrection does not merely come back to life, but is exalted by God to sit at his right hand in the heavens (1:20). This exaltation grants Jesus a status and power superior to every other ruler; all governments and nations of the world are "under his feet" (1:21–22). The same language appears in 1 Cor 15:23–27, where Paul again draws on Psalm 8 as a promise of the Messiah's universal reign. Philippians 2, likewise, recounts how Jesus obediently endured the humiliating slave-like death of Roman crucifixion. Because of his obedience, God reversed Rome's punishment of death, and granted to Jesus a status higher than

that enjoyed by any king, emperor, or potentate. According to Paul, at the divine name of Jesus, every human and angel would prostrate fall, recognizing Jesus as the universal Lord. The message was clear: Caesar and his ilk were pretenders whose time was limited, for the true emperor of the world had taken his throne.

THE APOCALYPSE

We would be remiss if we did not mention the last book of the NT, Revelation, in this vein. Perhaps no other NT book beats the anti-imperial drum more loudly. From the outset, Jesus's resurrection is closely connected to his identity as universal ruler. In 1:5 it is as the resurrected one, the "firstborn from the dead," that he is "the ruler of the kings of the earth." Notably, the verse first names him as the "faithful witness," likely a reference to his martyrdom on a Roman cross for his faithful proclamation of the message of God's kingdom (elsewhere in Revelation, the same terminology is used for the martyred Antipas [2:13], as well as the two executed prophets of ch. 11). The title "the ruler of the kings of the earth" here presents a clear counterpoint to Roman imperial power, embodied in the emperor, who ruled the ancient world through his client kings and governors.

The seer is acutely aware of the shameful death Jesus suffered under the Roman occupation. But, as he sees it, the crucifixion of Jesus has been transformed from tragic conclusion to promising prologue. At the cross, Rome thinks that it has completely stamped out Jesus's kingdom revolution. In his resurrection, however, Jesus overcomes Rome's most powerful weapon. He breaks the bonds of death, rising from the grave as a conquering hero, the keys of Death and Hades now in his possession (1:18; 3:21). Rome's time is limited, for the new emperor is returning soon to judge his enemies (1:7).

Moreover, the martyrdom and resurrection of Jesus become a pattern and model for his followers. They are to be faithful unto death, just as he was. If they share in the Messiah's death, they will also experience his resurrection. This resurrection, again, is no mere resuscitation, but a transformation and exaltation. The faithful martyrs will receive from God an exalted status and will sit on God's throne just as Jesus did (Rev

3:21). They will participate in the glory of his victory as they judge the nations, reigning with Jesus as kings and priests (20:4; 22:5).

The eschatological vision of Revelation is geopolitical and theo-political through and through. Appropriately for the first century and the burgeoning Jesus movement, there is no dichotomy of spirituality and sociology, or piety and politics. The resurrection of Jesus is the turning point in a narrative whose telos is the worldwide geopolitical dominance of the Messiah, as expected in the OT (Rev 21:24; cf. Psalm 2:8–10). "Salvation" in this scheme of thought refers not to an individual's blissful disembodied afterlife, but to the liberation of the land/earth from the violent overlords who through evil oppression corrupt and destroy God's good creation (Rev 11:18).

CONCLUSION

Read in this way, the depth and richness of the early Christian message of Jesus's resurrection is recaptured. If we can avoid imposing our modern biases and categories on the ancient text of Scripture, we will rediscover a dynamic and holistic gospel that speaks to every area of human existence, not merely to concerns about an individual afterlife. When we hear the story of Christ's resurrection in its original context, we will encounter it as a declaration of Christ's universal kingship that is thoroughly counter-cultural and even dangerously subversive, no matter whether we find ourselves in North America or North Korea. Perhaps it will be said once again of Christians that we "are turning the world upside-down . . . saying contrary to the decrees of Caesar that there is another king named Jesus" (Acts 17:6–7).

DANIEL R. STREETT, PhD, Associate Professor of Christianity at Houston Baptist University. His primary research and teaching interests are early Jewish esotericism and apocalypticism, the Johannine literature, Hebrews, and Greek pedagogy. He is currently writing on the reception of the Jewish festivals in early Judaism.

Five Reasons Why Some Christians are Shroud Skeptics

Barrie M. Schwortz

At first glance, I might seem to be the least likely candidate to be writing an article addressing Christians' beliefs about the Shroud of Turin, because I am Jewish. (Of course, so is the man on the Shroud)! On the other hand, I was a member of the only research team ever permitted to perform an in-depth scientific examination of the cloth. In 1978, I was one of 24 researchers who spent 120 non-stop hours over five days and nights examining it directly and performing a battery of non-destructive tests on the cloth. We spent the next three years evaluating all of our data and writing the results into formal scientific papers, which were submitted and published in highly regarded peer reviewed scientific journals. Our research ultimately concluded that the Shroud was not an artwork. In spite of that, I remained a die-hard skeptic and it took me another 17 years before the scientific evidence finally convinced me of its authenticity.

In my role as the official "Documenting Photographer" for the research team, I was obligated to document the event and the team's work in detail. When that work was finished and most of the others moved on, I felt that my work was somehow incomplete. As an "insider" with access to all of the scientific research and a media professional myself, I was very frustrated by the inaccurate (and sometimes patently false) reports in the media about the Shroud and realized that my Christian brothers and sisters were not really getting a very accurate accounting of what we knew about it. Let us

be honest. The average person does not read peer reviewed scientific journals! So I created and published the first Shroud of Turin website on the internet in 1996 (www.shroud.com) to provide a platform for more accurate and readily accessible information about the Shroud and began lecturing about it at conferences, universities and churches around the world.

Over the years I have spoken to hundreds of Christian groups of nearly every denomination and have probably heard every reason why people either love or hate the Shroud. Everything came to a head in 2013, when I was asked to speak at an Evangelical Conference in Colorado Springs, Colorado. I attended the entire three day event and spent the first two days just sitting at a table with a modest Shroud display and talking with many of the attendees, some of whom were quick to tell me they were not really interested in the Shroud. They were also very happy to tell me why, and their reasons were rather stunning, since in most cases they were completely inaccurate or totally incorrect.

I knew this evangelical audience probably would not be thrilled with a Jewish guy getting up and telling them they are misinterpreting their own Gospels when it comes to the Shroud, but I knew I had to do something. I was giving my only lecture in the main auditorium on the third day of the event, so I jotted down the top five reasons folks had given me on the back of an envelope so I could address each of them directly when I got up to speak. I called it (with apologies to David Letterman), the "Top 5 Reasons Why Some Christians Are Shroud Skeptics" and opened my talk with it. To my surprise, the audience response was overwhelmingly positive and I realized that this information should be made more readily available. Consequently, I created a PowerPoint to better illustrate the information and now present it as part of my regular presentations to Protestant and evangelical groups. When I was asked to write this article for *The City* I realized this was a perfect opportunity to expand on the information I had been presenting at my lectures and dispel in detail some of the misconceptions about the Shroud that many Christians seem to have. Before you make up your mind, I believe you should know the facts. So here are the top Five Reasons Why Some Christians are Shroud Skeptics:

1. THE SHROUD IS A GRAVEN IMAGE

This is usually the first reason I am given as to why the Shroud is not credible in some people's eyes. In my lectures, I always remind folks that being Jewish, I know a little bit about graven images. We had a Golden Calf that cost us 40 years in the desert! But what exactly is a graven image? By definition, it is a *manmade* object or artwork (such as a statue) that is worshipped as a god or in place of a god.

But science itself has PROVEN (and I don't use that word lightly), that the Shroud is not an artwork of any kind. Our team went to Turin to answer a single question: How is the image on the Shroud formed? The conventional wisdom in 1978 was that it was either some form of painting, scorch or photograph, so our tests included experiments to explore all of those possibilities. Using very sensitive spectral and chemical analyses, along with microscopic and photographic examination, we searched for any traces of paints or pigments on the cloth. In fact, we had with us a complete catalog of the spectral characteristics of every paint and pigment used by man from medieval to modern times. In the end we determined that no paints or pigments were responsible for the image. Thus, we *proved* scientifically that the Shroud image is *not* a painting.

Another theory was that someone heated a metal statue, laid the Shroud over it and the hot metal scorched the image onto the cloth. This was an understandable possibility since the color of the Shroud image is very similar to the color of the lightly scorched areas on the cloth. The Shroud was heavily damaged by a fire in 1532, leaving it covered with burns and scorches, so there were plenty of documented reference scorches on the cloth for us to compare to. Scorched linen will fluoresce red under ultraviolet excitation, so we photographed the entire Shroud using ultraviolet fluorescence photography and sure enough, every known scorch fluoresced in the red, just as we expected. But the image itself did *not* fluoresce. In fact, it even quenched the pale yellow-green background fluorescence of the cloth itself, thus proving that the Shroud image is not the product of a high temperature event. In other words, we *proved* that the image is *not* a scorch.

The third theory was that the Shroud image was created in medieval times using a photographic process, even though the first

documented photographic negative still exists and was created in 1826 by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce in France! There is not one shred of evidence in the historical record that any photographic images were created before then. Since the primary light sensitive material used in the photographic process is silver, the STURP team looked for it using spectral and chemical analyses and not one trace was found. According to proponents of that theory, all the silver was removed during the fixing process. However, the chemicals used to fix the image and make it permanent only remove the UNUSED silver and there would be plenty of it remaining in all of the image areas. Also, such a light sensitive emulsion would have to be coated onto the entire Shroud in a semi-viscous liquid or gelatin form which would have penetrated deep into the fibers of the cloth and some silver would have remained there until this day. Yet not one trace was found. Again, we *proved* the Shroud image was *not* created by a photographic process. Of course, if one takes the time to thoroughly analyze the Shroud's global image properties (and I am a professional photographer that has had 38 years to do so), one can easily see that, other than the negative-like light to dark reversal, the Shroud image is absolutely nothing like a photographic image. One cannot encode spatial or topographic 3-D information into an image using normal photography.

Here is an excerpt taken directly from the official summary of STURP's 1981 final report:

> "No pigments, paints, dyes or stains have been found on the fibrils. X-ray, fluorescence and microchemistry on the fibrils preclude the possibility of paint being used as a method for creating the image. Ultra Violet and infrared evaluation confirm these studies. Computer image enhancement and analysis by a device known as a VP-8 image analyzer show that the image has unique, three-dimensional information encoded in it. Microchemical evaluation has indicated no evidence of any spices, oils, or any biochemicals known to be produced by the body in life or in death. It is clear that there has been a direct contact of the Shroud with a body, which explains certain features such as scourge marks, as well as the blood. However, while this type of contact might explain

> some of the features of the torso, it is totally incapable of explaining the image of the face with the high resolution that has been amply demonstrated by photography..."
>
> "Thus, the answer to the question of how the image was produced or what produced the image remains, now, as it has in the past, a mystery. We can conclude for now that the Shroud image is that of a real human form of a scourged, crucified man. It is not the product of an artist. The blood stains are composed of hemoglobin and also give a positive test for serum albumin. The image is an ongoing mystery and until further chemical studies are made, perhaps by this group of scientists, or perhaps by some scientists in the future, the problem remains unsolved."[1]

Science has proven the Shroud is *not* a manmade artwork, so there is no way it can be considered a graven image. Finally, in my 39 year involvement with the Shroud, I have never seen one person pray to the Shroud. People may kneel before it in prayer, but the Shroud simply serves as a focal point for their prayers and not the final destination. The Shroud of Turin is NOT a graven image.

2. THE SHROUD IS JUST ANOTHER CATHOLIC RELIC

I have heard this argument on countless occasions and it always brings a smile to my face. My first response when this comes up in my lectures is to ask the audience when they believe the Shroud came under the control of the Catholic Church. The answers run the gamut from the 1st century to medieval times, but none of those are correct. For more than six centuries, the Shroud was in private hands and owned by the Savoy family, the ruling monarchy of Italy. Although they did place it in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Turin in 1578 for safe keeping, they retained ownership of it until the death of King Umberto II, last Duke of Savoy, in 1983. So the church was only the custodian of the Shroud, had no direct control of it and could do nothing with it without first getting the permission of the king. In fact, the scientific examination performed by STURP in

1978 was authorized by the king and not by the church. Frankly, had it been the direct property of the church, I am doubtful we would ever have received permission to examine it.

In 1985, after two years in the Italian courts, the king's will was probated and it was determined that the will was valid. It is most interesting to note that the king did not leave the Shroud to the institution of the church, but rather to one man, the living Pope. I imagine the king realized that if 130 cardinals had to vote on what should be done with the Shroud, nothing might ever be accomplished. So technically, the Shroud did not come under control of the Catholic Church until 1985! Consequently, it is not really correct to label it a Catholic relic.

3. THE GOSPELS STATE THAT JESUS WAS TIED WITH LINEN STRIPS

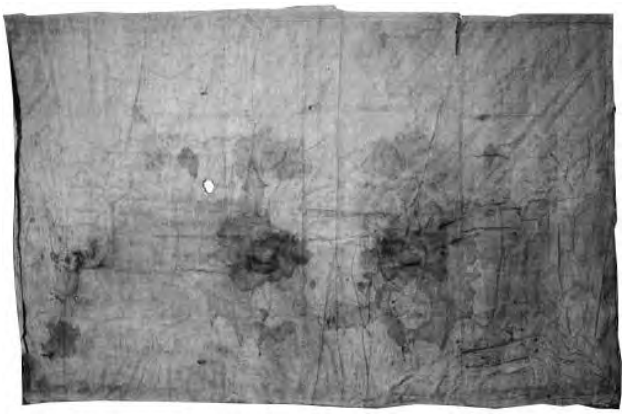
"The Gospels state that Jesus was tied with linen strips, yet the Shroud is a single large cloth, so it can't be real." That is another statement I hear frequently. I guess most people do not realize that by the first century, even the Egyptians had stopped wrapping mummies with strips. So why are "linen strips" even mentioned in the Gospels?

One has to remember that Jesus and his disciples were Jews and his burial would be conducted according to Jewish law and tradition. The Old Testament requires Jewish men of high stature to be buried in "pure linen raiments." The Gospels tell us that the shroud of Jesus was provided by Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy man. That makes good sense, since such a cloth would have been expensive by first century standards and would most likely have been imported, quite possibly from Syria. Jewish custom requires burial in a large

single sheet, as demonstrated in the accompanying De la Rovere painting. Once the body is wrapped in the cloth, it must be bound by linen strips to insure the cloth does not fall off when the body is transported. That is not only consistent with a first century Jewish burial, but also with contemporary burials, and not just by Jews but by Muslims as well. When my father died in 2003, he was given an Orthodox Jewish burial and was wrapped in a white linen shroud very similar to the Shroud of Turin. When the disciples entered the tomb on Sunday morning, only the cloth and strips remained, so they are mentioned in the Gospels.

Of course, the Gospels also tell us there was a second cloth, folded and separate from the other. I often am told that, since the Shroud is only one cloth and two were mentioned in scripture, that the Shroud must consequently be a fake. Never mind the fact that over two millennia, it is quite possible the two cloths could get separated!

So what is this second cloth and why was it there? Once again, Jewish law requires that anything containing the victim's blood or bodily fluids be buried with the body. Once Jesus was taken down from the cross, his face and head were wrapped in a smaller cloth or napkin which absorbed the blood and pleural fluids from his nose and mouth. We still follow a similar procedure today and typically cover the face of the dead immediately upon their passing. Frankly, it is the preservation of this second cloth and its presence in the tomb that convinces me this was an authentic Jewish burial. Even more amazing is that this second cloth, known as the Sudarium, has survived to the present day and is now kept in the cathedral in Oviedo, Spain, where it has resided since the 7th century!



The Sudarium of Oviedo -
©Centro Español di Sindonologia

4. THE MAN OF THE SHROUD HAS LONG HAIR, WHICH IS FORBIDDEN IN THE GOSPELS

Skeptics will often quote to me from 1 Corinthians 11:14 – "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" (this and other verses in this article are from the KJV translation). Well, yes, that is what it says. But when exactly was that written? I am not a New Testament scholar, but I know that Paul wrote that about twenty years after the death of Jesus! So this rule would NOT have applied to him or his disciples, since it had not been written yet! What laws did they follow? The best way to address that is to look to the Old Testament, which was the law in Jesus's time. Here is what it says about long hair and beards:

> Numbers 6:5 (Re the Nazarite's vow) - "All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in which he separateth himself unto the LORD, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow."
>
> And in Leviticus 19:27 – "Ye shall not round [*i.e.*, cut] the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar [*i.e.*, cut] the corners of thy beard."

Jews were literally forbidden to cut their hair and beards and you can still see that today in any Orthodox or Hassidic Jewish communities where all adult males have long hair and beards. Jesus followed the Law of Moses!

5. THE PROPHECIES SAY THE MAN'S BEARD WAS PLUCKED

"The Prophecies say the Man's beard was plucked, yet the Man of the Shroud has a full beard, so it can't be Jesus." This is another popular reason I am given by many Christians as to why the Shroud cannot be authentic. Is there anything on the Shroud that might address this issue? Actually, there is.

If you look closely at the center of the beard below the chin you

will notice an inverted "V" notch that indicates some missing hair. Having worn a beard myself for nearly four decades, I can assure you that plucking even one hair would bring tears to your eyes. Pulling out a clump of hair, as it appears on the Shroud, would have been extremely painful and only added to his torture. Once again, we must consult the Old Testament to see what the Prophecies say:

> Isaiah 50:6 - "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

It never said they shaved his face or plucked off ALL his hair.

©1978 Barrie M. Schwortz Collection, STERA, Inc.

Among people of the Middle East, the beard was held in great veneration, so to pluck a man's beard was a gross indignity and still would be today. As a Jew following the Law of Moses, Jesus was NOT clean shaven. How could people pluck hair from his cheeks if he had no beard?

As you can see, there is a very plausible explanation for each of these objections. It might seem a bit strange that they are being presented to you by a Jewish guy (especially one who said "no" when I was first asked to be on the STURP team in 1977), but I feel obligated to share with you the knowledge I have been privileged to gain over the past 39 years. It is my sincere hope that this information will simply provide you with a new perspective on the Shroud of Turin. It turns out that I was not in that room with the Shroud for myself. I was there for you!

BARRIE M. SCHWORTZ, was the Official Documenting Photographer for the Shroud of Turin Research Project (STURP), the team that conducted the first in-depth scientific examination of the Shroud in 1978. Today, he plays an influential role in Shroud research and education as the editor and founder of the internationally recognized Shroud of Turin Website (www.shroud.com), the oldest, largest and most extensive Shroud resource on the Internet, with more than fifteen million visitors from over 160 countries. In 2009 he founded the Shroud of Turin Education and Research Association, Inc. (STERA, Inc.), a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation in order to preserve and maintain his Shroud photographic collection and other important resources and make them available for future research and study. He currently serves as the President of STERA, Inc.

The Resurrection

Phillip H. Wiebe

Former Anglican Primate of Australia, Peter Carnley, sums up the significance of the Resurrection in the words: "It is the resurrection which is the foundation of the Church, its worship and its theology, for the Church gathers not just around the rehearsal of the story of the incarnation of God, but around the perceived presence of the raised Christ *himself*."[1] This remark conveys the importance of the Ancient creedal claim that Jesus "rose again from the dead." An evident import of it is that a corpse came back to life, which brings Christian faith into sharp conflict with all Modern sensibilities. Charles Taylor aptly remarks in his Gifford lectures for 1998-99, "Why is it so hard to believe in God in (many milieux of) the modern West, while in 1500 it was virtually impossible not to?"[2] C. S. Lewis describes the Medieval (spiritual) view of the universe in *The Discarded Image* (1964), which, he says, is not wholly true, but is not mere fantasy either.[3] Successfully advancing the Resurrection of Jesus today means that naturalism has not succeeded in snuffing out the Light from Antiquity.

Professor John Hick, who taught at the Universities of Cornell, Princeton, and Cambridge, and held chairs at Claremont Graduate University (US) and The University of Birmingham (UK), asserts that two examples of resurrections can be found in Hinduism from the last one hundred years: Sri Yukteswar is said to have appeared after his death (in 1936) to Paramahans Yogananda in Bombay (Mumbai), and

[1] Peter Carnley, *The Structure of Resurrection Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 8.
[2] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 539.
[3] C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 222.

Sri Yukteswar is said to have seen his already dead guru in 1895.4 Hick's claim would be spectacular if it were true, and would allow Hinduism to rival Christianity on its central tenet. However, Hick is surely wrong to view these apparitions as sufficient evidence for *resurrection*, for we can legitimately ask if the bodies of the two gurus came back to life in ways that left causal effects on their corpses, or even on their immolated remains.

These (mistaken) examples from Hick indicate that claims to resurrection require evidence concerning several distinct matters: (a) that some person is indisputably dead; (b) that "someone" *identical* to the person who died is indisputably (seen to be) alive after having been dead, and (c) that person's corpse no longer exists after coming back to life. These conditions are satisfied in the NT claim that Lazarus was brought back to life. The Resurrection of Jesus introduces a fourth isolatable factor, for he is said to have come to life in a body (d) that was immortal and beyond perishability (1 Corinthians 15), which has never been asserted of Lazarus. Exactly how this fourth factor might show up in evidence is somewhat obscure, but I will comment below.

Rudolph Bultmann, perhaps the most prominent theologian of the 20th century, spoke for many theologians and clergy when he remarked in a discussion with Swiss philosopher and psychiatrist, Karl Jaspers, "He [Jaspers] is as convinced as I am that a corpse cannot come back to life ... [b]ut how am I, in my capacity as pastor, to explain ... texts dealing with the Resurrection of Jesus in the flesh."[5] Bultmann plausibly turned to existentialist theology to find some interpretation of the Bible for modern humanity. My framing of the issues here concerning the Resurrection is also existential, I suppose, for the competitors for my allegiance since the early 1960s have always been Naturalism and Christianity. Neither Buddhism, nor Islamism, nor Hinduism nor ... [any religion] ... were ever, for me, "live options," in the famous words of William James. I enthusiastically embraced Bultmann's theology when I first encountered him as a young undergraduate, and was convinced that I would never embrace Christianity's then-unbelievable metaphysic.

We might understandably think that establishing that someone is dead would be a straightforward matter, but when an issue as provocative and far-reaching as resurrection is involved, every small point is contested in

[4] See *Disputed Questions in Theology and the Philosophy of Religion* 1993, 42; see also Paramhansa Yogananda, *Autobiography of a Yogi* 1946.

[5] Rudolf Bultmann, *Myth and Christianity* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux,1958), 60.

the most exhaustive manner imaginable. Some theologians of a century or more ago vigorously debated the possibility that Jesus was not dead when he was removed from the cross, but this stratagem for avoiding the claim that a corpse came back to life has virtually disappeared. The claim that Jesus actually died by crucifixion is now beyond doubt, with 1st century authors, both biblical and non-biblical, concurring on this point. NT expert Craig Evans writes: "The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus are not merely theological ideas but actual events – actual events that awakened faith and later prompted theological inquiry."[6] The evidence for the other conditions is more tendentious.

One tires of hearing about the many difficulties in the NT surrounding the Resurrection, which include the following:

1. Tradition has distinguished appearances of Jesus from visions of Jesus, with the Ascension serving as the event at which the appearances (physical encounters) stopped and the visions (subjective experiences) began. However, *St. Matthew* puts the Ascension in Galilee, whereas *St. Luke* puts it in Bethany (near Jerusalem) forty days after the Resurrection. Moreover, *St. John* implies that the Ascension occurred within the first eight days of the Resurrection.
2. Paul's list of witnesses in *1 Corinthians* 15 is devoid of details, so that it is virtually without value as evidence, especially to those attuned to scientific demands. Moreover, harmonizing the Gospels with one another, and also with Paul's list, appears to be impossible, e.g., Paul identifies Peter as the first to whom Jesus appeared, but *St. John* identifies Mary Magdalene as first.
3. The earliest gospel, *St. Mark*, has a disputed ending. A widely accepted short ending has no accounts of appearances at all, whereas a longer ending includes accounts of two appearances, one of which asserts that Jesus "appeared in a different form," although it does not elaborate. The church has widely repudiated the claim that the resurrected form varied, so *St. Mark* is suspect in both of these endings.
4. No gospel includes a description of Jesus. The only physical description of him in the NT is found in *The Revelation*, which

[6] Craig Evans, *Jesus, The Final Days: What Really Happened* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), Chap. 1.

is widely viewed as symbolic of a transcendent reality, not as a portrayal of how he appeared to his followers. Inasmuch as the identification of individuals depends primarily on how they appear, the failure of the NT authors to adduce details about the appearance of Jesus is mysterious.

5. The Gospels mention something about doubts arising in those who saw Jesus, or that he was not recognized. For example, *St. Matthew's* account of the Ascension says that his disciples worshipped him, but some doubted. The nature of this doubt is not elaborated, however. The claim that he was not always recognized, or that doubts accompanied perceptions, is more understandable if his form varied. The Gospels add curious mystery to the appearance accounts.
6. The nature of the *seeing* involved, in reports that disciples had "seen the Lord," is in dispute.[7] Some consider Paul's own Damascus-road encounter to be a paradigm of all or most cases of the appearances, making them subjective visions.[8] The more life-like appearance accounts in *St. Luke, St. Matthew,* and *St. John* are then seen as redactions of stories, to suppress Docetism or to enhance the divinity of Jesus.
7. The twenty to fifty years that elapsed between reported events and the written accounts undermines the credibility of what was reported. We would dismiss any allegation today about a spectacular event whose only source was an oral tradition of more than two decades.
8. The "ordinary" historical claims on which the NT writers can be successfully evaluated, e.g., the list of governors or rulers in *St. Luke*, seemingly provide little confirmatory value to the "extraordinary" events alleged. I have argued this point at some length elsewhere.[9] Some background on confirming evidence, on which I did my doctoral dissertation (University of Adelaide, 1973), is needed to complete the argument.

Other difficulties could be mentioned, which together suggest that the probability that a resurrection occurred is small. Some scholars disagree on the degree of probability, e.g., Richard Swinburne.[10] I cannot see a

[7] See Gerd Ludemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1994).
[8] See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus – Man and God* (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1968).
[9] Phillip Wiebe, "Authenticating Biblical Reports of Miracles," in Larmer, *Questions of Miracle*, 1996.
[10] Richard Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), Chap. 8.

straightforward solution to such epistemic differences, and offer as evidence for the plausibility of my position the fact that the Academy seems to agree with me, and has substantially abandoned Christianity.

An extraordinary archaeological development relevant to the Resurrection has been uncovered in the last century. The Shroud of Turin has been taken out of obscurity and been brought to the attention of modern science. More than two dozen academic discipline areas are now involved in its study, which makes it a domain so large and formidable that no single person can be qualified in them all, given the complexity of each. Some discussions of the Shroud appear to be devoid of appropriate dispassionateness, and too eagerly construe the Image of the Man as created by "a burst of light" when Jesus was resurrected. Such imbalances can be corrected by examining published criticisms.[11]

The curious symmetry between the injuries that the Man of the Shroud sustained, featured in its bloodstains, and the NT descriptions of the Crucifixion of Jesus have understandably led to the conjecture that the Man is Jesus. The recent discovery that the Man is surrounded by floral images – not just pollen – from flowers native to Israel[12] further contributes to making this identification. Many other factors naturally enhance or diminish the probability of this conjecture, including the 1988 carbon-dating test that gave the Shroud a medieval date.

Increasing attention is being given to the arresting Image of the Man on the Shroud, which is quite independent of bloodstains evident on it. This Image is mysterious, for it is much clearer when we photograph it and view the negative produced (discovered in 1898). The Image also exhibits a plausible three-dimensionality to the Man's body when the varying pixel-like colorations that form the Image are plotted as amounts of vertical relief (discovered in 1976). Most surprising of all, perhaps, the Shroud Image seems to have captured not simply the outer form of the Man, but also some portions of his skeletal structure, such as finger bones, teeth and their roots, orbit bones of eyes, a thumb folded into the palm, and perhaps more. This imaging is dramatically exhibited in the recent work of August Accetta, which also shows that the Shroud has properties we ordinarily see on film that has been bombarded with technesium-99.[13]

[11] See https://www.shroud.com/

[12] See Avinoam Danin, *Botany of the Shroud* (Jerusalem: Danin Publishing, 2010).

[13] August Accetta MD, Kenneth Lyons MD, John Jackson PhD "Nuclear Medicine and its Relevance to the Shroud of Turin," 2014, http://www.shroud.com/pdfs/accett2.pdf

One technical explanation for the Image, suggested by physicist John Jackson[14] and developed by the Ernest Rutherford authority, Thaddeus Trenn[15] opens up an extraordinary vista on evidence for any resurrection. Trenn suggests that some *external* form of energy caused the nuclei of the atoms forming the body of the Man to break apart, which Trenn describes as "weak dematerialization." The Shroud is conjectured then to have passed through these freed neutrons and protons, producing the varying (reversed) shades of light and dark to form the Image, while the freed electrons attached themselves to flowers on the Man to produce the floral images. This conjecture would explain the pointillism of the Image, the faint images of body parts, and the three dimensional effect. Although this conjecture involves a single object, and might seem problematic, it is falsifiable, which makes it scientific according to Sir Karl Popper and many others, as is the Big Bang, also a single event. A test implication of the conjecture is that some of the freed neutrons (from nuclei) would collide with Nitrogen-14, which is plentiful in linen, and produce (new) Carbon-14, thus skewing its 1988 carbon-date. A (non-invasive) scan of the entire Shroud could be conducted to detect C-14 levels, by covering it with radiographic film and encasing these in two sheets of lead for 24 hours. If the C-14 levels were to be found to be similar across the Shroud, the conjecture has been falsified; on the other hand, if C-14 is greatest in the body area and lesser in the outer edges of the cloth, the conjecture about the image having been created by weak dematerialization (or some similar process) would receive significant supporting evidence as a novel test implication.

This conjecture elevates debate about the Resurrection by a quantum leap. I will highlight three points:

1. If the Shroud image was formed by weak dematerialization, then it provides just the kind of evidence one needs for asserting that *a body disappeared when no one was watching*. An extraordinarily curious feature of the original resurrection claim is that no one seemingly observed it – whatever the Roman guards saw, if anything, was never preserved. We only have the empty tomb

[14] See John Jackson, "An Unconventional Hypothesis to Explain all Image Characteristics Found on the Shroud Image," in Berard, A., ed., *History, Science, Theology and the Shroud*, Symposium Proceedings, St. Louis Missouri, June 22-23, 1991, (Amarillo, TX: The Man in the Shroud Committee of Amarillo, 1991), 325-344.

[15] See Thaddeus Treen, "The Shroud of Turin: Resetting the Carbon-14 Clock," in Jitse M. van der Meer, ed., *Facets of Faith and Science* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1996), 119-33.

tradition(s). However, merely discovering several days after a burial that the body was not present in the tomb where it was placed, hardly serves to advance a *resurrection* claim. We also need post-mortem appearances, of course, but no resurrection claim can be advanced if we think that the bones of Jesus lie in some unmarked grave in the Judean hills (*contra* Ludemann). If the Shroud image is that in fact of Jesus of Nazareth, Christian faith has been given an immense evidential boost. On the other hand, if the medieval carbon-dating result of 1988 is correct, then the body of some unknown man has disappeared, and the Shroud reveals to Christian faith *the evidence that it needs in a scientific age but does not have*. Every human body eventually undergoes dissolution, but these events can be described at the level of atoms and molecules – as worms destroy our bodies, etc. However, the conjectured dissolution that is in evidence on the Shroud is subatomic, not atomic. Never before in the history of human thought has a sufficiently developed physics existed that could explain how someone *disappeared and left a trace of himself*.

2. The conjectured energy needed to break the bonds holding atomic nuclei intact in the body of the Man would be immense. For an object weighing, say, eighty kilograms, which is his estimated weight, the "energy would be the equivalent of nearly thirty-six grams of matter converted by E=mc2 ... energy nominally equivalent to about twenty-nine atomic bombs."[16] This energy would need to be *added* from an unknown source to the body of the Man, and it would need to exceed the strongest of the known natural forces – the strong nuclear force – which overpowers the repulsive force exerted in atomic nuclei by particles (protons) having the same charge.
3. Some exceedingly fine discrimination in this conjectured dematerialization was made between the blood already deposited onto the cloth, e.g., at the wrist, and the blood immediately adjacent to it still in the body. The area of the blood deposit at the wrist exhibits no fraying of the cloth fibrils, where the cloth evidently touched the body and received a blood transfer. The body was likely not pulled out of the Shroud to be deposited elsewhere, but seemingly disappeared in a shower of subatomic particles, leaving blood already on the Shroud untouched.

[16] Ibid.

The Shroud Image suggests the action of an *extremely powerful* Intelligence, acting with *conspicuous intentionality* and *astonishing precision* – the Most High God? The Shroud is not an innocuous bystander to the resurrection debate.

In the late spring of 1988 I began to examine experiences in which Christ himself seemingly appeared to living people – little did I know that my conversion *from* Bultmann had been initiated. My interviews of thirty (mostly ordinary) people were published in *Visions of Jesus* (1997), and include accounts of some people healed in their encounters, others in which people felt with their hands what they saw with their eyes, still others in which other successful reality checks were performed, also some for whom the radiance was so intense that only general features were seen, etc. I used a total of twenty-three variables in an effort to compare and contrast experiences. When we read the NT accounts of the immortalized Jesus through the lens of such experiences we will notice some startling incompleteness in NT descriptions, such as St. Paul's list of witnesses. However, we also see that some of the features of the Gospel encounters with a "Being beyond the limits of time" are corroborated.

My conversion to historic Christian faith was substantially completed on the morning of August 26, 2000, when I sat in front of the Shroud. I had gone to Italy for a conference, and stopped in Turin to see the Shroud, primarily because I was lecturing on it and was embarrassed when people in my audiences would ask me if I had actually seen it and I had to admit that I had not. Another reason was because the Shroud had then been on exhibit, on average, only every 25 or 30 years, so many people had only one or two chances in their lifetime to see it. The Cathedral of St John the Baptist was unusually free of visitors that year, and as I sat and surveyed the Man's blood, which was just everywhere on the Shroud, a firm "inner voice" spoke to me in the words, "The Resurrection's real, Phillip" – my full Christian name was used, with a bit of a lilt at the end that conveyed friendliness.

The Shroud suggests that the weight often given to the NT in trying to render the Resurrection plausible is more than texts alone can bear. However, the Christ has arguably also left behind not only a Church, but also a legacy of peculiar visionary encounters found in every century of the last two millennia, as well as the Shroud of Turin, to assure us that

the search for him is actually worth our time and effort. This unusual and existential search is not quite like a straightforward scientific study that anyone can undertake with a casual outlook on the subject. Rather, it is one that is designed to disclose the biblical truth that Jesus, the Christ, is God Incarnate.

PHILLIP H. WIEBE, PhD, is Professor of Philosophy at Trinity Western University, Canada. He is also Chair of the Research Ethics Board and a well published author.

Resurrection in Paganism and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

John Granger Cook

In an ancient Christian text of the fourth century, which is a debate over the New Testament between a Christian and a pagan philosopher, the philosopher begins his attack on the resurrection by referring to that "resurrection of his, which is common talk everywhere."[1] The philosopher, whose argument probably derives from Porphyry (who wrote the notorious *Against the Christians*), proceeds to ask why Jesus did not appear to Pilate, the High Priest, and the Roman Senate — "well known people." He then complains that he only appeared to Mary Magdalene, the other Mary, and a few other unknown people.[2] My colleagues writing for this issue discuss Paul's list of witnesses and the appearance to Mary Magdalene and the other women. Of course, the simple answer to the philosopher is: what would a Roman Senator (or Pilate for that matter) have thought even if the risen Lord had appeared to him (see Acts 10:41)? Since the beginning of the Christian era (Acts 25:19, Matt 27:62–66, 28:11–15) until this day there have been individuals who rejected the message of the resurrection of Christ. One primary argument aims to dismiss the reality of Christ's resurrection by comparing it to that of other ancient divinities — and I will respond to that argument in this article.

The first philosopher we know of who read the Gospels closely was Celsus, who possibly wrote during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (AD

[1] Macarius, Monogenes 2.25.1 (see Macarios de Magnésie, *Le Monogénès: Tome II Édition critique, traduction et commentaire*, ed. R. Goulet, Textes et traditions 7, [Paris: Vrin, 2003] 37).

[2] Ibid., 2.25.1-3 (37–39 Goulet).

161–180). In one of his objections,[3] he adopts the persona of a Jewish antagonist of Christianity and lists a number of individuals who descended to Hades and who returned such as Pythagoras, Orpheus, Protesilaus, Heracles, Theseus, and several others. He continues:

> But one must examine this; whether anyone who truly died ever rose in the same body ... dead, he arose, and he showed the signs of his punishment, how his hands had been pierced (John 20:20, 25). Who saw that? A frantic woman (Mt 28:9, John 20:16), as you say, and perhaps another victim of the same bewitchment who either as a consequence of a certain disposition had a dream and according to his desire had an image in his mind due to a mistaken belief, something that has happened to tens of thousands, or, what is more likely, he wanted to amaze others by this amazing story, and by such a lie to give other beggars an opportunity.[4]

Celsus's two explanations for the appearances of the risen Lord are ancient, but have reappeared often in the modern world: psychology or a grand lie. Celsus is willing to admit that the Greek stories are "myths" (*mythous*), but likewise rejects the Christian narrative. His comparison of Jesus to the Greek figures is an argumentative move that has also been made frequently in the modern critique of the Christian faith (both in books and on websites).

One of the first individuals to respond to an attack on the faith, due to its similarities with Greek myths, was Justin who was martyred during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. Justin was from Flavia Neapolis (Nablus) and was born to pagan parents. According to his own account, he tried several schools of Greek philosophy, but after conversation with an elderly Christian man, he wrote that "a fire was immediately kindled in my soul, and a love (*eros*) of the prophets and of those men who are friends of Christ came over me; while pondering on his words, I discovered that his was the only sure and useful philosophy."[5] The man who would later give his life for the faith was not afraid to make comparisons between the resurrection of Christ and that of Greco-Roman figures. In his *Dialogue with*

[3] Origen, Against Celsus 2.55 (trans. of J. G. Cook, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco Roman Paganism*, [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000], 55–56).
[4] Ibid., 55–56.
[5] *Dialogue* 8.1 (trans. of St. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, trans. T. B. Falls and rev. by T. P. Halton, [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003], 15).

Trypho, for example, he writes:

> For when they say that Dionysus was born of Zeus's union with Semele, and narrate that he was the discoverer of the vine, and that, after he was torn to pieces and died, he arose again [*anastēnai* – a verb used frequently for resurrection in the New Testament] and ascended into heaven, and when they use wine in his mysteries, is it not evidence that the Devil has imitated the previously quoted prophecy of the patriarch Jacob [Gen 49:10–11], as recorded by Moses?[6]

Justin, in his first *Apology* (i.e., defense of the faith) remarks that "the demons taught that Dionysus was torn apart and ascended into heaven".[7] Even though Christians affirm many things that are "similar"[8] to what the Hellenes (Greeks or pagans) say, only what the Christians have learned from the prophets and from Christ is true.[9] Justin's argument is:

> That whatever statements we make, because we learned them from Christ and the Prophets who preceded Him, are alone true, and are older than all writers, and that we should be believed, not because we speak the same things as the writers, but because we speak the truth ...[10]

This truth claim is objectionable, of course, to those who wish to assert that Christ's resurrection is a "myth," but the affirmation of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection is at the center of the Christian proclamation (and the mystical experience of the Christian believer; cp. Rom 6:4–5, 2 Cor 3:18, Gal 2:19–20, Phil 3:10–11, 3:21, Col 2:12–13, and Eph 2:5–6). Another second century apologist, Theophilus, writes that Heracles who burned himself to death "is alive," and that Asclepius, after Zeus struck him with a thunderbolt, "rose again."[11] Tertullian clarifies the apologists' intention in a text in his own *Apology*, with which he introduces his account of Christ's miracles, teaching, crucifixion, and resurrection: "For the moment accept this "story" (it is like your own stories) while we show how Christ is proved, and who they were who, in order to destroy the

[6] Ibid., 69.2 (107 Falls).
[7] St. Justin Martyr, 1 *Apology* 54.6 (my translation).
[8] Ibid., 24.1 (my translation).
[9] Ibid., 23.1.
[10] Ibid., 23.1 (trans. of St. Justin Martyr, *The First Apology. The Second Apology* ..., trans. T. B. Falls [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1948], 59).
[11] Theophilus, *Autolycus* 1.13.

truth, set about among you rival stories [*fabulas*] of the same kind [i.e., the demons of *Apol*. 22.9]."[12]

This brings us to the vexed issue of history, truth, and mythology. A well-known historian of ancient religions (Jonathan Z. Smith) defines myth in this way:

> "[M]yth" refers to a traditional narrative, often orally transmitted, concerning superhuman beings and extraordinary events, occurring in a time remote from the time of its telling; considered to be of collective importance or value because it narrates the formation, or dissolution, of aspects of the present order.[13]

If one understands myth in his manner, then the tales Justin and Theophilus refer to are myths and are easily distinguishable from the claims made about Jesus who can be located in history, along with the witnesses who asserted that they beheld him risen from the dead. I do not deny that some ancient Greeks attempted to chronologically locate figures such as Dionysus and Heracles in the past. Herodotus (V BC) tried to locate the Egyptian and Phoenician Heracles in ancient time and decided there must be two: the Egyptian Heracles was an immortal god in Olympus, and the Phoenician Heracles was a *hero* (a *hērōs*; i.e., a man who died and later was worshipped as a divinity after being taken up to heaven).[14] Cicero (I BC) refers to people of high intellect for the belief that illustrious men and women were taken into heaven. For Cicero, these individuals include Romulus, Hercules, Liber (= Dionysus), and a number of others.[15] The historian Diodorus Siculus (I BC) begins the fourth book of his *Library* by mentioning those who have composed old "mythologies" (*mythologias*).[16] The Egyptians[17] identify Osiris with the Greek Dionysus and affirm that because of his discovery of the vine and its cultivation he was given immortality. He proceeds with the Greek version, in which Dionysus was conceived after Zeus had sexual

[12] *Apology* 21.14-23 (trans. of Tertullian, *Apology* • *De spectaculis*, ed. and trans. T. R. Glover, [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931], 109).
[13] J. Z. Smith, "Things Said/Things Done: The Relations of Myth and Ritual," Witherspoon Lecture, University of North Carolina Charlotte, 29 March 2009, 2, 17–18 n. 2.
[14] Herodotus, *Histories* 2.42-45.
[15] Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.27-28.
[16] Diodorus Siculus, *Library* 4.1.
[17] Ibid., 4.17.

intercourse with Semele (a mortal),[18] gave people the gift of the vine (i.e., wine) and led an army.[19] In a trieteric festival[20] (every two years) some Greeks sacrifice to him and believe that the god makes an appearance (*epiphaneias*) among people. Some myth writers[21] claim there were two Dionysi (one born before the other in chronological time). Even though these figures lived in a legendary time in the past, clearly some Greeks tried to make sense of the chronology.

Cicero notes that "we have a number of Dionysi" (five, actually).[22] One version appears in a text of Philodemus,[23] an Epicurean philosopher of I BC. Philodemus, describing the infant Dionysus, says, "torn apart by the Titans, Rhea put his members together, and he returned to life." Cornutus, a Stoic philosopher of I AD, writes that "it is said in the myth (*mythologeitai*) that he (Dionysus) was torn apart by the Titans and put together again by Rhea."[24] One of the so called *Orphic Hymns* (probably III AD) envisions a Dionysus who is awoken from his sleep in Hades every two years, where he resides with Persephone:

> I call upon Bacchos, appearing every second year, the chthonian Dionysos, aroused/raised together with fair-haired nymphs, who, reposing in the holy house of Persephone, sleeps a holy Bacchic time of two years, but when he again aroused the trieteric revel he turns to a hymn with his fair-girdled nurses, now lulling to sleep, now arousing the times as the seasons wheel by.[25]

The verb for "aroused" or "raised" is the same as the primary verb for resurrection in the New Testament (i.e., *egeirō*).

In the Mediterranean basin, the oldest divinity reputed to have risen from the dead in some sense is Osiris. In the myth, his brother Seth (whom Plutarch identifies with Typhon) cut Osiris to pieces. An ancient *Pyramid Text* has, "Osiris awakes: the god once slack

[18] Ibid., 4.2.1-2.
[19] Ibid., 4.2.5-3.5.
[20] Ibid., 4.3.2.
[21] Ibid., 4.4.1.
[22] Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 3.58.
[23] Philodemus, *On Piety* III 44,4–8 = P. Herc. 247 col. III; cp. Diodorus Siculus 3.62.7.
[24] Cornutus, p. 62,10–11 Lang.
[25] *Orphic Hymns* 53 (trans. of M. Nilsson, *The Dionysiac Mysteries of the Hellenistic and Roman Age*, [New York: Arno Press, 1975], 40).

rouses, the god stands up, the god takes control of his body."[26] After his awakening, Osiris reigns in the Netherworld (i.e., not heaven). A Ptolemaic-Roman temple in Denderah depicts the mummified Osiris rising from the dead.[27] The god is sexually aroused, preparing to conceive Horus with his sister Isis, who had gathered together his scattered body parts. Plutarch, many years after the Pyramid text, compares Dionysus and Osiris, "The narratives of the Titans and of the Night Festivals correspond with the so-called dismemberments, returns to life and rebirths of Osiris."[28] Plutarch, however, as an eclectic philosopher (ca AD 50 – 120), did not accept the myths in a literal sense

> Therefore, Clea [the person to whom he dedicated the treatise, a priestess at Delphi], whenever you hear the traditional tales which the Egyptians tell [*mythologousin* "mythologize"] about their gods, their wanderings, dismemberments, and many experiences of this sort, you must remember what has been already said, and you must not think that any of these tales actually happened in the manner in which they are related.[29]

Diodorus Siculus tells a similar version of the ultimate fate of Horus, who himself had been killed: "Furthermore, she [Isis] discovered also the drug which gives immortality, by means of which she not only raised from the dead her son Horus, who had been the object of plots on the part of Titans and had been found dead under the water, giving him his soul again, but also made him immortal."[30]

There are references to Tyrian Heracles (identified with the god Melqart) rising from the dead. Josephus, the first century Jewish historian, describes the founding of a temple of Heracles (Melqart) by Hiram of Tyre: "Moreover he went off and cut timber from the mountain called Libanos for the roofs of the temples, and pulled down the ancient temples and erected new ones to Heracles and Astarte; and he was the first to celebrate the awakening (or

[26] *Pyramid Texts* Recitation 690 (trans. of J. P. Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015], 287).
[27] The image is available online: http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/mariette1873bd4/096.
[28] *Isis and Osiris* 35, 364F (my trans.).
[29] *Isis and Osiris* 11, 355B (trans. of Plutarch, *Moralia* vol. 5, ed. and trans. F. C. Babbitt et al., [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936] 29).
[30] *Library* 1.25.6 (trans. of Diodorus of Sicily, *The Library of History*, vol. 1., ed. and trans. C. H. Oldfather, [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933)], 81).

"resurrection") of Heracles in the month of Peritius."[31] The word Josephus uses for "awakening," or better "resurrection," is *egersin*, which is used one time in the New Testament for resurrection (Matt 27:53). There are various inscriptions from the Middle East (e.g., one from Philadelphia/Amman, *IGLSyr* 21.2 29) that mention an "awakener" or "resuscitator" of Heracles (*egerseitēn*), and that word is derived from the New Testament's primary verb for resurrection (*egeirō*). An ancient writer named Eudoxus of Cnidus (IV BC) probably illuminates the festival for Heracles in this tale: "Eudoxus of Cnidus, in the first book of his circuit of the earth, says that the Phoenicians sacrifice quails to Heracles, because when Heracles, the son of Asteria and Zeus, was going to Libya he was killed by Typhon. But when Iolaus brought him a quail and set it near him, he smelled it and came to life again."[32]

The evidence for a resurrection of Attis in paganism is at best late. Firmicus Maternus presents one of the late traditions:

> ... they (the Phrygians) advanced the claim that he whom they had buried a little while earlier had come to life again; and since the woman's [Cybele's] heart burned unbearably with overweening love, they erected temples to the dead youth ... His death they interpret as the storing away of the collected seeds, his return to life as the sprouting of the scattered seeds in the annual turn of the seasons.[33]

A third century Christian writer named Hippolytus who was also a bishop of Rome has a similar tradition, although it has been heavily influenced by a Gnostic Christian group (the Naassenes):

> But the Phrygians say that the same one is also a "corpse," having been buried in the body as in a monument or tomb ... And the same Phrygians, he says again, say that this same one is by reason of the change a god. For he becomes a god when he arises from the dead and enters into heaven through the same gate [the gate of the heavens].[34]

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[31] *Antiquities* 8.145-6 (trans. of Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities. Books V–VIII*, vol. 5., ed. and trans. H. St. J. Thackeray and R. Marcus, [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934], 649-51).

[32] Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists* 9.392DE.

[33] *Error* 3.1-2 (trans. of Firmicus Maternus, *The Error of the Pagan Religions*, trans. and annot. by C. A. Forbes, [New York: Newman Press, 1970], 47-48).

[34] *Heresies* 5.8.23-24 (trans. of Hippolytus, *Philosophumena or the Refutation of All Heresies*, trans. and modified by F. Legge, [London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1921], 135).

The evidence is so late that it is of limited use for a comparison with the beliefs of the ancient Christian community.[35]

I could mention other gods here such as Adonis to whom similar traditions of new life after death or resurrection are attributed. The evidence above, however, is enough to make my major point. None of the figures from the history of ancient Mediterranean religions are "live options" for faith any longer. "Live option" is a concept used by William James, the American philosopher who developed pragmatism — the one major philosophical school that Americans have contributed to the history of philosophy. To put it another way, it is clear to (most) modern individuals that Dionysus, Osiris, Heracles, and Attis are mythical beings who never existed. At one time, indeed, many did believe in their existence, although there were doubters. Jesus of Nazareth, on the other hand, did exist in a specific time — although there are a few critics of Christianity who have attempted, in vain, to show that the evidence for his existence is weak. Even the most extreme critics (and occasionally Roman magistrates who persecuted believers) of Christianity in the ancient world recognized the existence of Jesus. An article in *The City*[36] by Michael R. Licona summarizes some of the ancient evidence (to which more could be added, e.g., Porphyry, Hierocles, Macarius's philosopher, Julian the Apostate, etc.). The existence of Jesus is not the problem for the world — the resurrection is. Although there is remarkable evidence (e.g., 1 Cor 15:2–8, written within twenty years of Jesus's crucifixion), one can always doubt. The problem of faith is an existential problem for every human being who hears the Christian proclamation. The ancient comparative material is important for understanding why the Christian message took hold of the ancient world and still takes hold of people who respond with trust. An Egyptologist named Jan Assmann has written some quite perceptive words, in my view, which could be applied to all the divinities described above:

> The experience of death, together with longing for freedom

[35] See Freeman, J., "Attis and Jesus: An Examination of Parallel Claims of Crucifixion and Resurrection," *Citations: A Journal of Undergraduate Research* 10 (2013) 209–223. (http://www.lagrange.edu/resources/pdf/citations/2013/16_Freeman_Religion.pdf) Freeman refutes many of the claims of Acharya S., *The Christ Conspiracy: The Greatest Story Ever Sold*, (Kempton, IL: Adventures Unlimited, 1999).

[36] M. R. Licona, "What Jesus' Enemies Said About Him," *The City* 8 (2015): 92-100, (https://hbu.edu/HBU/media/HBU/publications/thecity/201506-TheCity.pdf).

> from the yoke of transitoriness, were at the core of Egyptian religion. In late antiquity, therefore, Christianity, which promised the same thing, must have exerted a fascinating power on the Egyptian mind. Christian rite, with its manifold sacramental explanations with regard to death and resurrection must have fallen on soil that had been especially fruitful for thousands of years.[37]

Comparing the resurrection of Christ to the vicissitudes of the Mediterranean divinities does not weaken the Christian faith. Instead, it is important to recognize that those individuals in the Mediterranean world who believed in some kind of new life or resurrection of the various divinities were longing for the truth — the truth that many of them later discovered in the Christian Gospel: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25).

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[37] J. Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 414.

JOHN GRANGER COOK, PhD, is Professor of Religion and Philosophy at LaGrange College (LaGrange, GA). He has published books on Mark, the response to the Greek Old Testament and the New Testament by pagan philosophers, the persecution of the early Christians, and crucifixion.

How Early Critics and Objectors Confirm the Truth of the Easter Story

Jeremiah J. Johnston

The Easter event overwhelmed the followers of Jesus to such an extent that it dominated their thought and became the very center of their preaching.[1] Indeed, the message that Jesus himself had proclaimed was subordinated to the proclamation of his resurrection.[2] However, positing that Jesus was not resurrected, one must account for the origin and emergence of resurrection traditions with a "mythmaking" model. Yet, this cannot explain the complaints voiced by early objectors of these accounts. Jews and pagans alike scoffed at this proclamation, especially so in the second century. Among the better-known objectors were Celsus and Porphyry, who ridiculed

[1] Gerhard Koch, *Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1959), 25. For scholarly discussion of resurrection theology and ideas in the New Testament and its environment, see C. F. D. Moule (ed.), *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1968); C. F. Evans, *Resurrection and the New Testament* (SBT 2.12; London: SCM Press, 1970); R. H. Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); Murray J. Harris, *Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985); idem, *From Grave to Glory: Resurrection in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990); Richard N. Longenecker (ed.), *Life in the Face of Death: The Resurrection Message of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God 3; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); Dale C. Allison Jr., *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and Its Interpreters* (London and New York: T & T Clark International, 2005); Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010); Christopher Bryan, *The Resurrection of the Messiah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). The literature treating the resurrection is enormous.

[2] This shift in focus gave rise to the theological debate centered on the problem of how to reckon with the early church's proclamation of the proclaimer.

the Christian proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus on the basis that it rested upon little more than the confused and contradictory testimony of frightened women.[3] Curiously enough, these criticisms potentially lend an important measure of support to the truthfulness of the Easter witness.

A number of years ago Russ Dudrey observed that in all probability authors of fictional accounts of the resurrection of Jesus would have told the story differently from the way it is told in the canonical Gospels. He rightly noted that the accounts of the canonical Gospels are vulnerable to several objections and criticisms, criticisms that are in fact raised in Jewish and pagan circles.[4] In response to pagan objectors, second-century Christian writers revised and embellished the Gospel accounts. In other words, they wrote the narratives the way they "should have been written" in the first place, had the production of convincing accounts, rather than the awkward, sometimes embarrassing truth, been the objective of the Gospel writers. The failure to write the accounts this way, reasons Dudrey, is evidence of the antiquity and probable truth of the accounts. "If one presumes that the Gospel writers were 'Christ conspirators' fabricating Christian fiction by inventing the story of the resurrection, then surely they should have done a better job of it."[5]

In recent work I have been able to elaborate upon the principal point of Dudrey's argument and to extend it further. I shall argue my case by appealing to the criticisms of Celsus and Porphyry and how second-century writings, such as the *Gospel of Peter* and the *Acts of Pilate*, respond to these criticisms. These writings serve as exemplars of how some Christians embellished the canonical resurrection accounts for apologetic purposes, so that—to build on Dudrey's point—the story is told the way the objectors thought it should be if it is to be convincing.

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[3] The resurrection is mocked and attacked by other thinkers from late antiquity, whose views can be found in the writings of several Fathers of the Church (see Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Oration* 5; Lactantius, *Institutes* 4.16, 5.2; and Libanius, *Oration* 18.178 see also the pagan perspective in Lucian, *Peregrinus* 11).

[4] R. Dudrey, "What the Writers Should Have Done Better: A Case for the Resurrection of Jesus Based on Ancient Criticisms of the Resurrection Reports," *Stone-Campbell Journal 3* (2000): 55–78.

[5] Ibid., 57.

CELSUS

Sometime in 175–181 CE the pagan philosopher Celsus wrote a hard-hitting critique of Christian faith entitled *The True Doctrine*, a work that is extant only in Origen's third-century response entitled *Contra Celsum*.[6] Robert Wilken sums up the essence of Celsus' polemic: The "early Christians cannot produce reliable witnesses to the events they claim took place."[7]

Celsus sees Jesus as a coward, whose prayer in Gethsemane portrays him fearfully begging for his life. "Why does he cry: 'Father, if only this cup could pass by me!' A fine God indeed who fears what he is supposed to conquer."[8] This cowardice of Jesus is the primary reason that Jesus's own disciples fled from him at the arrest and crucifixion, did not believe him, and betrayed him: "Your case is made the harder because not even his disciples believed him at the time of his humiliation."[9] Jesus's lack of fortitude and heroism when facing the cross is the main reason for the disciples' disbelief: "Would a god—a saviour, as you say, and son of the Most High God—be betrayed by the very men who had been taught by him and shared everything with him? What an absurdity..."[10] Even Jesus's own followers did not believe in him until they manufactured the story of his abandonment from the grave:

> Have you forgotten that while he lived this Jesus convinced nobody—not even his own disciples—of his divinity, and was punished shamefully for his blasphemies? Were he a god he should not have died, if only to convince other for good and all that he was no liar; but die he did—not only that, but died a death that can hardly be accounted an example to men.[11]

The *Gospel of Peter*, c. 150 CE, responds to this criticism by providing an explanation for the disciples' fear and desertion of Jesus:

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[6] Origen, *Contra Celsum*, preface 1–4. For the critical edition, see Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1953). *On the True Doctrine* has been reconstructed from *Contra Celsum* by R. Joseph Hoffmann, Celsus on the True Doctrine (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). On Celsus, see E. R. Dodds, Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1965), 116–21.

[7] Robert L. Wilken, The Christians as the Romans Saw Them (2nd ed., New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 111.

[8] Hoffmann, *Celsus*, 63–64.

[9] *Ibid*., 66.

[10] *Ibid*., 61–62.

[11] *Ibid*., 65. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2.21, 39.

"But I with my companions was grieved, and being wounded in mind we hid. For we were being sought by them as evildoers and as those wishing to burn the temple. But through all of these things we were fasting and were sitting, mourning and weeping night and day until the Sabbath" (Akhmîm fragment 7:26–27). The pious disciples were forced into hiding because of a false allegation, in which they were accused of desiring to "burn the temple." Moreover, the disciples are portrayed as piously fasting with deep emotions awaiting the Sabbath morn. Therefore, according to the *Gospel of Peter* the disciples were forced in hiding because of the pursuit of the Jews, not because of unbelief or doubts toward their master.[12] They did not, says Léon Vaganay, "flee as cowards."[13]

Celsus asserts, "No wise man believes the gospel."[14] If Jesus were God, he would have appeared to the illustrious and educated men of the empire. Jesus should have appeared to his Jewish and Roman enemies. The Christian notion of resurrection is anti-philosophical and anti-intellectual, not to mention irrational. The default Christian response to public discourse is, according to Celsus, "Do not ask questions; just believe."[15] Dudrey puts the criticism of Celsus into context: "This is not mere intellectual snobbery on Celsus' part: the social dynamics of the Greco-Roman world were dominated by questions of status and public dignity. Jesus had none, and neither did his followers."[16]

Indeed, the *Gospel of Peter* confirms the resurrection tradition with a Roman governor and centurion, Petronius, who refers to Jesus as the "Son of God" (Akhmîm fragment 11:45–46). The author asserts that the first witnesses of Jesus's resurrection are Romans—officials no less! While Pilate is exonerated from the death of Jesus, saying, "I am clean from the blood of the son of God," the Jewish

[12] Rightly observed by Vaganay. See, further, Léon Vaganay, *L'Évangile de Pierre* (2nd edn, Paris: Gabalda, 1930), 93: *Dans les deux péricopes . . . Pierre est à l'honneur. Il parle au nom des "Douze" et son discours n'a d'autre but que de justifier la conduite du college apostolique.* ("In the two pericopes . . . Peter is honoured. He speaks in the name of the 'Twelve' and his discourse has no other goal than to justify the leadership of the apostolic assembly.")

[13] Ibid.: *comme des lâches.*

[14] Hoffmann, *Celsus*, 75. *Origen, Contra Celsum* 3.73.

[15] Hoffmann, *Celsus*, 54; *Origen, Contra Celsum* 1.9, 12. See also E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 121.

[16] Dudrey, "What the Writers Should Have Done Better," 61.

leaders, having only moments earlier witnessed a vindicated Jesus, possessing a supernatural body whose height surpassed the clouds (Akhmîm fragment 10:40), asked Pilate to charge his Roman security detachment to lie about witnessing the resurrection of Jesus. "Therefore, Pilate ordered the centurion and the soldiers to say nothing" (Akhmîm fragment 11:49). It is important to note that Matthew's earlier story, in which the soldiers were ordered to spread the story that the disciples stole the body of Jesus while the guards slept (Matt 28:11–15), has been dropped. The guards could hardly serve as credible witnesses if they had been asleep. In the *Acts of Pilate*, c. 160 CE, the guards remain fully conscious and attentive when the angel of the Lord descends. They witness—and therefore confirm—what the canonical evangelists relate. The guards tell the ruling priests:

> We saw an angel descend from heaven, and he rolled away the stone from the mouth of the cave, and sat upon it, and he shone like snow and like lightning. And we were in great fear, and lay like dead men. And we heard the voice of the angel speaking to the women who waited at the tomb: "Do not be afraid. I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. He has risen, as he said. Come and see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead and is in Galilee." (*Acts of Pilate* 13:1)

Celsus taunts the early Christian movement for it puerile attempt to convince the world of Jesus's resurrection, yet without providing credible eyewitnesses. No belief is more devious, full of contradictions and open to criticism, says Celsus, than the report of Jesus's resurrection. For Celsus differences in the canonical accounts meant contradictions. The only witnesses to the alleged resurrection are hysterical and deluded:

> But who really saw [the resurrection]? A hysterical woman, as you admit and perhaps one other person—both deluded by his sorcery, or else so wrenched with grief at his failure that they hallucinated him risen from the dead by a sort of wishful thinking . . . If this Jesus were trying to convince anyone of his powers, then surely he ought to have appeared first to the Jews who treated him so badly—and to his accusers—

> indeed to everyone, everywhere. Or better, he might have saved himself the trouble of getting buried and simply have disappeared from the cross. Has there ever been such an incompetent planner: When he was in the body, he was disbelieved but preached to everyone; after his resurrection, apparently wanting to establish a strong faith, he chooses to show himself to one woman and a few comrades only. When he was punished, everyone saw; yet risen from the tomb, almost no one . . . This is not my own guessing: I base what I say on your own writings, which are self-refuting. What god has ever lived among men who offers disbelief as the proof of his divinity? What god appears in turn only to those who already look for his appearances, and is not even recognized by them?[17]

The *Gospel of Peter* seems to respond to this very complaint. According to the fragment, the resurrection was observed by Roman guards and by the very Jewish leaders who had condemned Jesus to death (9:35–11:45). Accordingly, the report of the empty tomb and resurrection no longer rests upon a "hysterical woman . . . and perhaps one other person," as Celsus puts it. On the contrary, Jesus did appear "first to the Jews who treated him so badly—and to his accusers"! This is not to say that the *Gospel of Peter* was specifically composed as an answer to Celsus, but it does seem to reflect an apologetic retelling of the burial and resurrection of Jesus with the kind of criticism seen in Celsus in mind, and which was circulating in the second century.[18]

By providing credible witnesses the *Gospel of Peter* fragment eliminates grounds for the kind of doubt put forward by sceptics like Celsus.[19] The author of the *Gospel of Peter* emphasizes that

[17] Hoffmann, Celsus, 61–62, 67–69; Origen, Contra Celsum 2.54, 59–75. Sceptics like Celsus reasoned, in the words of Vaganay: *Qui donc avait vu de ses yeux le Christ au moment de sa resurrection? Personne.* ("Who then saw Christ with their own eyes at the moment of his resurrection? No one.")

[18] Timothy P. Henderson, *The Gospel of Peter and Early Christian Apologetics: Rewriting the Story of Jesus' Death, Burial, and Resurrection* (WUNT 301; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 213. The *Gospel of Peter* may well have been composed a decade or two before Celsus wrote. What the author of the *Gospel of Peter* attempted to answer were the kinds of objections and criticisms known in his time and then soon after were further developed by Celsus.

[19] As Vaganay, *L'Évangile de Pierre*, 91, puts it: *Le pseudo-Pierre semble avoir eu conscience de ces objections possibles.* ("Pseudo-Peter seems to have been conscious of these possible objections.")

many eyes "kept watch" on Jesus's tomb after "they spread out seven seals" (Akhmîm fragment 8:33). Tobias Nicklas has noted how striking it is that the *Gospel of Peter* underscores "sensual perception," in that the soldiers, centurion, and Jewish elders "see" and "hear" what takes place during the resurrection of Jesus (9:36; 10:38, 39a, 39, 41, 42):[20]

V. 36:	καὶ εἶδο(ν)	"and they *saw*"
V. 38:	ἰδόντες οὖν οἱ	
	στρατιῶται ἐκεῖνοι	"and so those soldiers *having seen*"
V. 39a:	ἃ εἶδον	"what they *had seen*"
V. 39b:	πάλιν ὄρωσιν	"again they *see*"
V. 41:	ἤκουον	"And they were *hearing*"
V. 42:	ἠκούετο	"was *heard*"

The *Gospel of Peter* takes care to show that it was not possible for the disciples to remove the body of Jesus from the tomb (as was rumoured in Matt 28:11–15). The Jewish leaders were not in a hurry to leave the place of burial; instead, they were "pitching a tent there" (Akhmîm fragment 8:33). The *Gospel of Peter* further accentuates the Matthean apologetic by showing that there is no way the disciples could have stolen the body. The disciples, having fled were fasting; meanwhile the tomb of Jesus was constantly under observation, making it impossible for the disciples (or for any other grave robbers) to remove the body of Jesus (as was rumoured in Matt 28:11–15).

The polemics of Celsus seem to represent the sceptical climate circulating in the second century, which was likely known to the author of the *Gospel of Peter*.[21] The *Gospel of Peter* is in part an apologetic reaction to pagan criticism, such as we see in Celsus, specifically in reference to credibility of the resurrection story. The *Gospel of Peter* and the *Acts of Pilate* exemplify an apologetic that addresses second-century Jewish and pagan criticisms of the resurrection narratives of the older New Testament Gospels. The resurrection narrative of

[20] Tobias Nicklas, "Resurrection in the Gospels of Matthew and Peter: Some Developments," in W. Weren, H. van de Sandt, and J. Verheyden (eds.), *Life Beyond Death in Matthew's Gospel: Religious Metaphor or Bodily Reality?* (BTS 13; Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 27–41.

[21] Henderson, *The Gospel of Peter and Early Christian Apologetics*, 213.

the *Gospel of Peter* is also unique, for the New Testament gospels say nothing about humans—followers or non-followers—observing the resurrection of Jesus.

PORPHYRY

Porphyry (c. 232–303 CE) was a native of Tyre, and in his youth heard Origen preach, studied Hebrew scripture, especially the Gospels, and found them lacking in literary quality and philosophical sophistication.[22] Porphyry was eighteen when the persecution broke out under emperor Decius. Although at one time sympathetic toward Jesus and the Christian movement, he later developed an intense hatred for religion—or *superstitio*. Akin to modern-day "New Atheists," Porphyry came to regard Christianity as the most pernicious form of disease infecting the empire. His fifteen-book Κατὰ Χριστιανῶν (*Against the Christians*) is preserved in part in the writings of Eusebius and *Apollinarius*, and especially in the Apocriticus composed by Marcarius Magnes in the fourth or fifth century.[23] Porphyry echoes several of Celsus' criticisms of Christian beliefs.

Like Celsus, Porphyry claims that the Gospels' portraits of the death of Jesus are absurd and are not based on credible eyewitnesses, as seen by their apparent contradictions and the lack of first-hand reports:

> The evangelists were fiction writers—not observers or eyewitnesses to the life of Jesus. Each of the four contradicts the other in writing his account[24] of the events and of his suffering and crucifixion . . . Based on these contradictory and second-hand reports, one might think this describes not

[22] Hoffmann, *Celsus*, 16.

[23] Adolf von Harnack, *Gegen die Christen* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1916). Since the appearance of Harnack's collection, a number of studies have appeared variously defending or attacking the German historian's conclusions. The scholarly opinion is divided over whether the pagan of Macarius' dialogue is Porphyry, a transcriber of Porphyry or another. This thesis presupposes the traditional conclusion of Harnack's, i.e., that Marcarius was responding to Porphyry. I presuppose Harnack's conclusion, i.e., that Marcarius was responding to Porphyry.

[24] The charge of contradiction was commonplace. However, the apparent discrepancies and differences are in fact fewer and less severe in comparison to the writings of Greco-Roman historians during the period in question. See C. S. Keener, "*Otho*: A Targeted Comparison of Suetonius's Biography and Tacitus' *History*, with Implications for the Gospels' Historical Reliability," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 21 (2011): 331–55.

> the suffering of a single individual but of several! Where one says, "Into your hands I will deliver my spirit," another says "It is finished" and another "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me," and another "My God, my God why do you punish me." (*Apocrit*. 2.12)[25]

The *Gospel of Peter* counters this sort of criticism by claiming that the first witnesses of Jesus's resurrection were a Roman centurion and his soldiers, along with hostile Jewish elders and scribes, whose testimony can hardly be doubted. Porphyry sees the account of the passion and resurrection of Jesus as a "legend lifted from accounts of several crucifixions" and asks why Jesus did not stare down his enemies after his resurrection. Again, the *Gospel of Peter* rebuts the criticism, claiming that Jesus is tall enough to be seen by all and is more than enough to stare down anyone. The impression one receives from the canonical Gospels is that Jesus only appears to the lowly of his day, persons with little social standing and little credibility.

The pagan's demand for a worthy witness is a protest against witnesses that have no credibility. Instead of appearing to credible persons, says Porphyry, Jesus "appeared to Mary Magdalene, a prostitute who came from some horrible little village and had been possessed by seven demons, and another Mary, equally known, probably a peasant woman, and others who were of no account" (*Apocrit*. 2.14).[26] Accordingly, Porphyry asks, "[W]hy did this Jesus not appear to Pilate . . . or to the king of the Jews, Herod, or to the high priest of the Jewish people, or to many men at the same time"? (*Apocrit*. 2.14). According to the *Gospel of Peter*, that is exactly what the risen Jesus did: He appeared to Jewish people of the highest rank and to the Roman guards who reported all to Pilate.

The chronology of the appearance tradition is cast in a new way in the *Gospel of Peter*. Only after the Jewish and Roman leaders have seen the resurrected "son of God," do the women fearfully venture to the tomb (Akhmîm fragment 12:50–52). The narrator again reminds his audience that the stone was "great" (Akhmîm fragment 12:54) and

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[25] R. Joseph Hoffmann, *Porphyry's Against the Christians: The Literary Remains* (Amherst NY: Prometheus Books, 1994), 32.

[26] Hoffmann, *Porphyry's Against the Christians*, 34; John Granger Cook, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism* (Studies and Texts in Antiquity and Christianity 3; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 198.

the women were concerned about moving the stone, fearful the Jews would see them visiting, and decided to mourn when they returned home (Akhmîm fragment 12:52–54).

The resurrection is mocked and attacked by other thinkers from late antiquity, whose views can be found in the writings of several Fathers of the Church (see Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Oration* 5; Lactantius, *Institutes* 4.16, 5.2; and Libanius, *Oration* 18.178; see also the pagan perspective in Lucian, *Peregrinus* 11). Romans viewed the Christian message of resurrection as strange, even disgusting. The New Testament itself attests this Greco-Roman aversion to resurrection belief. We see this among Christians in Corinth, perhaps influenced by the Platonic notion of the soul, who persisted in their belief that there was no resurrection (1 Cor 15:12); perhaps also in the reference to Hymanaeus and Philetus, men who evidently spiritualized the resurrection by declaring the resurrection had already occurred (2 Tim 2:18). Paganism is clearly in evidence when Paul was "mocked" on Mars Hill for proclaiming the resurrection (Acts 17:32).

The New Testament Gospel narratives have apparent gaps and difficulties in the resurrection tradition leaving them exposed to attacks from objectors. Only Matthew's tradition mentions the guard at the tomb and the seal on the burial stone; only Lukan tradition narrates Jesus's appearance to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–25). The later Johannine tradition exclusively mentions Nicodemus's involvement in the burial of Jesus, Jesus's appearance to Mary Magdalene (John 20:1, 11–18), Peter and John's run to the empty tomb (John 20:3–10), Thomas's challenge that unless he met the risen Christ he would not believe (John 20:24–29), the disciples going back to their previous vocation as fishermen (John 21:4–6), and Peter's restoration over Jesus's breakfast (John 21:7–19).

Of course there are differences in the canonical resurrection accounts and some are not so easily reconciled. For critics like Celsus and Porphyry differences meant contradictions that were irreconcilable. The tradition contains a number of discrepancies in incidental details, which left the canonical narratives vulnerable to attack: (1) Which women visited the tomb on Easter morning? The Markan tradition reports three women: Mary Magdalene, Mary the

mother of James and Salome (Mark 16:1). The Matthean tradition speaks of two women, Mary Magdalene, and the "other" Mary (Matt 28:1). The Lukan tradition portrays at least five women—two Marys and Joana—and adds "the other women" without any more specificity (Luke 24:1, 10). (2) The canonical tradition does not agree with regard to the angels announcing the resurrection: Mark tells of a "young man" (Mark 16:5), while Luke mentions two dazzling angels (Luke 24:4); Matthew, like Mark, has one "angel of the Lord" at the resurrection tomb without mentioning a youthfulness (Matt 28:2–3); and the Johannine narrative omits the angel(s) altogether. (3) There is some geographical confusion regarding the location of the resurrection appearances: Were they in Galilee or in Jerusalem? The Markan tradition (rightly omitting 16:9–20) has no appearances; the text in its current form does not fulfil Jesus's most important Markan prediction of resurrection. In Mark 16:5 the disciples are told that Jesus will meet them in Galilee (Mark 16:5). The Luke–Acts narrative appearances occur exclusively around Jerusalem (Luke 24:36–41; Acts 1:6–11). The Matthean and Johannine tradition present Jesus's post-mortem appearances in Jerusalem and Galilee (Matt 28:1–10, 16; John 20–21).

Julian pointed out several contradictions in the synoptic resurrection account.[27] According to Cyril, Julian

> wrote that the holy evangelists contradict themselves when they say: Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (following Matt 28:11), late on the Sabbath when the first of the week began to dawn, came to the tomb; according to Mark, [16:2] however, after it began to be daylight and the sun had risen. And according to Matthew they saw an angel [28:2]; according to Mark a young man [16:5]; and according to Matthew they left and told the disciples about the resurrection of Christ [28:8] – according to Mark they were silent and told no one anything [16:8]. By means of these things he brings censure on the holy scriptures and says that they contradict each other.[28]

The canonical traditions give no eyewitnesses of the resurrection

[27] Cook, *Greco-Roman Paganism*, 300.

[28] As preserved in one of the Syriac fragments of Cyril's work against Julian. See Cook, *Greco-Roman Paganism*, 300.

event itself, only of the discovery of the empty tomb, the presence of angel(s), and the appearances of Jesus. In the Matthean account, Roman soldiers observe an angel descending from heaven, who rolls away the stone and sits upon it. We have the tomb opening, soldiers observing, and an empty tomb; however, nobody sees Jesus rise from the dead. According to the Synoptic tradition, we are left wondering where Jesus is, "Why seek the living with the dead? He is not here, he is risen" (Mark 16:6; Matt 28:6; Luke 24:5). This is exactly the lacuna that the *Gospel of Peter* seems to fill.

Despite the fact that the enemies of Jesus knew of the resurrection, only Jesus's allies are witnesses of the empty tomb. Initially we are told of at least five women; later we hear of Peter and John visiting the empty tomb. We are dependant on the later Johannine tradition for a male account of an empty tomb, that of Peter and John (John 20:1–10). Mark and Matthew do not reflect this tradition, and Lukan tradition provides limited detail of Peter's visit to the tomb (Luke 24:12). Other than Peter, as described in Luke 24:12, and Peter and John in the Johannine narrative (John 20:1–10), the earliest witnesses of Jesus's resurrection are women, who in late antiquity were viewed as dubious witnesses. Why do all the followers of Jesus, except John "who saw and believed" (John 20:8–9), expect to find Jesus's corpse in the tomb? The Johannine tradition presents the disciples wondering if grave robbers have stolen him away (John 20:2, 13–15). When the risen Jesus appears in the Upper Room, the apostles are chastised for unbelief and hardness of heart because they did not believe the women's report that he had risen (Luke 24:11, 13–35).

The *Gospel of Peter's* recasting of the resurrection story addresses the perceived problems in the earlier Canonical Gospels. This second-century writing attempts to rebut pagan criticism by providing eyewitnesses (hostile ones at that), who possess much more credibility than women, *of the resurrection event itself*. These witnesses are Roman guards and Jewish elders, who see angelic beings enter the tomb and lead a transformed, vindicated Jesus out of the tomb.[29] The disciples'

[29] See Vaganay, *L'Évangile de Pierre*, 91–92. Vaganay notes that the author of the gospel fragment took care to place the Jewish leaders close to the tomb, along with the Roman soldiers. In this way it would be impossible to challenge their testimony, for they saw everything clearly and discussed the matter among themselves.

fear and flight are explained. The chronology of post-mortem events is transposed in the second-century context to answer scepticism of Jesus's resurrection. Only after the social elite, the power brokers of Jewish Palestine, have experienced the resurrected Jesus do the women and disciples witness the empty tomb. Thus, the resurrection testimony of the followers of Jesus is subordinated to that of Jesus's enemies. Pontius Pilate, who had been unwilling to crucify Jesus, is exonerated and the blame is shifted to Herod and Jewish leaders. Our analysis has enabled us to see some significant points of cultural, political, and social coherence between apologetic elements in the *Gospel of Peter* and second century pagan scepticism.[30]

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The *Gospel of Peter* and the *Acts of Pilate* provide us with a number of examples of how accounts of the resurrection could have and should have been written, had the goal been a compelling and convincing story but not necessarily a factual one. In contrast, the Canonical Gospels present restrained, sober narrative. The accounts of the resurrection of Jesus in the Canonical Gospels exhibit a commitment to veracity and not to apologetically driven embellishment and excess. They leave their stories open to criticism, even an apparent vulnerability, because of a commitment to the ancient sources and traditions. Of course, the Gospels were not written in a way that anticipated second-century sceptics. The *Gospel of Peter* and the *Acts of Pilate*, however, illustrate perfectly the kind of creative, expansive embellishment that the Evangelists "should have done," if they had attempted to fabricate a more convincing account of the resurrection of Jesus. Careful comparison of the dissimilarities of the resurrection accounts from the first century and the second century with pagan criticism of the second century helps us appreciate more the candor

[30] One may well ask why a second-century Christian writer would embellish the gospel story in an effort to rebut contemporary critics. I doubt very much the writer of the *Gospel of Peter* thought his embellishments were anything less than the truth. Stories and legends about Jesus began to emerge after the passing of the apostles and those they taught. The lines between "interpreted tradition" and unhistorical embellishment were not clearly drawn. Several apocryphal gospels and books of Acts appeared in the second and third centuries, characterized by the kind of embellishment we find in the *Gospel of Peter* and the *Acts of Pilate*. Some of the embellishment was motivated by apologetic, but a lot of it is educational and devotional.

and commitment to truth we see on the part of the first-century gospel writers.

JEREMIAH J. JOHNSTON, PhD, is a New Testament scholar, teacher, apologist and regular speaker on university campuses, churches and other popular venues. His passion is equipping Christians to give intellectually informed accounts of what they believe. Dr. Johnston completed his doctoral residency in Oxford partnership with Oxford Centre for Christian Studies and received his Ph.D. from Middlesex University (United Kingdom) with commendation. Dr. Johnston currently serves as the founder and president of Christian Thinkers Society, a resident institute at Houston Baptist University where he also serves as Associate Professor of Early Christianity in the School of Christian Thought. For more information, visit www.ChristianThinkers.com.

Martyrdom and the Resurrection

Collin Garbarino

For most Americans the idea of martyrdom seems a strange and foreign concept. In recent years some Christians have experienced intolerance because of their stances on certain social issues, but the government has not killed Christians or tried to stamp out the church. Oftentimes when faced with an injustice against the church, Christians in America fight back using the political tools at our disposal. We ought to seek to preserve religious liberty, but if we stage a counter-assault in the culture war, we should not think we follow the example of the early Christian martyrs.

In some places around the world, however, martyrdom is a current reality for the church. Christians in some parts of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East are under attack from either their governments or vigilante groups or both. Christians are beheaded, pastors are imprisoned, church property is confiscated—in many ways it sounds as if the church has returned to its early days in the Roman Empire. In some places the situation is actually much worse, because Rome's persecution tended to be sporadic and localized while in some places today's persecution is more systematic.

By the grace of God, the church's history has not been one long bloody tale of martyrdom. Most Christians in most places have lived in relative peace with their governments over the last two thousand years. However, Christians should not be surprised when persecution does come. Did not Jesus himself promise us as much? Actually many Christians in the early church began to think of martyrdom as a manifestation of God's grace. While peace was good, martyrdom could provide a testimony to Christ and his resurrection that safety could not.

MARTYRDOM AS A TESTIMONY TO THE RESURRECTION

The idea of martyrdom began as a uniquely Christian concept. The Greeks and Romans had an idea of "noble death" in which some virtuous man or woman died for their ideals, and many pagans looked to Socrates, Lucretia, or Cato for examples of how to die well. It was the Christians, however, who coined the term "martyr" to refer to someone who died for their faith. What did they mean by this?

"Martyr" comes from the Greek word *mártys*, which simply means "one who gives testimony" or "witness." At some point during Christianity's first hundred and fifty years Christians began using this word to describe those who had died violently for the faith, and the word began to carry connotations of sacrifice. It is understandable to think of those dying for their faith as having sacrificed something, but why call them "witnesses"? What did the early church think that the martyrs had witnessed to? The martyrs' willingness to die testified that they believed in the gospel and showed the fervency of their belief in the resurrection through their actions.

The writers of the New Testament used *mártys* and its cognates frequently, but in the New Testament the word's semantic range stays close to the idea of bearing witness or testifying. Sometimes the *mártys* is an apostle, but often the *mártys* is God himself. Usually it does not have anything to do with death. In a couple of passages someone who died for the faith is called a *mártys*—Acts 22:20 and Revelation 2:13—but when compared with the word's usage throughout the rest of the New Testament, it is probably best to continue thinking of the word as meaning simply "witness."[1] During the sporadic persecutions of the second century, however, the word "martyr" came to have its present definition of one who dies for the faith.

[1] G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 12–16. For a different interpretation, see W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: a Study of Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (New York: New York University Press, 1967), 58–76. Frend argues for a development of the term *mártys* within the canon. He believes that Johannine literature moves *mártys* closest to the later meaning of "martyr."

The account of Polycarp's martyrdom is the earliest unquestionable evidence of mártys being used to mean "martyr." Around 150, Polycarp, the elderly bishop of Smyrna in Asia Minor, went into hiding because his church in Smyrna was suffering persecution. After his second hiding place was discovered, Polycarp decided that his execution must be God's will. The Roman governor told Polycarp that he could go free if only he would curse Christ, but the elderly bishop replied, "For eighty-six years I have been his servant and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme against my king and saviour?"[2] Polycarp's martyrdom became the archetypal martyr tale for early Christians, and many later martyr accounts follow its style and structure. Throughout the text, Polycarp and the others who died in Smyrna are referred to as "martyrs," and the context clearly shows that the word now refers to those who have died for the faith.

This dying, however, is a special kind of dying. The martyr's death testifies to the truth of the gospel. This dying testifies that Christ has risen and witnesses to the Christian's confidence in his own resurrection on the Last Day. The martyrs can embrace death because they know that life has conquered death. The death of the martyr proclaims that death has lost its sting. Polycarp witnesses to his confidence in this truth in his last speech.

> O Lord, omnipotent God and Father of your beloved and blessed child Christ Jesus, through whom we have received our knowledge of you, the God of the angels the powers, and of all creation, and of all the family of the good who live in your sight: I bless you because you have thought me worthy of this day and this hour, to have a share among the number of the martyrs in the cup of your Christ, for the resurrection unto eternal life of both the soul and the body in the immortality of the Holy Spirit. May I be received this day among them before your face as a rich and acceptable sacrifice, as you, the God of truth who cannot deceive, have prepared, revealed, and fulfilled beforehand. Hence I praise you, I bless you, and I glorify you above all things,

[2] *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 9.3. Translations of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* from Herbert Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 2–21.

> through that eternal and celestial high priest, Jesus Christ, your beloved child, through whom is glory to you with him and the Holy Spirit now and for all ages to come. Amen.[3]

Some of these martyrs verbally testified—bore witness—to their faith in Christ before they were killed, but the martyrs did not have to witness with words. Their deaths testified to their faith. With their deaths they testified that they would gladly suffer the killing of the body because they had confidence that Christ would restore the body in the Resurrection.

THE MARTYR'S GRAVE AS A REMINDER OF RESURRECTION

This faith in the bodily resurrection of the saints caused the early church to value and care for the bodies of the martyrs, as well as the bodies of other dead Christians. Christ came bodily, Christ was raised bodily, and Christ would give believers resurrection bodies on the Last Day. The early church understood the lesson. Bodies are important.

From the beginning we find the church caring for the remains of their precious martyrs. The chronicler of Polycarp's martyrdom writes that the Romans refused to give Polycarp's body to his followers, instead cremating it. However, they would not be deterred from doing their duty to care for it.

> Thus at last, collecting the remains that were dearer to us than precious stones and finer than gold, we buried them in a fitting spot. Gathering here, so far as we can, in joy and gladness, we will be allowed by the Lord to celebrate the anniversary day of his martyrdom, both as a memorial for those who have already fought the contest and for the training and preparation of those who will do so one day.[4]

The grave of a martyr became a memorial place where the church could celebrate the gospel of Christ.

Pagan Romans avoided the ashes of their forebears, but Christians looked upon the graves of their dead as having spiritual

[3] *Polycarp* 14.1–3.
[4] *Polycarp* 18.2–3.

importance. Christian cemeteries were not final resting places; the grave was only temporary. Christians looked forward to the bodily resurrection of their brothers and sisters, and visiting the grave of those who slept in Christ testified to this belief in the resurrection.

The resurrection of Christ had rent the veil that separated the living and the dead. The early Catholic Church did not merely boast a universality over space, but it also claimed a temporal universality. Could death really separate the saints, whether living or dead, now that Christ has risen? Christians gathered at the tombs to celebrate because in this way the members of the church who still lived could include in the celebration the members of the church who had died. Heaven and earth were joined, in a sense, when Christians both living and dead simultaneously worshiped the God who would one day reunite them in the Resurrection.

Even in death, many people wanted to be associated with the cult of the martyrs. Burial *ad sanctos*, being interred near a martyr, was quite popular with Christian communities in both the Latin and Greek halves of the empire.[5] People believed that spiritual benefits could be gained from lying so near the martyrs. Since the martyrs were close to God, being buried near them would perhaps bring the average Christian a little closer to God. Also, the idea existed that at the Resurrection, awakening near martyrs would be meritorious. Besides these spiritual benefits there may have been the very practical concern that a tomb near a powerful martyr might be less susceptible to desecration by grave robbers. Many notable bishops and their families were buried in the vicinity of martyrs; for example, both Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus buried their parents and siblings near martyrs.[6] Paulinus of Nola approved of this practice, but it seems that he did not feel adequate in justifying it so he sent a letter to Augustine asking for his opinion on the matter. In his reply, Augustine allowed burial *ad sanctos*, but he indicated that this allowance is mostly a compassionate concession to grieving families.[7] After all, the resurrection of the body is not dependent on

[5] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 30–35.

[6] Johan Leemans et al., *"Let Us Die that We May Live": Greek Homilies on Christian Martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine and Syria (c. AD 350–AD 450)* (London: Routledge, 2003), 13.

[7] Augustine *De cura pro mortuis gerenda.*

the martyrs; it depends on the power of Christ.

Just as honoring the dead sacralized space in the Christian cemeteries, honoring the martyrs helped create a holy temporality for Christianity.[8] The Christian calendar contained a unique rhythm, and during the fourth century, festivals honoring the martyrs, along with other Christian observances like Easter, began to sacralize time. The Christian calendar became a continuous rehearsal of the theological doctrines of renewal and resurrection. On the yearly cycle, Easter reminded Christians of Christ's resurrection from the dead, but Christians reminded themselves of the resurrection on a weekly basis as well. Every Sunday morning the church proclaimed the resurrection, and festivals honoring the martyrs supplemented this testimony to the belief in the resurrection. Originally, these celebrations were highly localized, with each city honoring its own martyrs, its own heroes of the faith. These observances were uneven throughout the empire because not all towns, for example Milan, had produced martyrs and some martyr shrines were located in rural areas not overseen by any ecclesiastical authority. Conversely, some important cities, like Rome, influenced the festivals in neighboring towns. By the time Constantine gained power in the early fourth century, the church in Rome, a city with an unrivaled martyr tradition, celebrated about thirty anniversaries of the martyrs.[9] This number would explode over the course of the fourth century as bishops engaged in the task of Christianizing the calendar.

HONORING THE MARTYRS IN HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION

The martyrs both past and present counted Christ and his resurrection more valuable than clinging to life in this tattered body. Both their lives and their deaths witnessed to their trust in Christ's sufficiency. When honoring the martyrs, the early Church said that the martyrs received a crown for witnessing to the point of

[8] R. A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 97–108.
[9] Markus, 98.

death. This crown was not a crown of ruling. It was the *stephanos*, the wreath of leaves awarded to someone who had triumphed at an athletic competition. God gave them this prize because of the extraordinary steadfastness exhibited in testifying through death.

The early church honored its martyrs, and we Americans should do the same for those suffering persecution around the world. In spite of our denominational divisions, the body of Christ remains undivided. All Christian martyrs are our martyrs. When the enemies of God persecute one part of the body, we all feel it. Ultimately, those who persecute the church attack Christ, who is our head. When Saul attacked the Church, Jesus asked, "Saul, why do you persecute me?" If our theology of martyrdom testifies to the belief in Christ's resurrection and the belief in the future resurrection of the dead, what should our practice be? What should those of us who are not threatened with beheading do?

First, we must pray. We must remember that we are persecuted in the persecution of our brothers and sisters around the world. Jesus said to pray for those who persecute us. We must not hate the terrorists and governments that persecute the church. We must pray for them, and ask that the Holy Spirit might use the witness of martyrs to save the souls of God's enemies. Souls are saved through the proclamation of the good news. Is there a bolder proclamation of the Christian's steadfast hope in the Resurrection than martyrdom? Pray that the enemies of God will be converted. Were not we all enemies of God at one time?

Second, we must heed the martyrs' example and be faithful witnesses to Christ and his Resurrection no matter what our circumstances. Their testimony is our testimony, and the martyr's *stephanos* is no different than the prize that Paul offers to all faithful Christians in 1 Corinthians 9.

In 397, Augustine of Hippo exhorted his congregation to live with a theology of martyrdom even though the Roman state no longer persecuted the church. He says that we should not hope to experience the same kind of persecution that the martyrs did, but he also says that this world provides ample opportunity for a steadfast witness to Christ because of its trials and temptations. We still war against sin and death, and a faithful witness to Christ

in the midst of the struggle wins the martyr's prize. He said, "Your feast day is not indeed in the calendar, but your crown is ready waiting for you."[10]

The manner of the martyrs' testimony is extraordinary, but the content of their testimony should be common to all Christians. The martyrs' extraordinary steadfastness encourages us to faithfulness in our own less extraordinary proclamation of Christ and his resurrection.

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[10] Augustine *Sermones* 306E.8. Translation from Augustine, *Sermons* (trans. Edmund Hill; vol. III/11 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: a Translation for the 21st Century*; New York, New City Press, 1997).

COLLIN GARBARINO, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of History at Houston Baptist University whose area of specialty is the church in late Roman society. He has written for a number of popular publications including *First Things* and *Touchstone*.

And We Believe in the Resurrection of the Dead

Louis A. Markos

Frank Capra's holiday film *It's a Wonderful Life* has consistently remained on my top ten list of best movies ever made. I never tire of watching it and have even had the chance to teach it several times to my college students. And yet, for all its cinematic brilliance, its enduring message of hope, and its keen insight into human desire, it has unwittingly helped to lead generations of American Christians astray.

Although the Nicene Creed, shared by all believing Christians, clearly teaches the resurrection of the dead—that is to say, the resurrection of the body—there are vast numbers of Christians who suppose, along with Capra's film, that when we die we become angels. Nothing could be further from the truth.

God created three beings to dwell in his cosmos (at least three that we know about). First he created the angels, who are pure spirit. Then he created the beasts, which are pure body. And then he created us, the great amphibians of the universe. We are not half physical and half spiritual, nor are we souls trapped in bodies. We are enfleshed souls, incarnational beings who are fully physical and fully spiritual.

And it is our destiny to remain so for all eternity.

✝

When the Second Person of the Trinity "agreed" to the Incarnation, he wasn't agreeing for only thirty-three years. When Christ rose again on that first Easter morning, he did not go back to being pure spirit like God the Father or God the Holy Spirit. During his years on the earth, Jesus was fully God and fully Man, and he will remain so for all eternity. Indeed, in a way that we cannot understand, the pre-incarnate Christ was already 100% divine and 100% human, for it was through him that the whole physical world was made, and it is in his image that we were made incarnational beings.

Jesus still has a body, a Resurrection Body that is spiritual while still being physical. To borrow language from 1 Corinthians 15, the greatest chapter on the resurrection, the difference between Jesus's body on earth and his Resurrection Body is like the difference between the hard dry acorn that is planted in the earth and the mighty oak tree that springs forth from it. According to the post-resurrection accounts recorded in the gospels, Jesus's Resurrection Body could eat and drink and be touched, but it could also move through walls, disappear, and cloak its appearance.

The gospels record three miracles in which Jesus raises someone from the dead. I like to illustrate these miracles by using a paper bag to represent death. When Jesus raised Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:21-43), the girl had only been dead for about an hour. I imagine that she fell into the lip of the bag; however, before she could fall any further, Jesus scooped her out and returned her to the land of the living.

When Jesus raised the widow's son (Luke 7:11-17), the boy had been dead for at least a day, for his body was being carried out of town on the funeral bier. Unlike Jairus's daughter, he had fallen all the way to the middle of the bag. Still, Jesus was able to reach in and draw him back out.

And then there was Lazarus (John 11:1-44), dead and in his tomb for four days, his body already beginning to decay. But the long arm of Jesus reached all the way to the very bottom of the bag and pulled Lazarus back into the world of sun and water and air.

But if this is how we illustrate the raising of Lazarus from the dead,

then how are we to illustrate the resurrection of Christ? There is only one way to do so: by punching a hole through the bottom of the bag. Jesus did not resurrect Jairus's daughter or the widow's son or even Lazarus. He resuscitated them, brought them back to life: but in such a state that they all eventually died again.

Such is not the case with the resurrection. Jesus was not brought back to life. Rather, he went *through* death and came out on the other side. His old life was killed and replaced with a new kind of life, even as his old body was replaced with a new one.

In Book IV, Chapter I of *Mere Christianity*,[1] C. S. Lewis helps to explain the difference between the old life and the new by using two different Greek words for "life." For the creaturely life that we share in common with animals and even, to a lesser extent, with plants, Lewis uses the word *bios* (root of "biology"). It is nice to have *bios* life, but we must remember that *bios* life is such that it wears down, grows old, decays, and dies. When Jesus healed people during his earthly ministry, he simply injected them with a fresh supply of *bios*. That is why, though his healing touch restored and extended their lives, they all eventually died.

If we are truly to be saved and redeemed, if we are to dwell for eternity in heaven with the One who created us, then we need something different than *bios*; we need *zoe* (root of "zoology"). By *zoe* (which is the Greek word for life used by Jesus in, for example, John 5:24-26 and 6:40), Lewis means the indestructible life that resides in God. Becoming a Christian, and eventually attaining heaven, does not mean becoming a better person. It means having our *bios* life killed and replaced with *zoe* life.

And how do we get that *zoe* life? We get it from the One who rose from the dead and who thus has *zoe* in himself. And not just has it, but is willing and able to share it with others. So Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 15 through a parallel he draws between Adam (the first

[1] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 172-177.

man) and Christ, whom he calls the last Adam: "So it is written: 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit" (verse 45; NIV).

Again, Jesus is not just alive; he has life (*zoe* life) in himself and can impart that life to we who, in our mortal state, possess only *bios*. It is because Jesus has the power and the desire to kill our *bios* and replace it with *zoe* that Paul can boldly proclaim the following promise to those who have died in the Lord:

> Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all 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, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:51-57; KJV)

Beautiful film though it is, *It's a Wonderful Life* is wrong to suggest that we will become angels when we die. God already has enough angels to fill the vast regions of heaven. His final goal for man is to redeem and perfect the incarnational creatures he created in the Garden so long ago. Our corruption will not simply give way to pure spirit; to the contrary, the corruption of our flesh will be swallowed up by the incorruption of our Resurrection Bodies. Death will be more than defeated; it will be transformed into victory. Like Jesus himself, whom Paul calls the first fruits, we too will pass through death and come out on the other side.

Now, over the last two millennia, there has been some debate as to what exactly happens when a believer dies. There are three basic options: 1) he immediately goes to heaven and gets his Resurrection Body; 2) he waits in paradise in a temporary, non-incarnate state until the Second Coming of Christ, at which time he receives his

Resurrection Body; 3) his soul sleeps until the Second Coming, at which time his soul rises to meet up with its Resurrection body in the air.

Since the Bible seems to be quite clear that the resurrection of the dead will be a corporate event and that it will not occur until the last trumpet sounds and Christ returns, option one is most likely not correct. Of course, given the fact that God lies outside time in eternity, it is possible that all three options are, in fact, the same option. The moment of our death is an eternal moment, so it is altogether possible that the moment of each of our deaths takes us collectively to the end of the world when Christ returns and the final resurrection takes place. Once we step into eternity, it may, *in* eternity, already be over.

But such thinking may be a bit too fanciful. It is more likely that we, unless our death takes place simultaneous with the Second Coming and we are caught up in the air with Christ, will spend an indefinite period of time in a disembodied state. That state may very well be the paradise that Christ promises the thief on the cross (Luke 23:43). Paul seems to speak of this state when he writes:

> "For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life" (2 Corinthians 5:1-5; NASB).

This view of things seems to be most prevalent today. In earlier centuries, however, it was held by many Christians that our soul slept for a space in anticipation of the Second Coming and the resurrection of the dead. Indeed, many of the poems of the seventeenth-century Anglican poet (and Dean of Saint Paul's, London) John Donne speak with reference to this soul sleep. Thus, one of his Holy Sonnets begins with a powerful description of that moment when our sleeping souls (cemetery means "sleeping place") are awakened by the sound of

Gabriel's trumpet (to which Paul alludes in the passage quoted above from 1 Corinthians 15):

> At the round earth's imagin'd corners, blow
> Your trumpets, angels, and arise, arise
> From death, you numberless infinities
> Of souls, and to your scatter'd bodies go.

On that most busy of days, our souls will actually seek out the parts of our body that we might rise together with them to our new life. Whether those parts reside in coffins, in earth, in ash, or in water, they will rise up with us and be reassembled in the air.

Indeed, in one of his strangest poems, "The Relic," Donne says he is going to be buried with a bracelet made from the hair of a woman whose love he was unable to win. His reason for doing so rests on his faith that both of their souls will sleep only to awake on the last day. When that day comes, and the woman's soul goes in search of her scattered body, she will have to visit his grave to retrieve her hair. When that happens, he will be granted a moment of intimacy with her before they rise to their eternal state of glory.

To our more cynical age, Donne's poem will sound like the confessions of a post-mortem stalker; still, it offers keen insight into the prevalence, in the seventeenth century, of the belief that our soul will sleep for a season until the end of the world arrives. I am aware that many will be frightened by the idea of their being asleep in the grave for an indefinite period before the resurrection; the thought, I must confess, frightens me quite a bit. Nevertheless, we can all be assured that if our soul does in fact sleep—it if goes into what we today would call a state of suspended animation—the time between our burial and our final wakening will seem to us to be but a moment. Which takes us back to the possibility that all three options listed above are really the same option.

But let us return now to Book IV, Chapter I of *Mere Christianity* and to the distinction it makes between *bios* life and *zoe* life. If we

read to the end of the chapter, we will find that Lewis not only sets the parameters for the change from one type of life to the other, but provides a powerful metaphor for understanding the nature of that change: "A man who changed from having *Bios* to having *Zoe* would have gone through as big a change as a statue which changed from being a carved stone to being a real man."[2]

The change from *bios* to *zoe* is not quantitative but qualitative. The change does not merely provide us with a better life but with a different kind of life: one that is beyond death, decay, and dissolution. In Part One, Chapter II of *The Everlasting Man*, G. K. Chesterton argues that the shift from ape to man is not evolutionary but revolutionary; it takes place outside of time and, as such, transcends the physical laws of nature. Even so, the shift from *bios* to *zoe* is not carried out by a natural process of moral reformation; rather, it is the result of a supernatural transformation. Christ's eternal *zoe* life replaces our mortal *bios* life, converting us into creatures over whom death no longer has a hold.

Although *Mere Christianity* began its life as a series of Broadcast Talks that Lewis gave over the BBC in the early 1940s, it was not until the end of that decade that he revised them into book form. Serendipitously, about the time Lewis was reworking his Broadcast Talks into *Mere Christianity*, he was also writing *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. As a result, one can spy a number of parallels between the two books.

Among those parallels is a scene that dramatizes Lewis's argument that a man who changed from *bios* to *zoe* would be like a statue that came to life. Though most readers quickly discern the link between the death and resurrection of Aslan and the death and resurrection of Christ, fewer know what to make of the strange event that follows Aslan's return from the dead. With Lucy and Susan on his back, the resurrected Lion races to the castle of the White Witch. There, in the courtyard, Aslan and the girls find statues of talking animals, dwarfs, centaurs, and giants that the White Witch had turned to stone with her magic wand. Without a moment's pause, Aslan proceeds to blow on each of the statues. As he does so, they thaw, grow warm, and

[2] Ibid., 159.

come to life.

Though Lewis does not say so directly, it seems clear from the rest of the novel that Aslan did not previously have the power to breathe on statues and bring them to life. Now, however, that he has experienced death and been raised to a new and greater life, he is able to do just that. The reason for this seems clear: like Christ (the last Adam), Aslan now has *zoe* life within himself and can share it with whomever he wishes.

When Jesus rose again, he not only defeated Satan and Sin, but Death itself. That is why we can trust Jesus's promise that he will never leave us nor forsake us. It is also why we can boldly proclaim in the Nicene Creed our firm faith in the resurrection of the dead.

LOUIS MARKOS, PhD, (www.Loumarkos.com), Professor in English and Scholar in Residence at Houston Baptist University, holds the Robert H. Ray Chair in Humanities; his books include *Apologetics for the 21st Century, On the Shoulders of Hobbits: The Road to Virtue with Tolkien and Lewis,* and *C. S Lewis: An Apologist for Education.*

The City: *Spring 2016*

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