

Chapter Three

Historical Sources

Pertaining to the Resurrection of Jesus

3.1. Introductory Comments

Once upon a time there was a farmer who began to read Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. After a short while, he put the book down and sighed, "I wish I had his worries." The German historian Christian Meier in 1973 told this fable to illustrate the troublesome relationship between philosophers of history and practicing historians.¹ Zagorin notes that "the majority of professional historians . . . appear to ignore theoretical issues and would prefer to be left undisturbed to get on with their work."² In this investigation of the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus, we have not ignored theoretical issues and it is now time to move from being philosophers of history to practitioners of it. We might think the remainder of our task to be much easier. But as we now do the work of the farmer—the historian—we will see that it is by no means a simple task.

Having discussed the nature of historical knowledge, how historians come to know the past, and what impact a miracle claim has on the process, we are now ready to proceed with our investigation. Historians must begin by identifying sources relevant to their investigation. The historian will mine these for data that will eventually be employed as *evidence* for a preferred hypothesis. Accordingly, a discussion related to our primary literature is necessary. Obviously, we will place a premium on the better sources. For example, the historian can assign no historical value to John Wesley's 1739 hymn "Christ the Lord is Risen Today" in an investigation of the historicity of Jesus' resurrection. At best, this hymn would tell historians that the resurrection of Jesus was still held by some in the eighteenth century to be a historical event. We are looking for sources much earlier and more closely connected to the eyewitnesses.

Our discussion of sources will focus on those sources that mention the death and/or resurrection of Jesus and are thought by at least some scholars to have been written within one hundred years of Jesus. These include the canonical Gospels, the letters of Paul, possibly pre-Pauline material (namely the much discussed tradition in 1 Corinthians 15, the speeches in the book of Acts, oral formulas, *Q*, and pre-Markan material), non-Christian literature of the period, a few of the Apostolic Fathers who are believed to have had connections with one or more of the original disciples of Jesus, and the earlier Apocryphal literature that includes but is not limited to some of the Gnostic literature.³

After discussing each source or category I will assign it a rating in terms of the likelihood that it provides independent testimony relevant to the present investigation. Christian sources will be rated according to the likelihood that they provide independent testimony to apostolic teaching. Ratings include the following: *unlikely*,

¹ As told by Lorenz (1994), 297.

² Zagorin (1999), 2.

³ Although Justin, Irenaeus, and Tertullian wrote within the same period, their works are regarded as largely dependent on the canonical literature.

possible-minus, possible, possible-plus, highly probable, indeterminate, and not useful.

3.2. Sources

3.2.1. Canonical Gospels

Since the most detailed reports of Jesus' resurrection appear in the canonical Gospels, we will discuss them first, although any detailed discussion would take us well beyond the scope of this dissertation. Some scholars take a very skeptical view of the Gospels, contending that much of their content was created by the Evangelists and emerges largely out of their theological interests.⁴ Others view the Gospels as containing mostly accurate reports that are based to varying degrees on eyewitness testimony even while having theological interests.⁵

Prior to the 1990's, a large segment of New Testament scholarship maintained that the Gospels represent a *sui generis*, that is, a genre unique to them. This *sui generis* was viewed as a type of mythology. Consider what the Jesus Seminar wrote in 1992: "[T]he gospels are now assumed to be narratives in which the memory of Jesus is embellished by mythic elements that express the church's faith in him, and by plausible fictions that enhance the telling of the gospel story for first-century listeners who knew about divine men and miracle workers firsthand. Supposedly historical elements in these narratives must therefore be demonstrated to be so."⁶ In other words, according to the Jesus Seminar at that time, the Gospels belong to a mythical genre and, thus, anyone making a claim of historicity pertaining to any portion of them bears the burden of proof.

If the Gospels belong to a mythical genre, then it is true that claims of historicity bear the burden of proof. However, the converse is likewise true. If the Gospels belong to a historical genre, then claims of myth bear the burden of proof. What, then, is the genre of the Gospels? This is a question that has received much attention over the past twenty years, resulting in advances in our understanding of the issue. As a result, the consensus of scholarship has shifted significantly from the opinion held by the Jesus Seminar.⁷ This shift was initiated by Charles Talbert's work followed by the more comprehensive and influential work by Richard Burridge.⁸ Burridge is a classicist who set out to disprove the thesis first proposed by Talbert and a few other American scholars that the Gospels belong to the genre of ancient biography. During

⁴ Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1997), 462; Lüdemann (2004), 111; Pierce (1995), 134; Sheehan (1986), 33; Wedderburn (1999), 32.

⁵ Bauckham (2006); Byrskog (2002), 236, 275; Craig (1998), 17-20; Grant (1977), 204; L. T. Johnson (1996), 110-11.

⁶ Funk, Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar (1997), 4-5. See also Koester (1990), 25-31.

⁷ France (2002): "Fifty years ago we were drilled in the critical orthodoxy of the form-critical school which insisted that the gospels were not to be seen as biographies, but since then there has been a massive swing in scholarly opinion on this point, and increasingly sophisticated study of the nature of biographical writing in the ancient world has led to a general recognition that, for all the distinctiveness of its Christian content and orientation, in terms of literary form Mark's book (and those of Matthew, Luke and John) would have seemed to an educated reader in the first century to fall into roughly the same category as the lives of famous men pioneered by Cornelius Nepos and soon to reach their most famous expression in the 'Parallel Lives' of Plutarch" (5).

⁸ Talbert (1977). Burridge (2004). Other significant contributions have come from David Aune, Philip Shuler, Robert Guelich, and Albrecht Dihle.

the course of his research, he reversed his opinion.⁹ Graham Stanton wrote in the foreword to BurrIDGE's book that "very few books on the Gospels . . . have influenced scholarly opinion more strongly" and that it "has played a key role in establishing that the Gospels were read in the early centuries primarily as biographies." He adds, "I do not think it is now possible to deny that the Gospels are a sub-set of the broad ancient literary genre of 'lives,' that is, biographies."¹⁰ Of BurrIDGE's book, Talbert comments, "This volume ought to end any legitimate denials of the canonical Gospels' biographical character."¹¹ BurrIDGE shows that ancient biographers were concerned with a number of issues pertaining to the person who is the subject, including his death, moral philosophy, teachings, political beliefs, stories told in tribute to and praise of him, and that they presented all of this in a narrative format. Although the Gospels do not possess all of the internal and external features of ancient biography, they do not differ from the genre "to any greater degree than other [works belonging to the genre of biography]; in other words, they have at least as much in common with Graeco-Roman [*bioi*], as the [*bioi*] have with each other. Therefore, the gospels must belong to the genre of [*bios*]."¹²

Each biographer usually had an agenda behind writing. Accordingly, they attempted to persuade readers to a certain way of thinking about the subject. Just as with many contemporary historical Jesus scholars, persuasion and factual integrity were not viewed as being mutually exclusive. It was not an either/or, but both.¹³

Flexibility was certainly a trait of *bioi*, although ancient historians had different views pertaining to the allowable extent to which liberties could be taken. For example, Lucian maintained that historians ought to follow a chronological arrangement of events¹⁴ whereas Suetonius interrupted straight narrative with "material classified according to subject-matter, dealing successively with the different characteristics which his personages displayed."¹⁵

⁹ BurrIDGE (2004), 101.

¹⁰ BurrIDGE (2004), viii-ix. For exceptions, see Fullmer (2007) who concludes that Mark's Gospel is "not primarily a history or biography of the life of Jesus, but rather an entertaining story of good news aimed at the wide audience of non-elite people of the ancient Hellenistic world" (210). Sheehan (1986) asserts that Mark "launched [a] new biblical genre" (32). Pierce (1995) contends that resurrection narratives belong to the genre of *testimony* (136, 139). Pierce provides little evidence that such a genre existed and some of what he does provide is inaccurate. For example, he writes, "Matthew's lack of interest in producing 'proof' of the resurrection is especially clear in this account of the encounter with the risen Jesus in Galilee: despite his presence and teaching we are told that some doubted (28:18)" (137). In reply, an empty tomb, an appearance of Jesus to the women, and one in Galilee to the disciples provides the proof Pierce seeks to avoid. Moreover, we will see in chapter 5.5.2.4 that Matthew's report that some doubted is not nearly as problematic as some have thought. Witherington (*Acts*, 1998) argues that Luke's Gospel is "Hellenistic Historiography" rather than *bioi* (1-39, esp. 15-20). However, Witherington states that it can often be difficult to distinguish historical monographs from biographies (18).

¹¹ Talbert, "Review," in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112 (1993), 715, cited by Keener (2003), 1:12.

¹² BurrIDGE (2004), 250. Keener (2003) writes, "The Gospels are . . . too long for dramas, which maintained a particular length in Mediterranean antiquity. They also include far too much prose narrative for ancient drama" (1:10). However, Keener adds in agreement with Witherington that John is probably a biography using the mode of tragedy (1:10-11). See also Perkins (2007), 2-11.

¹³ Byrskog (2002), 223; Hemer (1990), 79. See Lucian, *Her.* I 3.4; Cicero *De Inv.* I 19:27; Quintilian, IV 2.21, 31, 67, 89, 107, 109.

¹⁴ Lucian, *How to Write History*, 49.

¹⁵ Grant in Suetonius (1989), 8.

Was ancient biography concerned with history? BurrIDGE answers that it was “a flexible genre having strong relationships with history.”¹⁶ Keener writes, “The central difference between biography and history was that the former focused on a single character whereas the latter included a broader range of events.”¹⁷ Aune writes, “While biography tended to emphasize encomium or the one-sided praise of the subject, it was still firmly rooted in historical fact rather than literary fiction. Thus while the Evangelists clearly had an important theological agenda, the very fact that they chose to adapt Greco-Roman biographical conventions to tell the story of Jesus indicated that they were centrally concerned to communicate what they thought really happened.”¹⁸

It is clear that ancient biographers varied in the liberties they took pertaining to their use of embellishment and invention. Lucian reports that Alexander the Great was distressed upon reading a newly written biography of himself by Aristobulus who had falsely ascribed to him specific deeds of valor and invented achievements too great to be true.¹⁹ Conversely, Suetonius is praised for “his relatively high degree of objectivity.”²⁰ His biographies of *The Twelve Caesars* are regarded by modern Greco-Roman historians as being largely accurate, although he is somewhat indiscriminant of his sources. Because the commitment to accuracy and the liberties taken could vary greatly between biographers, identifying the canonical Gospels as *bioi* will take us only so far. Each Evangelist will need to be judged by his performance.²¹ Each may be evaluated by how accurate his report accords with other facts held with a high degree of certainty. Moreover, each may be evaluated by how much liberty he takes with his sources. Thus, Matthew and Luke may be judged by how closely they stick to Mark when they use him. Fortunately for us, that may be quite often. BurrIDGE and Gould note that “Something over 95 per cent of Mark’s Gospel is repeated in Matthew and Luke.”²² Moreover, we may assess how accurately Matthew and Luke employ hypothetical *Q* and may gain insights by observing where Mark and *Q* overlap.²³

¹⁶ BurrIDGE (2004), 67.

¹⁷ Keener (2003), 1:12.

¹⁸ Aune, “Greco-Roman Biography” in Aune, ed. (1988), 125.

¹⁹ Lucian, *How to Write History*, 12.

²⁰ Grant in Suetonius (1989), 8.

²¹ Hemer (1990), 94.

²² BurrIDGE and Gould (2004), 26. They also recognize an overlap of about 10 percent of the Synoptics in John (27).

²³ Keener (2003), 1:31-32. On a negative side, there are challenges to Luke’s accuracy, such as his report concerning the census by Quirinius. See R. Brown (*Birth*, 1993), 547-56. On a positive side, Keener (2003) contends that when an analysis of the use of Mark and *Q* by Matthew and Luke is done, the Synoptics “appear among the more accurate of ancient historians. . . . When one examines Luke’s use of these sources, one is repeatedly impressed with his restraint. Granted, Matthew and Luke exercise freedom in arranging and editing Mark and other sources that they share in common; but this editing must be judged minimal by ancient standards, not affecting the content as substantially as those who cite this ‘freedom’ often assume” (1: 31). Keener provides the following examples of where Mark and *Q* overlap: “Mark 1:7-13 with Matt 3:7-4:11/Luke 3:7-17, 4:1-13; Mark 3:22-27 with Matt 12:24-30/Luke 11:15-23.” Luke is not given to embellishment as is Josephus. For example, Luke reports that an Egyptian led a revolt and 4,000 followed him into the wilderness (Acts 21:38). Josephus reports the number at 30,000 (*War* 2:261-263). In another text, Josephus reports that “no less than three million” Jews appeared in Jerusalem complaining to Cestius Gallus about Florus (*War* 2:280). Such a number in that time and location is dubious (Hemer [1990], 98). An appearance of the risen Jesus to Peter is suggested in Mark 14:28 and 16:7 and merely mentioned in Luke 23:34. Perhaps Mark’s narrative of the appearance was lost or he died before he was able to report it. But Luke completed his Gospel and

The date of composition of the canonical Gospels is likewise disputed. Although nearly all scholars place them in the first century, more specific dating is somewhat arbitrary, as Luke Timothy Johnson comments:

The conventional dating of Mark between 67 and 70, for example, rests entirely on solving the ‘synoptic problem’ (the literary dependence among the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke) in favor of Markan priority, and then understanding the ‘apocalyptic discourse’ of Mark 13 as a reflection of the tribulations experienced by Jerusalem in the war with Rome before the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. Why are Matthew and Luke conventionally dated about 85 C.E.? Because they are considered to be literarily dependent on Mark, and some time must be allowed for Mark’s circulation before revision by Matthew and Luke. . . . The problem is real and insoluble: the majority of the sources on which any historical reconstruction of early Christianity must be based are themselves impossible to locate historically because of the lack of firm geographical and chronological controls.²⁴

The traditional authorship of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John is likewise insecure. Outside of the titles that begin each Gospel—titles themselves which are historically dubious in terms of their presence in the autographs—none of the canonical Gospels directly identifies its author by name. This has led numerous scholars to question the traditional authorship. However, at present the momentum appears to be moving in the opposite direction. Gundry argues for the traditional authorship of Mark²⁵ and asserts that a denial of the traditional authorship of Mark or Luke “would draw wide scholarly resistance.”²⁶ Witherington and Bruce argue that an eyewitness who was a disciple of Jesus is the author of John’s Gospel,²⁷ while Blomberg, Keener, and Wenham contend for traditional authorship.²⁸ Still others argue that behind John’s Gospel lays significant eyewitness testimony from an original disciple of Jesus.²⁹ Some maintain that the resurrection narrative in John may be earlier than Mark’s,³⁰

simply may have chosen not to narrate the appearance. If he was unaware of the details, he restrained himself from inventing them and creating a narrative (Fergusson [1985], 304n38).

²⁴ L. T. Johnson (1996), 91. See also J. A. T. Robinson (2000), 86-117, 254-311. Although a number of New Testament scholars now acknowledge that we do not know precisely when the canonical Gospels were written, the nearly universal consensus among them is that all of the canonical Gospels were written in the first century, between AD 50-100 or within 20-70 years of the life of Jesus. Most New Testament scholars date the first Gospel, Mark, between AD 65-70 (35-40 years after Jesus) and the last Gospel, John, between AD 90-100 (60-70 years after Jesus). See Ehrman (*The New Testament*, 2008), 57 who says this is the view of “almost all scholars” (57). On John, see van der Watt (2007), 123. For exceptions, see Crossan (1992) who dates the “first edition” of John’s Gospel “very early in the second century C.E.” (431); Mack dates the Gospel of Luke c. AD 120 (Burton L. Mack, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins* [San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993], 259); Vermes (2008) dates the completion of John’s Gospel to between AD 100-110 (112).

²⁵ Gundry (1993), 1026-45.

²⁶ Gundry in Copan and Tacelli, eds. (2000), 117n15.

²⁷ Witherington (1995), 11-18; Bruce (1983), 1-12.

²⁸ Blomberg (2001), 22-41; Keener (2003), 1:81-115, 139; Wenham (1992), 50.

²⁹ Pagels (2003), 59.

³⁰ Segal (2004), 455.

while others are agnostic on the matter.³¹ At present, a significant number of scholars maintain that some of the traditions in John's Gospel are the oldest in the Gospels.³²

Scholars also debate the extent to which the Gospels are dependent on one another. At minimum, most agree that Matthew and Luke knew Mark. Whereas in some places they appear largely dependent on Mark, the resurrection narratives in which we are most interested provide a much more difficult scenario. Wright observes that only 16 of 123 words in Luke 24:1-9 have equivalents in the 138 words in Mark 16:1-8, that only 35 of 136 words in Matthew 28:1-8 are in Mark's account, and that there is no *Q* to be seen.³³ While this does not rule out some literary dependence among the resurrection narratives, dependence may also be an illusion resulting from "a natural overlap" in oral tradition or the presence of terms that would be common even if all four Gospels were completely independent when they included reports of women going to the tomb, discovering it empty, and being told by an angel that Jesus has risen from the dead.³⁴ Wright states, "It is of course virtually impossible for four sources to tell essentially the same story without using any of the same words."³⁵

While scholars maintain different attitudes toward the canonical Gospels, more are recognizing their historical worth.³⁶ Indeed, when it comes to the historical Jesus and early Christianity, many and perhaps most scholars assert that the canonical Gospels are our best sources, despite their hesitations.³⁷

As stated previously, in our research we will approach the Gospels with methodical neutrality, that is, with neither approval nor skepticism.³⁸ Claims made of a particular text bear the burden of proof. Accordingly, neither claims of divine inspiration nor general trustworthiness will play any part in our investigation. Historians can always find valuable information in sources with which they do not agree. Willitts states, "It is acknowledged today that the Gospels and the New Testament are themselves a historical witness for Judaism of the first century. Scholars are now using the New Testament to help illumine the diversity of Second Temple Judaism."³⁹ I do not believe that the *Qur'an* is in any sense divinely inspired, but that does not make it unsalvageable for historians. From the many Quranic verses pertaining to battle, we know that Islam must have received resistance in seventh-century Saudi Arabia. In Q 5:116-17 we read of a dialogue between Allah and Jesus where Allah asks Jesus if he had instructed others to worship himself and his mother Mary as gods along with Allah. Jesus answers with an emphatic denial.⁴⁰ While I do not believe that such a dialogue between God and Jesus ever took place, this text informs me that there were

³¹ Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998), 490.

³² F. Just, "Epilogue: Where Do We Go From Here?" in Anderson, Just, and Thatcher, eds. (2007), 292; Keener (2003), 1:46 (on 47 he notes Charlesworth in agreement: J. H. Charlesworth, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gospel according to John," in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*, R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black, eds. [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996], 65-97, esp. 66); Wright (2003), 679.

³³ Wright (2003), 589-90.

³⁴ Wright (2003), 590-91; cf. Lüdemann (2004), 33.

³⁵ Wright (2003), 589.

³⁶ C. A. Evans ("Assessing," 2006), 20; Willitts (2005), 75.

³⁷ Ehrman (2004), 215; L. T. Johnson (1996), 89; Meier (1991), 48; Witherington (2006), 3-4.

³⁸ See chapter 1.2.10.

³⁹ Willitts (2005), 76.

⁴⁰ cf. Q 4:171, 19:35.

discussions between Muslims and a sect of Christians sometime during the seventh century in which either the Christians were proclaiming the deity of Jesus and Mary or that Muhammad mistakenly believed that they were. Thus, the claim of a text to be divinely inspired does not negate its use by historians.

Do the resurrection narratives in the canonical Gospels contain apostolic traditions? While many scholars contend that they do to varying degrees, there is much debate over what may and may not go back to Jesus and his original disciples. For this reason, in terms of whether the resurrection narratives in the canonical Gospels largely reflect independent apostolic tradition, I will assign them a rating of *possible*. We will rely most heavily on earlier sources for which it may be easier to identify traditions that can be traced back to the apostles with a higher degree of certainty.

3.2.2. The Letters of Paul

The next item on our list is the letters of the apostle Paul. Paul is very important for two reasons. He is our earliest written source that mentions the resurrection of Jesus, since his letters very probably predate the Gospels and were written sometime between AD 48-65 or 18-35 years after Jesus' crucifixion. He also claims to have been an eyewitness to whom the risen Jesus had appeared.

All four canonical Gospels are quite clear that the resurrection of Jesus was something that occurred to the corpse of Jesus. When the women and others came to the tomb on Easter morning, the body was no longer there. Jesus is later seen, he prepares and eats food, he is touched, and he invites others to touch him.⁴¹ However, a significant minority of scholars claim that the empty tomb was a legend invented by Mark and that Luke and John invented a physical Jesus in their Gospels as a response to the Docetists who did not believe that Jesus ever actually had a physical body.

Paul is, thus, a very important source for us in understanding the early Christian belief in Jesus' resurrection, especially when comparing his view of resurrection with the views expressed in the canonical Gospels.⁴² If Paul wrote about resurrection in terms of something that occurs in a "spiritual" sense, that is, a person's spirit lives on while his corpse decays and is never raised, the chances significantly increase that the Evangelists invented the empty tomb and bodily appearances. On the other hand, if Paul thought about resurrection as something that occurs to a corpse, then it is much more difficult to argue that Mark invented the empty tomb and that the resurrection narratives in the Gospels were invented, since the earliest extant Christian literature that comments on Jesus' resurrection would appear to be in agreement with the Gospels.

Although Paul was not one of Jesus' original disciples, he was an apostle who knew the major Jerusalem apostles: Peter, James, and John. He also claimed to have been someone to whom the risen Jesus had appeared. Accordingly, it is *highly probable* that Paul preserves apostolic testimony pertaining to the resurrection of Jesus.

⁴¹ Mark 16:1-8; Matt. 28:9-10; Luke 24:37-42; John 20:17, 27; 21:1-13.

⁴² Lüdemann in Copan and Tacelli, eds. (2000) writes that "source criticism and tradition criticism are everything here. You have to start with Paul and see that the Gospel stories are later developments" (55).

Whether it is similar to what Peter, James, and John were preaching will be discussed below.⁴³

3.2.3. Sources that Potentially Antedate the New Testament Literature

Irrespective of their theological convictions, most biblical scholars are confident that the Evangelists had sources available to them that they employed to varying degrees. Luke is clear that these sources existed when he wrote his Gospel and that he himself was dependent on other sources (Luke 1:1-3). What if we were able to ascertain what some of these sources reported? To some extent, form criticism may allow us to do just that.

3.2.3.1. Q

When we read the Synoptic Gospels carefully, we notice that there are a significant number of passages where all three report the same story in very similar terms, length, and order. How did this phenomenon occur? Since Luke reported that other accounts of Jesus existed in his day (Luke 1:1-2), it is plausible that Matthew, Mark, and Luke used one or more of those sources. Although it is not an indisputable conclusion, most scholars believe that Mark was the first of the canonical Gospels to be written. That opinion may change in the future, but for this dissertation I will assume Markan priority, that John was written last, and that Matthew and Luke were written sometime in-between.

We may also note numerous occasions where there appears to be tradition common to Matthew and Luke that is *not* found in Mark. Consider the following example:

Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you. For every one asking receives and the one seeking finds and to the one knocking it will be opened.⁴⁴

This saying of Jesus appears verbatim in Matthew 7:7-8 and Luke 11:9-10 but is absent from Mark. There appear to be two reasonable explanations that account for this similarity:

1. Matthew and Luke received this saying from a common source, which may have been a person, an oral tradition, or a written source.
2. Luke used Matthew as his source or *vice versa*.

Let us look at a longer example that is quite impressive: Matthew 12:41-42 and Luke 11:31-32. Either Matthew or Luke inverted the order. Thus, to appreciate the similarities, I have inverted Luke 11:31-32 so that it reads as 32-31. Differences between the two texts are italicized.

The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the [day of] judgment with this generation and will condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold one greater than Jonah is here.⁴² The queen of the south will be raised in the

⁴³ See section 3.2.3.4.d.

⁴⁴ Αἰτεῖτε καὶ δοθήσεται ὑμῖν, ζητεῖτε καὶ εὕρησете, κρούετε καὶ ἀνοιγήσεται ὑμῖν· πᾶς γὰρ ὁ αἰτῶν λαμβάνει καὶ ὁ ζητῶν εὕρισκει καὶ τῷ κρούοντι ἀνοιγήσεται.

[day of] judgment with this generation and will condemn *it*, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold one greater than Solomon is here. (Matthew 12:41-42)⁴⁵

The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the [day of] judgment with this generation and will condemn *it*, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold one greater than Jonah is here.³¹ The queen of the south will be raised in the [day of] judgment with *the men of* this generation and will condemn *them*, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold one greater than Solomon is here. (Luke 11:32-31)⁴⁶

With the exception of the inverted order of the two verses, the only differences are that Matthew asserts that the queen will be raised with *this generation* and will condemn *it* whereas Luke writes that the queen will be raised with *the men of this generation* and condemn *them*.

As with the prior example, there are two probable explanations for this similarity: Matthew and Luke shared a common source or one used the other as his source. We cannot know with certainty which of these options is correct. Perhaps Matthew received it from another and Luke received it from an oral tradition started by Matthew's source. Perhaps they had a common source for the first and Luke used Matthew for the second. We may never know. There are numerous passages like these within the Synoptic Gospels that vary in degrees of resemblance. Some of them are extremely close in the words they use and the order in which they appear. However, in many instances one must look very carefully to see the similarities and we must wonder whether they are the result of a common source or multiple sources reporting the same story. Because of the impressive number of passages with similarities, most scholars prefer the option that Matthew and Luke had a common source, although many others view the option that one used the other as equally plausible. I see no reason why either must be held as the exclusive answer for all similar texts. Notwithstanding, it appears that, at times, Matthew and Luke are drawing on traditions that are earlier than the Gospels they penned.

Many scholars who opt for a common source shared by Matthew and Luke (oral or written) take an additional step. Since the *source* they used was necessarily earlier, they hold that it was probably as early as the Gospel of Mark and perhaps earlier. In any case, it was distinct from Mark. By the end of the nineteenth century, scholars began to refer to this source as *Q* (for the German *Quelle*: source). *Q* is identified as the source of traditions that are similar in Matthew and Luke but absent from Mark. If a tradition appears in all three Synoptics, Mark is regarded as the source for Matthew and Luke. This rule should not be held hard and fast, since Mark may also have been using *Q* and may have chosen another source or omitted material where he

⁴⁵ ἄνδρες Νινευίται ἀναστήσονται ἐν τῇ κρίσει μετὰ τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης καὶ κατακρινοῦσιν αὐτήν, ὅτι μετενόησαν εἰς τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰωάν, καὶ ἰδοὺ πλεῖον Ἰωάν ὧδε. ⁴² βασιλίσα νότου ἐγερθήσεται ἐν τῇ κρίσει μετὰ τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης καὶ κατακρινεῖ αὐτήν, ὅτι ἦλθεν ἐκ τῶν περάτων τῆς γῆς ἀκοῦσαι τὴν σοφίαν Σολομώντος, καὶ ἰδοὺ πλεῖον Σολομώντος ὧδε.

⁴⁶ ἄνδρες Νινευίται ἀναστήσονται ἐν τῇ κρίσει μετὰ τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης καὶ κατακρινοῦσιν αὐτήν· ὅτι μετενόησαν εἰς τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰωάν, καὶ ἰδοὺ πλεῖον Ἰωάν ὧδε. ³¹ βασιλίσα νότου ἐγερθήσεται ἐν τῇ κρίσει μετὰ τῶν ἀνδρῶν τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης καὶ κατακρινεῖ αὐτούς, ὅτι ἦλθεν ἐκ τῶν περάτων τῆς γῆς ἀκοῦσαι τὴν σοφίαν Σολομώντος, καὶ ἰδοὺ πλεῖον Σολομώντος ὧδε.

differs from a tradition common to Matthew and Luke. For traditions present only in Matthew or Luke, scholars assign the hypothetical sources of *M* and *L* respectively.

It is important to keep in mind that the existence of *Q* cannot be proven, since it is possible that Matthew and Luke received their information from a common witness (person) or oral traditions that had been carefully constructed about or even by Jesus and preserved.⁴⁷ Therefore, the differences between similar reports by Matthew and Luke, often quite different, may be accounted for by slight differences in the oral tradition or perhaps Jesus localized his teachings. No manuscript of a “lost Gospel” resembling *Q* has ever been discovered. Aside from the possible allusion in Luke 1:1-2, it is not even mentioned in ancient literature. Still, *Q* is an interesting potential lead that cannot be ignored.

Among others, John Kloppenborg, James Robinson, and Burton Mack, all of whom reside on the theological left, refer to *Q* as a “sayings Gospel” or the “*Q* Gospel.”⁴⁸ Some like Kloppenborg and Mack believe they can even identify several earlier versions of *Q* and that there was even a *Q* community which had somewhat different beliefs than those who penned the canonical Gospels. For example, Mack makes the following assertions:

- “Lying at the bedrock of the earliest traditions about Jesus and his first followers, *Q* documents a Jesus movement that was not Christian.”⁴⁹
- “*Q* is the best record we have for the first forty years of the Jesus movements.”⁵⁰
- “The first followers of Jesus did not know about or imagine any of the dramatic events upon which the narrative gospels hinge. These include the baptism of Jesus; his conflict with the Jewish authorities and their plot to kill him; Jesus’ instruction to the disciples; Jesus’ transfiguration, march to Jerusalem, last supper, trial, and crucifixion as king of the Jews; and finally, his resurrection from the dead and the stories of an empty tomb. All of these events must and can be accounted for as mythmaking in the Jesus movements, with a little help from the martyrology of the Christ, in the period after the Roman-Jewish war. Thus the story of *Q* demonstrates that the narrative gospels have no claim as historical accounts.”⁵¹

Mack strays far beyond what the data warrants. It is certainly true that a “reconstructed *Q*” does not contain a resurrection of Jesus and this is noteworthy in our discussion of sources. However, this by no means warrants the conclusion that *Q* was unaware of it. For *Q* also does not clearly mention Jesus’ death by crucifixion.⁵² Are we to suppose that the alleged *Q* community—in any of its hypothetical layers of development—was unaware of this event? Kloppenborg himself admits that “*Q* does

⁴⁷ This would be different than what is imagined by those who think of *Q* as another Gospel or as sayings literature.

⁴⁸ Kloppenborg (2000); Robinson, Hoffmann, Kloppenborg, eds. (2002).

⁴⁹ Mack (1993), 245.

⁵⁰ Mack (1993), 245.

⁵¹ Mack (1993), 247. Smith (2003) argues that pre-Mark and *Q* probably contained traditions that spoke of Jesus’ assumption rather than resurrection (123-137). Ehrman (*Lost Scriptures*, 2003) seems open to the possibility that *Q* did not maintain “a literal belief in Jesus’ resurrection” (58).

⁵² Carnley (1987), 212; Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003), 231. However, it is possible that Jesus’ death is known by *Q* 14:27 and possibly 11:49-51 indicated by the expression “this generation.”

not offer a complete catalogue of the Q group's beliefs."⁵³ It may also be noted that "all of the data available (including Q) were retained by churches which did celebrate his resurrection."⁵⁴ It would be very odd for there to have been widespread use within the Christian communities of a source from another community that denied the very heart of their faith! Moreover, a number of explanations ranging in plausibility can explain the absence of Jesus' resurrection in Q without the least bit of strain: (1) Q did not exist and Luke simply used Matthew as his source on these points or *vice versa*; (2) Q was only a collection of Jesus' sayings/teachings and a resurrection narrative would have been as out of place in Q in terms of genre and purpose as it would have been in Paul's letters;⁵⁵ (3) Q contained a resurrection narrative but Matthew and Luke used other sources which they preferred;⁵⁶ (4) Mark used or intended to use Q for his resurrection narrative but it was lost with his ending.

We must always keep in mind that Q is a hypothetical source which, given our current data, we cannot know much about, much less be certain of a hypothetical community that produced it. Q is by no means as certain as the discovery of an ancient document.⁵⁷ Indeed, a number of scholars either remain unconvinced that Q ever existed or see a great deal of unverified speculation in Q studies.⁵⁸

Problems with Mack's conclusions continue to mount when he provides unverified possibilities, then proceeds as though they are secured facts. This is a logical fallacy known as *potest ergo est: It is possible; therefore, it is.*⁵⁹ It is wishful thinking rather than careful scholarship. In the field of Jesus studies where much is on the line and it is impossible to be completely objective, there is no room for this kind of approach by serious scholars, especially one as experienced as Mack. Adams's comments on Mack's conclusions are piercing:

If we had an actual (rather than theoretical), complete (rather than fragmentary) document (rather than embedded materials), then we might need to posit a community for which such a document would be foundational. Given what we in fact have in the hypothetical source known as Q, to speak about a non-Christian Jesus movement that survived the crucifixion without a belief in the resurrection is to engage in speculation that borders on fantasy.⁶⁰

Johnson refers to Mack's thesis that Q knew nothing of the resurrection of Jesus as "an exercise in baseless speculation."⁶¹ For Johnson, Mack's overall thesis that the Q

⁵³ Kloppenborg (2000), 371.

⁵⁴ Dunn (2003), 826.

⁵⁵ Wright (2003), 434; cf. Wright ("A New Birth?" 2000), 77n10. Also see Dunn (2003), 160.

⁵⁶ Wright (2003), 434n104.

⁵⁷ Contra is Tabor (2006) who refers to Q as "our most authentic early Christian document" (150).

⁵⁸ Perkins (2007), 89; Wright ("A New Birth?" 2000) notes that "a significant minority who practice [source criticism] come to very different conclusions to the majority (e.g. doubting the existence of Q); and that within the Q-believing majority a significant number do not think that we can read between the lines of different sources and produce, with any certainty at all, layers of 'development', of which 'Early Q' and 'Late Q' are obvious examples" (75). Wright (2003) himself is uncertain about the existence of Q (403). For extensive criticisms of the Q hypothesis, see Goodacre and Perrin, eds. (2004).

⁵⁹ Adams (1996), 152, 153; Kofoed (2005), 48.

⁶⁰ Adams (1996), 153-54. See also Perkins (2007), 85.

⁶¹ L. T. Johnson (1996), 138. Hurtado (2003) refers to such speculation as "dubious" (231); Perkins (2007), 125.

community was “non Christian” is “pure flimflam.”⁶² There is no positive evidence in its favor, it requires eight arbitrary assumptions pertaining to “the way texts and communities work,” it ignores all of the evidence provided by Paul and Acts, and cannot account for the proliferation of literature about Jesus.⁶³ As I read Mack’s epilogue I got the impression that there are certain political ideas that motivated his conclusions. Johnson makes a similar observation and judges it “very unlikely” that Mack is sincerely interested in history at this point.⁶⁴ While this may be correct, we cannot know. And bias does not necessarily distort historical judgment. However, when we note the weak arguments upon which Mack’s thesis is built, it may not be a stretch to maintain that Mack’s political convictions have (at least temporarily) handicapped his ability to conduct responsible historical research pertaining to the historical Jesus.

There may have been a source employed at times by Matthew and Luke, and for all we know, Mark too. If *Q* existed, it necessarily predated Matthew and Luke. We have no assurance that *Q* reported the death and resurrection of Jesus. However, to conclude that *Q* knew nothing of Jesus’ resurrection seems highly improbable. Accordingly, *Q* does not provide us with any valuable information for our investigation at hand and receives a rating of *unlikely*.

3.2.3.2. Pre-Markan Traditions

Many scholars believe that Mark had a source that provided information he used in his Gospel. There is no wide scholarly agreement or consensus about what a pre-Markan tradition may have included, especially when we speak of a pre-Markan Passion narrative. Marion Soards examined thirty-five scholars who have provided detailed analyses of a pre-Markan passion narrative and demonstrated that scholarly agreement on the pre-Markan material is non-existent.⁶⁵ Not a single verse was agreed upon by all thirty-five scholars. In fact, of the eighty-seven verses in the Markan passion narrative (Mark 14:32-15:47), only eight verses (or nine percent) enjoyed more than a seventy percent agreement.⁶⁶ Of the pre-Markan resurrection narrative, Crossan complains of “a wide disagreement” among scholars who “have been quite unsuccessful in obtaining any consensus on the pre-Markan tradition [and reconstruction] in 16:1-8.”⁶⁷ O’Collins asserts that “whereas many scholars accept in general that Mark drew on earlier written and/or oral sources for his passion and resurrection narratives, any particular reconstructions of these sources remain at best tentative and do not command wide scholarly agreement.”⁶⁸ In reference to the empty tomb narrative, Engelbrecht comments that “here we seem to be at an impasse, because after years of discussing the form-critical aspects of the story we still know very little, if anything at all, about the story in its pre-Markan form.”⁶⁹ Soards

⁶² L. T. Johnson (1996), 53.

⁶³ L. T. Johnson (1996), 53.

⁶⁴ L. T. Johnson (1996), 53.

⁶⁵ This essay was edited and presented by R. Brown: M. L. Soards, “Appendix IX: The Question of a Premarkan Passion Narrative” in R. Brown (*Death*, 1994) 2:1492-1524.

⁶⁶ Five had seventy-four percent agreement: 14:46, 15:20-21, 27, 34; two had seventy-six percent agreement: 15:22, 37; one enjoyed seventy-nine percent agreement: 15:24.

⁶⁷ Crossan, “Empty Tomb and Absent Lord (Mark 16:1-8)” in W. Kelber, ed. *The Passion in Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 136, 145 as reported by Waterman (2006), 100.

⁶⁸ O’Collins (*Easter Faith*, 2003), 67.

⁶⁹ Engelbrecht (1989), 245.

concludes that the task of separating tradition from Markan redaction “may finally be an impossible one.” He adds that we do not need to abandon the notion that Mark edited his source but that we should instead focus our efforts on the material Mark presents.⁷⁰ Accordingly, while a pre-Markan source may have existed, its contents are too uncertain to posit with any degree of plausibility that it differed essentially from what we read in Mark.⁷¹ I assign it a rating of *indeterminate*.

3.2.3.3. Speeches in Acts

Scholars have noted Luke’s unparalleled interest in speeches. These may serve as possible sources for our investigation. Principal speeches comprise approximately twenty-two percent of Acts.⁷² However, when direct speeches outside of the principal ones are included, “slightly more than half the book of Acts is taken up with the recording of direct speech.”⁷³ Given Luke’s interest in speeches, this leads us to question whether they are summaries or his creations. If summaries, do they refer to actual speeches or do they encapsulate the early preaching of the Church?

There has been much discussion over the use of speeches by other ancient historians as a background for understanding Luke’s intentions. Consider the statements by Thucydides:

With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one’s memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said.² And with reference to the narrative of events, far from permitting myself to derive it from the first source that came to hand, I did not even trust my own impressions, but it rests partly on what I saw myself, partly on what others saw for me, the accuracy of the report being always tried by the most severe and detailed tests possible.³ My conclusions have cost me some labour from the want of coincidence between accounts of the same occurrences by different eye-witnesses, arising sometimes from imperfect memory, sometimes from undue partiality for one side or the other.⁷⁴

Thucydides attempted to reproduce speeches with accuracy, employing his own recollections when he had been present as well as those who also witnessed the event. Because of the difficulty of recalling a speech verbatim, he arranged them as he thought they may have been uttered, keeping as nearly as he could to the general sense of what had been said. It is difficult to know whether Thucydides is saying that conflicting eyewitnesses and imperfect memory were responsible for discrepancies in

⁷⁰ Soards in R. Brown (*Death*, 1994), 2:1523-24. See also Wright (2003), 403.

⁷¹ I am, thus, in disagreement with Marxsen (1990) who asserts, “[The four resurrection narratives] can all be traced back to the *one* narrative which the author of the Gospel of Mark had in front of him and which, with the help of literary criticism, can be rather easily reconstructed” (51-52).

⁷² Hemer (1990), 415.

⁷³ Hemer (1990), 416.

⁷⁴ Thucydides, *Histories* 1.22.1-3. English translation provided by Perseus 2.0.

the accounts he used or whether he intentionally preserved the differences in his own accounts.⁷⁵

Polybius provides us with further comments on speeches:

Surely an historian's object should not be to amaze his readers by a series of thrilling anecdotes; nor should he aim at producing speeches which *might* have been delivered, nor study dramatic propriety in details like a writer of tragedy: but his function is above all to record with fidelity what was actually said or done, however commonplace it may be. For the purposes of history and of the drama are not the same, but widely opposed to each other. In the latter the object is to strike and delight by words as true to nature as possible; in the former to instruct and convince by genuine words and deeds; in the latter the effect is meant to be temporary, in the former permanent. In the latter, again, the power of carrying an audience is the chief excellence, because the object is to create illusion; but in the former the thing of primary importance is truth, because the object is to benefit the learner.⁷⁶

For Polybius, historians should only report speeches known to have actually occurred. They are to attempt to report as closely as possible what actually was said and done. A third ancient author, Lucian, exhorts historians to write speeches that suit those giving them and that they should be clear. The historian is permitted to show off his own skills as an orator when reconstructing a speech.

If a person has to be introduced to make a speech, above all let his language suit his person and his subject, and next let these also be as clear as possible. It is then, however, that you can play the orator and show your eloquence.⁷⁷

There are two extant reports of a speech delivered by the emperor Claudius to the Roman senate in AD 48. Tacitus provides a version of the speech in *Annals* 11.24. Remarkably, fragments of that speech are also preserved on a bronze plaque discovered at Lugdunum (Lyons) in 1528. Although a core is clearly discernable,⁷⁸ there are differences between the accounts and it is difficult to know which is more accurate. Most favor the plaque, since Tacitus's writing style is present in his version.⁷⁹ It is certain that either one or both are far from a verbatim account.

A number of scholars hold there are reasons for believing old material exists behind Luke's speeches and that they are not free inventions. Stanton notes that some Semitic material is probably behind the speeches that appear in the first fifteen

⁷⁵ If the latter, I cannot help but think of the three slightly differing accounts of Paul's conversion in Acts 9, 22, and 26.

⁷⁶ Polybius 2.56. English translation (corrected) by Perseus Project at www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0234&layout=&loc=2.56#anch2 (accessed June 12, 2008).

⁷⁷ Lucian, Volume VI, *How to Write History*, 58, K. Kilburn, transl. Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1959), 71.

⁷⁸ An English translation of the Lugdunum tablet is provided by William Stearns Davis, ed., *Readings in Ancient History: Illustrative Extracts from the Sources*, 2 Vols. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1912-13), 2:186-88 and may be read online at www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/48claudius.html.

⁷⁹ Byrskog (2002), 212; Hemer (1990), 76.

chapters of Acts, while Bauckham notes that the speeches seem “strikingly independent of Luke’s Gospel.”⁸⁰

Whether Luke conformed to the standards held by historians of his day or was the negative type of historian Polybius had in mind can only be argued through two means. The first would be to demonstrate Luke’s respect—or lack of it—for his sources. The second would be to demonstrate that Acts is of a specific genre—either one that shows Luke intended to write an accurate history of the first three decades of the Church or one that shows he was more interested in entertainment.⁸¹ Detecting Lukan vocabulary and style in the Acts speeches does nothing to undermine their accuracy except to show that they are not verbatim reports, which nearly all scholars would acknowledge. Although some scholars are encouraged that earlier material may lay behind the speeches in Acts, any appeal to them in our investigation must be accompanied with great caution and restraint.⁸² For at the end of the day, we just do not know enough about their origin, as Soards explains:

[O]n the issue of Luke’s creativity in composing the speeches, responsible critics have drawn remarkably different conclusions. While no one thinks the speeches are verbatim records of early Christian declamation, many scholars are actually not far from such an idea, themselves believing that Luke always offers a valid summary of actual addresses. Luke, Thucydides, Polybius, Lucian, and others are read as is necessary to support this contention. Other scholars, however, interpret the same ancient writers to indicate that Luke had a free hand in composing the speeches, even perhaps reporting speeches when none were made. The fact is, we do not know.⁸³

⁸⁰ Stanton (1974), 70; Bauckham (2002), 305. See also Vermes (2008): “the ideas attributed to the beginning of the Jesus movement in Jerusalem and Judea, chronicled in the Acts of the Apostles, have every probability of mirroring in substance the earliest thoughts of the first Jewish-Christian communities of Palestine” (112).

⁸¹ Although he sees “a number of novelistic touches” in Acts, Ehrman (*The New Testament*, 2008) is doubtful that entertainment is in mind. After providing a number of reasons in support he concludes that “Luke meant to write a history of early Christianity, not a novel. Indeed, all of the ancient Christian authors who refer to the book appear to have understood it in this way” (143, box 10.1). Witherington (*Acts*, 1998) argues that Luke-Acts are two volumes written as Hellenistic Histories and that Luke regarded himself as a serious religious historian (2-51).

⁸² Hemer (1990): “But there is a *prima facie* case for saying, whatever view one takes of the Synoptic Problem, that the ‘speeches’, of Luke’s Gospel in particular, are largely dependent on extant or inferable sources. There is editing; there is rearrangement—and that may hardly be surprising in an ‘episodic’ narrative—but the striking thing is the extent to which Luke uses sources almost verbatim” (78-79); Stanton (1974): “The vocabulary, tone, style and even the theology of the first chapters of Acts all differ so markedly from the later chapters that if all the material stems from Luke’s pen, he must have been one of the most brilliant authors and stylists of the first centuries of the Roman Empire” (68-69); Witherington (*Acts*, 1998): “One of the factors which must count in favor of seeing these as narratives of real events and real speeches is their obvious differences. If Luke were to set out to compose on his own multiple accounts of Saul’s conversion, we would have expected the narratives to be somewhat more similar than they are” (310).

⁸³ Soards (1994), 16n53. Soards speculates that at minimum Luke’s speeches represent what was likely to have been said (17n53). Byrskog (2002) asserts that “the consensus, it seems, has now moved away from U. Wilckens’ insistence on the strongly redactional character of most of them [i.e., speeches in Acts] and acknowledges the author’s thorough dependence on earlier material” (284). Hemer (1990) presents “three different levels of possible historical value in the speeches”: (1) they represent what actually was said on that specific occasion; (2) they present a “fair comment suitable to the tenor of the time, or the like”; (3) they are Lukan creations (419). Arguments for and against each option appear on 420-26. In summary, Hemer concludes that “the reliability and source of the material in the speeches is

Accordingly, in terms of understanding them as reflecting the teachings of the Jerusalem apostles I assign the Sermon Summaries in Acts a rating of *possible*.

3.2.3.4. Oral Formulas

Oral traditions played a large role in the Greco-Roman world, since only a small minority, perhaps less than ten percent, could read and write.⁸⁴ Peppered throughout the New Testament are a number of short formulas that mention the resurrection of Jesus. Many scholars believe these are oral traditions uttered in worship or baptismal settings that have found their way into the New Testament and, thus, are earlier than the literature in which they appear. Here are a few examples:

3.2.3.4.a. Romans 1:3b-4a

τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα, ⁴ τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν

He was born from the seed of David according to the flesh; ⁴ He was declared the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness [by] his resurrection from the dead

Many scholars believe there is an older formula that Paul here employs that may go back to the Jerusalem church even if Paul has recast its wording.⁸⁵ Dunn notes the following features that have lead many to this conclusion:

- “the two relative clauses in antithetic parallelism” (τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ / τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει)
- “the parallel verbs as aorist participles” (τοῦ γενομένου / τοῦ ὀρισθέντος)
- “two sets of parallel phrases attached” (ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ / υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει and κατὰ σάρκα / κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης)
- “the untypical Pauline term” (ὀρίζω)
- “the Semitism” (πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης). Käsemann adds the typically Semitic placing of the verb (a participle in this case: τοῦ γενομένου / τοῦ ὀρισθέντος) first (e.g., 1 Tim 3:16).⁸⁶ This is significant since Paul is mostly writing to Gentile readers in Rome. Semitic components tend to point to an origin in the Jerusalem Church where it is likely to have been formed or approved by the leadership there: Peter, James, and John.
- “and the primitive description of Christ’s resurrection as ‘the resurrection of the dead’”
- “the evidence of similar primitive balanced formulations (son of David, son of God) in 2 Tim 2:8; Ign. *Smyrn.* 1.1 and in the common tradition lying behind

far from settled. There remain good reasons for taking them as abstracts of real addresses rather than fabrications” (427).

⁸⁴ Malina, Joubert, and van der Watt (1996), *Logos Libronix*.

⁸⁵ Barrett (1957), 19; Bruce (1985), 68; Dunn (2002), “Form and Structure,” *Logos Libronix*; Hengel (2004), 157-58; Hurtado (2003), 107, 171, 326; Käsemann (1980), 10-11; Longenecker (1970), 80; R. Longenecker, “Christological Materials in the Early Christian Communities” in Longenecker, ed. (2005), 71.

⁸⁶ Käsemann (1980), 10.

the birth narratives (Matt 1:18-25; Luke 1:32-35; see Brown, *Birth*, 133-43, 309-16).⁸⁷

What is important for our investigation is that we have here a statement that Jesus rose from the dead that may date back earlier than Paul's letter to the Romans, which is typically dated between AD 55 to 58.

3.2.3.4.b. Luke 24:33-34

Καὶ ἀναστάντες αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ ὑπέστρεψαν εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ καὶ εὗρον ἠθροισμένους τοὺς ἑνδεκά καὶ τοὺς σὺν αὐτοῖς, ³⁴ λέγοντας ὅτι ὄντως ἠγέρθη ὁ κύριος καὶ ὤφθη Σίμωνι.

[Referring to the Emmaus disciples] “And getting up that same hour they returned to Jerusalem and found gathered the Twelve and those with them ³⁴ saying, “The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon.”

The statement in 24:34, “The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon,” is of interest. Two factors have led some scholars to identify this expression as an oral formula. First, it seems somewhat foreign to Luke's narrative since the appearance to Simon was not narrated by Luke or by any other Evangelist. It is mentioned in what will be the most important of our oral traditions, 1 Corinthians 15:3ff., where Paul reports in v. 4, καὶ ὅτι ὤφθη Κηφᾶ. Second, the risen Jesus is now referred to as ὁ κύριος and has a Christological flavor.⁸⁸ I am not persuaded by this second argument, since Jesus is referred to as ὁ κύριος by himself and by his disciples elsewhere in Luke's Gospel.⁸⁹ If this is a formula, it predates Luke's Gospel which was probably written between AD 60-85 with the majority of scholars favoring the latter end.

3.2.3.4.c. Other Formulas

Many scholars have noted what appear to be a number of short formulas that bear a resemblance to the statement, “God raised Jesus/him (from the dead)” (Rom. 4:24; 6:4; 7:4; 8:11a, b; 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:12, 15, 20; 2 Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Thess. 1:10; Acts 3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33, 37; 17:31; 1 Pet. 1:21; Pol. *Phil.* 2:1).⁹⁰ Many regard this formula as the earliest nucleus of the tradition of Jesus' resurrection, since it predates all of the New Testament literature.⁹¹ Another formula contains the two-fold statement of Jesus' death and resurrection (1 Thess. 4:14; Rom. 4:25; 8:34; 2 Cor. 5:15; Mark 16:6; Acts 2:23-24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30-31 [exaltation rather than resurrection]; 10:39-40; 13:28-30; Ign. *Rom.* 6:1; Pol. *Phil.* 9:2).⁹² A few of these texts are more weighty in terms of the probability that they reflect confessional tradition. Romans 10:9 contains the introductory words “confess

⁸⁷ Dunn (2002), “Form and Structure,” *Logos Libronix*.

⁸⁸ Marshall (1978), 900.

⁸⁹ 7:13; 10:1, 41; 11:39; 12:42; 13:15; 17:6; 18:6; 19:31, 34; 22:61. Of these, however, only 19:31 and 34 are declarations of Jesus or his disciples.

⁹⁰ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 229-32; R. Brown (1973), 78, 78n133, 84-85; Dunn (2003), 826n4; Theissen and Merz (1998), 483. By “formula,” I do not mean that a formal approved statement is always at hand, but rather a statement of belief in a given order.

⁹¹ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 229; Dunn (2003), 826n4; Theissen and Merz (1998), 483.

⁹² Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 230-31; Theissen and Merz (1998), 483.

that” while the baptismal context of Romans 6:4 lends itself to material that was part of a confessional tradition. The frequency in which similar content appears indicates that Jesus’ death and resurrection was part of the apostolic preaching.

3.2.3.4.d. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

παρέδωκα γὰρ ὑμῖν ἐν πρώτοις, ὃ καὶ παρέλαβον, ὅτι Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν κατὰ τὰς γραφὰς ⁴ καὶ ὅτι ἐτάφη καὶ ὅτι ἐγήγερται τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ κατὰ τὰς γραφὰς ⁵ καὶ ὅτι ὤφθη Κηφᾶ εἶτα τοῖς δώδεκα· ⁶ ἔπειτα ὤφθη ἐπάνω πεντακοσίοις ἀδελφοῖς ἐφάπαξ, ἐξ ὧν οἱ πλείονες μένουσιν ἕως ἄρτι, τινὲς δὲ ἐκοιμήθησαν· ⁷ ἔπειτα ὤφθη Ἰακώβῳ εἶτα τοῖς ἀποστόλοις πᾶσιν· ⁸ ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων ὡσπερὶ τῷ ἐκτρώματι ὤφθη καμοί.

For I delivered to of primary importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures ⁴ and that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas [i.e., Peter] then to the Twelve, ⁶ then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, from whom most remain until now, but some have fallen asleep, ⁷ then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ And last of all, as to one untimely born he appeared to me.

In nearly every historical investigation of the resurrection of Jesus, 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 weighs heavily and is perhaps the most important and valuable passage for use by historians when discussing the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus. Its first valuable quality is that it is early. Like the formulas just discussed, we have what seems to be tradition that predates the letter in which it appears. It is believed that Paul wrote the letter we now refer to as 1 Corinthians in AD 54 or 55. If Jesus died in AD 30, we are reading a letter that was written within twenty-five years of Jesus’ death by a major Church leader who knew a number of those who had walked with Jesus. If this letter contains tradition that Paul has preserved, we are even closer than twenty-five years to the events it claims to report.

What supports the widespread conclusion that we are reading tradition? There are two terms Paul employs that indicate he is imparting tradition in the careful manner used by various schools of the day: παραδίδομι and παραλαμβάνω.⁹³ Paul asserts that he is about to impart content he received from another; in other words, tradition handed down to him. Numerous Pauline passages inform us that the importance of tradition to Paul and the authority it carried cannot be overstated.⁹⁴ Mark and Josephus report that a zeal for tradition was standard for Pharisees, a group to which Paul had belonged.⁹⁵ And Paul is not hesitant to acknowledge his zeal for tradition

⁹³ BDAG (2000), #3, 762; R. Brown (1973), 81; Burrige and Gould (2004), 70; Craig (*Assessing*, 1989), 2; Dunn (2003), 855n127; Gerhardsson (1998), 288-90, 295; Hayes (1997), 254-55; Kloppenborg (1978), 351; Meier (2001), 139; Segal (2004), 400; Büschel in *TDNT* (1964-76), 2:171, #6; Theissen and Merz (1998), 487.

⁹⁴ 1 Cor. 11:2, 23; 15:1, 2 (τῖνι λόγῳ), 3; Gal. 1:14; Phil. 4:9; Col. 2:6; 1 Thess. 2:13 (παραλαβόντες λόγον); 4:1; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6 from Gerhardsson (1998), 290, 296.

⁹⁵ Mark 7:1-13, esp. 3, 5; Jos. *Ant.* 13:10:6 §297; 13:16:2 §408; cf. Phil. 3:5; Acts 23:6; 26:4-8. See Setzer (1996, c1992), in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6:638; M. B. Thompson, “Tradition” in Hawthorne and Martin, eds. (1993), 943-45. For more on tradition within ancient Judaism, see A. J. Avery-Peck,

while a Pharisee prior to his conversion (περισσότερως ζηλωτῆς ὑπάρχων τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων; “being more earnestly zealous [than others] of the traditions of my fathers”; Gal. 1:14).⁹⁶ It is not surprising that Christian Paul maintained a commitment to tradition, although he was now committed to the Jesus and apostolic traditions.

There are a number of components in 1 Corinthians 15:3ff. consistent with Paul’s assertion that he is imparting tradition. First, the text contains a number of non-Pauline traits. As examples, with a lone exception in Galatians 1:4, ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν (“for our sins”) is absent elsewhere in Paul (and the rest of the New Testament) who prefers the singular: “sin.”⁹⁷ The phrase “according to the Scriptures” is absent elsewhere in the Pauline corpus and the New Testament where we read γέγραπται.⁹⁸ Instead of the typical aorist, the perfect passive “he has been raised” is found only in 1 Corinthians 15:12-14, 16, 20 and in 2 Timothy 2:8 which is also a confessional formula believed to be pre-Pauline.⁹⁹ “On the third day” is only here in Paul.¹⁰⁰ In Paul, the term ὡφθη is found only in 1 Corinthians 15:5-8 and 1 Timothy 3:16.¹⁰¹ “The Twelve” is only here in Paul. Elsewhere he uses “the apostles.”¹⁰²

“Tradition in Judaism” and J. Neusner, “Tradition in Judaism (Supplement)” in Neusner, Avery-Peck, and Green, eds. (Brill and Logos Libronix Software, 2000).

⁹⁶ See also Phil. 3:5; Acts 23:6; 26:5.

⁹⁷ “Sin” appears 64 times in Paul; three occurrences in the Pastorals and five occurrences in OT quotations. Of the remaining 56, 50 are “sin” (singular and does not take the genitive). In the six occurrences where plural “sins” appears or with the genitive, “the influence of tradition is to be seen (I Cor. 15:3: kerygmatic influence; I Cor. 15:17: consequence of the kerygma; Gal. 1:4: Christological formula; Rom. 7:5; Eph. 2:1; Col. 1:14: un-Pauline formulations)” (Craig [Assessing, 1989], 2-3). See also Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 234; Theissen and Merz (1998), 487. This argument is weakened by the fact that περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν appears in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 while τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν occurs in Luke 11:4 and 1 Peter 2:24.

⁹⁸ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005, 234); Craig (*Assessing*, 1989), 3; Theissen and Merz (1998), 487.

⁹⁹ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005, 234); Craig (*Assessing*, 1989), 3; Theissen and Merz (1998), 487. Paul uses the aorist elsewhere: Rom. 4:24, 25; 6:4, 9: 7:4; 8:11 (2x), 34; 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:15 (2x); 2 Cor. 4:14; 5:15; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Thess. 1:10. In my opinion, this point is noteworthy though not exceedingly strong, since of a total of 25 Pauline occurrences of ἐγείρω applied to Jesus, seven (28%) are in the perfect passive. This is a substantial number. Of the seven, all but one could be said to be related to the tradition in 1 Cor. 15:3-5 and 2 Tim. 2:8 appears itself to be credal. This would strengthen the argument that 1 Cor. 15:3-5 is tradition, since the perfect passive of ἐγείρω is employed by Paul only once outside of it and the text immediately proceeding from and relating to it. However, two occurrences of the aorist in 1 Cor. 15:15 are equally related to the tradition in 1 Cor. 15:3-5.

¹⁰⁰ Craig (*Assessing*, 1989), 3.

¹⁰¹ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005, 234); Craig (*Assessing*, 1989), 3; Theissen and Merz (1998), 487. See also Acts 13:31; 16:9. We may ask, however, what other term Paul may have employed to state that Jesus had appeared. He could have used φανερώω as he does in 2 Cor. 5:10 and Phil. 2:15.

¹⁰² Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005, 234); Craig (*Assessing*, 1989), 3; Theissen and Merz (1998), 487. For me, non-Pauline terms alone carry limited weight for establishing non-Pauline tradition, since we cannot rule out that these are his very words which he simply does not use in his other extant letters. It is the cumulative weight of the cluster of uncharacteristic expressions, the stylized form of the affirmations, and the introduction of this material as tradition that Paul had transmitted to them, that make the conclusion of pre-Pauline tradition so compelling. For this reason I also do not find some of the arguments against Pauline authorship of Ephesians and Colossians convincing. Over the years, Gary Habermas and I have shared numerous email correspondences. He had a graduate assistant in his service at one point, and this assistant was charged with replying to a number of e-mails sent to Habermas. I received an email from Habermas (10/16/01) that led me to believe it came from his graduate assistant. His greeting and signature were different than on any emails I had previously

Second, parallelism exists where the first and third lines are longer, have the same construction (verb, closer modification, proved by the Scriptures), and are followed by a short sentence introduced by *ὅτι*.¹⁰³ Third, Paul uses *κήρυγμα/κηρύσσω* to describe the tradition. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-2, Paul states that he is going to tell them *τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ὃ εὐηγγελισάμην, ὃ καὶ παρελάβετε* (the gospel that we preached which also you received) and which he also refers to as *τίνι λόγῳ εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν* (the word I preached to you). However, when referring back to the content of 15:3ff., he says “*οὕτως κηρύσσομεν*” (15:11), *Χριστὸς κηρύσσεται ὅτι ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγήγερται* (15:12), and *κήρυγμα ἡμῶν* (15:14). *Κήρυγμα/κηρύσσω* is a more formal term than *εὐαγγέλιον/εὐαγγελίζω* and can refer to an “official announcement” though this need not be the case.¹⁰⁴ It is interesting, therefore, to see that after citing the tradition, Paul changes his description of his message and the activity of imparting it from *εὐαγγέλιον/εὐαγγελίζω* to *κήρυγμα/κηρύσσω*.

There are good reasons for concluding that this tradition probably came from Jerusalem. Paul states elsewhere that spiritual teachings came from the Church in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25-27; cf. 1 Cor. 9:11). In 1 Corinthians 14:36, the church in Corinth appears to have been forming its own policies pertaining to public worship. Paul asks them, *ἢ ἀφ’ ὑμῶν ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξῆλθεν, ἢ εἰς ὑμᾶς μόνους κατήτησεν* (Did the word of God come [out] from you or did it come to you only)? As Gerhardsson comments, “These arguments are fully recognizable from the sayings of the Rabbis, are built on two basic principles: that the chosen people of God are to have *one* common ‘law’ (Lev. 24.22), and that the law is to proceed from Jerusalem (Deut. 17.8 ff., Isa. 2.3). We may quote a close parallel from rabbinic sources. R. Hananiah (ca. 110), in the Babylonian town of Nehar-Paqod, had taken the liberty of making some decisions which, according to the tradition, a local authority had no right to do; R. Natan’s scornful comment was: ‘Does the Torah proceed from Babel, and the word of God from Nehar-Paqod?’”¹⁰⁵

Paul’s letter to the Galatians and numerous references in Acts indicate that the original Church leaders were headquartered in Jerusalem.¹⁰⁶ They were in Jerusalem during the days of Paul’s persecution of the Church. They were there three years after his conversion and still there fourteen years later.¹⁰⁷ In the latter meeting, Paul’s actions tell us that the Church in Jerusalem was the supreme doctrinal authority to which even he submitted.¹⁰⁸ Decisions made by the Jerusalem leadership held equally

received and he used an ampersand which I did not recall observing in his numerous previous emails to me. I replied the same day noting the differences and adding that it did not appear to me he had written the email. In jest I then concluded, “Either the principles of higher criticism have some merit here or my playful analysis has let out some of the gas in certain arguments that call into question Pauline authorship of Ephesians.” Two days later I received a reply with the usual greeting and signature. In the main text were the words, “You’re wrong—I sent the memo. Conclusion: Paul wrote Ephesians!” Examples from electronic correspondence notwithstanding, non-Pauline terms in the text are consistent with Paul’s claim that he is imparting tradition and they do not stand alone in support.

¹⁰³ Craig (*Assessing*, 1989), 7.

¹⁰⁴ BDAG (2000), #1, 543.

¹⁰⁵ Gerhardsson (1998), 275; cf. 306.

¹⁰⁶ Gal. 1:17-18; 2:1-10; Acts 1:8; 4:16; 5:28; 6:7; 8:1, 14; 9:26; 11:27; 12:25; 13:13; 15:2, 4-6; 16:4; 21:17-18.

¹⁰⁷ Gal. 1:17-18; 2:1-10.

¹⁰⁸ Gerhardsson (1998), 276-77. Cf. Acts 15:1-2.

for the Church outside of the city.¹⁰⁹ If Jerusalem controlled doctrine, it is most plausible, even very probable, that Paul received Jesus tradition from the Jerusalem apostles. Moreover, Hurtado asserts that the list of figures in the tradition who are not further explained indicates that this is “‘ingroup’ community tradition.” It must have been formulated in a setting where all of this was familiar and associates the tradition with Jerusalem.¹¹⁰ The “we” who are preaching the *kerygma* in 15:11 are not only Paul but also the other apostles:

εἴτε οὖν ἐγὼ εἴτε ἐκεῖνοι, οὕτως κηρύσσομεν καὶ οὕτως ἐπιστεύσατε.

Therefore, whether I or they, in this manner we preach and in this manner you believed.¹¹¹

This may likewise point to an origin in Jerusalem.¹¹² Accordingly, although certainty eludes us, it is most reasonable to conclude that the tradition in 1 Corinthians 15:3ff. was formed in Jerusalem and that Paul either received it directly from the Jerusalem apostles or from someone he deemed very credible.¹¹³ If the latter, we can be certain that at a later time he checked it out with the Jerusalem apostles or had already heard the same from them.¹¹⁴ One might claim that the tradition(s) Paul cites in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 had no ties to the Jerusalem Church, but whoever does so bears the burden of proof. It is widely accepted today that the tradition goes back to the Jerusalem church.¹¹⁵ Moreover, that Paul personally knew the Jerusalem apostles is abundantly supported.¹¹⁶

What is also important for our purposes is that, as mentioned previously, Paul placed a lot of weight on the authority of the tradition he had received and had passed along to others. He employed tradition to resolve problems in the church, both practical and theological (1 Cor. 7:10; 9:14; 11:23; 15:1-3, 12). Believers are to practice and hold firmly to the traditions (1 Cor. 11:2, Phil. 4:9; 2 Thess. 2:15). They are not to associate with those believers who lead a life contrary to what is taught in the tradition until they repent (2 Thess. 3:6, 14). He chides the Corinthian believers for taking the liberty to form their own policies without first consulting Church leaders

¹⁰⁹ Acts 15:1-29, esp. 19-33.

¹¹⁰ Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003), 168-69.

¹¹¹ It is clear that the “they” in 15:11 is the apostles. See 15:9-10 where Paul mentions the “apostles” and that he worked harder than all of them.

¹¹² Craig (*Assessing*, 1989), 15.

¹¹³ Habermas (2003), 20. See also Goulder (2005), 189-91; Vermes (2008): “[Paul] passes on to his flock in Corinth a tradition he has inherited from his seniors in the faith concerning the death, burial, and Resurrection of Jesus” (119).

¹¹⁴ Gerhardsson (1998), 297.

¹¹⁵ Engelbrecht (1989), 244; Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003), 168; Lindars (1986), 91; Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998) writes, “The appearance reports may well have originated a few days, or weeks, or months, after Jesus’ death. . . . How long it was after that flight before the resurrection faith arose is impossible to say, except to note that the conviction that Jesus had risen from the dead had already taken root by the time Paul was converted about 33 C.E. On the assumption that Jesus died about 30 C.E., the time for development was thus two or three years at most” (466); M. Goulder, “The Explanatory Power of Conversion Visions” in Copan and Tacelli, eds. (2000): “Paul ‘received’ the tradition—that is, he was taught it at his conversion—perhaps two years after Jesus’ death (1 Cor 15:3-8)” (98).

¹¹⁶ Gal. 1:18-19; 2:1-14; 1 Cor. 15:11; Acts 9:26-28; 15:1-30; 21:17-26; not to mention his time with Barnabas and Silas who were from among the Jerusalem Christians, the latter of which was a leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:22).

who must have been outside Corinth (1 Cor. 14:36). If the tradition did not address a specific topic, Paul believed as an apostle he could speak with authority on it. However, he was careful to distinguish his teaching from the tradition (1 Cor. 7:10-13, 25).¹¹⁷ Furthermore, we never find Paul setting aside the tradition for a new teaching as we find Jesus doing in the Gospels: ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν.¹¹⁸ At least portions of the tradition were regarded as commandments of the Lord Jesus. This is evident in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2 where the teachings of Jesus pertaining to living a morally pure life are mentioned and in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 where Paul specifies the teaching of the Lord on marriage.¹¹⁹ Some have identified numerous references to the Jesus tradition in Paul's letters. Kim lists eleven references that he regards as "Certain or Probable."¹²⁰ He then lists more than 30 additional examples in which possible echoes of Jesus' sayings may be found.¹²¹

When did Paul receive the tradition? A few possibilities readily present themselves. We may first consider the location of Damascus just after Paul's conversion, which is generally placed one to three years after the crucifixion of Jesus.¹²² According to Luke, Paul entered Damascus after his conversion experience. After Ananias healed his resulting blindness three days later, he spent several days with the Damascus Christians and increasingly became more powerful in his ability to confound his newly found Jewish opponents, proving that Jesus is Messiah (Acts 9:19-22). Perhaps he learned tradition during this period from Ananias or some of the other Christians there. If this is where Paul learned portions of the tradition, its reception by Paul may be dated to within three years of Jesus' death.

We may next consider the location of Jerusalem and there are two or three occasions that stand out. The first is three years after Paul's conversion when he visited Jerusalem for the first time since his conversion experience (Gal. 1:18).¹²³ During this trip he visited with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. Of interest is the term Paul uses to describe what he did while with Peter: ἱστορήσαι (or "visit"), from which

¹¹⁷ He also distinguished his advice from his commands (1 Cor. 7:1-6; 12-17, 25). Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003) comments that since the Jerusalem leaders were active and able to speak for themselves, Paul "was not at as much liberty to make specious attributions and claims about the origins of Christian traditions as we modern scholars" (231)! Meier (1991) similarly comments, "For all his claims to apostolic authority, Paul does not feel free to create teachings and put them into the mouth of Jesus" (46)

¹¹⁸ Mark 10:2-12; Matt. 5:21-22; 27-28; 31-32; 33-37; 38-42; 43-47 (cf. Luke 6:27); 12:1-8; 15:2-6; 19:8-9. That Paul invented New Testament Christianity is, of course, now widely rejected: Ehrman (2004), 147; L. T. Johnson (1996), 119, 122; Segal (2004), 400.

¹¹⁹ See Mark 10:11-12; Matt. 5:32; 19:9; Luke 16:18. Moreover, as we will observe below (3.2.5.1-2), it is more likely than not that Clement of Rome was a disciple of Peter and it is possible that Polycarp was a disciple of John. If Paul's teachings had differed fundamentally from those of the Jerusalem apostles, we would not expect the type of comments from Clement and Polycarp regarding Paul that we have. Clement places Paul on par with Peter who was perhaps his mentor (*I Clem.* 5) and Polycarp comments that the "glorious Paul . . . taught the word about the truth, accurately and reliably" (Pol. *Phil.* 3:2).

¹²⁰ Kim (2002), 259-70. He lists the following in this category: 1 Cor. 7:10-11; 9:14; 11:23-25; 1 Thess. 4:15-17; 5:1-7; Rom. 14:14; Rom. 12:14-21/1 Cor. 4:11-13; Rom. 13:8-10/Gal. 5:14; Rom. 13:7; Rom. 8:15/Gal. 4:6; references to the "kingdom of God." D. Wenham (1995) lists multiple connections in Paul's writings to the Jesus traditions and rates them as "highly probable," "probable," and "plausible" (381-85).

¹²¹ Kim (2002), 270-74.

¹²² Goulder in Copan and Tacelli, eds. (2000), 98.

¹²³ Barnett (1993), 30.

derives our English term “history.” The term may mean “to get information from,”¹²⁴ “to inquire into a thing, to learn by inquiry.”¹²⁵ What was it to which Paul inquired? He could have been attempting to get to know Peter, the leading Jerusalem apostle at the time.¹²⁶ But from his letters Paul does not appear to be the type of person who would want to take just over two weeks simply to develop a friendship with a colleague for the sake of having another friend. “A Paul does not go up to Jerusalem to Peter, ‘the Rock’, merely in order to talk about the weather (Dodd). And a man with Peter’s commission does not waste a fortnight talking rubbish. It [sic.] can be little doubt that during this time the word of Christ ‘was between them’” (cf. Col. 3:16).¹²⁷

With others, a different motive seems more likely to me. Paul’s conversion experience had turned his world upside down. He was convinced he had experienced a personal encounter with the risen Christ and it now forced him to rethink everything he had learned and thought about the Messiah, Jewish praxis, and theological matters including atonement, the kingdom of God, eschatology, and even the nature of God. He had spoken about his new views of Jesus in the synagogues and debated with his Jewish countrymen. But Paul had much work ahead of him. He would study these matters through an intensive examination of the Scriptures in order to make sense of what he now regarded as reality. Emerging from his three-year sabbatical in Arabia, we can imagine Paul wanting to complete his task by interviewing one or more of the people who had traveled with Jesus. There were no better sources for Paul than the Jerusalem apostles. There he would talk with Peter and learn about Jesus’ teachings. He would ask him what it was like to travel with Jesus. He would have the heavy theological discussions he so much valued during which he would share and hone his findings. This, I admit, is mere speculation. However, from what we appear to know about Paul, it may not be very far from what actually occurred. If this is the occasion when Paul received the tradition, we may place the tradition within four to six years of Jesus’ crucifixion and, even more importantly, it comes from the purported eyewitnesses themselves.

Paul appears to have visited Jerusalem perhaps two more times prior to penning 1 Corinthians (Acts 11:27-30; 15:1-29; Gal. 2:1-10).¹²⁸ On the occasion mentioned in Galatians, Paul met with the Jerusalem leadership in private. If Acts 15:1-29 reports the same visit, his interaction with the Jerusalem leadership went beyond his

¹²⁴ BDAG (2000), 483.

¹²⁵ LS (1996), 385. See Esth. 8:12 (LXX); Esd. 1:33 (twice), 40; 2 Macc. 2:24, 30, 32 (twice); 4 Macc. 3:19; 17:7.

¹²⁶ Büschel in TDNT 3:396.

¹²⁷ Gerhardsson (1998), 298. See also Dodd (1964): “At that time he stayed with Peter for a fortnight, and we may presume they did not spend all the time talking about the weather” (16); Fergusson (1985), 292. The observations of Bruce and Vermes are of interest. The tradition in 1 Cor. 15:3-7 refers to appearances to Peter and James. Bruce (1977) writes, “In that list two individuals are mentioned by name as having seen the risen Christ, and two only: ‘he appeared to Cephas’ and ‘he appeared to James’ (1 Corinthians 15:5, 7). It is no mere coincidence that there should be the only two apostles whom Paul claims to have seen during his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion [in Gal 1:19]” (85; cf. 93). He adds, “It was almost certainly during these fifteen days in Jerusalem that Paul received this outline” (86). Vermes (2008) agrees (119-20).

¹²⁸ Koester (2000) maintains that Acts 11:27-30 is “a Lukan invention” (109). There is considerable debate among scholars as to whether the visit of Gal. 2:1-10 should be equated with the visit of Acts 11 or of Acts 15.

interaction described in Galatians 2. Paul could have been the recipient of tradition during these visits.

Even more possibilities exist. He may have received some of the tradition from Barnabas or James during his first post-conversion visit to Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-29; Gal. 1:19). In Galatians 2:11, Paul reports a visit by Peter to Antioch. Paul may have received tradition from Peter or from one of those who had accompanied him during this time. In Acts 11:25-30 and 12:25-15:40, Luke reports that Paul and Barnabas spent a significant amount of time together. Paul could have received tradition from this Jerusalem leader during this period. Luke also reports that, after the Jerusalem Council, ἄνδρας ἡγουμένους ἐν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς (leading men among the brethren) named Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Antioch to deliver the resolution. Barsabbas and Silas could have delivered some of the tradition to Paul during this trip. Silas would also accompany Paul during his next missionary journey (Acts 15:40-17:14; 18:5-11). Thus, we can place Paul and Silas together from AD 49-51. It would be toward the end of this journey when Paul would deliver to the church in Corinth the tradition he had received and of which he reminds the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15:1-7.

It is not necessary to think that Paul received *all of the tradition* on any single occasion. What is important to note, however, is that Paul was rich in opportunities to receive tradition from the Jerusalem apostles and leading Jerusalem figures. Allison asserts, “Indeed, Paul knew Peter and James [Gal. 1:18-19; 2:1-9] and presumably others who claim to have seen the risen Jesus. First Corinthians 15:3-8 is not folklore.”¹²⁹ Moreover, even if Paul received the tradition embedded in 1 Corinthians 15:3ff. from someone outside of the Jerusalem leadership, his constant interaction with these leaders in and outside of Jerusalem coupled with his high regard for tradition virtually guarantees that the details of the tradition in 1 Corinthians 15:3ff. are precisely in line with what the Jerusalem leadership was preaching (1 Cor. 15:11). We have what amounts to a certifiably official teaching of the disciples on the resurrection of Jesus.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005) 234. See also Craig (*Assessing*, 1989), 82; Lüdemann (2004), 35.

¹³⁰ It is also possible that Paul was familiar with at least some of Jesus’ teachings while Jesus was alive. In Acts, Paul indicates that he had lived in Jerusalem for a long time (16:4). The son of Paul’s sister lived in Jerusalem (23:16). So, he would have had at least one known place where he may have stayed while in town. Moreover, he would have been in Jerusalem every Passover and every time Jews were expected to be there. If Pharisees were trained in Jerusalem, he would have spent a considerable amount of time there. Accordingly, it is very probable that Paul and Jesus were in Jerusalem at that same time on numerous occasions. If the Gospels can be trusted in their claim that Jesus preached there publicly, it is possible that Paul heard Jesus himself or had discussions concerning his teachings with Jewish leaders prior to his crucifixion. Even after Jesus’ execution, Paul demonstrates that he is familiar with Christian teachings, since he is so opposed to them that he launches a persecution against the Christians. See Marxsen (1990), 71; Stanton (1974), 93. Paul probably heard a number of early Christian preachers in Jerusalem like Stephen. As Barnett (1994) comments, “There can be no doubt that, both before he was a disciple but also afterwards, Paul knew a lot about the historical Jesus. There can be no support for the idea that Paul was some ‘Robinson Crusoe’ figure cut off from historical knowledge and entirely dependent on ‘heavenly revelation’” (4). Paul apparently knew of tradition or perhaps even firsthand that Jesus was condemned by earthly rulers (1 Cor. 2:8), was crucified (1 Cor. 1:23; 2 Cor. 13:4; Phil. 2:8; Gal. 3:1), and buried (1 Cor. 15:4; Rom. 6:4) (120). (1 Timothy 6:13 alludes to the trial scene with Pilate. Johnson [1996, 119-21] adds that Hebrews alludes to Jesus’ prayer in the garden [Heb. 5:7] and that he died by crucifixion [12:2]. He comments that there is “no reason to date Hebrews any later than the letters of Paul” [121].) In 1 Thess. 2:14-16, Paul is aware that the Jerusalem Jews were responsible for Jesus’ death (cf. Jos *Ant.* 18:3). As much as Lüdemann (in Copan

We may never know with more precision when Paul received the tradition and from whom. What we have seen, however, is quite impressive. Atheist New Testament critic Gerd Lüdemann comments,

I do insist, however, that the discovery of pre-Pauline confessional formulations is one of the great achievements of recent New Testament scholarship.¹³¹

Theissen and Merz write,

The analysis of the formula tradition about the resurrection of Jesus allows the following conclusion: a tradition in I Cor. 15.3b-5, which goes back very close to the events themselves, attests appearances to both individuals and groups. The credibility of this tradition is enhanced, because it is part confirmed by the narrative tradition, which is independent, and because in the case of Paul we have the personal testimony of an eye-witness who knew many of the other witnesses.¹³²

Craig comments that we should

keep firmly in mind the astounding fact, at which we cease to wonder because of its familiarity, that we have here the testimony of a man who actually talked with Jesus's brother and one of his principal disciples, both of whom claim to have personally seen Jesus risen again from the dead.¹³³

For the aforementioned reasons, virtually all critical scholars who have written on the subject, including rather skeptical ones, maintain that in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7, Paul has provided tradition(s) about Jesus that he did not form but rather received from others as he claims.¹³⁴ There is likewise widespread agreement that it was composed very early¹³⁵ and may very well be the oldest extant tradition pertaining to the resurrection of Jesus.¹³⁶

and Tacelli, eds. [2000], 67, 156-58) and Segal ([2004], 453) would like to see anti-Semitism in Paul and the Evangelists, it must be remembered that the statements appealed to are made *by Jews* within two to five decades after Jesus' death. These traditions in Paul indicate that these things were already known by his readers, even those in Rome whom he had never met. These traditions were both early and widespread within twenty years of Jesus' death. Johnson concludes that data from Paul's letters demonstrate that these recollections of Jesus were widespread at a quite early time and render it "less likely that the corresponding points in the Gospels were the invention of a single author or group [since] . . . such invention would have to be early enough and authoritative enough to have been widely distributed and unchallenged across the diverse communities with which Paul dealt. To propose such would work *against* the premise that Paul's form of Christianity had little to do with those interested in shaping the memory of Jesus" (122). Johnson also includes the letter by James in this observation.

¹³¹ Lüdemann (2004), 37.

¹³² Theissen and Merz (1998), 490. The eyewitness quality of the tradition in 1 Cor 15:3ff is also noted by others. For examples, see Crossley (2005), 176; Habermas (2003), 19; Kee (1990), 1-2 (Kee's statement refers to the tradition in general received by Paul of which 1 Cor 15:3ff. belongs. I am grateful to Gary Habermas for this reference); Koester (1990), 51.

¹³³ Craig (*Assessing*, 1989), 34, cf. 379.

¹³⁴ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 233-34; Barnett (1999), 181; Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998), 454; Habermas (2003), 17; cf. Habermas (1996), 153; Koester (2000), 91; (1990), 6-7; Theissen and Merz (1998), 487; Wedderburn (1999), 113.

¹³⁵ Barclay (1996): "may date from as early as the 30s" (16); Barnett (1994): "within two or three years of the First Easter" (6); BurrIDGE and Gould (2004): "dating from only a few years after Jesus' death"

These formulas take us back to what are datably some of the earliest proclamations of the Church. I will refer to this as *kerygma*, a term that has been assigned a number of meanings over the years.¹³⁷ Here I use *kerygma* in the sense that it was the formal proclamation of the early Church. The apostle Paul makes use of the *kerygma* and there are compelling reasons to believe that its origin was Jerusalem where it was known and approved by the leading apostles. Although the precise origin of the oral tradition we have previously examined is uncertain, what is certain is that the resurrection of Jesus was part of the *kerygma* and the official preaching of the Jerusalem church.¹³⁸

I assign the following ratings to the oral formulas just discussed: Romans 1:3b-4a (*possible-plus*), Luke 24:34 (*possible*), other formulas (*possible*), 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (*highly probable*).

3.2.4. Non-Christian Sources

We will now spend a little time focusing on non-Christian sources who mention Jesus, although a detailed examination is beyond the scope of this paper.

(46); Dunn (2003): “This tradition, we can be entirely confident, was *formulated as tradition within months of Jesus’ death*” (JR, 855); Engelbrecht (1989): “probably reaching back to within the first five years after Jesus’ death” (244); Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998): within “two or three years at most” (466). Funk also stated that most of the Fellows of the Jesus Seminar believe the tradition predates Paul’s conversion around AD 33 (454); Grant (1977): “very early” (177); Hayes (1997): “within about three years after Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem” (255); Koester (2000): “the traditions extant in Paul’s letters can be dated to the time before Paul’s calling, that is, no later than within five years after Jesus’ death” (90); Lüdemann (2004): within “the first two years after the crucifixion of Jesus” (31); Shanks and Witherington (2003): “This list dates to at least within twenty years of Jesus’ death” (109n3); Wedderburn (1999): “first half of the 30s” (113). Contrary is Marxsen (1990) who writes that “it is by no means an ancient formula, but a relatively late one.” In support he appeals to oral formulas in Rom. 5:8 and 10:9, claiming they are earlier. Based on these, he reconstructs a “faith formula”: “We believe that God raised Jesus from the dead” (54). However, this is not a legitimate reason for postdating 1 Cor. 15:3ff. to the oral formulas discussed earlier in this chapter (3.2.3.4). The tradition in 1 Cor. 15:3ff. may have served for teaching purposes whereas the oral formulas were designed for worship. Moreover, even if the formation of other oral formulas predate the tradition in 1 Cor. 15:3ff., it is of little importance, since, as we have observed, the latter was certainly in line with the teachings of the Jerusalem apostles, many of whom were eyewitnesses.

¹³⁶ Kendall (1988), 91; Lapidé (2002, c. 1982), 98; Lindars (1986), 91. See also Bauckham (2002), 259; Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003), 71; Lüdemann (2004), 138.

¹³⁷ Stanton (1974) prefers “preaching” over “kerygma,” since the latter has been employed in different ways by different writers (10).

¹³⁸ Ackerman (2006), 68; Alsop (1975), 274; Dunn (2003), 876; Ehrman (1999), 227. It is also interesting to note that in the *kerygma*, Jesus is not only raised but raised “from the dead” (ἐκ νεκρῶν). This indicates that Jesus was raised from a group among whom Jesus once was but is no longer a member. Who are “the dead”? They cannot be those who are presently living in the presence of God. For Jesus was raised from among a group to become a member of another. Since he is now in heaven, “the dead” cannot refer to the souls of those in heaven. Perhaps it could mean that Jesus existed among the corpses in somewhat of a “soul sleep” until his spirit was raised. Then again, with the canonical Gospels and Paul’s understanding of resurrection, Jesus’ corpse could have been with the others until he (i.e., his corpse) was raised to life.

3.2.4.1. Josephus

Josephus was born about AD 37 to a highly respected priest in Jerusalem named Matthias.¹³⁹ This places Josephus geographically and chronologically in a position where he would have heard about Jesus from the Church at its inception. In his youth, Josephus was pious in his Jewish faith and very much interested in spiritual matters.¹⁴⁰ Since his dad was a priest, the Christian gospel would likely have been a topic discussed around his family dinner table. Josephus fought against the Romans, was defeated by them, and then joined them as the court historian for the Emperor Vespasian.¹⁴¹

Josephus mentions Jesus on two occasions. There is much dispute by scholars over the first, since it appears that a Christian doctored the text sometime between the first and fourth centuries. However, the second mention possesses no such traits and is regarded by the large majority of scholars as being authentic in its present form. We will look first at the second reference.

ἄτε δὴ οὖν τοιοῦτος ὢν ὁ Ἄνανος νομίσας ἔχειν καιρὸν ἐπιτήδειον διὰ τὸ τεθνάναι μὲν Φῆστον Ἀλβίνου δ' ἔτι κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν ὑπάρχειν καθίζει συνέδριον κριτῶν καὶ παραγαγὼν εἰς αὐτὸ τὸν ἀδελφὸν Ἰησοῦ τοῦ λεγομένου Χριστοῦ Ἰάκωβος ὄνομα αὐτῷ καὶ τινὰς ἑτέρους ὡς παρανομησάντων κατηγορίαν ποιησάμενος παρέδωκε λευσθησομένους (Jos. *Ant.* 20:200)

Having such a character, Ananus thought that with Festus dead and Albinus still on the way he would have the proper opportunity. Convening the judges of the Sanhedrin, he brought before them the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ, whose name was James, and certain others. He accused them of having transgressed the law and delivered them up to be stoned.¹⁴²

Meier provides five reasons for holding that the present text is authentic in its entirety.¹⁴³ First, it appears in all of the Greek manuscripts of *Antiquities* 20 “without any notable variation.”¹⁴⁴ Second, the text provides a passing and blasé reference to James who is here of little consequence, since Josephus is more interested in the illegal behavior of Ananus (and Jesus is even less of a subject, only inserted to identify James).¹⁴⁵ Thus, it fits well in the context of Ananus’s removal from the office of high priest.¹⁴⁶ Third, no New Testament or early Christian writer wrote of James “in a matter-of-fact way as ‘the brother of Jesus’ (*ho adelphos Iēsou*), but rather—with the reverence we would expect—‘the brother of the Lord’ (*ho adelphos tou kyriou*) or ‘the brother of the Savior’ (*ho adelphos tou sōtēros*).”¹⁴⁷ The words

¹³⁹ Jos. *Life* 1:5, 7.

¹⁴⁰ Jos. *Life* 1:9ff.

¹⁴¹ Jos. *Life* 3:1ff.

¹⁴² English translation by Maier (1994), 281.

¹⁴³ Meier (1991), 57-59.

¹⁴⁴ Meier (1991), 57; Maier (1994), 284. Eusebius cites this passage (*HE* 2.23.22).

¹⁴⁵ Meier (1991), 57-58. See also Maier (1994), 284; Shanks and Witherington (2003) add that “it is often what one says in passing, which is less likely to reflect the ax one is grinding, that is most historically revealing” (168); Theissen and Merz (1998), 65; Van Voorst (2000), 84.

¹⁴⁶ Van Voorst (2000), 83.

¹⁴⁷ Meier (1991), 58. See also Maier (1994), 284-85; Van Voorst (2000), 84.

τοῦ λεγομένου Χριστοῦ are neutral and appear to be employed to distinguish Jesus from others in his writings by the same name.¹⁴⁸ Fourth, Josephus's account of James's execution differs significantly in its time and manner from that offered by the second-century Christian author Hegesippus and Clement of Alexandria in the third century.¹⁴⁹ If Josephus's account was invented by a Christian hand, we would expect that it would better reflect the Christian accounts. Fifth, Josephus's account is short and matter-of-fact compared to the Christian accounts by Hegesippus and Clement of Alexandria.¹⁵⁰ Shanks and Witherington add what we may regard as a sixth reason for authenticity. Contrary to what might be expected, the text has no hints of anti-Semitism. The Jews seem in fact to have liked James. Neither is the text positive about Christianity or Jesus.¹⁵¹ In short, this text gives no indication of tampering by Christians¹⁵² and the large majority of scholars regard the entire passage as the authentic words of Josephus.¹⁵³

From where did Josephus receive his information? We may never know with certainty. However, he seems to have been in the right places at the right times and, given his father's position as well as his own, had a network of good contacts from which he could receive reliable news. He may also have heard one or more of the apostles firsthand as they preached throughout Jerusalem and may himself have been an eyewitness to the execution of James.

The other occasion where Josephus mentions Jesus is in *Antiquities* 18:63, commonly referred to as the *Testimonium Flavianum*. The literature on this passage is enormous. Leading Josephus scholar Louis Feldman lists eighty-seven discussions on the authenticity of this passage between 1937 and 1980.¹⁵⁴ There are three general positions on this passage held by scholars: (1) the entire text is authentic, (2) the entire text is a Christian interpolation, (3) Josephus mentions Jesus in this text but it was subsequently doctored by a Christian interpolator. The first two positions have few adherents whereas the third enjoys a majority.

Γίνεται δὲ κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον Ἰησοῦς σοφὸς ἀνὴρ εἶγε ἄνδρα αὐτὸν λέγειν χρή ἦν γὰρ παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητὴς διδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἡδονῇ τάληθῃ δεχομένων καὶ πολλοὺς μὲν Ἰουδαίους πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ ἐπηγάγετο ὁ χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν καὶ αὐτὸν ἐνδείξει τῶν πρώτων ἀνδρῶν παρ' ἡμῖν σταυρῶ ἐπιτετιμηκότος Πιλάτου οὐκ ἐπαύσαντο οἱ τὸ πρῶτον ἀγαπήσαντες ἐφάνη γὰρ αὐτοῖς τρίτην ἔχων ἡμέραν πάλιν ζῶν τῶν θείων προφητῶν ταῦτά τε καὶ ἄλλα μυρία περὶ αὐτοῦ θαυμάσια εἰρηκότων

¹⁴⁸ Maier (1994) notes that there are twenty-one Jesuses in the works of Josephus then adds, "In fact, the very high priest who succeeded Ananus, who instigated the death of James, was Jesus, son of Damnaeus" (285); Theissen and Merz (1998), 65; Van Voorst (2000), 84.

¹⁴⁹ Both of these accounts are no longer extant but have been preserved by Eusebius (*HE* 2.1.4; 2.23.3-19) who claims that Hegesippus's account is more accurate than the one provided by Clement of Alexandria. However, he asserts that they are both largely in agreement (*HE* 2.23.3, 19).

¹⁵⁰ Meier (1991), 58-59.

¹⁵¹ Shanks and Witherington (2003), 169.

¹⁵² Maier (1994), 284; Wright (1992), 354.

¹⁵³ L. H. Feldman, "A Selective Critical Bibliography of Josephus" in Feldman and Hata, eds. (1989), 434. See also Dunn (2003), 141; C. A. Evans, "Jesus in Non-Christian Sources" in Green and McKnight, eds. (1992), 364; Maier (1994), 285; Meier (1991) 66; Shanks and Witherington (2003), 168; Van Voorst (2000), 83. See also Theissen and Merz (1998), 65.

¹⁵⁴ Feldman in Feldman and Hata, eds. (1989), 430. See Feldman (1984), 680-684, 957-958.

εἰς ἔτι τε νῦν τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἀπὸ τοῦδε ὠνομασμένοι οὐκ ἐπέλιπε τὸ φῶλον

At this time there appeared Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one should call him a man. For he was a doer of startling deeds, a teacher of people who receive the truth with pleasure. And he gained a following both among many Jews and among many of Greek origin. He was the Messiah. And when Pilate, because of an accusation made by the leading men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him previously did not cease to do so. For he appeared to them on the third day, living again, just as the divine prophets had spoken of these and countless other wondrous things about him. And up until this very day the tribe of Christians, named after him, has not died out.¹⁵⁵

The text leads one to believe that Josephus must have converted to Christianity. However, in the early third century, Origen claimed that Josephus was not a Christian.¹⁵⁶ This creates a problem. If Origen is correct, it would be odd that a non-Christian Jew would say some of the things reported in this passage. Three parts stand out as candidates for interpolations: (1) “if indeed one should call him a man,” (2) “He was the Messiah,” and (3) “For he appeared to them on the third day, living again, just as the divine prophets had spoken of these and countless other wondrous things about him.” Meier provides a modified passage without the probable additions:

At that time there appeared Jesus, a wise man. For he was a doer of startling deeds, a teacher of people who receive the truth with pleasure. And he gained a following both among many Jews and among many of Greek origin. And when Pilate, because of an accusation made by the leading men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him previously did not cease to do so. And up until this very day the tribe of Christians (named after him) has not died out.¹⁵⁷

Meier and Feldman argue that if the three questionable components are removed, there are good reasons for maintaining that Josephus wrote the remaining text.¹⁵⁸ Meier provides a number of arguments for the authenticity of the modified passage. First, the passage appears in every Greek and Latin manuscript of *Antiquities* 18. It must be admitted that there are only three Greek manuscripts, the earliest of which appears to have been written in the eleventh century. However, there are numerous Latin manuscripts dating to the sixth century.¹⁵⁹ It must also be noted that the passage is not mentioned by any Church fathers prior to Eusebius in the fourth century.

¹⁵⁵ English translation by Meier (1991), 60. Others have proposed versions quite similar. See Dunn (2003), 141; Ehrman (1999), 61-62.

¹⁵⁶ *Commentary on Matthew* (2.10.17; *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 10); *Contra Celsum* 1.47.

¹⁵⁷ Meier (1991), 61.

¹⁵⁸ Meier (1991), 60-67; Feldman expressed agreement with Meier in a personal e-mail to me (Aug. 28, 2001). Allison (1998) appears to agree with Meier's assessment (49, 49n161). Although not in complete agreement with Meier and Feldman, Zvi Baras writes that the “more plausible” position is “accepting parts of the passage and rejecting others” (Z. Baras, “The *Testimonium Flavianum* and the Martyrdom of James” in Feldman and Hata, eds. [1987], 339). While Morton Smith is pessimistic about a reconstruction of the passage, he concludes that Josephus certainly mentions Jesus (M. Smith, “The Occult in Josephus” in Feldman and Hata, eds. [1987], 252).

¹⁵⁹ Meier (1991), 62.

Second, given Josephus's later mention of "Jesus who was called Christ" some earlier reference to Jesus becomes likely, since he does not pause to explain more about Jesus.¹⁶⁰ Third, the vocabulary and grammar of Meier's modified passage "cohere well with Josephus' style and language; the same cannot be said when the text's vocabulary and grammar are compared with that of the NT. . . . [I]n fact, most of the vocabulary turns out to be characteristic of Josephus."¹⁶¹ Meier also contends that his modified *Testimonium* is a simpler move than omitting it in its entirety, which to him is "sometimes on flimsy grounds." For him, "[a] basic rule of method is that, all things being equal, the simplest explanation that also covers the largest amount of data is to be preferred."¹⁶²

Meier's modified Josephus text does not include Jesus' resurrection. There are reasons, however, to prefer a modified text over Meier's that is less trimmed.

And when Pilate, because of an accusation made by the leading men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him previously did not cease to do so. For they reported that he appeared to them alive. And up until this very day the tribe of Christians (named after him) has not died out.

We have already established that the resurrection of Jesus was part of the early *kerygma*. And there are strong reasons for believing that Josephus was familiar with it. He was appropriately situated geographically, chronologically, and vocationally. Josephus was raised in Jerusalem in the late 30s, 40s, and into the 50s in the very city where the Church was headquartered and during the period when the apostles were publicly preaching there, making it likely that Josephus and his father had even heard the apostles themselves preaching. Until the destruction of the temple, Jewish Christians continued to meet in the synagogues and go to the temple. If Luke is correct, many of the priests and some of the Pharisees were embracing the Christian message (Acts 6:7; 15:5). Remembering that Josephus himself and his father were priests, they may have even known some of those priests who had embraced Christianity. They would certainly have heard of the Christian teachings from many of their colleagues who were criticizing the heresy. Moreover, according to Josephus, he became familiar with being a Pharisee at age nineteen (c. AD 56).¹⁶³ In short, Josephus had a keen interest in spiritual matters, had close connections to Jewish

¹⁶⁰ Meier (1991), 62; Theissen and Merz (1998), 66.

¹⁶¹ Meier (1991), 62-63. See also Theissen and Merz (1998), 67; Van Voorst (2000), 88-90; E. M. Yamauchi, "Jesus Outside the New Testament: What is the Evidence?" in Moreland and Wilkins, eds. (1995), 213. Meier provides a fourth reason that concerns four "implied theological views" of the content (63-68). First, the Christology of the modified statement is low, since "wise man" is likewise used of Solomon and Daniel by Josephus (63-64; Solomon [*Ant.* 18:5:2 §53], Daniel [*Ant.* 10:11:2 §237]). Thus, if Meier's modified statement is what Josephus penned, Josephus is understandably ignorant of certain material found in the canonical Gospels. Second, his statement that "many Gentiles" followed Jesus contradicts the Gospels' report that Jesus primarily came for the Jews and little is said of a Gentile following. However, Meier admits that Josephus could have retrojected the situation of the late first century where many Gentiles were following him. Josephus is known to be careless elsewhere (64-65). Third, Josephus's final statement strikes him as communicating amazement: "And up until this very day the tribe of Christians (named after him) has not died out." Even after their leader was executed shamefully, Josephus is surprised that Jesus' followers still persist when he thinks they should have given up by now and found something else in which to believe. See also Theissen and Merz (1996, 67) who regard this as possible.

¹⁶² Meier (1991), 66-67.

¹⁶³ Jos. *Life* 1:10, 12.

priests and Pharisees, grew up and spent a lot of time in Jerusalem precisely during the period when the Church was growing and a number of Jews had embraced the Christian message. So, we have very good reason to think that Josephus had heard Jesus' resurrection proclaimed in Jerusalem.

The less trimmed version above may be more plausible than Meier's, since it is more closely represented in all of the extant manuscripts while maintaining neutrality toward Jesus and his followers. Moreover, it provides an insight concerning *why* the "tribe" of Christians had not died out: They were convinced that their spiritual leader had risen from the dead. This eliminates the tension Meier feels when considering the possibility that Josephus heard directly from Christians and yet neither knew about nor mentioned the resurrection of Jesus.¹⁶⁴

Meier himself does not exclude the possibility that Josephus mentioned Jesus' resurrection and some other scholars are quite open to it, even regarding it as equally plausible to Meier's.¹⁶⁵ Wright suspects that more of the *Testimonium* "is original to Josephus than is sometimes allowed."¹⁶⁶ And Meier concludes that "all opinions on the question of Josephus' source remain equally possible because they remain equally unverifiable."¹⁶⁷

A few more arguments for at least a modified original *Testimonium* have been put forth. If the *Testimonium* is a complete interpolation, we may wonder why the interpolator did not doctor up Josephus's account of John the Baptist—the genuineness of which is quite certain.¹⁶⁸ Feldman comments that "[t]o these arguments, we may add that, aside from this passage, and possibly those about John and James, there are no other passages in Josephus whose authenticity has been questioned; hence, the burden of proof rests upon anyone who argues for [wholesale] interpolation."¹⁶⁹ By far, the majority of scholars grant that Josephus mentions Jesus

¹⁶⁴ Meier (1991), 67. Although controversial, an Arabic version of the *Testimonium* quoted in the tenth century by the bishop of Hierapolis named Agapius is quite similar to the less modified version. Maier (1994) favors the Agapian version (284). In a personal correspondence with Maier (March 7, 2003), he told me that he once wrote Paul Winter, the ranking authority on Josephus at the time, to ask whether he thought *any* part of the *Testimonium Flavianum* was genuine, and if he did, how he thought the original passage read. Maier said, "He wrote me back with a yes for 1) and a reconstruction on 2) that *closely resembles the Agapian text!* Tragically, he died before the AT [Agapian Text] was announced by Schlomo Pines." Also open to the authenticity of the Agapian text is Theissen and Merz (1998), 72-73. Not so sanguine are C. A. Evans, "Jesus in Non-Christian Sources" in Green and McKnight, eds. (1992), 365; Feldman in Feldman and Hata (1989) comments, "the fact that the order of statements in Agapius differs from that in Josephus [Greek text] would seem to indicate that we are dealing here with a paraphrase. Furthermore, Agapius declares that according to Josephus, Herod burned the genealogies of the tribes, whereas there is no such passage in Josephus, but there is in Eusebius (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 1.7.13). This is further indication that Agapius did not consult Josephus directly" (433).

¹⁶⁵ Meier (1991), 68; Maier (1994), 284; Theissen and Merz (1998), 72-74; Van Voorst (2000), 103. Vermes (2008) asserts that Josephus's reference to Jesus' resurrection in the *Testimonium* "is considered by all modern experts as a Christian interpolation" (158). 'All' is a dangerous term and easily disproved, since a number of modern scholars are open to the idea that Josephus mentioned Jesus' resurrection in the *Testimonium*.

¹⁶⁶ Wright (1992), 354n44.

¹⁶⁷ Meier (1991), 68.

¹⁶⁸ Feldman in Feldman and Hata (1989), 446; Meier (1991), 66. For arguments for the genuineness of Josephus's passage on John the Baptist, see, Feldman in Feldman and Hata (1989), 429-430.

¹⁶⁹ Feldman in Feldman and Hata (1989), 430.

in the *Testimonium*, although there is wide disagreement regarding the extent to which the original text has been altered.¹⁷⁰

Unless and until an early manuscript of *Antiquities* 18 is discovered, uncertainty will have a valid presence in discussions pertaining to whether Josephus mentioned Jesus in 18:63 and, if so, what precisely he said. Scholars will continue to debate reconstructions that differ in plausibility. Accordingly, any use of Josephus in our investigation will be done with great caution. I assign this text a rating of *possible*.

3.2.4.2. Tacitus

Tacitus (c. AD 56-120) is generally regarded as the greatest of the Roman historians.¹⁷¹ He was the proconsul of Asia from AD 112-13. The *Annals*, Tacitus's last work, was written c. AD 116/117.¹⁷² According to Van Voorst, "[Tacitus] seems to use his sources carefully, and he writes an account whose basic accuracy has never been seriously impeached."¹⁷³ In his *Annals*, Tacitus mentions Jesus once. Writing of the burning of Rome and that a rumor was spreading that Nero was responsible, Tacitus reports,

Therefore, to squelch the rumor, Nero created scapegoats and subjected to the most refined tortures those whom the common people called "Christians," [a group] hated for their abominable crimes. Their name comes from Christ, who, during the reign of Tiberius, had been executed by the procurator Pontius Pilate. Suppressed for the moment, the deadly superstition broke out again, not only in Judea, the land which originated this evil, but also in the city of Rome . . .¹⁷⁴

Although the authenticity of this text is occasionally questioned, the vast majority of scholars grant it.¹⁷⁵ The text shows no signs of Christian influence.¹⁷⁶ The style belongs to Tacitus, it fits in the context of the report of Rome's burning, and it is doubtful that a Christian interpolator would have penned such insulting remarks of

¹⁷⁰ Although no formal research has determined the percentage of Josephus scholars who accept parts of the passage versus those who reject it in its entirety, Feldman is perhaps the most qualified to make an informed guess. In *Josephus and Modern Scholarship: 1937–1980*, he lists eighty-seven scholarly treatments on the *Testimonium* during that period. In a personal e-mail correspondence to me on Nov. 26, 2001, Feldman admitted that his list for the period of 1937 to 1980 is incomplete and that much more on the passage has appeared since 1980. Asked to make a rough guess of where contemporary scholarship stands on the authenticity of the *Testimonium*, he responded, "My guess is that the ratio of those who in some manner accept the *Testimonium* would be at least 3 to 1. I would not be surprised if it would be as much as 5 to 1." Jewish scholar Vermes (2000) agrees: "declaring the whole notice a forgery would amount to throwing out the baby with the bath water. Indeed, in recent years most of the experts, including myself, have adopted a middle course, accepting that part of the account is authentic" (227). Dunn (2003) refers to a "broad consensus" that holds that the authentic Josephus version was a modified version of our extant texts. See also C. A. Evans in Green and McKnight (1992), 364.

¹⁷¹ Gilderhus (2007), 20; Van Voorst (2000), 39.

¹⁷² Theissen and Merz (1998), 81.

¹⁷³ Van Voorst (2000), 39.

¹⁷⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44. English translation by Meier (1991), 89-90.

¹⁷⁵ Van Voorst (2000), 42-43.

¹⁷⁶ Dunn (2003), 141; Johnson (1996) notes that Tacitus uses "extreme penalty" rather than crucifixion as found in Christian writings, and there is no mention of the Jewish leaders' involvement (115-16).

Christians.¹⁷⁷ It is difficult to know where or from whom Tacitus received his information. Unlike Josephus, one cannot reasonably place him with certainty near Jerusalem or the apostles during his lifetime. He may have received his information from imperial records and/or perhaps from his friend Pliny the Younger who had run-ins with Christians just a few years earlier.¹⁷⁸ Tacitus may also have received his information from Christian proclamations in his day.¹⁷⁹ We can only speculate.¹⁸⁰ I will assign this text in Tacitus a rating of *possible*.

3.2.4.3. Pliny the Younger

Pliny was a senator, an avid letter writer, and friend of Tacitus. Around AD 111, he penned a letter to the emperor Trajan providing information pertaining to his experience with Christians. While of interest in studies of early Christianity and Christology, Pliny provides no information pertaining to the historical Jesus. I assign it a rating of *not useful*.

3.2.4.4. Suetonius

Pliny the Younger was the patron of a lawyer and Roman historian named Suetonius. Suetonius composed biographies of twelve Caesars (Julius Caesar through Domitian) probably between AD 117 and 122.¹⁸¹ One passage has been of limited interest to historians of early Christianity in which Suetonius writes: “He [Claudius] expelled the Jews from Rome, since they were always making disturbances because of the instigator Chrestus.”¹⁸² Historians generally believe that this event occurred in AD 49. Since Luke makes mention of the same event, the passage is of interest to historians of early Christianity.¹⁸³ However, we do not know where or from whom Suetonius received this information and we do not know whom he had in mind when he mentions “Chrestus.”¹⁸⁴ Perhaps he is referring to Jesus and to conflicts in Rome at the time between Jews and Christians. We may never know. But one thing appears certain: this text cannot be of any assistance in our investigation. I give it a rating of *not useful*.

3.2.4.5. Mara bar Serapion

A Syrian Stoic who wrote to his son from a Roman prison, Mara suspects he may be executed. Although the only manuscript of the letter is dated to the seventh century, the dating of the original is uncertain.¹⁸⁵ Some place its composition around or shortly after AD 73 while others assert that its dating cannot be narrowed further than

¹⁷⁷ Meier (1991), 90; Van Voorst (2000), 43.

¹⁷⁸ Meier (1991), 91.

¹⁷⁹ Van Voorst (2000), 52.

¹⁸⁰ Of interest is that outside of the New Testament writings, Jewish authors Philo and Josephus mention Pilate. Tacitus is the only non-Christian pagan writer to mention him. Bruce (1974) comments, “it may be regarded as an instance of the irony of history that the only surviving reference to him in a pagan writer mentions him because of the sentence of death which he passed upon Christ” (23).

¹⁸¹ Theissen and Merz (1998), 83.

¹⁸² Suetonius, *Claudius* 25.4. English translation by Van Voorst (2000), 30.

¹⁸³ Acts 18:2.

¹⁸⁴ Theissen and Merz (1998), 84

¹⁸⁵ British Museum Syriac MS Additional 14,658.

sometime after AD 73.¹⁸⁶ Its mention of Jesus is brief: “Or what did it avail the Jews to kill their wise king, since their kingdom was taken away from them from that time on?”¹⁸⁷ Little is known of Mara and one can only speculate pertaining to whether he had been a witness to Jesus’ execution or received his information from another source and, if so, who that may have been. At most, Mara informs us what some of his day believed or knew about Jesus’ fate. I assign it a rating of *not useful*.

3.2.4.6. Thallus

Around AD 55, Thallus wrote a history of the eastern Mediterranean world from the Trojan War until c. AD 50. Although no longer extant, portions of his writings have been preserved by others. Of interest to us is a Christian author named Julius Africanus (c. AD 220) who interacts with Thallus’s works. Unfortunately, that text is likewise lost. However, a section is cited by Georgius Syncellus (c. AD 800). Speaking of the portents that occurred at the death of Jesus, Julius Africanus comments, “On the whole world there pressed a most fearful darkness; and the rocks were rent by an earthquake, and many places in Judea and other districts were thrown down. This darkness Thallus, in the third book of his *History*, calls, as appears to me without reason, an eclipse of the sun.”¹⁸⁸ Through a third-hand source (Thallus—Africanus—Syncellus) it appears that a historian named Thallus made note of the darkness that occurred at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion. Although this text cannot be ignored, it is not very useful. One can only speculate about the identity of Thallus. We do not even know when he wrote, although the date of composition has been placed c. AD 55.¹⁸⁹ Even less knowable is from where and whom he received his information. Given the date, it is possible Thallus was in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion. Perhaps he was merely responding to Christian reports of the darkness. We cannot know based on the information we have, which unfortunately comes from a man some 750 years removed from Thallus and who received his information from another source about 165 years removed from Thallus. While we may assign a rating of *possible* to Thallus, the only value in this source is a possible corroboration of the darkness during Jesus’ crucifixion reported by the canonical Gospels.

3.2.4.7. Lucian

Lucian (c. AD 115—200) was born in Samosata and refers to himself as a Syrian. He mentions Jesus twice in *The Death of Perigrinus*, written c. AD 165. He calls him a σοφιστής (sophist: a wise man).¹⁹⁰ But this could be a sarcastic play on the word σοφία (wisdom) and could be referring to one who teaches for money or a cheat.¹⁹¹ He also reports that Jesus had been crucified in Palestine.¹⁹² As with all of the other pagan writers who mention Jesus, we do not know from where or whom Lucian

¹⁸⁶ Around AD 73 is C. A. Evans in Green and McKnight (1992), 366; shortly after AD 73 is Theissen and Merz (1998), 77; an indeterminate time after AD 73 is Bruce (1974), 30.

¹⁸⁷ Schulthess, ‘Mara bar Sarapion,’ 371ff. quoted by Theissen and Merz (1998), 77.

¹⁸⁸ Georgius Syncellus, *Chronicle*, 322 or 256 in ANF 1.6.2.1.3.25 (Logos Libronix).

¹⁸⁹ Van Voorst (2000), 22.

¹⁹⁰ Lucian, *The Death of Perigrinus*, 13.

¹⁹¹ Van Voorst (2000), 62; LS (1996), 738, II, 2.

¹⁹² Lucian, *The Death of Perigrinus*, 11, 13.

received this information.¹⁹³ Meier is probably correct: “no doubt Lucian is reflecting the common knowledge ‘in the air’ at that time, not an independent source of historical data.”¹⁹⁴ Lucian and these pagan historians tell us what educated pagans of the second century knew or believed about Jesus.¹⁹⁵ I assign this text in Lucian a rating of *not useful*.

3.2.4.8. Celsus

Our last pagan author to mention Jesus within a reasonably short period after his death is Celsus, a Middle-Platonic philosopher who penned an attack on Christianity titled *Ἀληθῆς Λόγος* (*The True Word*) sometime between AD 177 and 180.¹⁹⁶ Origen wrote a rebuttal to this work in c. AD 248.¹⁹⁷ While Celsus’ pamphlet or book is no longer extant, most of it is preserved by Origen who quotes it verbatim in response. Of interest to our investigation, Celsus mentions the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. However, he shows familiarity with the Gospel narratives, which appear to be his source. Accordingly, Celsus provides no independent material of interest for our investigation. I assign him a rating of *unlikely*.

3.2.4.9. Rabbinic Sources

Scholars have given attention to a few rabbinic sources as candidates for traditions about Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁹⁸ However, there is much disagreement over whether the person referred to is actually Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁹⁹ For purposes of our investigation, only one of these passages is of interest: *b. Sanhedrin* 43a.

It was taught: On the day before the Passover they hanged Jesus. A herald went before him for forty days [proclaiming], ‘He will be stoned, because he practiced magic and enticed Israel to go astray. Let anyone who knows anything in his favor come forward and plead for him.’ But nothing was found in his favor, and they hanged him on the day before the Passover.²⁰⁰

This passage appears in the Mishna in the Babylonian Talmud, which was produced by Jewish scholars in the fifth century and contains some material that was not put into writing until the third century.²⁰¹ We cannot know whether any information they

¹⁹³ Since there were Gentile Christian and Jewish non-Christian authors, I use “pagan” here in the sense of a Gentile non-Christian and not in a pejorative sense.

¹⁹⁴ Meier (1991), 92. See also Van Voorst (2000), 64.

¹⁹⁵ Meier (1991), 92.

¹⁹⁶ Marcovich (2001), 14.

¹⁹⁷ Marcovich (2001), 14.

¹⁹⁸ Van Voorst (2000, 109-14) lists the following: *b. Shabbat* 104b; *t. Shabbat* 11.15; *b. Sanhedrin* 67; *t. Sanhedrin* 10.11 (cf. *y. Sanhedrin* 7.16); *m. Sanhedrin* 10.2; *m. Abot* 5.19; *b. Gittin* 55b-57a; *b. Sanhedrin* 106b; *b. Sanhedrin* 107b (cf. *b. Sotah* 47a); *y. Hagigah* 2.2 (cf. *y. Sanhedrin* 23c); *m. Yebamot* 4.13;

b. Yoma 66d (cf. *t. Yebamot* 3.3-4); *b. Sanhedrin* 106a; *b. Hagigah* 4b; *b. Sanhedrin* 43a (cf. *t. Shabbat* 11.15; *b. Shabbat* 104b); *b. Sanhedrin* 103a (cf. *b. Berakhot* 17b); *b. Sanhedrin* 106a.

¹⁹⁹ For a discussion, see Van Voorst (2000), 104-22. See also Ehrman (1999), 62-63; Meier (1991), 93-98, esp. 95; Theissen and Merz (1998), 74-76.

²⁰⁰ English translation by Van Voorst (2000), 114.

²⁰¹ The Jerusalem Talmud was produced in the fourth century and is regarded as the less authoritative of the two. See Ehrman (1999), 62-63. Johnson (1996) dates the Talmud’s final composition to the fifth

utilized from third-century sources was based on reliable first-century sources. The rabbis typically were not interested in history and their “creative imagination . . . ran free in creative storytelling.”²⁰² Accordingly, some hold that in *b. Sanhedrin* 43a we are reading polemic against Christians of the period or an apologetic response to the Passion narratives in the canonical Gospels.²⁰³ In summary, the rabbinic sources were compiled in the fourth and fifth centuries, contained a chunk of information that was written in the third century that may have origins in earlier sources of unknown origin and reliability. And we can have no confidence that the rabbinic sources used their third-century sources responsibly or that their third-century sources used their earlier sources responsibly. The rabbinic sources probably tell us what educated Jews of the third century and perhaps earlier knew or believed about Jesus. Ehrman summarizes the opinion of many when he writes,

In view of the dates of these writings, and the complications of establishing the origins of their traditions, scholars by and large realize that they can no longer (as they once did) simply quote a passage from the Talmud and assume that it reflects conditions in the first century of the Common Era, any more than one can quote a modern newspaper editorial and assume that it reflects conditions of colonial America.²⁰⁴

I assign the Rabbinic sources a rating of *unlikely*.

3.2.5. Apostolic Fathers

Several extant writings remain in a corpus commonly known as the Apostolic Fathers. Rather than being written by the apostles as its name implies, the literature in this collection was written largely by Church leaders who came after the apostles in the first and second centuries. Unfortunately, many questions remain concerning nearly all of these writings. Who were their authors? When were they written; to whom and why? One qualifying issue determines whether we will employ any of these writings in our investigation: Are there any reasons for believing some of their content provides us with insights into what the original apostles had taught pertaining to the resurrection of Jesus? We remind ourselves that our present research is not concerned with the diversity of early Christianity as it existed in the first and second centuries. Rather, it is concerned with the fate of Jesus. Accordingly, it will be most important to attempt to ascertain what the original disciples were teaching on the matter and whether they were unified on the matter. For example, the seven letters of Ignatius (middle recension) are widely accepted as authentic and are dated c. AD 100-138 and more commonly to c. AD 110.²⁰⁵ Ignatius makes mention of the death and

or sixth century (114) while Wright (2003) at “roughly AD 400” and the Mishnah at “roughly AD 200” (191).

²⁰² Van Voorst (2000), 120-21. As an indicator that these rabbis were disinterested in accurate history, he notes their failure to place Jesus in the correct century (121-22). Johnson (1996) notes that the Talmud’s “references to Jesus and Christians have been subject to medieval censorship” (114).

²⁰³ Ehrman (1999), 63; Meier (1991), 97-98; Theissen and Merz (1998), 75; Van Voorst (2000), 121-22.

²⁰⁴ Ehrman (1999), 63.

²⁰⁵ Ehrman, Vol. I (2003) appears to favor Eusebius’ statement that it occurred in the middle of Trajan’s reign which was between AD 98-117 (205); C. A. Evans (2005): AD 110-118 (270); P. Foster, “The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch” in Foster, ed. (2007): AD 125-150 (89), although he admits that the majority favor c. AD 110 (88); Jefford (2006): AD 107-109 (12).

resurrection of Jesus. However, there are no traditions that link him directly to the apostles as there are for his possibly younger friend and colleague Polycarp. Thus, while providing valuable insights for our knowledge of the early second-century Church, the letters of Ignatius do not assist us in our investigation of the resurrection of Jesus. Another example is the *Fragments of Papias*. Although these short remaining fragments preserved in the writings of others contain numerous references that identify Papias as a companion of the apostle John, they make no mention of the death or resurrection of Jesus and, thus, are of no value in our investigation.²⁰⁶

3.2.5.1. Clement of Rome

1 Clement is a letter written to the church at Corinth from the church at Rome. Although the letter does not claim to have been written by a particular person, it has been attributed to Clement of Rome. It is about the same size as Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth.²⁰⁷

Who was Clement? A few possibilities have been proposed. Paul mentions a Clement in Philippians 4:3. Eusebius (c. AD 260-339) reports that this Clement later became the bishop of Rome in AD 92.²⁰⁸ However, he does not make a connection between him and the author of *1 Clement*. The *Shepherd of Hermas* (end of first century/first half of second century) refers to a Clement whose job it is to send books to all the other churches.²⁰⁹ Irenaeus (c. AD 140-202) mentions a Clement who became the third bishop of Rome. He adds that Clement had seen and conversed with the apostles.²¹⁰ This is perhaps consistent with the Clement in Philippians, although it is not required. Irenaeus also reports that *1 Clement* was written by the church in Rome to the church in Corinth while Clement was bishop at the former. This is the first clear attribution of *1 Clement* to the bishop of Rome and is consistent with the "we" passages found in *1 Clement*. Clement of Alexandria (c. AD 150-215) attributed the text of *1 Clement* to the "apostle Clement" and provided numerous quotations from it.²¹¹ Tertullian (c. AD 160-220) wrote of a Clement ordained by Peter for the church in Rome but makes no mention of *1 Clement*.²¹² A Clement is mentioned in Ignatius's letter to the Trallians (long recension) where he is a helper of Peter.²¹³ Of interest is that there are no traditions that reject Clementine authorship or that question Clement's link to the apostle Peter.

In summary, there is a tradition that a man named Clement, who was possibly the one mentioned by Paul, became the bishop of the church in Rome at the end of the first century. This Clement may have personally known a number of the apostles, perhaps even Peter or Paul. Because there are a number of sources that appear to link Clement to the apostles in some manner, this possible relationship cannot be ignored. On one hand, we cannot be certain of the reliability of the statements made about Clement, since with the possible exception of *Hermas*, the sources are fairly late (c. AD 140-

²⁰⁶ Pap. Frag. 1:4; 3:1-4, 7; 11; 15; 16:1.

²⁰⁷ A word count of the Greek text of each using BibleWorks 7.0 yielded the following results: 1 Cor.: 9,648 words; *1 Clem.*: 9,833 words, a difference of +1.92% for *1 Clem.*

²⁰⁸ HE 3.4.10; 3.15.1.

²⁰⁹ Hermas 8:3.

²¹⁰ AH 3.3.3.

²¹¹ Strom. 4.17.

²¹² Prescription 32.

²¹³ Ign. Trall. 7:3 (long version).

325). On the other hand, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and the long version of Ignatius's letter to the Trallians are four sources that link Clement to Peter and/or *1 Clement* and there are no competing traditions that claim otherwise.²¹⁴ Thus, although historical certainty eludes us, I regard it *more probable than not* (i.e., *possible-plus*) that Clement of Rome personally knew the apostle Peter.

When was *1 Clement* written? We will begin by establishing a broad range of dates. Since *1 Clement* mentions the deaths of Peter and Paul (*1 Clem.* 5), if the traditional dating for these of c. AD 64 is correct, *1 Clement* could not have been written earlier than AD 64. On the other end Hegesippus (c. AD 170) appears to be aware of *1 Clement*.²¹⁵ Moreover, Eusebius (c. AD 325) cited a portion of a letter written by Dionysius the bishop of Corinth to Soter the bishop of Rome (AD 166-74). In this letter he commends the church in Rome and informs Soter that his letter was read among the church in Corinth just that day (Sunday). Dionysius tells Soter that he believes his letter will always be helpful, just as will be an earlier letter written through Clement to the Corinthian church. This dates *1 Clement* earlier than AD 174.²¹⁶ Accordingly, we have a *terminus a quo* of post-AD 64 and a *terminus ad quem* of pre-AD 170.

Perhaps we can narrow our range further. Two dates are generally proposed: the traditional date of AD 95-97 and an earlier date, perhaps in the 60s or 70s. The traditional date has for some time remained the majority opinion.²¹⁷ Arguments for preferring this date over the earlier one are as follows: First, those who carried *1 Clement* from the church in Rome to the church in Corinth are said to have behaved faithfully and sensibly among them from youth (*νεότητος*) to old age (*γήρους*) (63:3).²¹⁸ This suggests a considerable amount of time. However, "youth" need not at all refer to one's teenaged years or earlier. Polybius tells of a man named Flaminius who is young (*νέος*) "for he was not more than thirty years" (*Histories* 18.12.5). Irenaeus refers to the thirty-year-old Jesus as a "young man" and he suggests that one could be considered "young" up until age forty (*AH* 2.22.5). Luke referred to Saul as a *νεανίας* ("young man") when witnesses laid their robes at his feet during the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58).²¹⁹ Saul approved of the stoning and immediately began to persecute the Church, having enough authority for the arresting and imprisoning of Jewish Christians (8:1-3). Therefore, young Saul is probably not a teenager. In 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul tells Timothy who is an overseer not to let others think little of him because he is young (*νεότητος*). If the date of Jesus' death is assigned the latter of the two most likely candidates—AD 30 and 33—and we assign *1 Clement* the earliest possible dating—AD 64—the Church would have been already three decades of age and the carriers of *1 Clement* could have aged from thirty-five at the time of Jesus' crucifixion to sixty-five at the time *1 Clement* was composed. This fits easily with Clement's statement pertaining to the faithfulness of the carriers' from

²¹⁴ Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Ignatius (long) link Clement to Peter while Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria link Clement to *1 Clement*.

²¹⁵ The writings of Hegesippus are no longer extant. However, Eusebius had them before him and quotes from them. On one occasion, he reports that Hegesippus comments on Clement's letter to the Corinthians (*HE* 4.22.1).

²¹⁶ *HE* 4.23.11.

²¹⁷ Ehrman, Vol. I (2003), 24; C. A. Evans (2005), 269; A. Gregory, "*1 Clement: An Introduction*," in Foster, ed. (2007), 28; Holmes, ed. and trans. (2007), 35-36; Jefford (2006), 18; Koester (2007), 212.

²¹⁸ Holmes, ed. and trans. (2007), 35.

²¹⁹ BDAG (2000): "fr. about the 24th through the 40th year" (667).

youth to old age (63:3).²²⁰ Moreover, Clement could be referring to those who had lived as pious Jews prior to their conversion.²²¹ Therefore, in my opinion, this first argument is equally consistent with both the traditional and early datings.

A second argument for the traditional dating is that an early dating is difficult to reconcile with the description of the Corinthian church as “the most stable and ancient” (τὴν βεβαιοτάτην καὶ ἀρχαίαν) (47:6). A congregation founded by Paul less than 20 years prior to an early dating of *1 Clement* could not have been regarded as “ancient.”²²² However, ἀρχαίωv may also be translated as “early.” The word is related to ἀρχή, which can mean “beginning,” so that ἀρχαίωv can mean simply “from (near) the beginning (of the Church).” At the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:7, Peter reminds the others that “from the early days” (ἀφ’ ἡμερῶν ἀρχαίωv) God chose him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. If we place the Jerusalem council event in AD 49-50, it is only twenty years from the most commonly accepted date of Jesus’ crucifixion (AD 30)! Thus, in this context, “ancient” is less than twenty years. In Acts 21:16, Mnason of Cyprus is referred to as “an ancient disciple” (ἀρχαίω μαθητῆ). The NRS renders “an early disciple,” while in the NASB he is “a disciple of long standing.” If Paul’s stay with Mnason occurred in AD 57,²²³ Mnason was a disciple of Jesus for no more than three decades, even if he was one of the minor disciples who had accompanied Jesus prior to his execution. Accordingly, Clement may simply be saying that some of them went back to the earliest days of the Corinthian church or be referring to the early days of Paul’s preaching there.²²⁴ In my opinion this argument is likewise consistent with both the traditional and early datings.

A third argument for the traditional dating is that Clement mentions leaders in the Corinthian church that are at least twice removed from the apostles (44:3-5).²²⁵ This places the letter’s composition more comfortably with the traditional dating, especially if ἔγκαρπον καὶ τελείαν ἔσχον τὴν ἀνάλυσιν in 44:5 is rendered “they died fruitful and mature [in age]” though this rendering is by no means required. Paul founded the church in Corinth in c. AD 51-52. We do not know when he or one of the other apostles would have established the office of overseer/elder/bishop. But if we propose that he left some leadership in place when leaving Corinth in AD 52 and solidified the office a few years later (c. AD 55), given the possible advanced age of the overseer when installed in office and a premature death by disease or martyrdom, it seems entirely possible that the office might need to be assumed by a successor a little over a decade later. However, it also seems to me that this argument weighs in favor of the traditional dating.

A fourth argument sometimes advanced is that the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul are said to have occurred τῆς γενεᾶς ἡμῶν (in our generation; 5:1) as did the persecution and martyrdom of a large number of Christians in the same period (6:1-2). This text

²²⁰ In John 21:18, Jesus speaks of Peter’s martyrdom when he is “old” (γηράσῃς).

²²¹ Gregory in Foster, ed. (2007), 29.

²²² Ehrman (*Apostolic Fathers*, 2003), 1:25.

²²³ Witherington (*Acts*, 1998), 85.

²²⁴ Gregory in Foster, ed. (2007), 28.

²²⁵ Ehrman (*Apostolic Fathers*, 2003) refers to chapter 46. But I think this is a typographical error, since nothing in that chapter tells of other generations of leaders. The reference is more likely 44:1-5 as noted by Holmes, ed. and trans. (2007), 1:35.

has been used to argue for both the traditional and early datings.²²⁶ Although it is difficult to be precise, the “great multitude” points to a notable persecution. Whereas a persecution by Domitian during the time of the traditional dating has been questioned, the brutal persecution of Christians by Nero is quite firm, being reported by Tacitus.²²⁷ Moreover, as Gregory notes, ἔγγιστα in 5:1 is a superlative rather than a comparative. Thus, the examples of the suffering and deaths of the apostles are not “more recent” than the other examples he provided, but they are the “most recent.”²²⁸ Since as of AD 95 Peter and Paul could have been the most recent heroes martyred, it seems to me that this passage fits well with both early and traditional dates.

A fifth argument for the traditional dating is Eusebius’ report that Clement was installed as bishop of the church in Rome in AD 92. However, this argument varies in its weight according to the amount of reliability one is inclined to assign Eusebius. Moreover, Clement may have written the letter prior to being ordained as bishop.²²⁹

Although the traditional date enjoys favor by most scholars on the subject, “there have been important challenges to this consensus.”²³⁰ Based on an earlier proposal by Herron, Jefford finds an early dating more satisfying.²³¹ Herron provided seven arguments. I will only focus on the first two, which I find the weightiest of the seven. The first is a counterargument for the traditional dating that states that Clement is reported to be a secretary of the church in Rome rather than a bishop for which church leaders were known in the early second century (*Hermas* 8:3). However, the term for “bishop” (ἐπίσκοπος) was used of elders or overseers in the middle of the first century.²³² The second is a positive argument. Clement’s discussion of the temple (40-41) assumes that it is still standing and that its liturgical practices were still in effect. This, of course, places the composition of *1 Clement* prior to the destruction of the temple in AD 70.²³³ The use of the present tense in this passage is quite impressive. The high priest, the priest, and the Levites are carrying on their services in Jerusalem in front of the sanctuary at the altar (40:4-5; 41:2-3) and those who make their offerings in the temple at the proper time are “accepted and blessed. For they are following the laws of the Master and are not straying” (εὐπρόσδεκτοὶ τε καὶ μακάριοι τοῖς γὰρ νομίμοις τοῦ δεσπότου ἀκολουθοῦντες οὐ διαμαρτάνουσιν). Given the general message in the New Testament that Christ was the final sacrifice, to me this seems unthinkable coming from a Christian of the period. However, we are reminded of Acts 21:17-26 where Paul took four others with him, purified himself with them, went into the temple and made preparations for the sacrifices that would

²²⁶ For use in support of the traditional date, see Holmes, ed. and trans. (2007), 35. For use in support of an early date, see Gregory in Foster, ed. (2007), 28-29.

²²⁷ Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44. Ehrman (*Apostolic Fathers*, 2003) comments that the view that *1 Clement* was written in the midst of a Domitian persecution “is now by and large rejected” and that “there is no solid evidence from the period itself of a persecution of Christians under Domitian” (1:24).

²²⁸ Gregory in Foster, ed. (2007), 29. See also BDAG (2000), 270.

²²⁹ Jefford (2006), 18.

²³⁰ Gregory in Foster, ed. (2007), 28. Gregory is open to a composition as early as the 70s (29).

²³¹ Jefford (2006, 18) acknowledges his dependence upon the analysis by T. J. Herron, “The Most Probable Date of the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians,” in *StPatr* 21 (1989), 106-21. Jefford is a member of the Jesus Seminar and argues for Clementine authorship and a date of composition between AD 64-69 (17-19). He asserts that “many prefer something earlier” than the traditional dating (18).

²³² See Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1, 2; Titus 1:7; Acts 20:28.

²³³ Jefford (2006), 18.

be offered for them. Whatever the extent of the relationship Christians maintained with the temple until its destruction in AD 70, they had not pulled away from it completely until sometime after AD 57 when this event in Acts purportedly took place. We might answer that Clement is using a narrative present. While this is possible, I think it problematic. The occasion of the letter was to provide guidance and correction to the Corinthian believers. The advice being given in this text is relevant only if the temple events being described are still occurring. Clement's readers would have known whether the Jerusalem temple had been destroyed. Thus, in my opinion, we have evidence in support of an early dating of *1 Clement*.

If *1 Clement* was written after the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul and prior to the destruction of the Temple, this gives us a date of composition between AD 64 and 70. If one senses that the persecution had ended before the time of writing, the end of Nero's persecutions with his death in AD 68 would assist us in further narrowing our date to sometime between AD 68-70.

In summary, we have considered five arguments for preferring the traditional dating and discovered that the first two and the fourth can just as easily be employed for an earlier dating, the fifth is weak, and the third weighs in favor of the traditional dating. However, the earlier dating has a fairly strong argument in its favor. Accordingly, we have one strong argument in favor of each. A good position is able to explain away the strong points of competing positions without strain. This becomes somewhat of a subjective enterprise. I find the argument in favor of an early date compelling but I cannot dismiss the argument for a later dating. It appears to me that neither can be explained away without any strain. While I would personally like to assign an early date to *1 Clement*, I feel constrained to refrain from a decision at this time. Of greater importance than the date of writing is the matter of authorship and I do not think we can know with adequate certainty whether the Clement of this letter personally knew the apostles. However, if he did, Clement's letter becomes very valuable, since it allows us access to the teachings of one who had known some of those who had walked with Jesus and perhaps had been ordained by not only one of the three top leaders of the Jerusalem church but one of Jesus' closest disciples: Peter. I assign *1 Clement* a rating of *possible-plus*.

3.2.5.2. Polycarp

Polycarp was the bishop of Smyrna (present day Izmir, Turkey) when he wrote a letter to the church in Philippi. We have more information about Polycarp than any of the other Apostolic Fathers. As Ehrman notes, "[a]mong the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, there is one text written *to* him (by Ignatius), another written *about* him (the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*), and yet another written *by* him . . ." ²³⁴ These other texts assist us in dating his letter. According to the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, he was executed by the Romans at the age of eighty-six. ²³⁵ However, the year of his martyrdom is uncertain, some placing it between AD 155-160 (c. AD 156) or AD 161-180 (c. 167).

²³⁴ Ehrman (*Apostolic Fathers*, 2003), 1:324

²³⁵ *Mart. Pol.* 9:3.

Scholars debate whether Polycarp's letter to the Philippians is one letter or two letters that have been combined.²³⁶ However, they all appear to hold that Polycarp is the author even if they think a later editor combined the two.²³⁷ If there was only one letter, we may date Polycarp's letter to c. AD 110 or very shortly thereafter, since he appears to know that his friend Ignatius was on his way to being executed and either knows of his death or desires an update (1:1; 9:1; 13:2). The traditional date of Ignatius's letter accepted by most scholars is sometime between AD 107-110.²³⁸ Irenaeus asserts that Polycarp was instructed by the apostles, especially John with whom he had interacted, and also spoke with a number of others who had seen Jesus. While in his early youth, Irenaeus saw Polycarp while he was bishop of Smyrna and heard him tell about Jesus' miracles and teachings, which he had learned from the apostles and which the Church had handed down.²³⁹ If Irenaeus was being truthful, similar to Clement of Rome, Polycarp's writings become very important, since he personally knew and followed one of Jesus' closest disciples who was one of the three major leaders of the Jerusalem church: John. However, without an ability to know and with only Irenaeus linking Polycarp to John, we may only assign Polycarp a rating of *possible*, in terms of preserving apostolic teachings pertaining to the resurrection of Jesus.

3.2.5.3. Letter of Barnabas

Although the author of this letter does not identify himself, four ancient authors attribute it to the apostle and companion of Paul named Barnabas: Clement of Alexandria (c. AD 150-215), Origen (c. AD 185-254), Didymus the Blind (c. AD 313-98), and Jerome (c. AD 342-420).²⁴⁰ With the exception of Clement of Alexandria (who may be the least critical of the early Church Fathers),²⁴¹ these are later than those who link Clement of Rome to Peter and *I Clement*. Eusebius (c. AD 260-339) asserted that *Barnabas* was spurious and most modern scholars agree, since *Barnabas* contains some teachings and an approach to the Law that differs from Paul's and more importantly a radical reversal from what we read about Barnabas in Galatians 2:13-14.²⁴² Paget asks, "Would the Levite Barnabas, who had shown himself somewhat conservative on occasions in relation to the Jewish law (Gal. 2.11f.), have subscribed to *Barnabas*' radically hostile attitude to literal implementation of the Jewish law?"²⁴³ On the other hand, we cannot rule out that, after the destruction of the temple in AD 70, Barnabas more fully understood Christianity's break from the temple cult and made a large step in the other direction.

²³⁶ For those supporting a unified letter, see M. Holmes, "Polycarp of Smyrna, *Epistle to the Philippians*" in Foster, ed. (2007), 123; Jefford (2006), 14-15. Ehrman (*Apostolic Fathers*, 2003) appears to favor the "two letter" hypothesis, although he does not state such (1:328-29).

²³⁷ Jefford (2006), 13.

²³⁸ Jefford (2006), 12. However, see Ehrman (*Apostolic Fathers*, 2003): "around 110 CE" (328); C. A. Evans (2005): "dated broadly to 100-118 C.E., though some narrow the span to 107-110" (270); Holmes in Foster, ed. (2007): "possibly as early as 110-20" (108).

²³⁹ AH 3.3.4. Also see Eusebius (*HE* 5.20.5-8) for a relevant fragment he preserved but which is no longer extant.

²⁴⁰ J. C. Paget, "The Epistle of Barnabas" in Foster, ed. (2007), 72n1-4, 73. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2.6; 2.7; 2.20; 5.10.

²⁴¹ Meier (1991), 151n50.

²⁴² HE 3.25. That the majority of scholars reject authorship by the NT Barnabas, see Ehrman (*Apostolic Fathers*, 2003), 2:6; C. A. Evans (2005), 272; Holmes, ed. and trans. (2007), 372-73; Jefford (2006), 32; Paget in Foster, ed. (2007), 73-74.

²⁴³ Paget in Foster, ed. (2006), 74n14.

When was *Barnabas* written? According to *Barnabas* 16:3-5, the temple has been destroyed and plans to rebuild it were in process.²⁴⁴ This places the composition of *Barnabas* after AD 70 and perhaps as late as sometime in the AD 130s. It is difficult to set a more narrow date with any certainty, although talk of rebuilding the temple in *Barnabas* inclines most to assign a date no earlier than the end of the first century.²⁴⁵ If the letter was written at this time or later, this also weighs against authorship by the apostle Barnabas who was Paul's companion, given his required age. For example, if written c. AD 95, Barnabas would have to have been at least eighty years old at the time of composition. I assign *Barnabas* a rating of *possible-minus*.

3.2.6. Other Non-Canonical Christian Literature

3.2.6.1. Gospel of Thomas

Of all of the non-canonical Christian literature, the *Gospel of Thomas* has perhaps received the most attention.²⁴⁶ When was *Thomas* written? This is a difficult question to answer. Koester dates its composition "[n]o later than the beginning of the second century, and perhaps even earlier,"²⁴⁷ although he thinks it "quite likely that an early version of the *Gospel of Thomas* was composed as a sayings gospel around the year 50 CE, probably also in the area of Syria/Palestine."²⁴⁸ Pagels places its composition around AD 90-100.²⁴⁹ The fellows of the Jesus Seminar place the original *Gospel of Thomas* in the 50s.²⁵⁰ Many other scholars place it sometime between the early and late second century.²⁵¹

Three Greek Oxyrhynchus Papyri fragments contain approximately 20 percent of the Coptic version of *Thomas*.²⁵² These Greek fragments are usually dated between AD 200-300 with most scholars leaning toward around AD 200.²⁵³ The Coptic

²⁴⁴ The rebuilding may mean the Jewish temple or the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus that Hadrian built on the former location of the Jewish temple. See Paget in Foster, ed. (2007), 74-75.

²⁴⁵ Ehrman (*Apostolic Fathers*, 2003): after AD 70 and before AD 135 (2:6-7); C. A. Evans (2005): "late first century or in the early second" (272); Holmes, ed. and trans. (2007): after AD 70 "but before the city was rebuilt by Hadrian following the revolt of AD 132-35. Within these limits it is difficult to be any more precise" (373); Jefford (2006): AD 96-100 and asserts this is where the majority of scholarship is today (34); Paget in Foster, ed. (2007) speaks of a "developing consensus" of "sometime in the 130s" (75).

²⁴⁶ Elliott (2005), 122; Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003), 452; Perrin (2002), 191.

²⁴⁷ Koester (2007), 221.

²⁴⁸ Koester (2000), 157.

²⁴⁹ Pagels (2003), 45. In a television discussion between Pagels and me in February 2005, Pagels dated *Gospel of Thomas* somewhere between AD 80-90. See "The Missing Gospels" from *Faith Under Fire*, segment 3. The discussion may be viewed at <http://www.4truth.net/site/apps/nl/content3.asp?c=hiKXLbPNLrF&b=784449&ct=1201303>.

²⁵⁰ Funk, Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar (1997), 18. S. J. Patterson, "Outside the Bible: Can it be Jesus?" in Scott, ed. (2008) asserts that "most scholars now date the Gospel of Thomas sometime in the last third of the first century" (42). Although Patterson is most likely correct if by "scholars" he is referring to the fellows of the Jesus Seminar, I very much doubt the truth of his statement if he is referring to the broad and mainstream community of scholars.

²⁵¹ Perrin (2002) and C. A. Evans (2006) date *Thomas* c. AD 180. Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003): "the literary origin of *Gos. Thom.* is best located sometime between 90 and 160" (473). Witherington (*Jesus Quest*, 1995) is open to a composition as early as the late first century (261n31).

²⁵² C. A. Evans (2006), 63.

²⁵³ Funk, Hoover and the Jesus Seminar (1997): around AD 200 (470); Perkins (2007): "late second or early third century" (68); Witherington (*Jesus Quest*, 1995): "no later than about A.D. 200" (49).

manuscripts discovered at Nag Hammadi are dated to the fourth century.²⁵⁴ The *Gospel of Thomas* is first mentioned by Hippolytus and Origen no later than AD 235.²⁵⁵ Therefore, we can set a confident *terminus ad quem* of sometime prior to AD 235. Establishing a *terminus a quo* is much more difficult, complex, and hotly disputed.

Some scholars contend that *Thomas* contains material that is independent of and predates all of the canonical Gospels. Three major arguments are usually forwarded in support. First, *Thomas* appears to be of the genre of *sayings literature*, since no extensive narrative is offered when Jesus is teaching.²⁵⁶ Some scholars compare *Thomas* with *Q*. Koester notes that neither *Q* nor *Thomas* describes Jesus' crucifixion or resurrection. For him, *Q* and *Thomas* assume that the power for the early Church lay in the logia of Jesus rather than his death and resurrection. Koester holds that *Q* went through at least one major redaction. It is the pre-redacted *Q*—written 10-20 years after Jesus' death—that shares parallels with *Thomas*. In support, he notes that 46 of 79 logia in *Thomas* parallel *Q*. Koester concludes that a lot of *Thomas*'s material pre-dates the Synoptics. He also suggests that on a number of occasions John may be writing specifically against *Thomas*.²⁵⁷

Second, the logia in *Thomas* appear in a different order than we find in the Synoptics and they are not situated in the same narrative context we find in the canonical Gospels.²⁵⁸ This weighs in favor of an independence of the logia in *Thomas* from the canonical Gospels.

Third, a few of the logia found in *Thomas* appear in a manner that suggests an earlier form than that in which parallel logia appear in the Synoptics. Many logia in *Thomas* are shorter and less theologically adorned than their parallels in the canonical Gospels. They also lack references to the Old Testament.²⁵⁹ Therefore, these scholars conclude that *Thomas* is earlier than and independent of the canonical Gospels.²⁶⁰

However, a slight majority of scholars are more skeptical of an early dating of *Thomas*. A text's belonging to the genre of "sayings literature," as *Thomas* does, does not require an early dating. Sayings literature existed in the second and third

²⁵⁴ Koester (2000) observes that a comparison between the Greek Oxyrhynchus fragments and the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas* fragments found at Nag Hammadi reveals that redactions to the text occurred during the period between their compositions (157). Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003) makes a similar observation and adds that this demonstrates "fluidity" between the original composition and extant manuscripts (453). But this goes further than the evidence warrants. If we imagine a timeline containing three points (A, B, C), redactions occurring in the period between B and C do not provide evidence that they also occurred between A and B.

²⁵⁵ Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5:7:20 (AD 222-235) and Origen, *Luc. Hom.* 1.

²⁵⁶ Koester (1990), 82.

²⁵⁷ Koester (1990), 122-24. See also Pagels (2003), 39-73; esp. 58ff.

²⁵⁸ Koester (1990), 82. See also Ehrman (*Lost Christianities*, 2003), 55.

²⁵⁹ Ehrman (*Lost Christianities*, 2003), 55-56; Koester (1990), 85.

²⁶⁰ Koester (2007), 229. Koester (2000) also adds the following argument: "The contrast between *Thomas* and Jesus' brother James (*Gos. Thom.* ##12 and 13) allows the conjecture that the author of this gospel belongs to circles of disciples who sought to strengthen and defend the right of their tradition in the name of *Thomas* against the authority of James of Jerusalem, without denying the latter's claim to leadership in ecclesiastical matters. This reflects a church-political situation in Palestine in the middle of the 1st century rather than a controversy from a later period" (157).

centuries, even in Syria. Examples include the rabbinic collection *Pirque Avot* and the *Sentences of Sextus*, the latter of which was composed in second-century Syria.²⁶¹

Hurtado regards as “unlikely” the contentions of Koester, Pagels, Riley, and DeConick that John in places is writing against *Thomas*.²⁶² While John’s emphasis on Jesus’ bodily resurrection contrasts with Thomas’s conception of disembodied postmortem existence,²⁶³ such a view is not unique to John but is present in the Synoptics and Paul, all of whom are earlier. Thus, a response to *Thomas* on this matter is completely unnecessary, unless *Thomas* predates both the Synoptics and Paul. Moreover, John’s portrayal of Jesus’ being able to materialize behind solid and locked doors (20:19, 26) is not the sort of detail one invents to counter an ethereal resurrection and “scarcely reflects a supposed aim of making some specific assertion about the nature of Jesus’ resurrection body over against a rival view.”²⁶⁴

What about John’s negative portrayal of Thomas as a skeptic in 11:16 and 20:24-29 and as an “ignorant and obtuse disciple” in 14:5?²⁶⁵ I think this is both a selective reading and a misreading of John. We need not think that Thomas is being portrayed in a negative and doubting manner in John 11:16 (“Let us go also in order that we may die with him”). Perhaps Thomas was speaking sarcastically as Pagels appears to believe. However, I do not see why this is any more likely than that he was speaking with boldness and total commitment to his Lord. I likewise do not view Thomas’ statement directed to Jesus in John 14:5 (“We do not know where you are going. How are we able to know the way?”) and Jesus’ answer to him in 14:6 (“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”) as a negative portrayal of Thomas. John may simply be narrating the discussion and has Thomas utter the statements many early Christians were asking. The only of the three examples provided by Pagels that come close in my mind to John’s portrayal of Thomas in a negative light is in 20:24-29 where Thomas refuses to believe that Jesus has risen from the dead unless he himself sees and touches him. Were Jesus’ words to Thomas a “rebuke” as Pagels claims?²⁶⁶

ἑώρακάς με πεπίστευκας; μακάριοι οἱ μὴ ἰδόντες καὶ πιστεύσαντες.

You have seen me and believed? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed. (20:29)

Why is Thomas any worse than the others in John’s resurrection narrative? Mary Magdalene believed Jesus’ corpse had been stolen prior to actually seeing him alive again (20:2, 16-18). And what about Peter and the other disciples (see 20:3-10, 20) who apparently do not believe until they actually *see* Jesus?²⁶⁷ Indeed, this is what we

²⁶¹ C. A. Evans (2006), 76.

²⁶² Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003), 475. Hurtado cites DeConick (2001), 68-85; Riley (1995), 78-126.

²⁶³ *Gos. of Thom.* 37.

²⁶⁴ Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003), 476.

²⁶⁵ Pagels (2003), 70; cf. 58, 70-72.

²⁶⁶ Pagels (2003), 71.

²⁶⁷ Pagels (2003) even reads John 20:29 in this manner: “Jesus warns the rest of the chastened disciples: ‘Have you believed because you have seen? Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet believe’” (72). However, this is a misreading, since Jesus is referring to Thomas with the singular rather than the plural: ἑώρακάς με πεπίστευκας; (“You believed because you have seen me?”).

find clearly articulated in Luke’s resurrection narrative.²⁶⁸ It is plausible that in 20:29 Jesus is contrasting their belief that he had risen only after seeing him with the belief of the Beloved Disciple who did not first need to see him. But this sort of evidence is far from clear that John’s Gospel was a response to a Thomas community.²⁶⁹

It is likewise noteworthy that, in John, Jesus’ other disciples are sometimes portrayed in a more negative manner than Thomas. Where are the claims that John is answering a Philip community (14:8-11)²⁷⁰ or a community partial to Peter (18:10-11; 17-27; 21:15-23)²⁷¹ or a community started by the disciples (16:31-33)?²⁷² Hurtado notes that it is characteristic of John to feature a number of Jesus’ disciples who are mentioned by name, then asks whether “the representation of each figure in GJohn is intended to address some ecclesiastical issue?”²⁷³ If we did not know better, it follows from John’s portrayal of Judas that John’s Gospel is a polemic against a Judas community that penned the *Gospel of Judas*.²⁷⁴

The second argument for an early dating of *Thomas* pertains to the logia order and narrative setting and is answered by noting that *Thomas* lacks coherence with and has even lost its pre-70 Jewish Palestinian setting. Instead, it is more coherent with late second-century Syrian tradition.²⁷⁵ For example, Perkins notes Fitzmyer’s

²⁶⁸ In Luke 24:10-11, the disciples do not believe the women’s report, and in 24:17-26, the Emmaus disciples are “sad” (17) and Jesus says they are “slow of heart to believe” (25). I do not think that those who doubted in Matt. 28:17 were of the same nature as Thomas. See section 4.3.2.6.

²⁶⁹ It is unclear what Peter and the Beloved Disciple thought after verifying Mary’s report that the tomb was empty.

τότε οὖν εἰσηλθεν καὶ ὁ ἄλλος μαθητῆς ὁ ἐλθὼν πρῶτος εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον καὶ εἶδεν καὶ ἐπίστευσεν·⁹ οὐδέπω γὰρ ᾔδεισαν τὴν γραφὴν ὅτι δεῖ αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῆναι.

Then also the other disciple who came first to the tomb went inside the tomb and he saw and believed.⁹ For they had not yet understood the Scripture that he must be raised from the dead.

What did the Beloved Disciple believe upon seeing that the tomb was empty? Most commentators hold that he believed Jesus had been raised. However, the verse that follows states that the two had not yet understood that the Scriptures taught that Jesus must be raised from the dead. The pluperfect (ᾔδεισαν) could imply that in a past now completed they had not understood, but now they do. But this is not at all necessary, since the pluperfect makes no comment pertaining to whether the results still exist at the time of speaking, one way or the other (Wallace [1996], 583; cf. 586). Moreover, after the two disciples had left for their homes (their emotional state not stated), Mary remains at the tomb weeping, still believing that Jesus’ corpse had been stolen (and apparently not encouraged if the Beloved Disciple believed Jesus had been raised). Perhaps the Beloved Disciple now believed Mary’s report that Jesus’ corpse was gone from the tomb rather than that he had been raised. If this was what the Evangelist was saying, the Beloved Disciple is on par with the others who did not believe until they saw Jesus for themselves.

²⁷⁰ In John 6:5-7 one could postulate that Philip’s answer to Jesus indicates that he failed the test Jesus gave him.

²⁷¹ Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003), 479.

²⁷² It is of interest that in the *Epistle of the Apostles*, a letter that is most likely a response to Gnostic literature, it is Peter rather than Thomas who is first invited by the risen Jesus to place his hand and/or finger in the nail-prints of Jesus’ hands, after which Thomas is invited to put his finger in Jesus’ side. Finally, Andrew is asked by Jesus to verify that his feet are touching the ground (Coptic) or that his steps leave a footprint (Ethiopic) (11). See the English translations of the Coptic and Ethiopic texts in Elliott (2005), 562-63.

²⁷³ Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003), 478-79.

²⁷⁴ I am indebted to Rob Bowman for this thought.

²⁷⁵ C. A. Evans (2006), 76; Perkins (2007), 71.

commentary on Luke 12:16-21 in support: “He says of *Gos. Thom.* 63: ‘In this form of the story, however, the rich man is not treated as a fool, and it has lost the cutting edge of the Lucan parable, viz. God’s verdict.’”²⁷⁶ The order of the logia in *Thomas* will be addressed below.

In answer to the third argument for a pre-Synoptic form of the logia in *Thomas*, a redactor may have created the more ambiguous sayings in *Thomas* by truncating and wording more cryptically the Synoptic material in order to conform to the quasi-Gnostic ideas found in *Thomas*, including secret knowledge. Moreover, shorter logia and pericopes that are less theologically adorned do not necessarily suggest an earlier dating. This point is illustrated in the various accounts of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearance to the Emmaus disciples. Ps-Mark 16:12-13 is much shorter and less theologically adorned than its parallel in Luke 24:13-35. Yet, it is almost certainly later. Perhaps it is based on an earlier source than what Luke had before him. But that is mere speculation. It could be that Ps-Mark shortened Luke’s narrative for purposes of economy. Even so, the point that shorter and less theologically adorned texts may reflect earlier tradition carries weight and should not be ignored.

A number of scholars have noted Gnostic tendencies in *Thomas*.²⁷⁷ This weighs in favor of a date no earlier than the early second century, since it is difficult to establish that this form of Gnosticism existed in the first century.²⁷⁸ Accordingly, given hints of Gnostic thought throughout *Thomas*, “it is risky to draw firm conclusions relating to priority on the basis of which form of the tradition is the shortest and appears abbreviated.”²⁷⁹ One would have to assume *a priori* that *Thomas* contains earlier material and that would render an *ad hoc* component to the position that places *Thomas* on equal or better footing than the canonical Gospels. If *Thomas* has Gnostic overtones, we would have an expectation that it would not appeal to the Old Testament in support, since many Gnostics regarded the Old Testament God as an evil being.

In addition to answering typical arguments for the priority of *Thomas* over the canonical Gospels, a number of scholars have posited arguments suggesting that *Thomas* is indeed dependent on them. Evans notes that *Thomas* quotes or alludes to “more than half of the writings of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, Hebrews, 1 John, Revelation). . . . The presence of so much New Testament material in *Thomas* argues for a date well into the second century, when Christians would have had access to more than just a few of the writings that eventually made up the New Testament.”²⁸⁰ Evans then notes that *Thomas* contains material from the source material used by the Synoptics as well as John’s Gospel, listing 14 parallels between *Thomas* and *M*, five with *L*, and five with John. *Thomas* cannot be independent of the canonical Gospels if it contains so much of Matthew, Luke and

²⁷⁶ Perkins (2007), 71, quoting J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)* (Anchor Bible 28B; New York: Doubleday, 1985), 971.

²⁷⁷ Ehrman (*Lost Christianities*, 2003), 60; C. A. Evans (2006), 67; Theissen and Merz (1998), 40; Witherington (*Jesus Quest*, 1995), 50.

²⁷⁸ I agree with Pagels (2003) that the term “Gnosticism” is ambiguous and is often employed as a synonym for heretical teachings (33).

²⁷⁹ C. A. Evans (2006), 71.

²⁸⁰ C. A. Evans (2006), 68.

John.²⁸¹ But *Thomas* also shows familiarity with the redacted form of the Synoptics. For example, Jesus makes an awkward statement reported by Mark:

οὐ γάρ ἐστιν κρυπτόν ἐὰν μὴ ἵνα φανερωθῆ (Mark 4:22)

For nothing is hidden except that it may be revealed

Luke smoothes the statement:

οὐ γάρ ἐστιν κρυπτόν ὃ οὐ φανερόν γενήσεται (Luke 8:17)

For nothing is hidden which will not be revealed.

Thus, it is noteworthy that the early Greek fragment of *Thomas*' version (5-6) is a precise match with Luke's text.²⁸²

P.Oxy. 654.5: [οὐ γάρ ἐσ]τιν κρυπτόν ὃ οὐ φαν[ερὸν γενήσεται]

Although there is missing text in P.Oxy. 654.5, the important text is present. While Mark has ἐὰν μὴ ἵνα, Luke and *Thomas* render ὃ οὐ.²⁸³

Finally, Evans argues that *Thomas* shows familiarity with late traditions distinctive to Eastern, Syrian Christianity. For instance, the use of the name "Didymos Judas Thomas" in the introductory statement to *Thomas* is found in other works of Syrian origin and circulation: *Book of Thomas the Contender* (138.1-3; 142.7), *Acts of Thomas* (1, 11), and the Syriac version of John 14:22.²⁸⁴ Theissen and Merz add that the author's name "Judas Didymus Thomas" appears only in Christian literature of Syrian origin.²⁸⁵ However, it is noteworthy that only "Thomas" appears in the earlier Greek fragment.²⁸⁶

Moreover, in support of a Syriac origin (which also addresses the second argument in favor of the priority of *Thomas*) is Perrin's recent connection of *Thomas* with Tatian's *Diatessaron*.²⁸⁷ Perrin argues that *Thomas* was initially composed in Syriac. He creates a vorlage of *Thomas* in Greek and Syriac then notes 269 "catchwords" in Coptic, 263 in Greek, but 502 in Syriac.²⁸⁸ Perrin's Syriac vorlage links all the logia with the exception of three couplets (56-57, 88-89, 104-05).²⁸⁹ For Perrin, this coheres well with other Syriac literature of the period such as the *Odes of Solomon*.

²⁸¹ C. A. Evans (2006), 68-70.

²⁸² C. A. Evans (2006), 70.

²⁸³ C. A. Evans (2006) provides a number of additional examples (70). If Evans is correct, Koester (2006) is mistaken when claiming that *Thomas*' "sayings with parallels in the Synoptic Gospels show no signs of the redactional activities of the authors of these gospels and in several instances appear in a form that is doubtless more original than those preserved by the gospels of the New Testament canon" (157).

²⁸⁴ C. A. Evans (2006), 71-72.

²⁸⁵ Theissen and Merz (1998), 38. Contra is Koester (2000) who argues that "Judas Didymus Thomas . . . points to an early Aramaic-speaking milieu" (157).

²⁸⁶ See the parallel English translations of the Coptic and Greeks texts in Elliott (2005), 135.

²⁸⁷ Perrin (2002).

²⁸⁸ Perrin (2002), 57-155.

²⁸⁹ Perrin (2002), 171.

Not only do Thomas and the odist appear to enjoy puns, they use some of the identical words in order to achieve paronomasia.²⁹⁰ If Perrin is correct, this explains the order of logia in *Thomas* that has long puzzled scholars and answers the second positive argument forwarded for an early *Thomas* with an unexpected force. The author of *Thomas* was more concerned with creating catchwords than following a particular order.²⁹¹

Perrin then argues that it is most likely that the author relied on Syriac sources for the Synoptic tradition in *Thomas* and that the *Diatessaron* was not only “the first gospel record in Syriac,” but also “the only Syriac gospel in existence in the second century. As far as we know, there was no other resource to which Thomas could have turned.”²⁹² If Perrin is correct, *Thomas* was first composed in Syriac modifying canonical Gospel traditions in the *Diatessaron*. If it was composed at or near Edessa, a city known to be bilingual (Greek and Syriac), we might expect a Syriac document to be translated fairly quickly into Greek.²⁹³ This explains a dating of the Oxyrhynchus Greek fragments to c. AD 200.

Evans summarizes his case for a late dating of *Thomas* as follows:

This is where all of the evidence takes us: (1) the association of the *Gospel of Thomas* with ‘Judas Thomas,’ (2) the arrangement and order of the sayings explained by hundreds of Syriac catchwords that link the sayings, and (3) the coherence of the readings in *Thomas*, which differ from the Greek New Testament Gospels, with the readings either in the *Diatessaron* or other Christian Syriac works from this period compellingly argue for a late-second-century Syrian origin of the *Gospel of Thomas*.²⁹⁴

It would be nice to see how Koester and Crossan would respond to these arguments. Unfortunately, they have ignored them. Granted, Evans’s work on the subject is very recent. But Perrin’s conclusions had been around for five years prior to Koester’s most recent treatment of *Thomas*, in which he fails even to mention Perrin’s research!²⁹⁵ This is disappointing. The few reviewers of Perrin’s proposal have noted weaknesses. For example, when reconstructing catchwords in a Vorlage it would be expected that Perrin would use those terms that best support his proposal, a criticism to which Perrin admits being vulnerable.²⁹⁶ Moreover, although Perrin’s default argument is plausible for *Thomas*’s dependence on the *Diatessaron*—that the latter was the only known Syriac Gospel source available to him—we simply do not know whether this was the case given that “we have absolutely no evidence of Syriac

²⁹⁰ Perrin (2002), 192; 158-61.

²⁹¹ Perrin (2002), 185.

²⁹² Perrin (2002), 183-84. Perrin asserts that “[d]espite some dissenting voices, the priority of the *Diatessaron* [over the Old Syriac Gospels] in the Syriac textual tradition has in recent decades been generally taken as granted” (20-21). See also C. A. Evans (2006), 76. Evans also argues that where *Thomas* disagrees with the canonical Gospels, it agrees with Syrian tradition. In support, he provides two examples that compare Greek Matthew and Greek Luke with *Thomas*, Syriac Matthew, and Syriac *Recognitions* and concludes that *Thomas* got his differences from the Syrian tradition (74-75).

²⁹³ Perrin (2002), 27.

²⁹⁴ C. A. Evans (2006), 77.

²⁹⁵ Koester (2007), 195-206.

²⁹⁶ Shedinger (2003), 388.

literary texts prior to the *Book of the Laws of Countries* (end of 2nd – beginning of 3rd century).²⁹⁷

Admittedly, Perrin’s proposal employs academic imagination beyond the contentions of Evans and he may be mistaken on a number of points. However, competing proposals that *Thomas* was composed in the first century are likewise based on academic reconstructions that are no less imaginative. *Thomas* specialists will need to address the issues raised by Perrin and Evans.²⁹⁸

As earlier noted, even some who prefer an early dating of *Thomas* often do not provide arguments that its teachings go back to the original apostles.²⁹⁹ If significant differences can be identified between numerous teachings in *Thomas* and what can be identified as authentic apostolic teachings, why should equal weight be assigned to *Thomas* for our present investigation? If our interest is identifying what was taught about Jesus’ resurrection by groups who referred to themselves as Christians during the first three hundred years after Jesus, then we must give attention to *Thomas*. However, if our interest is identifying the teachings of the historical Jesus and his personal disciples who survived him, one should limit the weight assigned to *Thomas*.

Contrary to the optimism of some, much confidence in an early composition of *Thomas* does not appear to be warranted. The only agreement among scholars is that a few authentic agrapha absent from the canonical Gospels may be preserved in *Thomas*.³⁰⁰ In light of the deadlock in this discussion, how valuable is *Thomas* to the historian’s investigation of the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus? Since *Thomas* may present a view of resurrection involving disembodiment (37)³⁰¹ or enlightenment (51), it is germane to our discussion. However, those logia that may assist us in our investigation are not among the candidates for authentic and unique agrapha and it is difficult to attribute them to the *kerygma*. Accordingly, I assign *Thomas* a rating of *possible* pertaining to the presence of some unique apostolic testimony but *unlikely* in terms of providing useful data for our present investigation.

²⁹⁷ Poirier (2003), 5.

²⁹⁸ Shedinger (2003): “Though most *Thomas* scholars will probably not find [Perrin’s argument that *Thomas* was originally composed in Syriac] convincing, the evidence Perrin presents should not be ignored. It deserves closer scrutiny and an informed response. Perrin explicitly lays down the gauntlet. Will *Thomas* scholars accept the challenge?” (391). As of June 27, 2008 I was able to locate the following interactions with Perrin’s 2002 book: Books reviews by J. Joosten in *Aramaic Studies* 2.1 (January 2004), 126-30; P-H Poirier in *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 6.2 (July, 2003) accessed June 27, 2008 at <http://syrcom.cua.edu/Hugoye/Vol6No2/HV6N2PRPoirier.html>; R. F. Shedinger in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122.2 (Summer, 2003), 387-391; J. P. Williams, *European Journal of Theology* 13.2 (2004), 139-40. Further criticisms, discussions, and Perrin’s response may be found at the following: http://ntgateway.com/weblog/2007/05/nicholas-perrin-thomas-other-gospel_23.html; <http://ntgateway.com/weblog/2007/06/p-j-williams-response-to-perrin.html>; <http://ntgateway.com/weblog/labels/Nicholas%20Perrin.html>; <http://ntgateway.com/weblog/2007/06/nicholas-perrin-responds.html>; http://ntgateway.com/weblog/2007_05_01_archive.html; <http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/vol08/Perrin2003rev.html> (all accessed June 27, 2008).

²⁹⁹ See chapter 1.2.1.

³⁰⁰ Elliott (2005), 124. Possible authentic unique agrapha include *Gos. Thom.* 8, 77, 82.

³⁰¹ Crossan (1991) understands *Thomas* 71 as a reference to Jesus’ body and contends that it is the earliest form of this logion. However, he also contends that when the historical Jesus uttered these words he was referring to the temple (*Thomas*: “house”; John 2:19: “temple”).

3.2.6.2. Gospel of Peter

The *Gospel of Peter* is mentioned by Origen and Eusebius.³⁰² Eusebius reports that Serapion made reference to it while he was bishop of Antioch (AD 199-211).³⁰³ Accordingly, we may establish a *terminus ad quem* of AD 211. Like the *Gospel of Thomas*, establishing a *terminus a quo* for *Peter* is very difficult.

Four Greek fragments containing 18 incomplete lines (*P. Oxy.* 2949, 4009) dated to the early third century and a small codex discovered at Akhmîm and dated to sometime between the seventh and ninth centuries are all that survive of the *Peter*, which is an incomplete text.³⁰⁴ Most of our extant text is from the later Akhmîm, in which there is considerable variation from the earlier fragments.³⁰⁵ Therefore, the much more complete and later text may not be an accurate reflection of the original *Peter*, limiting any value from the outset.³⁰⁶

We may first ask whether *Peter* is dependent on the canonical Gospels. Koester argues it is not.³⁰⁷ He contends that the details of the passion account found in the canonical Gospels and in *Peter* “do not rest on historical memory, but were developed on the basis of allegorical interpretation of Scripture. The earliest stage and, at the same time, the best example of such scriptural interpretation is preserved in the *Epistle of Barnabas*.”³⁰⁸ One example Koester offers is that of the scapegoat in Isaiah 50:6 with Zachariah 12:10. He makes the following observations:

- All three items in the Isaiah passage appear in *Peter* (scourging, striking, spitting) while Mark, Matthew, and John only include two.
- Mark and Matthew “substitute” the Roman term for scourging while *Peter* and John employ the Greek term in Isaiah (LXX).
- Only Isaiah and *Peter* mention the cheeks in respect to the strikes.
- *Sibylline Oracles* 1.373-74 reports of piercing the side with a reed. The terminology employed in this text is similar to what is found in *Peter*. Mark and Matthew misread the passion tradition and report that Jesus was struck with a reed and Matthew reports that the reed was placed in Jesus’ hand before taken from him in order to beat him with it.³⁰⁹

³⁰² Origen, *On Matthew* 10:17; Eusebius, *HE* 3.3.2; 6.12.

³⁰³ Eusebius, *HE* 6.12.

³⁰⁴ Elliott (2005), 150; Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003), 442; Perkins (2007), 122. See also Borg and Crossan (2006), 176-77.

³⁰⁵ Elliott (2005), 150.

³⁰⁶ Perkins (2007), 122, 124.

³⁰⁷ Perkins (2005) likewise does not think *Peter* is dependent on the canonical Gospels but holds that its author probably knew Matthew’s Gospel (12:1-22). Meier (1991) maintains that *Peter* “betrays a knowledge of, at the very least, Matthew, probably Mark and Luke, and possibly John” (117). Meier appeals to the analyses of Vaganay and McCant in support and concludes that *Peter* “is a 2d-century pastiche of traditions from the canonical Gospels, recycled through the memory and lively imagination of Christians who have heard the Gospels read and preached upon many a time. It provides no special access to early independent tradition about the historical Jesus” (117-18). See Léon Vaganay, *L’Évangile de Pierre* (EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1930) and Jerry W. McCant, *The Gospel of Peter: The Docetic Question Re-examined* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation; Atlanta: Emory University, 1978).

³⁰⁸ Koester (1990), 224; cf. 227.

³⁰⁹ Koester (1990), 224-27, esp. 226-27.

But why must it have been Mark and Matthew who employed a “substitute” term? Is it not more plausible that it was *Peter* and John who employed a “substitute” term in order to conform to the Isaiah text after theological reflection?³¹⁰ Moreover, that only *Peter* and Isaiah mention the cheeks being struck indicates further reflections on Isaiah, whereas the Synoptics have not made this connection. The same may be said of *Peter*’s use of the *Sibylline Oracles*. It is obvious that this is the result of theological reflection on the part of *Peter*, whereas it is not in the canonical Gospels. Koester appears to work backward, starting with the conclusion he desires—*Peter* predates the Synoptics—then forces the facts to fit.

It must be noted that the resurrection narrative in *Peter* contains details much more fantastic than we find in the canonical Gospels. The guards at the tomb hear a loud voice from heaven, see the heavens opened and two men in great brightness come down from heaven to the tomb. The stone rolls itself away and both angels retrieve Jesus from inside the tomb. They emerge carrying Jesus and their heads go up into the sky whereas the head of Jesus goes far above theirs. Then Jesus’ cross is seen following them and speaks in answer to a heavenly voice.³¹¹ While most scholars would argue that fantastic details indicate that a tradition has grown over time, Koester’s proposal has the canonical Gospels moving in the opposite direction.³¹² Employing this type of thinking, Mark should be named the last of the canonical Gospels to be written! It may also be noted that Koester’s argument appears anachronistic, since the Synoptic Gospels were written prior to *Barnabas*.³¹³

Crossan argues that the original passion narrative was written in the 40s, which he labels the “Cross Gospel.” This source reported that Jesus’ enemies crucified him, buried him, and experienced apparitions of him. The canonical Gospels were all dependent on the Cross Gospel, which was later modified to conform somewhat to the canonical Gospel traditions that had modified it. This second stratum of the Cross Gospel had Jesus’ friends burying him, discovering his empty tomb and experiencing apparitions of him. A third stratum resulted when the text was redacted in order to accommodate the original Cross Gospel and the canonical Gospel traditions.³¹⁴ It is the third stratum that we find in *Peter*. Thus, according to Crossan, remnants of the original passion narrative are more clearly seen in *Peter* than in any other Gospel.

Crossan’s proposal not only lacks evidence, it is immune to verification and is *ad hoc*. Since the only text of *Peter* available for examination hints of dependence on the canonical Gospels, Crossan must propose that our extant text of *Peter* is the third

³¹⁰ Koester (1990) argues that *Peter* corresponds more closely to the early Christian use of Psalm 69 than do the canonical Gospels and is, thus, earlier (227-30). However, one may argue that this demonstrates greater theological reflections such as we would expect in later Church literature. Moreover, Perkins (2007) answers that the same observation can be employed to turn the argument upside down. As Jews challenged Christians, they shaped the passion and resurrection narratives in order to conform more closely to the Scriptures (121).

³¹¹ *Gos.Pet.* 9.34-42.

³¹² C. A. Evans (2006), 84. Perkins (2007) has likewise noted anti-Semitic elements in *Peter* stronger than what others see in the canonical Gospels that suggests *Peter* was written later than the canonical Gospels.

³¹³ Even according to Koester (1990), *Barnabas* was written in the mid-90s or within a few decades afterward (16).

³¹⁴ Crossan (1995), 23-25, 223-224. See also Crossan (1988) and Crossan (1991), 385-87.

stratum of another Gospel that did not contain these features.³¹⁵ Moreover, it is difficult to see why the redactions proposed by Crossan took place where he suggests, since they bear out little if any benefit to his theory. Crossan has not won much of a following with his proposal of a *Cross Gospel*.

Elliott comments that “Nowadays it is generally concluded that this gospel is secondary to and dependent on the accounts of the passion in the canonical Gospels.”³¹⁶ He adds that few go to the “extreme and claim that this gospel represents an independent witness to the Passion of Jesus.”³¹⁷ I find myself in agreement with this conclusion and assign the *Gospel of Peter* a rating of *unlikely* in terms of it reflecting early apostolic traditions pertaining to the resurrection of Jesus.

3.2.6.3. Gospel of Judas

A manuscript of the *Gospel of Judas* was discovered in Egypt in the 1970s and unveiled by the National Geographic Society in 2006. It is dated to c. AD 300 and written in Coptic. Because its owner was unsuccessful in his efforts to sell it, the manuscript was placed in a safe deposit box in New York where it remained until recently.

The original *Gospel of Judas* was probably written around the middle of the second century, since Irenaeus reported that it was written by a group called the Cainites who made heroes out of biblical villains such as Esau, Korah, the Sodomites, and Judas.³¹⁸ *Judas* was certainly penned by a Gnostic. Five names of Gnostic figures are specifically mentioned in the recently discovered manuscript. Jesus gives to Judas secret knowledge that is known by no other human (47-53). Disembodied postmortem existence is mentioned (43, 57). There seems to be wide agreement that the *Gospel of Judas* is a mid-second century text and there is no reason for believing that its contents reflect apostolic tradition.³¹⁹ Therefore, I assign it a rating of *unlikely*.

3.2.6.4. Revelation Dialogues

Most of the literature in this category is typically dated to the second half of the second century. Since there are no reasons to hold that independent testimony of the apostolic *kerygma* is preserved in these dialogues, they will only serve to inform us of the beliefs of particular communities in the late second century. I assign them a rating of *unlikely*.

³¹⁵ A number of criticisms of Crossan’s hypothetical *Cross Gospel* have been offered. See Brown (1994), 2:1322 especially, but also his entire discussion pertaining to the *Gospel of Peter* (1317-48); C. Evans (2006), 82-85, Koester (1990), 219-20; Meier (1991), 116-18. Dunn (2003) finds so little to commend the *Cross Gospel* that he opines that “very little need be said” in reply (170).

³¹⁶ Elliott (2005), 151. Vermes (2008): “even a perfunctory glance at the text proves that it is dependent on the canonical Gospels so that its treatment here [in relation to the resurrection of Jesus] would be a pure waste of time” (158). However, Crossan (1995) opines that a “split consensus was there at the very beginning [of studies of *Peter*] and probably still is” (23).

³¹⁷ Elliott (2005), 150-51. Drobner (2007), thinks *Peter* drew upon the same sources as the canonical Gospels and partly assimilated the Synoptics (21).

³¹⁸ AH 1.31.1.

³¹⁹ See Simon Gathercole. *The Gospel of Judas: Rewriting Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

3.2.6.4.a. *Epistle of the Apostles (Epistula Apostolorum or Dialogue of the Savior)*

The *Epistle of the Apostles* opposes Gnostic teachings by using a genre commonly employed by the Gnostics: revelation dialogues. The letter narrates a dialogue between the risen Christ and his disciples. Here Jesus' full deity and bodily resurrection are among the doctrines taught.³²⁰

Opinions vary related to its date of composition. Theissen and Merz state that it was written "around 150."³²¹ Wright places it "around the middle of the second century, or perhaps somewhat earlier."³²² Koester opts for the second half of the second century.³²³ Elliott comments that "the consensus of opinion places its composition in the third quarter of the second century."³²⁴

I am not aware of any claims that this letter contains early traditions independent of the canonical Gospels. Accordingly, it will not assist us in our historical investigation pertaining to the resurrection of Jesus.

3.2.6.4.b. *Treatise on the Resurrection (Letter to Rheginus)*

Another letter belonging to the revelation dialogue genre is the *Treatise on the Resurrection*. According to Ehrman, "many scholars date it to the late second century."³²⁵ Koester likewise dates it to the end of the second century but argues for an original form that goes back to the first century, because he identifies sayings of Jesus which have parallels in Matthew and John but mostly in *Thomas*.³²⁶ *Treatise* provides a Gnostic interpretation of Jesus' sayings.³²⁷ The resurrection of believers does not involve the revivification of the corpse, but it happens only to the spirit which goes to heaven. The material body is jettisoned upon death.

3.2.6.4.c. *Apocryphon of James (Letter of Peter to James)*

This letter also belongs to the genre of revelation dialogue. Koester thinks that some of the material in this letter predates the Synoptic Gospels.³²⁸ Most scholars, however, date its original composition to the third century.³²⁹ Most of the text is a dialogue between Jesus, Peter, and James when Jesus appears to them 550 days (18 months) after his resurrection and is still waiting to ascend (2.16-24). Jesus' death and resurrection are taught (2.15-28; 5.30-35; 6.5-9), but the nature of Jesus' resurrection is not specified.

³²⁰ Drobner (2007), 27; Ehrman (*Lost Scriptures*, 2003), 73; Elliott (2005), 555; Koester (2000), 243-44; Theissen and Merz (1998), 33n42. Ehrman (*Lost Scriptures*, 2003) argues that it is a "Gospel" rather than a letter (73), while Elliott (2005) argues that it is an "apocalypse" (555).

³²¹ Theissen and Merz (1998): 33n42.

³²² Wright (2003), 499.

³²³ Koester (2000), 243. This appears to have been a change from earlier in Koester (1990) where he dates it to the first half of the second century (174-75). Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003) places this genre in "the late second century and thereafter" (480) but thinks it "possible" that its earliest use "might be pushed back to the first half of the second century" (481).

³²⁴ Elliott (2005), 556.

³²⁵ Ehrman (*Lost Scriptures*, 2003), 208. See also Theissen and Merz (1998), 42-43.

³²⁶ Koester (1990), 23; Koester (2000), 159-60.

³²⁷ Koester (2000), 158.

³²⁸ Koester (2000), 162.

³²⁹ Ehrman (*Lost Scriptures* 2003): early third century (191); Elliott (2005), 673.

3.2.6.5. Pseudo-Mark (Mark 16:9-20)

There is a virtually unanimous consensus today that Mark 16:9-20 was not part of Mark's original ending. Many scholars assign it a date of the second or third century and hold that it was penned by a scribe who wanted to soften Mark's painfully abrupt ending or for some other reason.³³⁰

Wright notes that the "longer ending" looks "as if it might even have originally been a separate account altogether, since it begins in *parallel* to Mark 16.1-2/Matthew 28.1/Luke 24.1/John 20.1, not in *sequence* with Mark 16.1-8."³³¹ He adds that this observation "opens fascinating possibilities" such as that it survived from a lost gospel.³³²

Moreover, although the consensus maintains that 16:9-20 was not part of Mark's original ending, the consensus opinion is weakening for the position that 16:8 is Mark's intended ending. We will discuss this in more detail in the next chapter.³³³ What if Mark's original ending has been lost? What may such an ending have said? Wright provides an answer that is interesting in light of our previous discussions on the non-canonical literature. He marvels over the unwillingness of those who detect several recensions of *Q*, a pre-redacted *Thomas*, a *Secret Gospel of Mark*, an earlier version of *Peter*, and a hypothetical *Cross Gospel*, to engage in the much more promising task of attempting to reconstruct Mark's original ending. Given the fashion of some biblical scholars for detecting lost material that is much earlier than the canonical traditions, it is astonishing that these scholars are not engaging in such an exercise with Mark's lost ending.³³⁴

Wright does not attempt to reconstruct Mark's lost ending. However, following the majority view of the relationships between the Synoptic Gospels, he makes the following suggestion:

[Since] Matthew has been following Mark reasonably closely up to this point, especially in developing 28.5b-8a out of Mark 16.6-8a, it is not impossible that he continued to do so, and that we have in Matthew 28.9-20 an outline at least of what Mark 16 might have gone on to say.³³⁵

Wright then notes numerous Matthean features that were most likely absent in Mark's lost ending. Notwithstanding, "the existing 'longer ending' may well not be too far, in outline, from what originally stood there, though in quite different language and with emphases for which Mark himself has not prepared us."³³⁶

While Wright's suggestions are interesting pertaining to the possibilities of the 'longer ending' being a report that survived from a lost Gospel and that Mark's lost ending may have looked a lot like what we find in Matthew, such speculations are too

³³⁰ Aland and Aland (1989), 232; Dunn (2003), 826n7; Metzger (1994), 104; Wright (2003), 619.

³³¹ Wright (2003), 618.

³³² Wright (2003), 619.

³³³ See chapter 4.3.2.3.

³³⁴ Wright (2003), 624.

³³⁵ Wright (2003), 623-24.

³³⁶ Wright (2003), 624.

flimsy to assist us in our present historical investigation—as even Wright would freely admit. Moreover, they would only support the earlier and stronger existing reports present in the *kerygma*, Paul, and the canonical Gospels.

3.3. Conclusion

Paul and the oral traditions embedded throughout the New Testament literature provide our most promising material. Other sources, like the canonical Gospels, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, the Acts speeches, and the *Gospel of Thomas* may also at times be helpful. Many of the other sources just discussed may likewise assist us to varying degrees.

I must say something about what we do not have but would like. We do not have a letter that may be certified to have been written by Jesus or any of his original disciples. We do not have any material written by Paul (Saul) during his pre-Christian life describing why he was so opposed to the Christian sect. We do not have any material written by Jewish leaders during the time of Paul's ministry describing his conversion or his new found commitment to the crucified so-called Messiah and the Church that he founded. We do not have any official documents from either the Roman or Jewish governing bodies that mention the Christian sect, the content of the apostolic preaching, or report that Jesus had risen from the dead. These would all be of value to historians and would provide corroborating reports of the strongest kind.

However, what we do have is good. We have reports that Jesus had been raised from the dead from at least one eyewitness (Paul) and probably more (the Jerusalem apostles preserved in the *kerygma*). These reports are very early and provide multiple independent testimonies as well as testimony from one who had been hostile to the Christian message previous to his conversion experience. The canonical Gospels probably contain some traditions that go back to the original apostles, although these may be identified with varying degrees of certainty. To the extent one is convinced that Clement of Rome knew one or more of the apostles, his letter may yield valuable insights pertaining to the apostolic teachings. What do these sources yield us for our investigation pertaining to the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus? We will discover the answer in the next chapter.