

Chapter Four

The Historical Bedrock Pertaining to the Fate of Jesus

4.1. Introductory Comments

Given the pitfall of horizons that await a haphazard historian, painting a historically responsible portrait of Jesus requires the use of historical facts that are regarded as virtually indisputable. These facts are ‘historical bedrock,’ since any legitimate hypothesis claiming to paint a fairly accurate portrait must be built upon it.¹ If a hypothesis fails to explain all of the historical bedrock, it is time to drag that hypothesis back to the drawing board or to relegate it to the trash bin.

In chapter one, we provided two criteria for identifying historical bedrock: the facts are strongly evidenced and contemporary scholars nearly unanimously regard them as historical facts. Historians commonly employ other facts of lesser strength, but all hypotheses posited to answer a historical question need at minimum to include the bedrock.²

Gary Habermas first adopted a similar approach as he contended that a strong case for the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus may be built upon only a few facts that are agreed upon by the vast majority of scholars writing on the subject, including rather skeptical ones. Habermas identified twelve historical facts that meet the above criteria. He then asked, “[W]hat if my list were challenged by some skeptical person? Or perhaps we are simply interested in discovering a reduced historical case that could still bear the weight of an investigation of Jesus’ resurrection. What would such a case look like?”³ Habermas then reduces his list of twelve to six “minimal facts.”⁴

At present Habermas has an unpublished bibliography of academic literature written on the subject of Jesus’ resurrection between 1975 to the present in German, French, and English. He has told me that there are in the neighborhood of 2,500 sources. He has catalogued the positions of scholars on more than one hundred topics directly related to the resurrection of Jesus in an MSWord document that is roughly formatted and more than six hundred pages in length.⁵ A point of interest related to Habermas’s research is that he has actually engaged in serious “bean counting.” Statements pertaining to a so-called “majority of scholars” are common and are usually based on educated hunches. These are not necessarily wrong, but they sometimes lead to conflicting assertions pertaining to where the majority sides. Consider the statement by Wright who describes himself as among the “recalcitrant minority” of scholars who regard Ephesians and Colossians as from Paul, while Witherington states that

¹ Fredriksen (1999), 264.

² See chapter 1.2.3, letter e.

³ Habermas (2003), 26.

⁴ Habermas (2003), 26-27.

⁵ For the published results of some of Habermas’ research, see Habermas (2003), 3-51; Habermas (2005), 135-53; G. R. Habermas, “Mapping the Recent Trend toward the Bodily Resurrection Appearances of Jesus in Light of Other Prominent Critical Positions” in Stewart, ed. (2006), 78-92; Habermas (2004).

“Most scholars still believe that Paul wrote Colossians.”⁶ Brown writes, “*At the present moment about 60 percent of critical scholarship holds that Paul did not write the letter [ital. his].*” He cites CLPDNW 171 as his source but adds three others studies, two of which found a majority favoring Pauline authorship of Colossians.⁷ Even formal counts can produce conflicting results.

I wish to be clear that the “minimal facts” approach of Habermas and the nuanced one I will be taking are not to be confused with a “consensus” approach in which a fact is identified *because* a strong majority of scholars grant it. Habermas is also careful to consider *the arguments* provided by the strong majority of scholars who grant a particular fact. The strength of supporting arguments and their ability to answer counter-arguments are of primary value. Something does not become a “fact” because the majority of scholars believe it.⁸ I am in agreement with Allison when he states, “I am always much less interested in counting noses than in reviewing arguments—and especially in a case such as [the resurrection of Jesus].”⁹ Pannenberg offers a similar comment: “A single judgement of a sober historian easily outweighs a majority vote, in my opinion. Historical judgement must remain a matter of argument. A majority vote may express the dominant mood of a group, possibly its prejudices, but is not very helpful in judging claims to historical truth or authenticity.”¹⁰

Pannenberg makes a good point but he is too quick to dismiss majority opinion. While not always a reliable filter of conclusions that have been overly influenced by the horizons of historians, no filters are. In a similar manner, none of the criteria frequently employed for ascertaining the historicity of a saying or deed of Jesus can be said to be reliable all of the time. They are guidelines which often prove helpful but can never be applied in a wooden sense.

In our case, there is a collection of facts pertaining to the fate of Jesus that are agreed upon by a nearly unanimous consensus of scholars on the subject. These scholars span a very wide range of theological and philosophical convictions and include atheists, agnostics, Jews, and Christians who make their abode at both ends of the theological spectrum and everywhere in between. We therefore have the heterogeneity we desire in a consensus and this gives us confidence that our horizons will not lead us completely astray during this portion of our investigation.¹¹

I would like to address two concerns about any approach that employs a consensus. Robert Miller notes how scholar “A” who is widely respected awards historicity to a particular deed of Jesus without providing adequate argumentation. Scholar “B” who is likewise a respected scholar grants the historicity of the same deed and cites scholar

⁶ Wright (2003), 236; Witherington (*Acts*, 1998), 58.

⁷ R. Brown (*Intro.*, 1997), 610, 610n24.

⁸ Habermas in Geisler and Meister, eds. (2007) writes, “While surveys, of course, do not mean that any particular position is correct, that this is the contemporary theological state provides at least some clues as to where recent scholars think the data point” (282).

⁹ Allison (“Explaining,” 2005), 125.

¹⁰ Pannenberg (1998), 22-23.

¹¹ Bean counting is the approach of the Jesus Seminar when voting on the historicity of the sayings and deeds of Jesus. It differs from our approach in that the Jesus Seminar only takes a count from its small membership whereas the approach taken in this dissertation considers a much broader sampling of scholars (including those of the Jesus Seminar) and much greater heterogeneity is involved.

“A” in support. A third scholar “C” praises the thorough work of scholar “B.” Miller then asks, “Are these indications of an emerging consensus . . . How many consensuses in our field get started in just this way?”¹² Miller makes a good point. This is where Habermas’s large-scale research on where scholars opine on a subject will be of value.

The second concern relates to our collection of facts that make up the historical bedrock. Historical Jesus research is a broad field in which the number of discussions is legion. Therefore, we must be careful to remember that it is possible that some “facts” for which we may not give much attention may be used effectively in competing hypotheses. Stated differently, since we are narrowing our focus on the fate of Jesus, I may subconsciously fail to consider certain facts about Jesus because I do not see how they would fit into any of the hypotheses we will be considering. If I were more skeptical toward the idea that Jesus rose from the dead, I would be more motivated to form additional hypotheses that may include other facts that meet our criteria but which are not included in what will be our collection. However, we take comfort in the fact that many of those with whom we will be interacting are not handicapped by a similar bias and yet do not identify other facts for which a nearly unanimous majority approval exists.

4.2. The Historical Bedrock Pertaining to Jesus’ Life

Before identifying the historical bedrock immediately relevant to our investigation, this is a good point to discuss a broader context of Jesus’ life in which the more immediate facts appear. There is a strong consensus today among scholars that Jesus thought of himself as an exorcist, miracle worker, and God’s eschatological agent. Many likewise maintain that he was convinced he would die an imminent and violent death and subsequently would be vindicated by God. These data strongly support the conclusion that the reports of Jesus’ resurrection place it in a significantly charged religious context. Accordingly, if the Resurrection hypothesis turns out to be the best explanation of the relevant historical bedrock, we are warranted in calling it a miracle.

4.2.1. Jesus the Miracle-Worker and Exorcist

That Jesus performed feats that both he and his followers interpreted as miracles and exorcisms is a fact strongly evidenced and supported by the majority of scholars.¹³ Graham Twelftree, perhaps the leading authority on the miracles and exorcisms of

¹² R. J. Miller (1992), 9.

¹³ C. A. Evans, “Authenticating the Activities of Jesus” in Chilton and Evans, eds. (*Activities*, 2002): “Scholarship has now moved past its preoccupation with demythologization. The miracle stories are now treated seriously and are widely accepted by Jesus scholars as deriving from Jesus’ ministry” (12); Sanders (1985) lists six “almost indisputable facts” about Jesus, the second of which is that he “was a Galilean preacher and healer” (11); Sanders (1993) states that there is an agreement among scholars that “Jesus performed miracles” (157). See also Meier (1994), 970; Theissen and Merz (1998), 281. Even rather skeptical scholars agree that Jesus was an exorcist and miracle-worker. Bultmann (1958) wrote, “There can be no doubt that Jesus did the kinds of deeds which were miracles to his mind and to the minds of his contemporaries” (124). Borg (1987) concedes that there are “very strong” reasons for concluding Jesus performed healings of a sort and that a supernatural cause cannot be ruled out (67-71); cf. Borg (2006), 56. Crossan (1991) concludes that “Jesus was both an exorcist and a healer” (332; cf. 311); Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998) lists among the “basic facts” about Jesus that he was a “charismatic healer and exorcist” (527). See also Ehrman (1999), 198.

Jesus, has argued in several works that the evidence that Jesus was a miracle worker is so strong that it is one of the best attested historical facts about Jesus.¹⁴ For example, in Mark (3:22-30), the charge that Jesus was casting out demons by Satan appears to reflect polemic against Jesus. Why answer such a charge unless it was being made? It appears that the traditions of Jesus' exorcisms were known among those who were sympathetic and those who were in opposition to Jesus.¹⁵ Extra-biblical reports indicate that Jesus had the reputation of being a miracle-worker. Although a disputed passage, at the end of the first century Josephus reports that Jesus was a "worker of amazing deeds" (παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητής).¹⁶ Josephus employs παραδόξων elsewhere to mean "miracle" or "strange."¹⁷ In the middle of the second century Celsus accused Jesus of being a magician.¹⁸ Still later, the Talmud reports that Jesus practiced sorcery.¹⁹ It was also reported that Jewish exorcists were attempting to cast out demons in the name of Jesus, an indicator that Jesus had exorcized demons.²⁰

Jesus' miracles are multiply attested, being found in every Gospel source (Mark, Q, M, L, John) and Josephus.²¹ There are also multiple reports in each Gospel. Reports of Jesus' miracles are also present in multiple literary forms including narratives, summaries of his activities, and references to his miracles in logia attributed to him.²² Moreover, the reports are quite early when compared with most other miracle claims in antiquity. Mark reports the miracles of Jesus within forty years of his death, whereas the reports of miracles attributed to Apollonius of Tyana, Honi the Circle-drawer, and Hanina ben-Dosa are at least 125 years removed from the alleged events.²³ Meier concludes, "The miracle traditions about Jesus' public ministry are already so widely attested in various sources and literary forms by the end of the first Christian generation that total fabrication by the early church is, practically speaking, impossible."²⁴

¹⁴ G. H. Twelftree, "The History of Miracles in the History of Jesus" in McKnight and Osborne, eds. (2004): "There is now almost unanimous agreement among Jesus questers that the historical Jesus performed mighty works" (206); Twelftree (1999): "If we can be certain of anything about the historical Jesus it is that his contemporaries considered him to have performed wonders or miracles" (258); "in answer to the question 'Did Jesus perform miracles?' we have to reply with an unequivocal and resounding 'Yes!' We have seen that it is not a matter of so-called blind faith that enables us to say this. . . . The necessary conclusion, in light of our inquiry, is that *there is hardly any aspect of the life of the historical Jesus which is so well and widely attested as that he conducted unparalleled wonders*" (345, emphasis in original).

¹⁵ Eve (2005), 33.

¹⁶ Jos. Ant. 18:3.

¹⁷ I am indebted to Twelftree (1999) for the following references: Jos. Ant. 2:91, 223, 285, 295, 345, 347; 3:1, 30, 38; 5:28, 125; 6:171, 290; 9:14, 58, 60, 182; 10:21, 214, 235, 266; 15:379; Jos. Ag. Ap. 2:114. See also Theissen and Merz (1998), 297. Moreover, παραδόξων does not seem to have been a conventional Christian term for miracle, occurring only once in the NT (Luke 5:26), and therefore is unlikely to be a later Christian interpolation in the text of Josephus. One would have expected a Christian interpolation to use the word "signs" or "wonders."

¹⁸ In Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1:38.

¹⁹ *b Sanh.* 43a.

²⁰ Twelftree (1999) provides numerous references from the NT and later Jewish writings (411n60, 411n62).

²¹ Meier (1994): "For if the criteria of historicity do not work in the case of the miracle tradition, where multiple attestation is so massive and coherence so impressive, there is no reason to expect them to work elsewhere" (630; cf. 619-22); see also Theissen and Merz (1998), 298-99.

²² Meier (1994), 622; Theissen and Merz (1998), 299-304.

²³ See chapter 2.5.4 above and Theissen and Merz (1998), 304-09.

²⁴ Meier (1994), 630. Tucker's solution (2005, 385, 388), namely that the miracles of Jesus were wholesale inventions and that this provides wider scope and is more fruitful than literal interpretations,

That Jesus had the reputation of a miracle-worker is corroborated by his critics who asserted that his power came from Satan and that they had colleagues who could perform exorcisms too.²⁵ This agrees with what we observed in the extra-biblical reports. The plausibility factor is quite high, since we know of others of the period who were regarded as exorcists or were purported to have performed one or more miracles, although the number of miracles and exorcisms attributed to them are far less than the number specifically attributed to Jesus in the canonical Gospels.²⁶

4.2.2. Jesus: God's Eschatological Agent

That Jesus viewed himself as God's eschatological agent—the figure through whom the kingdom of God was coming—is also widely recognized by biblical scholars and amply attested in the sources.²⁷ Jesus is reported to have said, “If, by the Spirit of God, I am casting out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt. 12:28; cf. Luke 11:20). He is also said to have told John's disciples that John could be assured Jesus was the Messiah since he was doing those things others believed the Messiah would do (Matt. 11:4-5; cf. Luke 7:22; 4Q521; Isa. 61:1). If Jesus actually uttered statements like these, then it would seem that he believed his status of being God's Messiah was confirmed by his miracles and that God's kingdom had come through him.²⁸

The “kingdom of God” was a central part in the content of Jesus' preaching, although precisely what he meant by it continues to be disputed.²⁹ That the kingdom of God was at the core of Jesus' preaching is secure.³⁰ Meier notes that Jesus' preaching of the kingdom is found in Mark, Q, M, and indirectly in L and John, and appears in multiple literary forms: prayer, eschatological, beatitudes.³¹ Moreover, that Jesus preached the arrival of the kingdom of God through him is consistent with the facts of Jesus' life and execution, such as his preaching about the coming judgment and destruction, especially relative to the temple.³²

might be warranted only in the absence of such evidence and, even then, only when such a solution creates fertile ground in cases of underdetermination.

²⁵ Mark 3:22; Matthew 12:27 (cf. Luke 11:19). See Dunn (2003), 670-671; Ehrman (1999), 197-200; Meier (1991), 617-45.

²⁶ It is important to note that these other “miracle-workers” were not known for performing many miracles as Jesus was. Twelftree (1999) notes that “in the period of two hundred years on each side of the life of the historical Jesus the number of miracle stories attached to any historical figure is astonishingly small” (247).

²⁷ Theissen and Merz (1998): “There is also a consensus that the ‘honorific titles’ which the historical Jesus possibly used to express his status must have come from Jewish tradition (or have been mediated through Jewish tradition). The titles ‘Son of Man’ and ‘Messiah’ (=Christ) in particular arise in connection with the historical Jesus . . . Finally, there is a consensus that Jesus had a sense of eschatological authority. He saw the dawn of a new world in his actions. Here he goes beyond the Jewish charismatics and prophets known to us before him” (512-13).

²⁸ Twelftree (1999), 247, 263, 346-47.

²⁹ Meier (1994), 289-506; Theissen and Merz (1998), 246-78.

³⁰ Meier (1994), 289-506. Theissen and Merz 246-74. Dunn (2003) notes that “[a]t the very least we overhear in the words of the remembered Jesus a claim for the divine significance of his mission, as the (not just an) eschatological emissary of God” (707; cf. 762).

³¹ Meier (1994), 349. I think Jesus speaks of the kingdom directly in L (Luke 12:32). See also Ehrman (1999), 152-54.

³² Sanders (1985), 222-41. See also Ehrman (1999), 154-60 and Theissen and Merz (1998), 264-78.

4.2.3. Jesus' Predictions of His Death and Resurrection: Just Outside of the Historical Bedrock

Scholars dispute whether Jesus predicted his imminent and violent death and subsequent imminent resurrection by God, as the Gospels describe him doing. However, there is surprisingly a preponderance of evidence in favor of the historicity of these predictions. It may first be noted that accounts of these predictions are early, being found in abundance in Mark's Gospel, which was written somewhere between roughly twenty-five to forty-five years after Jesus' death. Moreover, there is a potential Aramaic original in the passion prediction in Mark 9:31 where the Aramaic presents a play on words: the *Son of Man* is to be *handed over* to the *hands of men*.³³

Second, the passion and resurrection predictions are multiply attested, as the following tables show.³⁴

Jesus Predicting His Death and Resurrection: Mark, M, John, Q (possibly)

Mark

- Related to Peter's rebuke: Mark 8:31; Matt 16:21; Luke 9:22
- After Transfiguration: Mark 9:9; Matt 17:9
- Passing through Galilee: Mark 9:30-31; Matt 17:22-23
- Going up to Jerusalem: Mark 10:33-34; Matt 20:18-19
- Last Supper: Mark 14:18-28; Matt 26:21-32; Luke 22:15-20

M

- Sign of Jonah: Matt 12:38-40 (cf. Luke 11:29-30); 16:2-4 (cf. Luke 12:54-56)³⁵

John

- Related to Destruction of Temple: John 2:18-22 (cf. Mark 14:58; Matt 26:62; Mark 15:29)

Jesus' Predicting His Death Only: Mark, L, John

Mark

- Ransom for Many: Mark 10:45
- Vineyard and Wicked Tenants: Mark 12:1-12; Matt 21:33-46; Luke 20:9-19
- Garden: Mark 14:32-40; Matt 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46

L

- Prophet Cannot Die Outside of Jerusalem: Luke 13:32-33

³³ Dunn (2003), 801.

³⁴ Crossley (2005), 173; Habermas (2003), 92. According to McKnight (2005), there appears to be strong agreement that there are three primary passion predictions in the Synoptics. For a detailed comparison of these, see McKnight's chart (227).

³⁵ Jesus' resurrection is implied since without a resurrection we must ask what is the sign to which Jesus refers. Moreover, Matthew earlier portrayed Jesus saying that his resurrection is the sign of Jonah. Robinson, Hoffman, and Kloppenborg (2002) recognize the presence of these sayings in Q, although they exclude the "sign of Jonah" portion since it is absent in Luke: Q 11:16, 29-30 (109); Q 12:[54-56] (127).

John

- Jesus Lifted Up: John 3:13-14; 8:28; 12:32-34

Even more importantly, the passion predictions appear in multiple literary forms, being found in logia involving parable (Mark 12:1-12) and simple didactic.

Third, the passion and resurrection predictions fulfill the criterion of embarrassment. In his garden prayer, Jesus “wants out” if possible (Mark 14:32-40; Matt. 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46) and there is the embarrassing portrayal of the disciples who do not understand Jesus’ passion predictions or simply did not believe him (Mark 8:31-33; 9:31-32; 14:27-31; Luke 24:11, 21).³⁶ Of special interest is that in the midst of these predictions the first leader of the church is twice portrayed in a negative light.³⁷ Fourth, with only a few exceptions, the passion and resurrection predictions lack signs of possible theologizing by the early church.³⁸ For example, there is no reflection on the significance of Jesus’ death, such as its atoning value.³⁹ Fifth, Jesus’ passion and resurrection predictions are often located within Jesus’ reference to himself as the “Son of Man.”⁴⁰ Given the criterion of dissimilarity, the “Son of Man” appears to have been an authentic self-designation by Jesus.⁴¹ The “Son of Man” logia appear in every Gospel layer and in multiple literary forms.⁴² However, the later church did not

³⁶ C. A. Evans (1999), 88; Habermas (2003), 92; Vermes (2008), 82.

³⁷ Maier (1997): “If the story of Holy Week were a pious invention of writers who wanted to portray a superhero, this scene would never have been included” (131).

³⁸ In Mark 10:45 Jesus’ death will serve as a ransom for many. At the Last Supper Jesus claims that his body and blood will be sacrificed on behalf of many and a new covenant will be instituted (Mark 14:22-24; Matt 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20). In John 3:13-14, Jesus will be crucified so that others may have eternal life. In Luke 13:32-33, the “goal” of which Jesus speaks may be his death for others, given Luke 22:19-20.

³⁹ McKnight (2005), 230; Theissen and Merz (1998), 429. C. A. Evans (1999), 88, and McKnight (2005), 232, note that the passion predictions likewise do not mention the Parousia and the coming of the Son of Man for judgment.

⁴⁰ Habermas (2003), 92. Schaberg (1985) argues that Jesus’ passion predictions where he refers to himself as the Son of Man in the Synoptics and the three Johannine predictions (3:13-14; 8:28; 12:31-34) are allusions to the Son of Man in Daniel 7:13.

⁴¹ Although many scholars grant that Jesus claimed to be the “Son of Man,” further division exists pertaining to what Jesus meant by the term. Bock (1998): “The ‘Son of Man’ [in Mark 14:61-64] is an otherwise, unidentified representative head . . . who shares God’s authority, is a regal-like representative for the nation who is given judging authority and divine prerogative” (150; see 148-54); Dunn (2003) understands the term to mean “a man like me” in most of the occurrences while he grants “at least some reference to” the Son of Man in Daniel 7:13 (760); Theissen and Merz (1998): “In our view the interpretation mentioned last is therefore the most probable one: Jesus spoke of both the present and the future Son of Man. He combined the expression ‘son of man’ from everyday language with the visionary-language tradition of a heavenly being ‘like a son of man’. . . . He is at the same time the present and the future ‘man’. This ‘double’ concept of Son of Man is analogous to the ‘double’ kingdom of God eschatology” (552). Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003) denies that Jesus made claims to being the Son of Man. Instead, it was the first “bilingual circles of Jesus’ followers to serve as his distinctive self-referential expression in conveying his sayings in Greek” (304). According to Hurtado, the purpose of this expression was “to identify and distinguish a person” and “[refer] to him emphatically as human descendant” (305). We might use an American idiom for Hurtado’s bilingual group who were saying of Jesus, “You da man!”

⁴² Bock (1998) notes that the title “Son of Man” is applied to Jesus 82 times in the Gospels, 81 of which come from the lips of Jesus (John 12:34, in which Jesus’ critics quote his words back to him and ask who was the “Son of Man,” is the lone exception). Taking parallels into consideration, there are 51 logia of which 14 appear in Mark and 10 in Q. There are four occurrences in the NT outside of the Gospels: Acts 7:56; Heb. 2:6; Rev. 1:13; 14:14. (Also see Dunn [2003], 737.) The term is rare in the writings of the early church (225). Bock goes on to demonstrate that even the *apocalyptic Son of Man*

refer to Jesus as the “Son of Man.” Brown’s reply to those claiming that the “Son of Man” self-designation of Jesus was an invention of the church is insightful: “Why was this title so massively retrojected, being placed on Jesus’ lips on a scale far outdistancing the retrojection of ‘the Messiah,’ ‘the Son of God,’ and ‘the Lord’? And if this title was first fashioned by the early church, why has it left almost no traces in non-Gospel NT literature, something not true of the other titles?”⁴³ Sixth, the passion predictions fulfill the criterion of plausibility.⁴⁴ His prediction comes as no surprise within Jesus’ Jewish context, given the fact he had made enemies of prominent Jewish leaders, considered himself a prophet and would naturally share the fate of a prophet, given the Jewish traditions describing martyrdom and vindication by God (2 Macc. 7), and that John the Baptist had been recently executed for similar activities.⁴⁵

In spite of the strong evidence in favor of historicity, there are three major arguments forwarded against the historicity of the passion and resurrection predictions. First, the passion predictions require that Jesus had predictive powers and these are unallowable within historical investigation. It is obvious that this objection is driven solely by horizon rather than the data. Concerning the Jesus Seminar’s conclusion that Jesus did not predict his death in a manner beyond what he would have perceived given his dangerous occupation, Brown opines:

A factor at the root of the issue was that most of the participants were unwilling to grant that Jesus spoke of his impending death by virtue of ‘super-ordinary’ powers (Borg, ‘Jesus Seminar’ 83-84). Obviously a great distance separates the mind-set of these interpreters from that of the evangelists. . . . Consequently in interpreting the place and development of Gospel passion predictions, an a priori rejection of extraordinary or miraculous foreknowledge is a handicap. This rejection also distorts the quest for history. Historicity should be determined not by what we think possible or likely, but by the antiquity and reliability of the evidence; and as far back as we can trace, Jesus was known and remembered as one who had extraordinary powers.⁴⁶

logia are multiply attested in Mark, Q, M, and L. (We may add John [5:27; 9:35-36; 12:23] and that these logia appear in multiple literary forms: parabolic, apocalyptic, didactic.) “If the criterion of multiple attestation means anything or has any useful purpose, then the idea that Jesus spoke of himself in these terms should not be doubted” (226). Theissen and Merz (1998): “It is certain that Jesus used the expression ‘son of man’. It derives from Aramaic and is attested in all the complexes of the Jesus tradition (Mark; Q; Matt.^s cf. 10.23; 25.31ff./ Luke^s cf. e.g. 18.8; John; Gospel of Thomas 86)” (548); Dunn (2003): The Son of Man phrase “*was remembered as a speech usage distinctive of Jesus because that is precisely what it was*. It was Jesus who, if we may put it so, introduced ‘the son of man’ phrase into the Jesus tradition. The evidence could hardly point more plainly to that conclusion” (738, emphasis in original; cf. 759).

⁴³ R. Brown (*An Introduction to New Testament Christology*, 1994), 90.

⁴⁴ Please note that Jesus’ predictions that he would resurrect shortly after his death do not fulfill this criterion.

⁴⁵ R. Brown (*The Death of the Messiah*, 1994), 2:1486; Crossan (1991), 352; Crossley (2005), 173; Dunn (2003), 797, 805; C. A. Evans (1999), 94; McKnight (2005), 231; Theissen and Merz (1998), 429; Turner (2000), 16-17. McKnight (2005) asserts, “The logic is simple and unavoidable: if Jesus called his disciples to a willing martyrdom, for which there is plenty of evidence (Q 12:4-9; 14:27; 17:33), we can infer with the utmost probability that he, too, saw his own death approaching” (155). C. A. Evans (1999), however, cautions: “The rhetoric of such a summons may have been intended to underscore the dangers and difficulties that lay ahead; not necessarily the certainty of Jesus’ death, or of the death of any of his followers” (89).

⁴⁶ R. Brown (*Death*, 1994), 2:1468.

Historians who reject the possibility of the miraculous can still grant the historicity of the passion predictions for the seven reasons stated above, while emphasizing the sixth reason: the plausibility of the predictions. Given Jesus' Jewish beliefs, he could have made the predictions of his death without requiring supernatural power. Even Jesus' prediction that he would be raised "after three days" or "on the third day" is not problematic if the phrase is interpreted, as it is by many, to mean "soon."⁴⁷

The second objection is that the passion and resurrection predictions may be seen as an invention of the early church, "predictions after the fact" (*vaticinia ex eventu*) that attributed predictive powers to him in the process of inventing his claims to divinity. This is certainly possible. However, even if it can be reasonably argued that some of the predictions are the result of creations by the Evangelists, the conclusion that all of the predictions are creations seems to me quite a leap, given the six arguments presented above that suggest Jesus predicted his imminent and violent death and imminent resurrection. Moreover, historians must look for the most probable solution and this objection relies too heavily on *a priori* assumptions. In Dunn's treatment of the historicity of Jesus' Christological claim to be "the Son" in Mark 13:32, he notes the embarrassing nature of Jesus' claim not to know the time of his coming. Not only is this strange within a Gospel that paints a portrait of a divine Jesus, Dunn notes that since Jewish tradition maintained that several of the Patriarchs had foreseen the end of the world, this would render (from that perspective) Jesus inferior to them.⁴⁸ This embarrassment, of course, weighs in favor of the historicity of Jesus' claim to being God's Son. However, Dunn then cites Barrett who rejects its historicity or favors redaction: "The description of Jesus by the most honorific title available would be precisely the sort of compensation that tradition would introduce."⁴⁹ Dunn concludes, "In effect this observation removes Mark 13.32 from the catalogue of firm evidence that Jesus spoke of himself as God's son ('the Son') in his teaching."⁵⁰

It is difficult to read Dunn and not develop a very high regard for his careful scholarship. When I first read his conclusion I had confidence that Barrett had provided support for his assertion, which Dunn neglected to mention. Upon reading Barrett, however, I discovered that he likewise neglected to provide any support. The problem is that Barrett and Dunn deny historicity based on the assumption that this saying of Jesus is later Christology retrojected onto the lips of the historical Jesus and in so doing deny the actual evidence that could overturn their assumption.⁵¹ We should allow the evidence to guide our historical research rather than our *a priori* assumptions, even if those include our belief that Jesus made no claim to divinity.

The third objection asks why Jesus' followers failed to anticipate his resurrection if he had actually predicted his imminent and violent death as well as his subsequent imminent resurrection by God. Of the three objections, I regard this one as the weightiest. If not for the preponderance of evidence, this objection might very well

⁴⁷ R. Brown (*Death*, 1994), 2:1477; C. A. Evans (1999), 95-96; McKnight (2005), 233-35. See also section 4.3.2.1.c below.

⁴⁸ Dunn (2003), 723, 723n73.

⁴⁹ Dunn (2003), 723, citing Barrett (1967), 25-26.

⁵⁰ Dunn (2003), 723. Contra Meier (1994) who argues for the authenticity of Mark 13:32 (347; cf. Meier [1991], 169).

⁵¹ Gerhardsson (1998) counters, "The opinion expressed by so many scholars, that the Christology of the N.T. is essentially a creation of the young Church, is an intelligent thesis, but historically most improbable" (325).

persuade me to reject the historicity of the passion predictions. Earlier I asserted that when weighing hypotheses, each hypothesis must be judged by how well it answers disconfirming arguments.⁵² Accordingly, we have come to a point where we must apply this principle.

Why was it that the disciples did not appear to understand or anticipate the resurrection of Jesus? I can think of a number of possible options: First, it was probably difficult for Jesus' disciples to grasp Jesus' passion and resurrection predictions given their beliefs about what the Messiah would do in terms of setting up an earthly kingdom when he came. A dying and rising Messiah was so foreign to their thoughts and hopes that they simply did not *hear* Jesus, thought he may be mistaken, or were in a state of denial while hoping that events would not turn out as he was predicting. In favor of this option are numerous references to the weak faith of the disciples (Matt 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20; Mark 4:40; Luke 8:25; 12:28; 17:6; 24:11, 25; John 4:48; 6:64; 14:8-11, 28-30).⁵³ A second possibility is that Jesus made the passion predictions early in his ministry, at which time he did not speak in terms of it being imminent, since it was at the beginning of his ministry. However, this does not eliminate the passion predictions close to the time of his death and, thus, does not answer the tension.⁵⁴

A third possibility is that when Jesus spoke of his imminent death and imminent vindication via resurrection, his disciples and possibly Jesus himself thought of the general resurrection and that it would happen quickly. Jesus' resurrection would be simultaneous with and no different than their own. This option is promising, but must regard the historicity of Mark 14:28 as unlikely, since Jesus appears to be thinking that his resurrection would be unique.⁵⁵ Furthermore, against this third option is our expectation that Jesus' disciples may have shown a bit of excitement over Jesus' imminent passion if they had understood this to mean that the general resurrection was just around the corner. And yet, there is not so much as a hint of this in the Gospels. Accordingly, this option does not carry much strength.

A fourth possibility is that Jesus never made the passion predictions because he did not think he was going to be martyred. Instead, Jesus hoped God would now usher in his kingdom through him. Jesus' cry on the cross that God had forsaken him may be seen as support. The passion predictions were quickly fabricated in order to cover up this embarrassment and keep the Christian sect going. This option is unattractive, since the Evangelists show no hesitation to include numerous embarrassing elements

⁵² See chapter 1.3.2.

⁵³ Although impossible to verify its historicity, Luke 9:45 reports that the disciples were kept from understanding the passion prediction. (Mark 9:31-32 says that they did not understand his passion prediction.) Of interest, however, is the fact that Luke does not omit the problem that the disciples appeared clueless about it. Elsewhere, Luke simply omits embarrassing tradition, such as Jesus' words in Mark 13:32 (Matt. 24:32-36; Luke 21:29-33).

⁵⁴ C. A. Evans (1999) maintains that the passion predictions were not made until after Jesus had entered Jerusalem and notes that Jesus' triumphal entry on Palm Sunday and his actions in the temple indicate that he had no intention of dying up to that point (89). He adds that the mockery of Jesus by the Roman guards and the *titulus* are clues that "Jesus' royal intentions are plainly evident" (90). However, we may postulate that Jesus may have actually understood these events including his death as fulfilling prophecy and had increased his boldness as a result.

⁵⁵ Alsop (1975) asserts that both Mark 14:28 and 16:7 are redactions, since they "provide for Mk the essential theological seam between the passion narrative and the empty tomb story" (92).

such as the persistent thick-headedness of the twelve, Jesus' rejection by his own brothers, his lack of knowledge concerning the time of his return, his strong emotional hesitation in the garden, and the very cry of rejection made on the cross to which this objection appeals.⁵⁶ This is indicative of biographers who are attempting to report the good, the bad, and the ugly, and therefore weighs against wholesale inventions.

A fifth possibility is that the passion predictions of Jesus are poetic components invented for honoring Jesus. Even if one regards Jesus as an authentic miracle-worker, for example, it is possible that his nature miracles were the result of this type of invention. In noting a distinction between history and poetry, Lucian asserts that poets had "undiluted liberty" in story-telling. He adds that when poets tell of one who runs over water or overtop a cornfield, no one is begrudged.⁵⁷ Weighing against this option is that, if true, it seems improbable that the Evangelists would have cast Jesus and the future leaders of his church in such an embarrassing light. Why not portray Jesus making his passion predictions with his disciples responding, "Let us also go so that we may die with him" (John 11:16),⁵⁸ or paint a more positive picture of the garden scene as John does?

In summary, we have observed six arguments in favor of the historicity of the passion and resurrection predictions and three arguments for their nonhistoricity. We may summarize the arguments for historicity as follows. There can be no doubt that Jesus' passion and resurrection predictions were known very early in the church. They appear in Mark and may have an Aramaic original. They are multiply attested and appear in multiple literary forms. They appear in contexts that portray Jesus as well as the leadership he left in an embarrassing manner. They generally lack theologizing, report Jesus referring to himself in a manner believed historical, and are even expected within the context in which Jesus walked. With the exception of references such as Mark 14:28, Jesus could certainly be seen as making the passion predictions without requiring supernatural knowledge. Against historicity, to the extent that it could be demonstrated that deism or atheism is true, it would be probable that Jesus did not have supernatural knowledge. Moreover, to the extent that it could be demonstrated that the early church created the doctrine of Jesus' divinity, it would be probable that the church likewise invented the passion and resurrection predictions in order to exalt Jesus and/or promote Christianity. Finally, it is strange that Jesus' disciples act as though Jesus never made the passion predictions.

The six arguments for the historicity of the passion and resurrection predictions mount a strong case. Of the three arguments for nonhistoricity, it is my opinion that only the third carries weight. I have offered five possible explanations for the disciples' lack of anticipation of the resurrection of Jesus. None of them strikes me as having a significant advantage over the others, although the first seems strongest to me. As a result, it is my opinion that the strong case for the historicity of Jesus' predictions of

⁵⁶ R. T. Fortna, "The Gospel of John and the Historical Jesus" in Scott, ed. (2008): "Despite the impression to the contrary in all the gospels, Jesus did not expect to be raised from death. To maintain that he did makes a sham of his fearful but courageous acceptance of the death sentence" (51). While this objection may carry some conviction pertaining to Jesus' cry of rejection while on the cross, it rings hollow in relation to his anxiety in the garden, his death sentence and the tortures that followed. Even if one were absolutely confident of being in heaven immediately upon death, anticipation of the lictor's work would be quite unnerving.

⁵⁷ Lucian, *How to Write History* 8. Lucian is referring to the god Erichthonius in Homer's *Iliad* 20.226.

⁵⁸ John does not cast Thomas saying this within the context of a passion prediction.

his passion and resurrection stands, since the only cogent argument against it can be answered without strain.

I conclude that the historical Jesus predicted his violent and imminent death and subsequent imminent resurrection.⁵⁹ However, we cannot establish that he made these predictions as a result of possessing supernatural knowledge. Accordingly, even if we were to include the passion predictions in our Jesus context, their value varies according to the strength of the resurrection hypothesis. For if the resurrection hypothesis is inferior to a competing hypothesis, there is little significance in Jesus' belief that he would die a martyr, at least not for our investigation of the resurrection of Jesus. However, if the resurrection hypothesis is the best explanation for the data, supernatural knowledge on the part of Jesus becomes more plausible and the religious significance of the life of Jesus increases. As a result, if the resurrection hypothesis is the best explanation of the data, it is more likely that it was a miracle rather than an anomaly. Therefore, we may bracket the question related to whether the passion predictions were made from Jesus' natural expectations or supernatural knowledge until we have weighed the hypotheses. Notwithstanding this discussion, the majority of scholars do not regard the passion predictions as historical.⁶⁰ Accordingly, they fall outside of our historical bedrock and, therefore, I will not include them in the context of Jesus' life during our investigation.⁶¹

We conclude, therefore, that Jesus thought of himself as an exorcist, miracle worker, and God's eschatological agent. Indeed, there can be little doubt that Jesus awed crowds with deeds that many interpreted as miracles and exorcisms, while others appear to have interpreted them as demonic or magical. Moreover, Jesus thought of himself as having a special relationship with God who had chosen him to bring about his eschatological kingdom. These conclusions are generally regarded by scholars as historical bedrock upon which we can build a metanarrative of the life of Jesus. Our goal, however, is much more modest, seeking only to establish a context in which the data related to Jesus' resurrection appear.⁶² If these "minimal facts" related to Jesus' opinion of and claims about himself are correct they provide a fascinating context that is indeed charged with religious significance, a context in which we might expect a god to act if he, she, or it chose to do so. If, in addition to our historical bedrock, we were to consider that Jesus predicted his imminent and violent death as well as his subsequent imminent vindication by God, a claim for which there is significant support, the context becomes super-charged. Let me hasten to add, however, that this neither confirms the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus nor does it provide any evidence for it. Our context is a necessary component, however, for distinguishing a miracle from an anomaly. Should the resurrection hypothesis be superior to its competitors, the context warrants historians to regard the event as a miracle.

⁵⁹ For others who have arrived at a similar conclusion, see R. Brown (*Death*, 1994) 2:1468-91; Crossley (2005, 173): "quite probable"; Dunn (2003, 805): "There need be little doubt"; C. A. Evans, "Did Jesus Predict His Death and Resurrection" in Porter, Hayes, Tombs, eds. (*Resurrection*, 1999), 82-97; cf. C. A. Evans ("Assessing," 2006): "almost a certainty" (13); Wright (2003, 409): "highly likely."

⁶⁰ Waterman (2006) asserts, "The majority of scholars, therefore, see Jesus' prediction [of his resurrection] as a genuine primitive tradition free from the post-Easter proclamation of the early church" (196). However, his statement is without documentation and I suspect it is incorrect.

⁶¹ I desire to be consistent with my method. See chapter 1.2.3, letter e.

⁶² Davis (1993): "It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the resurrection must be viewed in its religious context and not as an isolated wonder" (188).

Perhaps one may object that this context provides an expectation for a miracle, since it is already charged with superstition. Accordingly, we are right to expect more miracle stories and the reports of Jesus' resurrection come as no surprise. All are legendary. This is a thoughtful reply. It is certainly true that religiously charged contexts create an expectation for miracles and we may presume that people in these contexts will make more out of a circumstance than may actually be there. Healing services showcasing Ernest Angley and Benny Hinn are prime examples. During worship services in which Angley and Hinn preside, people speak in tongues, receive healings and are often "slain in the Spirit." Reports of phenomena during these services can quickly become embellished and evolve into urban legends.⁶³

The observation that a context charged with religious significance creates an expectation for miracle demonstrates that naturalistic explanations such as delusion, hallucination, and legend can be quite reasonable in accounting for certain phenomena. It shows that a context can serve multiple purposes. And with that I am in agreement. Related to the resurrection of Jesus, we might argue that the context of Jesus as miracle-worker and eschatological agent created an expectation among his followers that resulted in their having delusions or hallucinations and in the rapid accumulation of urban legend, thus creating the resurrection narratives. I see no *a priori* reason for preferring a resurrection over this alternative. It is important, therefore, to weigh the hypotheses, which we will do in chapter five. If we discover that a naturalistic hypothesis is superior to the resurrection hypothesis, then it is most plausible that the context created the expectation for a miracle and the resurrection legend resulted. However, if the resurrection hypothesis is superior to naturalistic explanations, the context will serve to strengthen the hypothesis that the resurrection of Jesus was historical and that the event was a miracle. Moreover, it is important to remember that our commitment to using only the historical bedrock serves as a safeguard so that we do not confuse urban legend with fact.

4.3. The Historical Bedrock Pertaining to Jesus' Fate

To an extent, we will here be standing on the shoulders of Habermas who has, to my knowledge, engaged in the most comprehensive investigation of the facts pertaining to the resurrection of Jesus. Although he has provided lists of varying lengths in the past, Habermas now identifies three minimal facts that are regarded as indisputable by almost all scholars writing on the subject:

1. Jesus died by crucifixion.
2. Very shortly after Jesus' death, the disciples had experiences that led them to believe and proclaim that Jesus had been resurrected and had appeared to them.
3. Within a few years after Jesus' death, Paul converted after experiencing what he interpreted as a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to him.⁶⁴

We will discuss these at length in order to see if we are warranted in regarding them as historical bedrock.

⁶³ I am not suggesting that all of the phenomena during the services are self-induced, imaginary, or legendary, although I personally hold that many of them are.

⁶⁴ In a personal telephone conversation with Habermas on March 31, 2008.

4.3.1. Jesus' Death by Crucifixion

Crucifixion was a common form of execution employed by the Romans to punish members of the lower class, slaves, soldiers, the violently rebellious, and those accused of treason.⁶⁵ It was usually preceded by torturing the victim brutally. The Romans normally carried out flogging before crucifying a victim.⁶⁶ From the late first century BC through the end of the first century AD, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Livy, Philo, and Josephus report of people being tormented with whips, fire, and all sorts of tortures before they were crucified.⁶⁷ In the second century, Lucian reports of a man who was whipped, his eyes put out, and his tongue cut off before being crucified.⁶⁸ The whipping itself, scourging, could be quite brutal. Although a subsequent crucifixion is not mentioned, in the middle of the second century, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* reports of people whose flesh were “so torn by whips” that their “veins and arteries” became visible.⁶⁹ Josephus tells of a man who, just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, was whipped to the bone by one of Pilate’s successors in Jerusalem.⁷⁰ He also reports that a group was whipped until their intestines were exposed.⁷¹ Having undergone this type of treatment prior to crucifixion, we can only imagine what the victim looked like while on the cross. In the first century, Seneca described crucified victims as having “battered and ineffective carcasses,” “maimed,” “misshapen,” “deformed,” “nailed,” and “drawing the breath of life amid long drawn out agony.”⁷²

After being tortured, the victim condemned to the cross was often followed by crowds while being escorted outside the city walls where he was nailed or bound to a cross or tree.⁷³ Nailing appears to have been the preferred method.⁷⁴ Sometimes the victims were nailed in different positions.⁷⁵ Brutal treatment was occasionally dished out on victims on the cross.⁷⁶ In the last quarter of the first century, Martial describes a theatrical performance in graphic detail during which a condemned man was

⁶⁵ Sloyan (1995), 18–20. Also see Hengel (1977), 46-63.

⁶⁶ Hengel (1977), 29, 29n21.

⁶⁷ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae* 5.51.3; Livy, *The History of Rome* 22.13.9; 28.37.3; Philo, *Flaccus* 65-85; Josephus, *War* 5:449, 451. I am here indebted to Hengel’s work for much of the information that follows.

⁶⁸ Lucian, *Piscator*, 2.

⁶⁹ *Mart. Pol.* 2.2.

⁷⁰ *Jos. War* 6:304.

⁷¹ *Jos. War* 2:612.

⁷² Seneca, *Epistles*, “To Lucilius” 101.

⁷³ Lucian, *The Passing of Peregrinus*, 34.

⁷⁴ Hengel (1977, 31-32n25) provides the following list where nails were used in crucifixion: Philo, *De posteritate Caini* 61; *De somniss* 2.213; Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe et Clitophon* 2.37.3; Plutarch, *Moralia* 499D; Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia* 28.41-46; Ps. Manetho, *Apotelesmatica* 4.199; 1.149; Seneca, *Dialogue 7 (De vita beata)* 19.3; Lukan, *De Bello Civili* 6.543-47; Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 3.17.4; Galen, *De usu partium* 12.11; Artemidorus, *Onirocritica* 2.56; Lucian, *Prometheus* 1.2; *Dialogus deorum* 5(1).1. Hengel also lists Xenophon of Ephesus, *Ephesiaca* 4.23 which mentions binding to a cross specifically related to a particular instance that occurred in Egypt (32n26). To Hengel’s list we may add Josephus who writes of nailing to the cross (*War* 4:451) and Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.44) who reports that Nero fastened Christians to crosses and then in the evening set them ablaze to provide light for his gardens. It is difficult to imagine ropes being used here, since fire would burn through them. Possible support might be evident in *Mart. Pol.* 13:3-14:1 where Polycarp asks not to be nailed to the stake for the sake of securing him.

⁷⁵ Seneca, *Dialogue* 6 (“To Marcia on Consulation”), 20.3; *Jos. War* 5:449-51.

⁷⁶ Seneca, *Dialogue* 6 (“To Marcia on Consulation”), 20.3; Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44.

substituted for the actor at the appropriate moment and crucified in the theatre, after which a bear was loosed on him that tore him to pieces while alive on the cross.⁷⁷ Josephus reports a particularly brutal treatment where after being whipped severely with rods, some were crucified, and that while alive their wives and sons were killed and their now dead infant sons were hung around their necks.⁷⁸ One can easily understand why Cicero referred to crucifixion as “that most cruel and disgusting penalty,” “the worst extremes of tortures” and “the terror of the cross.”⁷⁹

4.3.1.1. There are at least four reasons for believing that Jesus of Nazareth died as a result of being crucified. The first evidence is that Jesus’ death by crucifixion is multiply attested in a fair number of ancient sources, Christian and non-Christian alike. It is very probable that Josephus reported the event in his original version of *Antiquities* 18:3.⁸⁰ Tacitus, Lucian, and Mara bar Serapion are all certainly aware of the event.⁸¹ Lucian adds that Jesus’ crucifixion took place in Palestine.⁸² In Christian sources, Jesus’ execution is widely reported, with and without specifying the mode of crucifixion. All four canonical Gospels report Jesus’ death by crucifixion as do numerous other books and letters of the New Testament that refer to it regularly.⁸³ Moreover, there is no ancient evidence to the contrary.⁸⁴

4.3.1.2. A second evidence for Jesus’ death by crucifixion is that the reports are early. Paul mentions Jesus’ death by crucifixion no later than AD 55 (1 Cor., Gal.) and said he preached the same to those in Corinth in AD 51 or within twenty-one years of

⁷⁷ Martial, *Liber Spectaculorum* 7.

⁷⁸ Jos. Ant. 12:256.

⁷⁹ Cicero, *Speech against Verres* 2.5.165, 168; *Pro Rabirio* 16. Josephus (*War* 7:203) referred to crucifixion as θανάτων τὸν οἴκτιστον (“the most pitiful of deaths”).

⁸⁰ See chapter 3.2.4.1.

⁸¹ Tacitus does not specifically name crucifixion as the mode of Jesus’ execution but instead reports that Jesus suffered “the most extreme penalty.” Mara bar Serapion does not mention the mode of execution. Although of questionable historical value, the Talmud also reports the event but uses the term “hanged” (*b. Sanhedrin* 43a).

⁸² Lucian, *The Passing of Peregrinus* 11.

⁸³ Mark 15:24-37; Matt. 27:35-50; Luke 23:33-46; John 19:16-37. Before the canonical Gospels were written, the death of Jesus is reported abundantly throughout the Pauline corpus and in all of Paul’s undisputed letters except Philemon (Rom. 1:4; 4:24; 5:6, 8; 10; 6:3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10; 7:4; 8:11 [bis], 34; 10:9; 11:26; 14:9, 15; 1 Cor. 8:11; 15:3, 12, 13, 15, 16, 20; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15; Gal. 1:1; 2:21; Phil. 2:8; 3:10, 18; Col. 1:18, 20; 2:12, 14, 20; 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:14; 5:10; 2 Tim. 2:8, 11. Crucifixion of Christ [crucifixion, cross]: 1 Cor. 1:17, 18, 23; 2:2, 8; 2 Cor. 13:4; Gal. 2:20; 3:1; 6:12, 14; Eph. 1:20; 2:16). We find Jesus’ death also attested in Hebrews and 1 Peter (Heb. 2:9, 14; 9:15-10:14; 12:2; 13:20; 1 Pet. 1:3, 21; 2:24; 3:18). Both were certainly written in the first century and may pre-date the canonical Gospels (L. T. Johnson [1996], 151, 164). Jesus’ death is stated in the *kerygma*, although the manner of his death is usually absent. Jesus’ death may be alluded to in *Q* 14:27 and possibly *Q* 11:49-51 as indicated by the timing of “this generation” (Perkins [2007], 87; Smith [2003], 124). Jesus’ crucifixion is likewise abundantly mentioned in the non-canonical literature: Ign. *Eph.* 16:2; Ign. *Trall.* 9:1; Ign. *Rom.* 7:2; *Barn.* 7:9; 12:1; *Mart. Pol.* 17:2. The *Gospel of Peter* (10, 18) and the *Epistle of the Apostles* (9) report Jesus’ death by crucifixion. The *Gospel According to the Hebrews* mentions Jesus’ death by implication of his bodily resurrection. The *Gospel of Mary* and the *Gospel of Truth* likewise mention Jesus’ death. Jesus’ crucifixion—without mentioning whether he died—is mentioned in the *Gospel of the Savior* (91-92, 100-108). Jesus is crucified and dies in the *Coptic Apocalypse of Peter* and *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, Gnostic writings dated to the third century. The *Gospel of Thomas* (65) and the *Gospel of Judas* (57) probably refer to the death of Jesus in *Thomas’s* version of Jesus’ parable of the vineyard and the wicked tenants and *Judas’s* mentioning of Jesus’ betrayal resulting in a sacrifice of Jesus’ body. The fate of Jesus is neither mentioned nor alluded to in Egerton Papyrus 2, *Gospel of the Nazareans*, *Gospel of the Ebionites*, and *Gospel of the Egyptians*.

⁸⁴ R. J. Miller in Scott, ed. (2008), 14.

Jesus' crucifixion.⁸⁵ It may be alluded to in *Q*, which could be around the same time. It appears numerous times in the oral formulas. Perhaps the earliest report of Jesus' death is found in the tradition in 1 Corinthians 15:3ff. As noted in the previous chapter, virtually all scholars who have written on the subject hold that Paul here provides tradition about Jesus which he received from others. There is likewise widespread agreement that it was composed very early, reflected what was being taught by the Jerusalem apostles, and is the oldest extant tradition pertaining to the resurrection of Jesus. It is really quite amazing to think that we are probably reading what was taught by the original disciples of Jesus.

4.3.1.3. A third evidence for Jesus' death by crucifixion is that the Passion narratives appear largely credible given their satisfying of the criterion of embarrassment and the plausibility of certain peripheral details. While a number of accounts existed of Jewish martyrs who all acted bravely under circumstances of extreme torture and execution, reports of Jesus' arrest and martyrdom show a weaker and more human Jesus, one which could cause embarrassment in contrast. We begin by surveying reports of martyrs in the ancient Jewish literature.⁸⁶

4.3.1.3.a. Seven Brothers (*d.* second century BC). In 2 Maccabees 7, seven Jewish brothers are tortured and executed brutally for their defiance of the Seleucid king who had ordered them to break the Jewish Law and eat pork. In turn, each have the skin on their heads removed, their tongues cut out, their hands and feet severed, and finally are placed in a very large, hot pan and fried alive. Each faces the king who gives them an opportunity to eat pork and save himself. And each faces the consequences of defying the king with great boldness. The first brother proclaims that he is ready to die rather than transgress the Law. After being tortured, the second brother uses his last breath to tell the king that God will raise them up in spite of his actions against them. The third defiantly sticks out his tongue and hands and tells the king that he received them from God from whom he hopes to receive them back. After the fourth had been tortured as the others, he tells the king that he looks forward to resurrection and adds that there will be no resurrection for the king. After the fifth is tortured in the same manner, he tells the king that God will torment him and his offspring. The sixth tells the king that he and his brothers deserve the treatment they are receiving for sinning against God and that the king will not escape unpunished since he has contended with God. Finally, the seventh tells the king that he too will not obey him since he deserves to die because of his sins but will be with God, and that the king will not escape God's just punishment. He then is killed more brutally than all of the others. The courage and resolve of the seven brothers are remarkable. Even more remarkable are the second and fourth brothers who utter words of reproach *after* their tongues have been removed!

4.3.1.3.b. Eleazar (*d.* second century BC). In 4 Maccabees 6:1-30, Eleazar is whipped until his flesh is stripped and his sides pierced. In 6:15-21, Eleazar communicates that more painful than torture is the thought of his being deceptive, compromising his character, becoming a poor example for the young, and thought a coward and unmanly. He was then burned and stinking fluids poured down his nostrils. After he had been burned to the bone and was about to die, having maintained his full reasoning abilities throughout his ordeal he prays, informing God that although he

⁸⁵ 1 Cor. 15:1-11.

⁸⁶ For a fuller survey, see Wire (2002), 279-373.

could have saved himself by disobeying His Law, he endured to the end. He asks God to allow his suffering and death to be regarded as substitutionary punishment for the Jews.

4.3.1.3.c. Stephen (*d.* first century AD). In Acts 6:8-7:60, when Stephen is dragged before the Jewish Council and falsely accused, his face looked like that of an angel's. When the high priest asks him to reply to his accusers, he delivers a homily that ends with a stern rebuke: Just as their fathers had killed the prophets who announced the coming of the Righteous One, they have actually killed the Righteous One. With their anger now more intense than ever, Stephen has a vision of the Righteous One, Jesus, at the right hand of God and tells them what he sees. Immediately, they drag him outside of Jerusalem and stone him. Just before death, Stephen prays and asks God not to hold this sin against them.

4.3.1.3.d. Rabbi Akiba (*d.* second century AD). Akiba lived in the second century and was tortured to death by Rome. During his tortures the appointed time comes and he begins to recite the Shema, that God is One and we are to love God with all of our heart, life, and means. One account reports that he then begins to laugh, for which the Roman ruler mocks him. Akiba answers that he has loved God with all of his heart and means but has not been tested with his life until that very moment. He realizes that he has now experienced even that and laughs. After these words, Rabbi Akiba died.⁸⁷ In another account, while under torture he begins reciting the Shema. When his students ask him whether his piety is necessary even under torture, he answers that he has always wondered when he would be given the opportunity to love God with all of his life and now that the moment has arrived, would he not do it? He continues reciting the Shema and dies after saying the word "One." At that moment of his death the sounds of the voice of God and his angels in heaven are heard.⁸⁸

4.3.1.3.e. Rabbi Hanina ben Taradion (*d.* second century AD). Hanina is wrapped in the Torah scroll he had laid on his lap and is prepared to be burned in it. Sponges of wool are soaked in water and placed on his heart in order to prolong his suffering. He tells his onlooking daughter that the burning of the scroll doubles his humiliation. The executioner is so impacted by Hanina's piety at death that he offers to expedite his execution if he promises him a place with him in the world to come. Hanina agrees. The executioner turns up the flames and removes the sponges. Hanina dies quickly and the executioner himself jumps into the fire. The story ends with a heavenly voice informing those present that both have been welcomed into the world to come.⁸⁹

4.3.1.3.f. Polycarp (*d.* second century AD).⁹⁰ At his arrest, Polycarp feeds his Roman captors and prays for two hours. When he is taken into the stadium to be executed, a voice from heaven heard only by the Christians present says, "Be strong, Polycarp, and act like a man."⁹¹ Polycarp refuses the multiple demands of the proconsul to curse Christ and offer allegiance to Caesar. When threatened to be fed to wild animals and to be burned alive, he says, in effect, "Bring it on!" When Polycarp is

⁸⁷ Jerusalem Talmud, *Berakhot* 9, 7/8 [14b].

⁸⁸ Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 61b.

⁸⁹ Babylonian Talmud, *Abodah Zerah* 18a.

⁹⁰ *Mart. Pol.* 7:1-16:1.

⁹¹ *Mart. Pol.* 9:1.

condemned to be burned, he asks the Romans not to nail him as a restraint, since God will enable him to stay on the pyre without moving. He then offers praise and thanks to God for considering him worthy of martyrdom. Again, only the Christians are then privy to seeing that the flames form an arch around Polycarp that does not consume him and they smell the scent of incense. When the Romans realize that his body is not being consumed by the flames, an executioner stabs and kills him upon which so much blood comes forth from Polycarp that it puts out the fire.

Speaking without tongues and emitting quantities of blood that extinguish a large fire appear to be embellishments of a historical core. We may speculate that these stories are meant to honor the martyr and to strengthen others who may soon find themselves in similar circumstances. The martyrs are strong, bold, and courageous in their final hour. They are pious to the very end.

4.3.1.3.g. Jesus (*d.* first century AD). When we come to the Passion narratives in the canonical Gospels, we find a number of traits shared with the other martyrdom stories. Like all of the others, once arrested, Jesus stands bold in his convictions. In all, there are moments of great composure during their painful ordeals. Jesus offers a prayer to God as do Eleazar, Stephen, Polycarp, and Rabbi Akiba. Even Jesus' enemies are impressed with his behavior under fire as are those witnessing the martyrdoms of the seven brothers, Eleazar, Polycarp, Rabbi Akiba, and Rabbi Hanina ben Taradion.

However, the accounts of Jesus' martyrdom also differ significantly from the others. Whereas a number of the martyrdom reports seem constructed to strengthen others who may face similar situations, the Passion narratives of Jesus provide no such encouragement. Jesus anguishes over his impending treatment and wants to avoid it if at all possible (Mark 14:32-42; Matthew 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46). This would certainly not inspire those whom he had told to take up their own cross and follow him if they wanted to be his disciples (Mark 8:34; Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23). Rather than proclaiming during his ordeal that he will not forsake God or his Law, Jesus instead cries out asking why God has forsaken him (Mark 15:34; Matthew 27:46). Keener notes that "Given subsequent Christian Christology, the early church would hardly have invented Jesus' cry of despair in uttering a complaint about alienation from God, quoting Psalm 22:1."⁹² Vermes agrees, concluding that "the Aramaic words *Eloi, Eloi lama sabachthani?* bear all the appearances of a genuine cry. Representing the consternation of a man of faith at the sudden realization that God would not come to his rescue, the exclamation is a piously inspired prayer of disbelief."⁹³ The words of the martyrs are often defiant: "Do whatever you want to me." "I will not forsake God's Law." "You will be punished by God." "I could have saved myself but did not for God's sake." "May my death be substitutionary." "Bring it on!" "Racks and stones may break my bones, but resurrection awaits me!" However, Mark and Matthew report that Jesus cried out with a loud voice and died (Mark 15:37; Matthew 27:50).⁹⁴ Reports by Luke and John are more like the others

⁹² Keener (1999), 682. See also Gundry (1993), 965-66. Feldman, "Introduction" in Feldman and Hata, eds. (1989) comments that these words are credible "precisely because they are so embarrassing" (42).

⁹³ Vermes (2000), 122.

⁹⁴ Matthew reports that Jesus cried out with a loud voice *again*, the former cry asking why he had been forsaken (27:46). Although Matthew does not report the content of his latter cry, we cannot know whether the cry was with or without specific words. It may also be noted that Jesus was defiant when

with Luke reporting Jesus as saying, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46) and John reporting his utterance, “It is finished” (John 19:30). Instead of saying “God will punish you” (seven brothers, Polycarp), Jesus says, “Father, forgive them.”⁹⁵

We must keep in mind that only the reports of the seven brothers and Eleazar pre-date Jesus, while Stephen, Rabbi Akiba, Rabbi Hanina ben Taradion, and Polycarp post-date him. However, given Roman rule in Jerusalem which brutally crushed any suspicion of rebellion, reports of the seven brothers and Eleazar are likely to have been widely known there. If so, many of the differences between Jesus in the Passion narratives and the seven brothers and Eleazar must have stood out immediately to the early readers and would most likely have been quite embarrassing for Christians. For this reason, we get a sense that in the canonical Gospels we are reading authentic reports of Jesus’ arrest and death, even if cleaning up or omission may have occurred to some of those embarrassing details by Luke and to all of them by John and even if some encomiastic elements were added.⁹⁶ Accordingly, the embarrassing elements in the Passion narratives weigh in favor of the presence of historical kernels. These include, most importantly in our investigation, Jesus’ death by crucifixion.⁹⁷

There are a number of details in the canonical Gospels pertaining to Jesus’ execution that possess plausibility, although these are in the peripherals. Although not strong evidence when considered in isolation, since even novels may often contain plausible details, the plausibility of numerous details in the reports possess weight when considered in light of the other evidences weighing in favor of historicity. Lucian reports of crowds following those on their way to being crucified and renders plausible Luke’s statement that a crowd of people followed Jesus on his way to being crucified.⁹⁸ John reports that because it was the day of preparation for the Passover, the Jewish leaders asked Pilate to remove from their crosses the bodies of Jesus and of the two thieves crucified with him so that they would not remain there on the Sabbath. Pilate granted their request and ordered that their legs be broken in order to expedite death. When they came to break the legs of Jesus, the soldiers noticed that he was already dead and instead pierced his side with a spear, upon which blood and water came out.⁹⁹ These details have often been called into question.¹⁰⁰ However, they have more merit than is usually granted. Breaking the legs of crucified victims is also reported by Cicero and the *Gospel of Peter*.¹⁰¹ In the latter, breaking the legs is forbidden so that the crucified victim would actually suffer longer.¹⁰² The skeletal

brought before the Jewish leaders, implying that he will judge those who are now judging him (Mark 14:61-64; Matt. 26:63-66; Luke 22:66-69), which is similar to the defiance we observe with the Jewish martyrs.

⁹⁵ Luke 23:34. Stephen does this as well (Acts 7:60).

⁹⁶ A possible candidate for encomium is John 18:4-6.

⁹⁷ We may also note with Johnson (1996) that “In none of the canonical Gospels is the scandal of the cross removed in favor of the divine glory” such as is seen in the Gnostic Gospels (150).

⁹⁸ Lucian, *The Passing of Peregrinus* 11.34; Luke 23:27.

⁹⁹ John 19:31-37.

¹⁰⁰ For example, see R. Brown (*Death*, 1994), 1088-92; 1178-84 and Crossan (1994), 143-52.

¹⁰¹ Cicero, *Orations: The Fourteen Orations against Marcus Antonius (Philippics)* 13.27. For a text, see the Perseus Project: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Cic.+Phil.+13.27> (accessed July 14, 2007); *Gos. Pet.* 4:14.

¹⁰² The actual cause of death by crucifixion is disputed among medical professionals and is not an issue of importance in the present investigation. It is sufficient to conclude that the crurifragium was employed to expedite death, although it was not always used.

remains of a crucified victim named Yehohanan ben Hagakol were discovered in Jerusalem in 1968. Of interest is that one of his shins had been smashed, although it has also been theorized that this occurred when removing his corpse from the cross.¹⁰³

The Romans often left crucified victims on their crosses for some time after they had died in order to become food for birds and dogs.¹⁰⁴ However, Josephus provides an interesting report that indicates Jerusalem was an exception. Two or three years prior to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, mercenaries for Rome killed some Jewish high priests and did not permit their burial. Josephus adds that until then the Jews had taken great care in their burial of the dead, burying the crucified prior to sunset: τὸς ἐκ καταδίκης ἀνεσταυρωμένους πρὸ δύντος ἡλίου καθελεῖν τε καὶ θάπτειν.¹⁰⁵ Since a crucified victim could remain alive on the cross for a few days, some ambiguity is present pertaining to whether the day the crucified were removed from their crosses and buried was the same day they were initially crucified. It could be claimed that Deuteronomy 21:21-23, most likely appealed to by the Jewish leaders in the case of Jesus, indicates that the condemned were executed, removed from their crosses and buried on the same day, since it forbids leaving a corpse that has been hanged overnight. The *Gospel of Peter* supports this interpretation: “It was noon and darkness came over all of Judea. They were disturbed and upset that the sun may have already set while he was still alive; for their Scripture says that the sun must not set on the one who has been killed.”¹⁰⁶ However, in the context of Deuteronomy 21, authorities may have hanged the corpse after the condemned had been killed. It is difficult to decide with any confidence, since the *Gospel of Peter* is questionable in its historical value and many first-century Jews, including Josephus, could have interpreted Deuteronomy 21 differently than originally intended and, thus, be in agreement with the *Gospel of Peter*.

John’s Gospel may provide some insight. Given what was apparently a request from the Jewish leaders that the bodies of Jesus and those crucified with him be removed so that they would not remain on their crosses *during the Sabbath*, it is possible that the crucified mentioned by Josephus were normally left on their crosses until they died and that they were then buried on the day of death prior to sunset.¹⁰⁷ Even if one is inclined to reject the historicity of much of John’s passion narrative, we may still find that John presents information pertaining to procedures understood by his readers. One may reject the historicity of much reported in the *Gospel of Peter*. However, the statement giving the order not to break the legs of one of the malefactors in order that his torment would be extended implies that readers understood that the crurifragium was employed in order to expedite death. John and *Peter* may stand opposed to one another on the matter of why Jesus was removed on the day he was crucified, unless John was highlighting the fact that the Sabbath was approaching and that this was all the more reason why he had to be removed on that day prior to sunset. Josephus’ statement does tell us at minimum that the Roman government in Jerusalem prior to c. AD 68 permitted the crucified to receive a proper burial on the day of their death.

¹⁰³ Tzaferis (1985).

¹⁰⁴ The following references are provided by Hengel (1977, 9, 54, 58n13): Pseudo-Manetho, *Apotelesmatica* 4.198ff; Juvenal, *Satires* 14.77ff; Horace, *Epistles* 1.16.46-48.

¹⁰⁵ *Jos. War* 4:317.

¹⁰⁶ *Gos. Pet.* 15; cf. 5. English translation by Ehrman (*Lost Scriptures*, 2003), 32.

¹⁰⁷ *John* 19:31; cf. *Gos. Pet.* 5.

John reports that when the soldiers saw that Jesus was already dead, rather than break his legs, they pierced him in order to provide some “death insurance.” This too has plausibility, given Quintilian’s statement: *Cruces succiduntur, percussos sepeliri carnifex non vetat* (As for those who die on the cross, the executioner does not forbid the burying of those who have been pierced).¹⁰⁸

John may have sought to make sense of some of the events that occurred at Jesus’ crucifixion by searching the scriptures. John asserts that events at Jesus’ crucifixion occurred in fulfillment of prophecy (John 19:24, 36-37; Ps. 22:18; 34:20; Zech 12:10). The soldiers’ dividing his clothing among themselves, breaking the legs of the victims, and piercing victims to ensure death were all plausible in Roman executions. None of the texts to which John appeals is originally speaking of Messiah. Segal argues that no messianic text renders the death or crucifixion of the Messiah “inevitable” and, thus, “it must have come from the historical experience of the events of Jesus’ life, not the other way around.”¹⁰⁹ Crossan may be correct that many of the details related to Jesus’ crucifixion are fictional and “prophecy historicized” rather than “history remembered.”¹¹⁰ But it is at least equally as possible as Crossan’s “prophecy historicized” that we are reading “history prophesized.” In other words, the Evangelists knew of these things, and in the case of John’s Gospel, the Beloved Disciple may have been an eyewitness, and gained an understanding of them in the scriptures. It is easy to understand how the early Christians may have seen Jesus’ crucifixion in Psalm 22: (1) the possibly historical statement from Jesus while on the cross, citing Psalm 22:1: “My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me?”¹¹¹ (2) dividing and casting lots for his garments,¹¹² (3) sneering at the victim, wagging their heads, and saying “let God deliver him,”¹¹³ (4) intense thirst or dry mouth,¹¹⁴ (5) being surrounded by dogs,¹¹⁵ (6) a band of evil men surrounding him,¹¹⁶ (7) piercing his hands and feet,¹¹⁷ and (8) exposed bones.¹¹⁸ If crucifixion normally involved at least a number of these eight details such as being impaled, mocked by onlookers, intense thirst, and exposed bones from the scourging, why should we be surprised if the Evangelists having read Psalm 22 believed that prophecy had been fulfilled in these things? Moreover, if Jesus had been impaled in his crucifixion, John had no need to invent the guard who pierced Jesus with a spear (John 19:34) in order

¹⁰⁸ Quintilian, *Declarationes Maiores* 6.9. It is questionable whether Quintilian penned this work. However, the authorship is not germane, since we are only interested in what the text says about crucifixion practices. An online text may be accessed at <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/quintilian/quintilian.decl.mai6.shtml> (accessed July 14, 2007). The Latin term *percussos* means “to strike through and through, thrust through, pierce, transfix” (G. R. Crane, ed., “Perseus Word Study Tool,” The Perseus Project, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>).

¹⁰⁹ Segal (2004), 427-28.

¹¹⁰ Crossan (1994), 145.

¹¹¹ Mark 15:34; Matt. 27:46. See section 4.3.1.3.g above.

¹¹² Ps. 22:18; Mark 15:24; Matt. 27:35; John 19:23-24.

¹¹³ Ps. 22:7-8; Mark 15:29-32, 35-36; Matt. 27:39-43; Luke 23:35-39.

¹¹⁴ Ps. 22:15; John 19:28; cf. Mark 15:36-37; Matt. 27:47-48; Luke 23:36. Forensic pathologist Fred Zugibe, M.D. (1995) comments that intense scourging would have caused “trauma to the nerves, muscles and skin reducing the victim to an exhausted, wretched condition with shivering, severe sweating, frequent displays of seizure, and a craving for water” (118).

¹¹⁵ Ps. 22:16. The “dogs” could refer to the animal or to Gentiles.

¹¹⁶ Ps. 22:16. Referring to those who had crucified Jesus and those who had supported the action. Perhaps that Jesus was crucified between two thieves could have been noted by the Evangelists as a fulfillment of prophecy (Mark 15:27; Matt. 27:38; Luke 23:32-34; John 19:18).

¹¹⁷ Ps. 22:16.

¹¹⁸ Ps. 22:17; Jos. *War* 6:304.

to fulfill Zechariah 12:10, since his crucifixion would have been more than sufficient.¹¹⁹

One can rightly note that the crurifragium and piercing are mentioned only by John and, thus, lack multiple attestation. However, it is important to note that John is also the only Evangelist to mention the use of nails in Jesus' crucifixion, although as above noted this was apparently the usual mode of crucifixion.¹²⁰ The other three Evangelists, like most ancient authors, may not have been interested in reporting the details of crucifixion. Its horrors were ever before them and ancient writers for the most part did not want to discuss it.¹²¹ Moreover, as noted above, given that Rome apparently allowed Jerusalem Jews to bury the crucified before sunset prior to the fall of Jerusalem and that it is very plausible that the crucified would not be allowed to remain on their crosses in Jerusalem during a Jewish holiday, the crurifragium becomes highly probable and expected. If the Beloved Disciple was present at Jesus' crucifixion, such details would have been burned into his mind. Accordingly, I see no reason to question the historicity of the crurifragium and piercing as mentioned by John.

4.3.1.4. A fourth evidence for Jesus' death by crucifixion is the very low probability of surviving crucifixion. As noted earlier, crucifixion and the torture that many times preceded it was a very brutal process. In fact, only one account exists in antiquity of a person surviving crucifixion. Josephus reported seeing three of his friends crucified. He quickly pleaded with his friend the Roman commander Titus who ordered that all three be removed immediately and provided the best medical care Rome had to offer. In spite of these actions, two of the three still died.¹²² Thus, even if Jesus had been removed from his cross prematurely and medically assisted, his chances of survival were quite bleak. In addition, no evidence exists that Jesus was removed while alive or that he was provided any medical care whatsoever, much less Rome's best.

While open to possibilities, historians must be guided by probabilities. Given the strong evidence for Jesus' crucifixion, without good evidence to the contrary the historian must conclude that the process killed him. This is the conclusion shared by virtually all scholars who have studied the subject. McIntyre comments,

Even those scholars and critics who have been moved to depart from almost everything else within the historical content of Christ's presence on earth have found it impossible to think away the factuality of the death of Christ.¹²³

McIntyre is quite correct. Atheist Lüdemann writes, "Jesus' death as a consequence of crucifixion is indisputable."¹²⁴ Crossan, who denies the authenticity of a large majority of the sayings and deeds attributed to Jesus in the canonical Gospels, comments that there is not the "slightest doubt about the *fact* of Jesus' crucifixion

¹¹⁹ We may also ask why Jesus' burial by Joseph of Arimathea was never appealed to as a fulfillment of prophecy in Isa. 53:9, especially since a number of scholars do not regard the burial by Joseph as historical.

¹²⁰ John 20:25. Outside of the canonical Gospels, see *Gos. Pet.* 21. See also Luke 24:39 where it is likely that nails are implied. See note 74 above.

¹²¹ Hengel (1997), 25, 38.

¹²² *Jos. Life* 420-21.

¹²³ McIntyre (2001), 8.

¹²⁴ Lüdemann (2004), 50.

under Pontius Pilate”¹²⁵ and “That he was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be.”¹²⁶ For the Jewish scholar Vermes, “The passion of Jesus is part of history.”¹²⁷ The rather skeptical scholar Paula Fredriksen writes, “The single most solid fact about Jesus’ life is his death: he was executed by the Roman prefect Pilate, on or around Passover, in the manner Rome reserved particularly for political insurrectionists, namely, crucifixion.”¹²⁸

In summary, the historical evidence is very strong that Jesus died by crucifixion. The event is multiply attested by a number of ancient sources, some of which are non-Christian and, thus, not biased toward a Christian interpretation of events. They appear in multiple literary forms, being found in annals, historiography, biography, letters, and tradition in the form of creeds, oral formulae, and hymns. Some of the reports are very early and can reasonably be traced to the Jerusalem apostles. The Passion narratives appear credible, since they fulfill the criterion of embarrassment and contain numerous plausible details. Finally, the probability of surviving crucifixion was very low.

4.3.1.5. Only a few have ventured to suggest that Jesus may not have died as a result of his crucifixion.¹²⁹ Their proposals have not received a following from either the academic or medical communities. Duncan Derrett asserts that Jesus may have survived crucifixion, since “it is a fact that crucified victims may be taken down alive” and “perfect recovery is common” when “a severely injured individual shows signs of death but is not brain-dead.”¹³⁰ Derrett does not discuss how this may have occurred in the case of Jesus. It is one thing to claim that a person who has been “severely injured” and is nearly dead as a result may be restored to full health given proper medical care and time. However, it is an entirely another thing to claim that a victim of severe torture and crucifixion may have been restored to full health, especially when there is no evidence that Jesus was removed from his cross alive or that he was provided any medical care whatsoever. Strauss’s critique is every bit as pertinent today as it was on the day he offered it.¹³¹ He asked us to suppose that a man was removed from his cross half-dead, buried in a tomb, and somehow re-

¹²⁵ Crossan (1991), 375; cf. 372.

¹²⁶ Crossan (1994), 145. See also Borg (2006), 271-72; R. J. Miller in Scott, ed. (2008): “Jesus’ death by crucifixion is as certain as anything in history can be” (14).

¹²⁷ Vermes (2005), 9. Another Jewish scholar, Lapidé (2002), claims that Jesus’ death by crucifixion is “historically certain” (32).

¹²⁸ Fredriksen (1999), 8. Moderate to somewhat conservative scholars likewise grant Jesus’ death by crucifixion as historical. See R. Brown (*Death*, 1994): “most scholars accept the uniform testimony of the Gospels that Jesus died during the Judean prefecture of Pontius Pilate” (1373); Ehrman (2000): “One of the most certain facts of history is that Jesus was crucified on orders of the Roman prefect of Judea, Pontius Pilate” (162; cf. [2008], 235, 261-62); Johnson (1996): “The support for the mode of his death, its agents, and perhaps its co-agents, is overwhelming: Jesus faced a trial before his death, was condemned, and was executed by crucifixion” (125); Sanders (1985) includes Jesus’ death by crucifixion outside Jerusalem by the Roman authorities in his list of “almost indisputable facts . . . which can be known beyond doubt” (11).

¹²⁹ These include L. Crawford, “Non, Jésus n’est pas mort sur le Golgotha!” *Cahiers du Cercle Ernest Renan* [Paris] 33 (142, 1985), 17-29; 34 (143, 1986), 20-22, (144, 1986), 37-42; J. D. M. Derrett, “Financial Aspects of the Resurrection” in Price and Lowder, eds. (2005), 394, 399; Lloyd Davies and Lloyd Davies (1991); Thiering (1992), 115-20.

¹³⁰ Derrett in Price and Lowder, eds. (2005), 394, 399. Wedderburn (1999) is likewise open to the possibility that Jesus survived crucifixion (97).

¹³¹ D. F. Strauss, *A New Life of Jesus*. 2 vols., 2nd ed. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1879), 1:408-12. I am grateful to Gary Habermas for alerting me to this reference.

energized after a few days. Having awakened from his stupor and wanting out of the dark tomb, he places his nail-pierced hands on the very heavy stone blocking his entrance and pushes it out of the way. He then walks blocks on pierced and wounded feet in search of his disciples. Finally, he arrives at the place they are staying and knocks on the door, which Peter opens only to see a severely wounded and dehydrated Jesus who is hunched over and looks up at Peter and through his extreme pain grimaces and says, “I’m the first fruits of the general resurrection!” Such a Jesus would never have convinced his disciples that he was the risen prince of life. Alive? Barely. Resurrected? Never. Allison comments, “how a flagellated, half-dead victim of the hideous torture of crucifixion could impress others as triumphant over death is hard to envisage.”¹³²

Two articles pertaining to the death of Jesus have been released in the professional medical literature. The first article appeared in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and concluded that “interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge.”¹³³ However, the second appeared in the *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of London (JRCPL)*.¹³⁴ Lloyd Davies and Lloyd Davies, a husband and wife team, make the following proposal:

At his crucifixion, Jesus was in shock and hypotensive, and lost consciousness because of diminished blood supply to the brain. His ashen skin and immobility were mistaken for death and there is no doubt that the bystanders believed he was dead. . . . Oxygen supply to the brain remained minimal, but above a critical level, until the circulation was restored when he was taken down from the Cross and laid on the ground. Chill during the eclipse of the sun helped to maintain the blood pressure. As Jesus showed signs of life he was not placed in a tomb (which may have been the intention to avoid burial rites on the Sabbath) but taken away and tended.¹³⁵

Attempting to explain how Jesus’ followers came to believe he had been resurrected, they assert,

[T]he disciples and the women must have been under intense psychological pressure far beyond their capacity to cope with emotionally. Individual and corporate perceptions, but not visualizations, were to be expected. His followers underwent a transmarginal inhibition, a state of activity of the brain in which hysterical suggestibility (or alternatively counter-suggestibility) frequently occurs. Battle fatigue or brain-washing are analogous. . . . This hypothesis accepts the historical events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus but explains what happened in the light of modern knowledge.¹³⁶

This proposal was quickly met with sharp criticism from a number of medical professionals whose objections were published in the volume that followed. Leinster, a Reader in Surgery at the University of Liverpool, noted the highly selective readings

¹³² Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 203-204.

¹³³ Edwards, Gabel, Hosmer (1986), 1463.

¹³⁴ Lloyd Davies and Lloyd Davies (1991).

¹³⁵ Lloyd Davies and Lloyd Davies (1991), 168.

¹³⁶ Lloyd Davies and Lloyd Davies (1991), 168.

of the couple.¹³⁷ For example, “the circumstantial details given suggest a real presence and not a psychological experience; hallucinations do not commonly prepare breakfast for those experiencing them.”¹³⁸ If the Lloyd Davies couple wants to trust details in the canonical Gospels, such as the occurrence of an eclipse, the details they do not mention certainly point to Jesus’ death by crucifixion. Leinster and Wright, a professor of rheumatology at the University of Leeds, both noted the likelihood of death by crucifixion given these details.¹³⁹

Retired surgeon Fowler noted that “Their theory is logically flawed because if Jesus had been taken down from the cross and revived by friends then his followers would have seen him afterwards and would not have been hallucinating.”¹⁴⁰ David Barnardo of Queen Mary’s University Hospital in London wrote, “The authors quite rightly state that ‘faith does not require the abandonment of thought’ but in stretching credulity to the limit they appeal to this very thing! . . . Whilst faith does not require the abandonment of thought, a material explanation of these events requires more than a superficial review of physiological concepts.”¹⁴¹

Another scholar who recently proposed an apparent death theory is Barbara Thiering. Jesus, his disciples, and the New Testament writers employed a peshar method whereby they imbedded hidden meanings within a text.¹⁴² The general reader will not see these but “skilled experts,” which Thiering believes herself to be, may solve the mystery.¹⁴³ The benefit is that an actual history could be concealed if needed.¹⁴⁴ An example of how Thiering employs her method is found in Jesus’ turning water into wine. She says that only celibates at Qumran whom had entered “full monastic life” could receive communion (i.e., wine) while others (e.g., married, handicapped, Gentiles, women, slaves, etc.) received water through baptism. What John is telling his readers is that everyone is now free to take communion.¹⁴⁵

When we come to the reports of Jesus’ death, “[a] drink was brought, of ‘vinegar’, wine that had been spoiled. . . . It was snake poison, taking a number of hours to act. But its first effect, together with that of the trauma he had suffered, was to render him unconscious. . . . Jesus did not die on the cross. He recovered from the effects of the poison, was helped to escape from the tomb by friends, and stayed with them until he reached Rome, where he was present in AD 64. [According to Thiering, this help came after Jesus was laid in the tomb with “a container holding one hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes, a very large quantity. The juice of the aloe plant acts as a purgative, and when given in large quantities acts quickly. Myrrh is a soothing ingredient, acting on mucous membrane. The medicines only had to be administered

¹³⁷ Comment by S. J. Leinster; Reader in Surgery; University of Liverpool in “Letters,” *JRCPL* (1991), 268.

¹³⁸ Comment by S. J. Leinster in “Letters,” *JRCPL* (1991), 269.

¹³⁹ Comment by S. J. Leinster in “Letters,” *JRCPL* (1991), 268-69; comment by V. Wright in “Letters,” *JRCPL* (1991), 269.

¹⁴⁰ Comment by A. W. Fowler in “Letters,” *JRCPL* (1991), 270.

¹⁴¹ Comment by David Barnardo in “Letters,” *JRCPL* (1991), 270, 271.

¹⁴² According to Thiering, Jesus “may well have been involved in the making of the fourth gospel, which, as its peshar shows, was written before AD 37” (128).

¹⁴³ Thiering (1992), 21.

¹⁴⁴ Thiering (1992), 22.

¹⁴⁵ Thiering (1992), 24.

to effect the expulsion of the poison.”¹⁴⁶] This is not conjecture, but comes from a reading of the text by the peshar method. . . . [She notes the *Gospel of Philip* in which Jesus did not first die then rise up but instead rose first then died.] Some of the other newly discovered Gnostic books reflect the well-known docetic tradition that Jesus did not really die on the cross, but another died in his place. Although this belief obviously derives its strength from the idea that Jesus was not of mortal flesh, so could not suffer, it could hardly have flourished in Gnostic circles if there had been solid and certain evidence that he had really died.”¹⁴⁷

What about Paul? According to Thiering, in March AD 40 Paul was attending a Jewish service around noon where none other than Jesus was teaching. Paul (then Saul) was hostile toward Jesus at that time. So, Jesus walked up to him and said, “You are persecuting me.” After a short exchange of words, Jesus brought Paul up front for him to hear his sermon after which he was a different man and changed his loyalty from the Hebrews to the Hellenists. His teachings on the resurrection of Jesus found later in his letters was “part of the accepted teaching for the less advanced members.”¹⁴⁸

As we read Thiering’s peshar we get the sense that this is an example of someone seeing whatever she wants, even when the plain sense of the text is nowhere within her sight.¹⁴⁹ While this degree of imagination should alert Thiering’s readers to proceed cautiously with raised antennae, it does not follow that her hypothesis is false. It is when we begin to search her hypothesis for her evidence and check it against the known facts that the thin ice on which it is built begins to crack. Thiering provides no evidence that the drink given to Jesus while on the cross contained snake poison or that such poison could have had the effect she claims.¹⁵⁰ We may also ask why modern hospitals and physicians are not administering large quantities of aloe juice and myrrh if they have the amazing abilities claimed by Thiering to purge snake poison and heal ghastly wounds such as those resulting from scourging and crucifixion. Thiering explains that Paul reserved his teachings on bodily resurrection for the “less advanced members.”¹⁵¹ However, if my exegesis of the Pauline passages below is correct, Paul believed that bodily resurrection is the desired and final result for all believers, including himself.¹⁵²

We must also wonder why these teachings did not survive if this was the official teaching of Jesus and his apostles to the advanced members. Thiering hints that we may find their insider teachings on resurrection in the Gnostic writings, which claim

¹⁴⁶ Thiering (1992), 120.

¹⁴⁷ Thiering (1992), 115-18. Her peshar method is described on 20-25.

¹⁴⁸ Thiering (1992), 139.

¹⁴⁹ Braaten (1999) notes that the “naturalistic view of history” has motivated some theologians to “freely invent interpretations that run counter to the plain sense of what is written” (147-48). Braaten’s comments could have been made with Thiering in mind when in support of her peshar she writes, “In the gospels, there are a great many miracles, which the modern mind finds incredible . . .” (22). See also Crossan (2003): “There is an ancient and venerable principle of biblical exegesis which states that if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, it must be a camel in disguise.” See also Hengel and Schwemer (1997), 119, 147.

¹⁵⁰ Although she cites *Gos. Pet. 5* and *Barn. 7:3*, neither supports her assertion that the cocktail given Jesus contained poison.

¹⁵¹ Thiering (1992), 139.

¹⁵² See section 4.3.3.9 below.

that another died in Jesus' place and that resurrection precedes death. However, we observed in the previous chapter that these writings probably postdate the canonical Gospels, some by quite a bit, and with the lone exception of *Thomas* it is dubious that they contain authentic teachings of Jesus and the apostles. Moreover, her argument that the belief that Jesus survived his crucifixion "could hardly have flourished in Gnostic circles if there had been solid and certain evidence that he had really died" is not convincing. Thiering herself notes that this belief "obviously derives its strength" from the Docetists who denied that Jesus had come in the flesh.¹⁵³ This provides sufficient cause for the origin of the belief that Jesus did not die on the cross. Furthermore, we could turn her argument around: The belief that Jesus died by crucifixion could hardly have flourished in Christian circles if there had been solid and certain evidence that he had actually survived. This too would be unconvincing.

Thiering's pesher hypothesis appears to be based on irresponsible historical method and unrestrained results. As has been said many times for well over one hundred years, we have another theory murdered by a brutal gang of facts.¹⁵⁴ It failed to convince scholars and has brought about some rather negative responses. Evans writes, "I am not aware of a single competent scholar on the planet who agrees with Thiering's conclusions."¹⁵⁵ He adds, "Most scholars have ignored Barbara Thiering's work because it is so subjective and idiosyncratic."¹⁵⁶

We have looked carefully at the data pertaining to Jesus' death by crucifixion and have observed that there are very strong reasons for granting the historicity of this event and that it is granted by the overwhelming majority of scholars.¹⁵⁷ We have also observed that only a few have ventured to question this fact and that their arguments are very weak.¹⁵⁸ Thus, Jesus' death by crucifixion qualifies as our first minimal fact.

4.3.2. Appearances to the Disciples

Shortly after Jesus' death, his disciples asserted that Jesus had returned to life and appeared to some of his disciples. We will examine these claims beginning with the earliest: 1 Corinthians 15:3-8.

¹⁵³ Thiering (1992), 117.

¹⁵⁴ The origin of this saying is unknown. It has been attributed to Benjamin Franklin, T. H. Huxley, and Francois La Rochefoucauld. However, a similar comment by Huxley may be behind it. See Keyes (2006), 219.

¹⁵⁵ C. A. Evans (2006), 207.

¹⁵⁶ C. A. Evans (2006), 268n2. See also Johnson (1996): "Thiering's 'history' is the purest poppycock, a product of fevered imagination rather than careful analysis. The way she works with the data defies every canon of sober historical research, and operates outside all the rules of textual analysis" (30-31). Meeks (2006) refers to Thiering's hypothesis as "far-fetched" (45), while Vermes (2008) refers to it as one of a number of "modern musings [that] need not retain us," given an "absence of real ancient evidence" in support (146).

¹⁵⁷ We have not discussed the date of Jesus' crucifixion. Scholars are divided between AD 30 and 33 with a slight majority preferring the former. Since nothing in our present investigation depends on this date, I will not discuss it in this paper and will adopt the more standard dating of AD 30. For a discussion on the date of Jesus' death, see R. Brown (*Death*, 1994), 2:1350-78.

¹⁵⁸ Wright (2003) asserts that the apparent death theory has "nothing to recommend it" and that even skeptical scholars who are committed to denying the resurrection of Jesus do not appeal to it (709).

4.3.2.1. Appearances in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

4.3.2.1.a. Length of the Tradition. At minimum, most scholars grant 15:3b-5a:¹⁵⁹

ὅτι Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν κατὰ τὰς γραφὰς
καὶ ὅτι ἐτάφη
καὶ ὅτι ἐγήγερται τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ κατὰ τὰς γραφὰς
καὶ ὅτι ὤφθη Κηφᾶ

That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures
And that he was buried
And that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures
And that he appeared to Peter

Differences of opinion exist over whether “for our sins” and “according to the scriptures” in the first line belonged to the original tradition and the same can be said of “on the third day” and “according to the scriptures” in the third line.¹⁶⁰ Differences of opinion exist over whether 15:5b-7 is part of the same tradition or that Paul has combined two or more traditions. 15:5b-7 reads

εἶτα τοῖς δώδεκα·
ἔπειτα ὤφθη ἐπάνω πεντακοσίοις ἀδελφοῖς ἐφάπαξ [ἐξ ὧν οἱ πλείονες
μένουσιν
ἕως ἄρτι, τινὲς δὲ ἐκοιμήθησαν·]
ἔπειτα ὤφθη Ἰακώβῳ
εἶτα τοῖς ἀποστόλοις πᾶσιν·

then to the Twelve
then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time [from whom
most remain until now, but some have fallen asleep]
then he appeared to James
then to all the apostles

I have added brackets to Paul’s parenthetical statement that most of the more than five hundred to whom Jesus appeared remain alive at his time of writing in c. AD 55. Finally, Paul adds in 15:8 that Jesus appeared to him too:

ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων ὡσπερὶ τῷ ἐκτρώματι ὤφθη καί μοι. (And last of all as to one untimely born he appeared to me.)

¹⁵⁹ Hayes (1997) ends the tradition at 15:5 (257); MacGregor (2006) says through 15:5 (226).

¹⁶⁰ What texts might the early Christians have had in mind? Wright states that “Paul does not mean that there are one or two biblical prophecies which, taken by themselves, point in this direction. He refers to the entire scriptural narrative, stretching forward as it does towards the climax of God’s purpose for Israel, and characterized throughout by the powerful grace which brings hope out of disaster and life out of death” (Wright [2005], 224; cf. his longer treatment in Wright [1992], 241-43). However, a plausible case can be made that the early Christians had specific Scriptural texts in mind. In Acts, Luke also claims that Christ died and rose from the dead in accordance with the Scriptures (3:18; 17:2-3; 26:22-23) and he cites a number of passages in support (Ps. 16:8-11 in Acts 2:25-32; Ps. 118:22 in Acts 4:10-11; Ps. 2:1-2 in Acts 4:25-28; Isa. 53:7ff. in Acts 8:32-35; Isa. 55:3 and Ps. 16:10 in Acts 13:33-37).

Most scholars hold that Paul's appearance does not belong to the original tradition. Regardless of what side one falls on these disputed matters, the death, burial, resurrection, and appearances of Jesus reported in this tradition are very early and probably go back to the Jerusalem leadership and certainly to Paul regarding his own experience. To be careful then in our conclusions pertaining to this text, the death, burial, resurrection, and appearances to Peter, the Twelve, to a large group of more than five hundred, to James, to all of the apostles, and to Paul are reported.

4.3.2.1.b. Two especially controversial appearances. Two appearances reported in this tradition have especially raised questions: the appearance to the more than five hundred at one time and the appearance to James. These appearances are not clearly reported outside of this text, especially by any of the canonical Gospels.¹⁶¹ However, it is important to observe that the appearance to so many at one time and the appearance to James who became a prominent leader in the Jerusalem church are reported in the earliest tradition. Had these appeared only in the canonical Gospels, they might be more suspect as free invention since they would be absent from the earliest sources. However, here the opposite happens to be true: they appear in the earliest reports but not in the later resurrection narratives. Moreover, Paul's parenthetical phrase that most of the more than five hundred to whom Jesus appeared at a single event is quite interesting, since according to Paul, most of them were still alive and could be questioned by those having doubts.¹⁶² It is also noteworthy that the multiple appearances in the tradition are listed in a chronological order and, for Paul, ground the appearances in history.¹⁶³ Accordingly, these appearances cannot be quickly dismissed.

Commenting on the findings of the Jesus Seminar, Funk wrote,

the Fellows were dubious about the inclusion of the appearances to James, the brother of Jesus, to the "twelve" as a group, and to the five hundred believers at the same time . . . Part of the skepticism regarding these reports owes to the fact that the names assigned to the twelve vary from this to list, so we cannot establish a firm membership for the twelve . . . The claim on behalf of James seems to be an attempt to put James on an equal footing with Peter (and perhaps Paul). An appearance to a large crowd, like the five hundred mentioned by Paul, suggests a visionary worship experience, such as the Pentecost experience described in the second chapter of Acts, where the apostles are filled with the spirit and speak in tongues.¹⁶⁴

The lists of disciples appear in the canonical Gospels that were written a decade or more after Paul. Why must discrepancies in narratives written later imply problems

¹⁶¹ An appearance to James is reported in the *Gospel According to the Hebrews* 5 by Jerome in *Illustrious Men* 2. See Ehrman (*Lost Scriptures*, 2003), 16, fragment 5. We will discuss this appearance more below. See section 4.3.4.1.c.

¹⁶² Barnett (1994), 7; Lüdemann (2004), 41; cf. Lüdemann in Copan and Tacelli, eds. (2000), 152. Contra is Catchpole (2002), 152.

¹⁶³ Barnett (1999), 183; Bryskog (2002), 227; Carnley (1987), 228; Craig (*Assessing*, 1989), 33-34; Witherington (2006), 174; Wright (2003), 326. There is good reason for holding that the tradition reports the appearances in a chronological order. See section 4.3.2.2 below.

¹⁶⁴ Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998), 454-55. They offer no support for their claim that James is here listed in order to legitimize his authority and that the appearance to the more than five hundred at one time "suggests a visionary worship experience."

with an earlier report? Moreover, there is no indication that the earlier list in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 was intended to be a list of all the disciples. Rather, it is quite clearly a list of those to whom Jesus appeared after his resurrection and indicates that, while Jesus appeared to all of his disciples, not every disciple received an individual appearance. There are further reasons to doubt that the list in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 was meant to be complete or exhaustive. The appearance to the women is not included, even though as we will see below this appearance is often granted by even quite skeptical scholars.¹⁶⁵

There appear to be close similarities between the four-line formula in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 and other passages such as Mark 15:37-16:7 and Acts 13:28-31 where the same sequence is stated: Jesus died, was buried, was raised, and appeared.¹⁶⁶ Allison provides a chart detailing sequential parallels between the four canonical Gospels and the tradition in 1 Corinthians 15:3ff., namely Jesus' death, burial, resurrection on the third day, appearances to individuals, and appearances to the eleven or twelve disciples.¹⁶⁷ He concludes, "Amid all the diversity, we seem to have variations upon a common pattern. Paul is perhaps not so far removed from the gospel traditions as sometimes implied."¹⁶⁸ Thus, a general outline of the sequence of events may be said to be multiply attested.

Furthermore, it may likewise be noted that most of the appearances listed in the tradition are multiply attested. The appearance to Peter in 1 Corinthians 15:5 may be alluded to in Mark 16:7 and is specifically mentioned in Luke 24:34 though not narrated.¹⁶⁹ In fact, Luke agrees with the tradition in placing the appearance to Peter chronologically prior to the group appearance to the disciples.¹⁷⁰ "The fact that the name Peter is used in Luke 24:12 while Simon is used in 24:34 again points to different sources or traditions."¹⁷¹ The appearance to the Twelve in 1 Corinthians 15:5 is clearly narrated by Luke and John.¹⁷² Allison provides another chart of this appearance in Matthew, Ps-Mark (16:9-20), Luke, and John showing similar setting, appearance, response, commissioning, and promise of assistance.¹⁷³

Some scholars think that the appearance to the more than five hundred is the appearance in Galilee mentioned in Matthew 28:16-18.¹⁷⁴ Although Matthew does not specify how many were present, the text does not clearly state that such a large

¹⁶⁵ See Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998), 454; Lüdemann (2004), 36.

¹⁶⁶ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 233n133; Craig in Copan and Tacelli, eds. (2000), 165; Theissen and Merz (1998), 496.

¹⁶⁷ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005) lists the following on 239: Death (Matt. 27:45-54; Mark 15:33-39; Luke 23:44-48; John 19:28-30; 1 Cor. 15:3); Burial (Matt. 27:56-61; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-55; John 19:38-42; 1 Cor. 15:4a); Resurrection on third day (Matt. 28:1-8; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-8; John 20:1-10; 1 Cor. 15:4b); Appearance to individuals (Matt. 28:9-10; Mark 16:7 (?); Luke 24:13-35; John 20:11-18; 1 Cor. 15:5a, 7a, 8); Appearance to 11 or 12 disciples (Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:7; Luke 24:36-51; John 20:19-22; 1 Cor. 15:5b, 7b).

¹⁶⁸ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 239; cf. 235.

¹⁶⁹ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 240; Catchpole (2002), 155; Craig in Copan and Tacelli, eds. (2000), 182; Dunn (2003), 862-63.

¹⁷⁰ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 240.

¹⁷¹ Engelbrecht (1989), 242. Catchpole (2002) notes that the historicity of Peter's experience is "seldom doubted" while interpretations of his experience are not uniform (155).

¹⁷² Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-20.

¹⁷³ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 245.

¹⁷⁴ Craig (*Assessing*, 1989), 57-63; Wright (2003), 325.

number were present. We may have an indicator that Matthew knew of others there who did not belong to the close group of Jesus' disciples. Matthew 28:17 reads καὶ ἰδόντες αὐτὸν προσεκύνησαν, οἱ δὲ ἐδίστασαν (and seeing him they worshipped but some doubted). The οἱ δὲ may indicate that those doubting are other than the disciples of Jesus. We will discuss this *doubting* below.¹⁷⁵ Another candidate is Luke 24:33-53/Acts 1:6-11, although there is nothing in the text that makes this clear. Accordingly, "possible" is as far as we can go.

As noted above, the appearance to James is not mentioned elsewhere except in the *Gospel According to the Hebrews*, which is not regarded by most scholars as being credible. Its presence in this tradition and nowhere else indicates that tradition is present that is independent of the canonical Gospels.¹⁷⁶ The same may be said of the appearance to the more than five hundred. The appearance to all of the apostles may also be reported in Luke 24:33-53 and Acts 1:6-11.¹⁷⁷ The appearance to Paul is reported by Luke (Acts 9, 22, 26) and elsewhere by Paul (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8).

Even many of the events themselves reported in 1 Corinthians 15:5-7 are multiply attested. Jesus' death is reported in 1 Corinthians 15:3 and all of the sources mentioned in the previous section. Jesus' burial is reported in 1 Corinthians 15:4 and all of the canonical Gospels. Jesus' resurrection and appearances are reported in the tradition of 1 Corinthians 15:4-7 and in multiple sources as explained above.

In summary, the tradition in 1 Corinthians 15:3ff. is quite early, very probably based on eyewitness testimony, and is multiply attested in terms of a general outline of the sequence of events. Also, many of the events themselves are multiply attested. We may not know why the Evangelists did not narrate the appearances to James and to the group of more than five hundred. We can only speculate. Since this was part of the tradition that was being passed along by the apostles, claiming that the Evangelists were unaware of these appearances is a tough pill to swallow. Perhaps the canonical Gospels only narrate the appearances that occurred until Jesus' ascension. We know Paul's occurred afterward and the appearance to James may have as well. For reasons unknown to us, the Evangelists did not include them in their narratives. However, this does not eliminate the fact that these appearances are present in the earliest known material on the resurrection of Jesus and can be traced to the Jerusalem apostles.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ See section 4.3.2.6.

¹⁷⁶ Theissen and Merz (1998), 496.

¹⁷⁷ Wenham (1995) notes that Paul may have been aware of a narrative where the risen Jesus appeared to and commissioned his disciples to present the gospel to the nations (i.e., Gentiles). In Rom. 1:3-5, Paul writes that he and others had received grace and apostleship from the risen Lord unto the obedience of faith to all the nations for his name's sake (δι' οὗ ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολήν εἰς ὑπακοήν πίστει εἰς πάντα τοὺς ἔθνεσσιν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ). These words are reminiscent of what we find in the Synoptics. In Matt. 28:19, the risen Lord commissions the apostles to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος). In Luke 24:44-49, the risen Lord commissions his disciples to preach repentance unto the forgiveness of sins to all nations in his name (κηρυχθῆναι ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ μετάνοιαν εἰς ἅφεςιν ἁμαρτιῶν εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη). In all three texts, the gospel is to be preached to the nations in Jesus' name or for his name's sake. See Wenham (1995, 368n99) who acknowledges Idicheria Ninan for the idea.

¹⁷⁸ Lapede (2002), 99.

4.3.2.1.c. The three-day motif. The tradition that Jesus ἐγήγερται τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ (was raised on the third day) appears in a number of forms and has raised questions pertaining to its meaning. We may first ask where the three-day motif may have originated. It has been suggested that the three-day motif has Hosea 6:2 in mind.¹⁷⁹

ὕγιασει ἡμᾶς μετὰ δύο ἡμέρας ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ ἀναστησόμεθα καὶ ζήσόμεθα ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ

He will restore us [to health] after two days. On the third day we will be raised and live in His sight.

It is doubtful that Paul regarded the third-day motif as a metaphor for spiritual survival upon bodily death, since the time-lag places the event in history and would be unnecessary if the early Christians had meant that Jesus had ascended to heaven.¹⁸⁰ Moreover, as Wedderburn notes, “curiously nowhere is this text [Hosea 6:1-2] expressly quoted in the New Testament as fulfilled in Jesus’ resurrection. The text that *is* expressly quoted in this connection is Jonah 2.1”; and Hosea 6:1-2 refers to the general resurrection as the first person plural is used throughout.¹⁸¹

It is far from clear that the three-day motif was borrowed from pagan religions. Mettinger notes that “the expression in *Inanna’s Descent* does not refer to the span of time between death and resurrection but rather to the time that passes before Ninshubur incites Enki to take action.”¹⁸² He also cites the Adonis rituals in Lucian’s *De Dea Syria* 6 (second century A.D.) as “a possible case of a three-day cycle.”¹⁸³ However, given Lucian’s time of writing, there is a real possibility that the three-day motif in the resurrection of Adonis was borrowed from Christianity.¹⁸⁴ Mettinger suggests that there is one piece of evidence that may take the Adonis account to pre-Christian times (Amarna Letters, EA No. 84, c. mid-fourteenth century B.C.), but stresses the “tentative nature” of it due to its “fragmentary nature.”¹⁸⁵ For Mettinger, the question whether the pre-Christian Near East knew of a three-day motif in reference to a resurrection must remain open:

We would be wise to admit the possibility that this was the case, but this is still far from being an established fact. . . . The notion that the resurrection [of Jesus] occurred ‘on the third day’ is difficult to derive from a fixed pre-Christian concept of a *triduum*. As we have seen, the evidence for such a concept is still too scanty for any conclusions.¹⁸⁶

¹⁷⁹ Wright (2003), 322. See also Vermes (2008): It is “likely that the expression [“on the third day”] was chosen because it was a typical Old Testament formula marking seven significant biblical events occurring ‘on the third day.’ [Gen 22:4; Hos 6:2]. . . . One should also take into account that, according to rabbinic reckoning, part of a day or night counted as a full day or night (yShabbath 2a; bPesahim 4a)” (81).

¹⁸⁰ J. Wenham (1984), 53; Wright (2003), 322.

¹⁸¹ Wedderburn (1999), 50-51.

¹⁸² Mettinger (2001), 214-15.

¹⁸³ Mettinger (2001), 215; cf. 131-37.

¹⁸⁴ Mettinger (2001), 136. Keener (2003) also considers this possibility: “While the third day is used for resurrection in the later ritual for Attis and perhaps for Adonis, these may be based on Christian precedents” (2:1174).

¹⁸⁵ Mettinger (2001), 137, 140.

¹⁸⁶ Mettinger (2001), 215, 221.

We may then ask what is the meaning of the three-day motif. Observing its meaning in the New Testament, especially pertaining to the resurrection of Jesus, is most promising:

- “After three days” (μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας): Matt. 27:63; Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34
- “After three days” (μετὰ ἡμέρας τρεῖς): Luke 2:46; Acts 28:17. Neither of these references refer to Jesus’ resurrection and can be understood in a non-literal sense.
- “Three days and three nights” (τρεῖς ἡμέρας καὶ τρεῖς νύκτας): Matt. 12:40
- “In three days” (ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις): John 2:19, 20
- “On the third day” (τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ): Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 27:64; Luke 9:22; 24:7, 46; Acts 10:40
- “The third day” (τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ): 1 Cor. 15:4; Luke 18:33; John 2:1 (This latter reference does not pertain to the resurrection of Jesus.)
- “Today and tomorrow and on the third day” (σήμερον καὶ αὔριον καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ): Luke 13:32. Of interest here is that today is the first day, tomorrow is the second, and the following day is the third. Given Luke’s interest in chronology (Luke 1:3), it is entirely possible that Jesus’ Jerusalem entry was on the third day from when he made this statement. A description of three phases in his ministry likewise seems possible. See also Acts 27:19 (τῇ τρίτῃ) where “on the third day” must be understood in a literal sense of three days.
- “This is the third day” [since the crucifixion occurred] (τρίτην ταύτην ἡμέραν): Luke 24:21
- “On the third day” (τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ): 1 Cor. 15:4

Focusing on how each author employed the three-day motif, we observe the following:

- Paul—or the tradition he shares—employs only “on the third day” (τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ).
- Mark employs only “after three days” (μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας) and does so three times.
- Matthew employs “after three days” (μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας) once, “three days and three nights” (τρεῖς ἡμέρας καὶ τρεῖς νύκτας) once, and “on the third day” (τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ) four times.
- Luke employs “on the third day” (τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ) four times, “on the third day” (τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ) once, and “after three days” (μετὰ ἡμέρας τρεῖς) twice, although neither instance of the third reading is related to the resurrection of Jesus. Also interesting is “today and tomorrow and on the third day” (σήμερον καὶ αὔριον καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ) and “on the third” (τῇ τρίτῃ), the former referring either to a literal three days or three phases of ministry while the latter refers to a literal three days (although neither refers to the resurrection of Jesus).
- John employs “in three days” (ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις) and “on the third day” (τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ), although the latter does not refer to the resurrection of Jesus.

Finally, we note the Jewish understanding of Jesus’ resurrection predictions as presented in the canonical Gospels:

- Throughout the course of three days (διὰ τριῶν ἡμερῶν): Matt. 26:61; Mark 14:58
- In three days (ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις): Matt. 27:40; Mark 15:29
- It is curious that in Matt. 26:61 and 27:40 the Jewish accusers understand Jesus' predictions to relate to the rebuilding of the temple, whereas in 27:63 the Jewish leaders understand his predictions to relate to his own body. It is possible that Jesus had a number of ways of predicting his vindication or resurrection and that the instance misunderstood by his accusers (Matt. 26:61; 27:40 and stated more clearly in John 2:18-22) was not the one the Jewish leaders had in mind in 27:63.

Taking all of this into consideration, it is of interest that Matthew and Luke synonymously employ phrases that are contradictory when taken in a literal sense. For example, Matthew describes Jesus' resurrection as coming "on the third day," "after three days," and after "three days and three nights."¹⁸⁷ Luke similarly employs "on the third day" and "after three days." This suggests that the three-day motif related to the time of Jesus' resurrection was a figure of speech meaning a short period of time.¹⁸⁸ There are a number of similar idioms in North America. My teenaged children may complain about a house chore that will take them "forever" to complete when it actually takes them just two hours. An auto mechanic promises to get to my car in "just a minute." But this is understood to mean a short period of time just as the idiom, "I'll be there in a second." That the three-day motif is a figure of speech referring to a short period of time is confirmed by Matthew 27:63-64 where the Jewish leaders approach Pilate and recall Jesus' predictions that he would be raised to life "after three days" (μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας). As a result, they request that a guard be placed in front of the tomb "until the third day" (ἕως τῆς τρίτης ἡμέρας). This is an odd request taken literally. For the Jewish leaders are requesting that the guard remain at the tomb only during the period prior to the time when Jesus had predicted he would rise, rendering the service of the guards of minimal value. Stated another way, if Jesus predicted that he would be raised to life sometime after three days had passed as the Jewish leaders were claiming, why would they request that Jesus' tomb be guarded only "until the third day" while leaving it unguarded at the very time they should have been most concerned about body theft? If, however, we understand the three-day motif assigned to Jesus' resurrection as a figure of speech, the tensions vanish.

Still further support for a non-literal understanding of the third-day motif may be found in Esther 4:16 and 5:1, where Esther asks others to fast with her for three days, night and day (שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים לַיְלָה וַיּוֹם; ἐπὶ ἡμέρας τρεῖς νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν), after which she will approach the king. It is then reported that she went in to see the king on the third day (בְּיָוֶם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי; ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ).¹⁸⁹ Perhaps Esther went to the king late on the third day. Perhaps she went to him on the third day while still fasting, knowing that her request would involve a process during which she still desired prayer. Certainty eludes us. However, if Esther's phrase "for three days, night and day" was

¹⁸⁷ Davis (2006), 51.

¹⁸⁸ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 232; Bruce (1977), 93; Dunn (2003), 823. Mettinger (2001) asserts that the motif was also an "Akkadian expression in the context of medical prognosis to refer to a quick recovery from illness" (214).

¹⁸⁹ See also 1 Sam. 30:12-13 for a possible example of a three-day motif taken in a non-literal sense.

not to be understood literally as seventy-two hours, then the similar phrase in Jonah may not carry such a requirement (שְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים וְשְׁלֹשָׁה לַיְלוֹת; τρεῖς ἡμέρας καὶ τρεῖς νύκτας). If this holds, neither is a literal interpretation of the sign of Jonah’s “three days and three nights” in Matthew 12:40 required.

Whatever influence one may think Hosea 6:1-2 or pagan religions may have had on the third-day motif related to the resurrection of Jesus, in my judgment the evidence seems clear that the early Christians, including Paul, the earlier tradition he cites, and all four of the canonical Gospels employ it to refer to a short period of time.¹⁹⁰ Since this tradition very probably reflects the teaching of the Jerusalem apostles, it is very likely that the original teaching pertaining to the time of Jesus’ resurrection was that it occurred very soon after his death by crucifixion, a teaching consistent with the resurrection narratives.¹⁹¹

4.3.2.1.d. The tradition and the nature of the appearances. Citing the three accounts of Paul’s conversion experience in Acts (9, 22, 26), Stephen’s vision (Acts 7:54-60), and Paul’s statements pertaining to resurrection bodies in 1 Corinthians (15:40, 42), the Jesus Seminar interprets the resurrection appearances as Christophanies that “did not involve the resuscitation of a corpse.”¹⁹²

There are, however, a few factors that spoil this conclusion. First, the appearances to Stephen and Paul are post-ascension appearances, which may account for why Jesus was seen in the sky or in the heavens rather than on land.¹⁹³ Second, the same Luke

¹⁹⁰ It is not clear whether the phrases ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν κατὰ τὰς γραφὰς and τῆ ἡμέρα τῆ τρίτῃ κατὰ τὰς γραφὰς were part of the original tradition or were later added. But this is what Paul taught the church in Corinth and he states that the other apostles were teaching the same (1 Cor. 15:11). Given our observations that Paul was not inclined to fiddle with the tradition, there is good reason for believing these phrases that are questioned were in agreement with the teachings of the Jerusalem apostles. Moreover, as Bruce (1977) writes, “The statement that it was ‘on the third day’ that Christ rose is based not on any Old Testament scripture but on historical fact. Such an expression as ‘after three days’ (not to speak of ‘three days and three nights’), used in predictions of the resurrection before the event (e.g. in Mark 8:31), might have the general sense of ‘in a short time’; but after the event we regularly find it dated ‘on the third day’, because it was actually on the third day that the tomb was found empty and Jesus first appeared in resurrection to Peter and others” (93).

¹⁹¹ Although late and of limited weight, it is worth noting with Vermes (2008, 154) that the later rabbinic literature reported that the soul would hover near the corpse for three days hoping to return to it (GenR 100:7; yYeb 15c; Sem 8). If we understand these texts as claiming that bodily decomposition begins on the fourth day following death, the early Christian interpretation of Ps. 16:10 (LXX; see Acts 2:25-31) is that Jesus was raised prior to the fourth day. It may even be that Ps. 16:10 was one of the main texts the early church had in mind in affirming that Christ’s resurrection on the third day was “according to the Scriptures.” If so, this evidence might be taken to point toward a more literal understanding of the third-day motif.

¹⁹² Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998), 461, also 458-62. They add, “It is difficult to distinguish Stephen’s vision of Jesus from other resurrection appearances” (460).

¹⁹³ Barnett (1999), 183. We may also note a difference between Stephen’s vision and Paul’s experience in Acts. Apparently, the bystanders had no external perceptions of what Stephen described. However, in all three accounts in Acts, Paul’s traveling companions shared some of the perceptions experienced by Paul such as the light and the voice. Moreover, D. Wenham (1995) writes, “The fact that Paul includes himself in the list of witnesses to the resurrection does not prove that he regarded his experience as identical in character to that of the earlier witnesses. But even if he did, this does not necessarily mean that he saw the earlier experiences as visionary. The opposite inference is arguably more probable, namely, that he did not see his own experience as simply a vision but as something more ‘objective’ and ‘physical’ than the visions that he later experienced and did not categorize as

who reports the appearances to Stephen and Paul is likewise very clear that he interprets the appearances to the disciples as disclosing a literal resurrection of Jesus' corpse. In Luke 24, Jesus' tomb is empty on Easter morning and the grave clothes that had wrapped his body now contain nothing. Jesus has "flesh and bones" and eats. At his ascension in Acts, Jesus is taken up from among his disciples and is lifted up into the clouds (1:9-11). He ate and drank with his disciples before his ascension (10:39-41), and his body is said not to have decayed as king David's did but was instead raised up (2:30-32; 13:35-37). It is difficult to state more clearly than Luke has done that Jesus' resurrection involved raising his corpse. Accordingly, those who appeal to Acts in support of an understanding of Jesus' resurrection that did not involve his corpse must do so quite selectively, interpreting some of Luke's narratives in a manner that has him lucidly contradicting himself. Such a move is unnecessary and unattractive when Luke may be interpreted in a manner where he is entirely consistent with himself without any forcing whatsoever. Moreover, we will see below in our observations pertaining to 1 Corinthians 15 that Paul understands resurrection as an event that happens to the corpse.¹⁹⁴ Funk and the Jesus Seminar are very much mistaken in their interpretation of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances in Luke, Acts, and Paul.

That Funk and the Jesus Seminar are mistaken in these interpretations does not require that a differing interpretation is accurate. It only warrants the conclusion that the Jesus Seminar has not argued effectively for their understanding of the nature of the appearances in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. We must inquire into the meaning of ὤφθη (appeared).

ὤφθη is the aorist passive indicative third person singular of ὀράω. There are 29 occurrences of ὀράω in its various forms in Paul, 16 of which clearly refer to physical sight, while only one refers to a heavenly-type vision.¹⁹⁵ For the other 12 occurrences, the term means "Behold" (Rom. 11:22; Gal. 5:2), "understand" (Rom. 15:21; Gal. 2:7, 14), "make efforts" (1 Thess. 5:15), and others that for the present cannot be assigned a firm category (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:5, 6, 7, 8; 1 Tim. 3:16). In Luke/Acts, there are 147 occurrences.¹⁹⁶ Of these, 107 clearly refer to physical sight, while 10 refer to a resurrection appearance, 11 to a vision, five to experience, eight to perceive/understand, and six to various other meanings.¹⁹⁷

resurrection appearances" (369; in 369n94 Wenham adds, "See especially Craig, 'Bodily Resurrection'").

¹⁹⁴ See section 4.3.3.9.b.

¹⁹⁵ Physical sight: Rom. 1:11; 1 Cor. 2:9; 8:10; 16:7; Gal. 1:19; 6:11; Phil. 1:27, 30; 2:28; 4:9; Col. 2:1; 1 Thess. 2:17; 3:6, 10; 1 Tim. 6:16; 2 Tim. 1:4. "Heavenly visions": Col. 2:18.

¹⁹⁶ Luke 1:11, 12, 22; 2:15, 17, 20, 26 (2x), 30, 48; 3:6; 5:2, 8, 12, 20, 26; 7:13, 22, 25, 26, 39; 8:20, 28, 34, 35, 36, 47; 9:9, 27, 31, 32, 36, 49, 54; 10:24 (2x), 31, 32, 33; 11:38; 12:15, 54; 13:12, 28, 35; 14:18; 15:20; 16:23; 17:14, 15, 22 (2x); 18:15, 24, 43; 19:3, 4, 7, 37, 41; 20:14; 21:1, 2, 20, 27, 29, 31; 22:43, 49, 56, 58; 23:8 (3x), 47, 49; 24:23, 24, 34, 39 (2x); Acts 2:3, 17, 27, 31; 3:3, 9, 12; 4:20; 6:15; 7:2, 24, 26, 30, 31, 34 (2x), 35, 44, 55; 8:18, 23, 39; 9:12, 17, 27, 35, 40; 10:3, 17; 11:5, 6, 13, 23; 12:3, 16; 13:12, 31, 35, 36, 37, 41, 45; 14:9, 11; 15:6; 16:9, 10, 19, 27, 40; 18:15; 19:21; 20:25; 21:32; 22:14, 15, 18; 26:13, 16 (3x); 28:4, 15, 20, 26, 27.

¹⁹⁷ Physical sight: Luke 1:11, 12; 2:15, 17, 20, 26 (bis), 30, 48; 3:6; 5:2, 8, 12, 20, 26; 7:13, 22, 25, 26, 39; 8:20, 28, 34, 35, 36, 47; 9:9, 27, 31, 32, 36, 49; 10:24 (2x), 31, 32, 33; 11:38; 12:54; 13:12, 28, 35; 14:18; 15:20; 16:23; 17:14, 15; 18:15, 24, 43; 19:3, 4, 7, 37, 41; 20:14; 21:1, 2, 20, 27, 31; 22:43, 56, 58; 23:8 (3x), 47, 49; 24:23, 24, 39 (2x); Acts 3:3, 9, 12; 4:20; 6:15; 7:2, 24, 26, 30, 31, 34 (2x), 35, 44, 55; 8:18, 39; 9:35, 40; 12:16; 13:12, 35, 36, 37, 45; 14:9, 11; 16:27, 40; 19:21; 20:25; 21:32; 28:4, 15, 20; Resurrection Appearance: Luke 24:34; Acts 9:17, 27; 13:31; 22:14, 15; 26:13, 16 (3x); Seeing a

As a noun, the related ὄραμα appears only twelve times in the New Testament and forty-eight times in the LXX.¹⁹⁸ In the New Testament, all but Matthew 17:9 appear in Acts. Luke employs ὄραμα to describe a vision outside of space-time experienced by Peter while in a trance (Acts 10:9–17; 11:5). For Luke, this type of vision was neither unreal nor subjective, since Peter, who had experienced visions from God, sometimes found it difficult to distinguish a vision from an event in space-time. On at least one occasion he confused them (12:9). Used by Paul, or Luke’s depiction of his conversion experience, ὄραμα does not refer to an experience that is entirely private to an individual, since his traveling companions likewise saw the light and heard the words (9:17 where the participle ὀφθεῖς is employed). In Matthew 17:9, Jesus describes his transfiguration as a ὄραμα. This is not like Peter’s dream-like experience, since Peter, James, and John participated in the experience while awake. Moreover, Peter’s offer to build tabernacles for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah is curious. Were Moses and Elijah so physical that they would require shelter or are the tabernacles meant to serve as shrines? Peter’s intention is difficult to know with any certainty.

The closely related ὄρασις is found on four occasions in the New Testament and 131 times in the LXX.¹⁹⁹ In the New Testament, it refers to a vision distinguished from a dream (Acts 2:17; Rev. 9:17) and having the likeness of something (Rev. 4:3 [2x]). The term certainly can mean something experienced with the physical eyes. For examples, see Genesis 1:9 (LXX) which speaks of the dry land appearing and Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 43:2 which speaks of the sun appearing.

A term employed for “vision” is ὀπτασία, which appears only five times in the New Testament (Luke 1:22; 24:23; Acts 1:3; 26:19; 2 Cor. 12:1). Luke employs ὀπτασία to describe Zacharias’s experience of the angel (Luke 1:22), the women seeing the angels at the empty tomb (Luke 24:23), the risen Jesus presenting himself alive to his disciples over a period of forty days (Acts 1:3), and Paul’s description of his experience of the risen Jesus (Acts 26:19). In 2 Corinthians 12:1, Paul employs ὀπτασία to describe his experience of being caught up into heaven, adding that he does not know whether he experienced this event while in or out of his body. Thus, for Paul, his experience could have been in a normal, physical sense. In Luke 1:22, the angel is standing to the right of the altar of incense near Zacharias and in 24:23 (cf.

vision: Luke 1:22; Acts 2:17; 9:12; 10:3, 17; 11:5, 6, 13; 16:9, 10; 22:18; Experience: Luke 2:26 (semel); 17:22 (2x); Acts 2:27, 31; Perceive/Understand: Luke 9:54; 22:49; Acts 8:23; 11:23; 12:3; 16:19; 28:26, 27; Be cautious: Luke 12:15; Look into: Acts 15:6; Take care of: Acts 18:15; Behold: Luke 21:29; Acts 13:41; indeterminate: Acts 2:3.

¹⁹⁸ Gen. 15:1; 46:2; Exod. 3:3; Num. 12:6; Deut. 4:34; 26:8; 28:34, 67; Eccl. 6:9; Job 7:14; Sir. 43:1; Isa. 21:1f, 11; 23:1; 30:10; Jer. 39:21; Dan. 1:17; 2:1, 7, 19, 26, 28, 36, 45; 4:28; 7:1 (2x), 7, 13, 15; 8:2, 13, 15, 17, 26 (2x); 8:27; 9:24 (2x); 10:1 (2x); Dat. 2:19, 23; 4:13; 7:2, 13; 8:2; Matt. 17:9; Acts 7:31; 9:10, 12; 10:3, 17, 19; 11:5; 12:9; 16:9, 10; 18:9.

¹⁹⁹ Gen. 2:9; 24:62; 25:11; 31:49; 40:5; Lev. 13:12; Num. 24:4, 16; Jda. 13:6 (2x); 1 Sam. 3:1, 15; 16:12; 2 Sam. 7:17; 1 Chr. 17:15, 17; 2 Chr. 9:29; Tob. 12:19; Tbs. 12:19; 1 Macc. 13:27; 3 Macc. 5:33; Ps. 88:20; Eccl. 11:9; Job 37:18; Wis. 15:15; Sir. 11:2; 19:29; 25:17; 34:3; 40:6; 41:22; 46:15; 48:22; 49:8; Pss. Sol. 6:3; Hos. 12:11; Mic. 3:6; Joel 2:4; 3:1; Obad. 1:1; Nah. 1:1; 2:5; Hab. 2:2, 3; Zech. 10:2; 13:4; Isa. 1:1; 13:1; 19:1; 30:6; 66:24; Jer. 14:14; 23:16; Lam. 2:9; Ep. Jer. 1:36; Ezek. 1:1, 4, 5, 13, 22, 26, 27 (3x), 28 (2x); 3:23; 7:26; 8:2, 3, 4; 11:24; 12:22, 23, 24, 27; 13:7; 21:34; 23:16; 40:2, 3 (2x); 41:21; 43:3 (4x), 10; Dan. 3:92; 4:10, 11, 19, 20, 23; 5:6; 8:1, 15, 16 (2x); 10:6, 7 (2x), 14, 16, 18; Dat. 1:17; 2:28, 31; 3:92; 4:5, 9; 7:1, 15, 20; 8:1, 13, 15 (2x), 16, 17, 19, 26 (2x), 27; 9:21, 24; 10:6 (2x), 14, 18; 11:14; Acts 2:17; Rev. 4:3 (2x); 9:17.

24:4) it is two angels standing near the women inside of Jesus' tomb. Unlike Peter's vision (ὄραμα) in Acts 10:9-17, the angelic appearances to Zacharias and the women are reported as occurring in space-time. We will settle for concluding that Luke's use of ὀπτασία is inconclusive in reference to the resurrection appearances. Every one of these occurrences may be used either for natural sight of something in space-time or visionary sight where only those permitted are able to see.

We have observed the language of vision in the New Testament and can now make some conclusions. Two terms are generally employed: ὁράω/ὄραμα and ὀπτασία. Both are very frequently employed as language of sight, although this is by no means without its exceptions. Even when employed as sight, this sight does not necessarily involve our mortal eyes, although on many occasions it certainly does. Unfortunately, word studies alone are inconclusive in determining whether Paul or Luke meant for us to understand that the experiences of the risen Jesus by Paul and the others listed in 1 Corinthians 15:5-8 were physical events in space-time. Both terms are used by Luke to describe an experience that may or may not have occurred in space-time. Paul more often than not employs ὁράω to refer to physical sight. However, since we are considering pre-Pauline tradition in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7, Pauline usage carries little or no weight.

Context can often provide clues for the particular meaning being employed at that moment. Let us consider the occurrences referring to Jesus' resurrection appearances (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:5, 6, 7, 8; Luke 24:34; Acts 1:3; 9:17, 27; 13:31; 22:14, 15; 26:13, 16 [3x], 19). Luke presents the resurrection of Jesus as something that happened to his corpse. As noted above, in Luke 24 Jesus' tomb is empty on Easter morning and his grave clothes are now empty as well. Jesus has "flesh and bones" and eats. At his ascension in Acts, Jesus is taken up from among his disciples and into the clouds (1:9-11). After his resurrection Jesus ate and drank with his disciples (10:39-41) and his body is said not to have decayed as king David's had but instead was raised up (2:30-32; 13:35-37). Since Luke reports that Jesus appeared to his disciples over a period of forty days (Acts 1:3) and the appearance to Peter is not narrated, it is conceivable that this and possibly other appearances not mentioned by Luke were of a nature outside of space-time. However, as we have seen, Luke clearly presents Jesus' resurrection as an event that occurred to his corpse, and he employs ὄφθη/ὄραμα more frequently in the sense of physical sight. It therefore seems more probable that Luke thinks of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances in the sense of ordinary sight than that he is thinking of an ethereal Jesus or one that is outside of space-time. The same may be said of Paul. As we will observe, Paul understands resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 as an event that happens to a corpse.²⁰⁰ Therefore, if Paul understood resurrection as the revivification and transformation of a corpse, when he reports that Jesus appeared to others after his resurrection it seems most likely that he is thinking of a physical appearance of the resurrected Jesus in space-time.

4.3.2.1.e. Paul and the empty tomb. Since Paul did not mention an empty tomb in the tradition, we may ask whether he was aware of it. A number of scholars have asserted that he was not.²⁰¹ This is important since if the empty tomb tradition was

²⁰⁰ See section 4.3.3.9.b.

²⁰¹ Carnley (1987), 45, 53; Segal (2004), 447. Borg (2006, 279) and Vermes (2008, 120) are uncertain. Lüdemann (1995), 46.

invented after Paul's letters, then it is possible that Jesus' resurrection may originally have been thought of as being ethereal in nature.

A number of other scholars have answered that the assertion that Paul did not know of an empty tomb is mistaken. Hayes comments that, since we are reading tradition in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7, Paul's failure to mention an empty tomb "shows nothing except that such stories were not a part of the traditional *kērygma*. It certainly does not mean that Paul or any other early Christian could have conceived of a 'resurrection from the dead' in which the body remained in the tomb."²⁰² Gundry answers that there was no need for the tradition to mention an empty tomb, since the tradition provided a list of events (i.e., death, burial, resurrection, appearances) and was not an attempt at narrative.²⁰³ A number of scholars argue that the sequence of death—burial—resurrection—appearances shows a continuity and implies a bodily resurrection.²⁰⁴ Habermas says that we may interpret the tradition as saying that what goes down in burial comes up in resurrection.²⁰⁵ Wright comments,

The fact that the empty tomb itself, so prominent in the gospel accounts, does not appear to be specifically mentioned in this passage, is not significant; the mention here of 'buried then raised' no more needs to be amplified in that way than one would need to amplify the statement 'I walked down the street' with the qualification 'on my feet'.²⁰⁶

While this is certainly possible, it is not conclusive that this is the original meaning of the tradition. However, we may ask, why even mention Jesus' burial if his resurrection was not bodily? If the burial is omitted, the tradition would appear as follows:

Christ died for our sins
And that he was raised on the third day . . .
And that he appeared to Peter . . .

One suggested answer to this question is that Jesus' burial was mentioned to confirm his death just as the appearances were mentioned to confirm he was alive again. This would explain the role of the inclusion of Jesus' burial in the tradition without requiring a bodily resurrection.

Bracketing the discussion over whether there was a single meaning of "resurrection" within Second-Temple Judaism, what if death and resurrection did not require the revivification of the corpse in the minds of first-century Jews? Wright may very well be correct that "resurrection" almost certainly referred to a corpse that is revivified and transformed.²⁰⁷ But since the meaning of the term altered at some point to include disembodied existence and I must set some limits on this research project, I will focus on what is present in the *earliest* Christian literature that may tell us what

²⁰² Hayes (1997), 256.

²⁰³ Gundry in Copan and Tacelli, eds. (2000), 118.

²⁰⁴ R. Brown (1997), 535; Goulder in D'Costa, ed. (1996), 57; Habermas (2003), 23; Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003), 200, 476n152; Keener (1999), 713; Theissen and Merz (1998), 499; Wright (2003), 321.

²⁰⁵ Habermas's comments in Ankerberg, ed. (2005), 26.

²⁰⁶ Wright (2003), 321.

²⁰⁷ Wright (2003), 32-583.

the *earliest* known Christians thought about what had happened to Jesus and, thus, whether they would have defined “resurrection” as an event that happens to a corpse. If they did, Wright is correct that it would be quite redundant to add the empty tomb within the tradition, since including it would take away from the logic and, especially, the symmetry in its present form.²⁰⁸

Christ died for our sins
And that he was buried
And that he was raised on the third day
And that the tomb was empty
And that he appeared to Peter . . .

Even if Paul understood resurrection as an action that occurs to a corpse this does not require that those forming the tradition to which Paul appealed in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 thought in similar terms.²⁰⁹ Some have argued that in the list provided in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, Paul is claiming that the nature of his experience was the same as those experienced by the original disciples of Jesus.²¹⁰ These scholars interpret Paul’s experience as visionary in the sense of an event that did not occur in space-time or that possessed extra-mental qualities in this world. This is speculation, of course, since there is nothing in the text requiring such an interpretation. Indeed, a number of scholars have commented that Paul is equating the validity of his experience to be on par with those of the others.²¹¹

Let us consider the possibility that the original claims pertaining to Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances entailed experiences outside of space-time or of an ethereal nature and that Paul subsequently altered these reports to reflect the revivification and transformation of Jesus’ corpse. Such a scenario seems highly unlikely, given Paul’s view and treatment of early tradition. Moreover, those who knew what was being taught about the resurrection by Peter, James, or any of the other apostles would have seen right through Paul, if he was falsely claiming that his view of resurrection agreed with theirs. What is historically secure is that Paul knew the Jerusalem apostles and their teachings, that he claimed to preach the same thing as they about Jesus’ resurrection, that Paul taught that Jesus’ corpse had been raised, that the tradition Paul cites in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 very probably reflected the Jerusalem “tradition,” that he was firm in his belief that such “tradition” must be adhered to strictly, and that he believed he had no authority to alter or add content to the “tradition.”²¹² The implication that the Jerusalem apostles were teaching the resurrection of Jesus’ corpse is so strong that those making assertions to the contrary carry a heavy burden of proof. Placing on one side of the scale a few possibility peas, that is, a few highly ambiguous texts interpreted to the contrary, is no match for the brick of secure evidence from numerous Pauline texts on the other. The tip of the scale that follows is not a gentle one.

²⁰⁸ Waterman (2006), 203-04.

²⁰⁹ MacGregor (2006) argues that “Paul’s interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus in 1 Corinthians is simply irrelevant to the original understanding of Jesus’ resurrection” (230).

²¹⁰ Borg (2006), 277; cf. Borg in Borg and Wright (1998), 132; Craffert (2002), 91; Lüdemann in Copan and Tacelli, eds. (2000), 61; Moiser (1990), 17.

²¹¹ Craig in Copan and Tacelli, eds. (2000), 181; Crossan (1994), 169; Gundry in Copan and Tacelli, eds. (2000), 116.

²¹² See chapter 3.2.3.4.d. I add, however, that this conviction may have pertained to the content of tradition and not necessarily its form.

Moreover, if my interpretation of Paul's texts below is correct and if Paul's conversion experience was anything like that portrayed in Acts 9, 22, and 26, we may ask why he would wish to alter a non-corporeal meaning behind the tradition to one that is corporeal since the non-corporeal experience may have added credibility to his own conversion experience in the eyes of others.

Therefore, two statements are warranted pertaining to the nature of Jesus' resurrection appearances from the tradition in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7. First, one cannot secure bodily resurrection or an empty tomb if the tradition is considered in isolation.²¹³ But given Paul's view and use of tradition, it is highly probable that his own teaching on bodily resurrection was in alignment with the Jerusalem apostles from whom the tradition very likely originated. Second, although there is no mention of an empty tomb, it is improper to conclude that the empty tomb was a later invention and that neither Paul nor those who formed the tradition knew of it.²¹⁴

In summary, in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, we find very early tradition about the resurrection of Jesus, the contents of which can be traced with a high degree of probability to the Jerusalem apostles. Accordingly, we can claim to have in our possession eyewitness testimony. This testimony tells us that Jesus died, was buried, was raised from the dead, and that he appeared to individuals and to groups. The chronological order of the appearances is Peter, the Twelve, more than five hundred on one occasion, to James, to all of the apostles, then last of all to Paul. This tradition provides no strong hints pertaining to the nature of the appearances. But we are warranted in inferring that bodily resurrection is what was in mind and that this was the single voice of the original apostles.

As we observed in the previous chapter, there are a number of early formulas preserved in the New Testament and the tradition in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 may be said to belong to this very early tradition. While the content of these other formulas do not differ from the tradition preserved in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7, they add nothing to it and, in fact, contain fewer details.

It is also important to note that what I will establish through Paul's letters—specifically that he believed Jesus had been raised bodily and had appeared to a number of them—is entirely consistent with what we read in the resurrection narratives in the canonical Gospels.²¹⁵ This does not mean that the narratives are

²¹³ R. Brown (1973): "goes beyond the evidence" (84); Hoover in Copan and Tacelli, eds. (2000): "Support for the historicity of the empty-tomb story cannot be found in Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 15" (130); Waterman (2006): "the wishful thinking of some scholars" (198). However, R. Brown (1973, 84n142) and Waterman (2006, 197) maintain that Paul probably knew of the empty tomb. So does Lüdemann (2004), 70.

²¹⁴ Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003), 71.

²¹⁵ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 238; Carnley (1987), 224. For Paul see section 4.3.3.9 below. Jesus' bodily resurrection is likewise taught in *Gospel According to the Hebrews* (fragment 5 in Ehrman [*Lost Scriptures*, 2003], 16); *Gospel of Peter* 35-40, 55-56. In the *Gospel of Mary* the living Jesus speaks to his disciples apparently after his death then departs from them. However, it is not clear in what state Jesus was when he spoke with them (Ehrman [*Lost Scriptures*, 2003], 36-37). There are numerous references in the non-canonical literature that appear to teach disembodied post-mortem existence. See *Gospel of Thomas* 37 (c. second-cent. AD), *Gospel of Truth* (c. second-cent. AD) (Ehrman [*Lost Scriptures*, 2003], 46-47), *Gospel of Philip* (c. third-cent. AD) 11, 21, 23 (Ehrman [*Lost Scriptures*, 2003], 39, 40-41); *Coptic Apocalypse of Peter* (c. third-cent. AD) (Ehrman [*Lost Scriptures*, 2003], 80-81), *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* (c. third-cent. AD) (Ehrman [*Lost Scriptures*, 2003],

precisely what the early Christians claimed and that no embellishments or inventions are present. The conventions of *bioi* allowed for biographers to exercise literary freedom and ancient biographers took advantage of this liberty to varying degrees. Accordingly, the modern historian can only hope to create a very basic outline of what occurred. However, the outline is very helpful in our investigation. We have established that the disciples of Jesus claimed he had risen from the dead and had appeared to them. Given this conclusion, there are some related issues for which this would be an appropriate place for discussion.

4.3.2.2. Appearances as Legitimizing Support for the Authority of the Recipients

In 1963, Ulrich Wilckens first proposed that the list of appearances in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 provides support for the authority of the recipients.²¹⁶ Funk and the Jesus Seminar additionally argued that “a rivalry among leaders in the early Jesus movement” is evidenced by the varying reports of the recipients of the first post-resurrection appearance. “Paul and Luke award first place to Peter; Matthew and John 20 award the initial appearance to Mary of Magdala; the Gospel of the Hebrews gives the nod to James, the brother of Jesus. . . . These competing claims suggest not so much historical reports as a rivalry among leaders in the early Jesus movement.”²¹⁷ Painter comments that this tension resulted “because the primacy of appearance became the ground for the claim of authority within the Jerusalem church.”²¹⁸

It is not apparent to me that a rivalry among leaders is present or that the first appearance was employed as a rhetorical device for granting authority. I see no indication that the legitimizing of church authority is present in the reports of Matthew and John pertaining to the women recipients of the first appearance. In fact, if the earliest Christian writers were legitimizing the authority of specific apostles, we would not expect to find what we do. In Matthew and John it is clear that Peter is the primary disciple given authority by Jesus.²¹⁹ Yet in neither is he the recipient of the

84-85). That the disciples were claiming Jesus rose from the dead is also reported in *1 Clement* 42:3. That Jesus rose from the dead is reported in Pol. *Phil.* 1:2; 2:1-2; 9:2; 12:2. Tacitus reports that after the death of Jesus, Christianity was “suppressed for the moment” before it broke out again in Judea where it started, then spread to Rome (*Ann.* 15.44). While this report does not mention the resurrection of Jesus, the circumstances are consistent with the canonical Gospels and Acts where the disciples were fearful and in hiding until Jesus had appeared to them, whereby they began proclaiming his resurrection boldly fifty days later at Pentecost in fulfillment of his commission to make disciples in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the furthest lands on earth (Acts 1:8). Paul sent greetings to the church in Philippi from fellow believers who are part of Caesar’s household (Phil. 4:22), perhaps indicating that the gospel had reached Rome and some within Caesar’s family had become believers.

²¹⁶ Wilckens (1963), 64-71.

²¹⁷ Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998), 454. See also Borg and Crossan (2006), 206-07; cf. 277; Moiser (1990), 17. Although these contend that the appearances were meant to legitimize the authority of the individual, they do not mention that the leaders were in competition.

²¹⁸ J. Painter, “Who Was James? Footprints as a Means of Identification” in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001), 31. See also Smith (2003), 135. Vermes (2008): “By asserting that he, too, was granted an appearance of the risen Jesus, Paul intended to insinuate his equality to Peter and James” (120). It is important to note that, for Vermes, the experiences occurred and were not merely rhetorical devices invented to legitimize the authority of certain individuals. Lüdemann (2002) likewise grants that Paul had an experience which “put him on equal footing” with Peter and James (171).

²¹⁹ Matt.16:18-19. In John 20:2-3, Mary rushes from the empty tomb to inform Peter and the Beloved Disciple. In 21:15-17, Jesus gives primary authority to Peter. Even in Acts, Peter by far plays a more prominent role than any other disciple throughout the first twelve chapters, his name appearing more than 50 times. He preached the sermon on Pentecost (2:14ff.) and led thousands to faith in Christ (2:41;

first appearance. Instead, it is the women.²²⁰ If Luke’s desire was to support the authority of Peter with the first appearance, why is he ambiguous pertaining to who received it? Luke does not report the appearance to the women. So, why not narrate the appearance to Peter that he only mentions in passing instead of the appearance to the Emmaus disciples?²²¹ Since James became the leader of the Jerusalem church in Luke’s sequel Acts, why not name him as one of the Emmaus disciples? Indeed, why not make James and Peter the two Emmaus disciples with one of the two being the primary spokesman instead of Cleopas who appears only here in the New Testament?²²² Peter, James and John, always in that order in the canonical Gospels, were listed as those being in an inner circle of Jesus (Mark 5:37 [cf. Luke 8:51]; Mark 9:2 [cf. Matt. 17:1; Luke 9:28]; Mark 14:33).²²³ Paul mentions James, Peter, and John (in that order) as those regarded as “pillars” in the Jerusalem church (Gal. 2:9). Perhaps this order reflects what we find in Acts 15:13-21.²²⁴

While Mary Magdalene receives the first appearance in John—in Matthew the first appearance is to two Marys (28:1, 8-10)—there is no clear indication that there is a battle for authority going on between Peter and Mary. And even if such a debate is alluded to in the *Gospel of Thomas* (114) and the late second-century *Gospel of Mary*, it is not good evidence that this debate was going on in the first-century church.²²⁵ Catchpole notes that the Emmaus disciples “are not commissioned to do anything of note, and they are not expected to be anyone of note: they and their story do not belong to the setting in which appearances of the risen Jesus are exploited for the purpose of personal ecclesiastical validation.”²²⁶

The *Gospel of the Hebrews* mentioned by Funk and the Jesus Seminar is not a reliable source as we observed in the previous chapter. Even if its author preferred James and assigned him the first appearance, this provides limited support, if any, that similar preferences are occurring in the earlier sources. Accordingly, it is of little value to our present investigation.

That the tradition preserved in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 provides a chronological sequence likewise weighs against the proposal that the list was intended to legitimize the authority of the list’s members. Bracketing 1 Corinthians 15:6-7, in the New Testament and especially in Paul, the term ἐπειτα (“then”) is most commonly employed in a chronological sense (1 Thess. 4:17; Gal. 1:18, 21; 2:1; 1 Cor. 15:23, 46; Heb. 7:27 [cf. Lev 9:7]; James 4:14; Luke 16:7; John 11:7), although it can also denote something or someone that is next in position (1 Cor. 12:28; Heb. 7:2; James 3:17). The same may be said of εἶτα (then) which is also most commonly employed

3:11ff.; 4:4). Peter’s name appears first in every list of the Twelve (Mark 3:16-19; Matt. 10:2-4; Luke 6:13-16; Acts 1:13). See Hendriksen (1973), 648.

²²⁰ Bauckham (2002), 280. Bauckham also states that the appearance to the women in Matthew is not only chronologically prior to the appearance to the male disciples but is also “indispensable” to it, since the men must rely on the women’s report in order to see Jesus (278).

²²¹ Bauckham (2002), 280; Dunn (2003), 862-3.

²²² Luke 24:18.

²²³ Of interest in Mark 14:33 is when Jesus finds Peter, James and John asleep. His scold is directed toward Peter. This is most understandable if Peter is the leader of the three.

²²⁴ That it is James who talks after all have presented their case (15:13) as well as his statement διὸ ἐγὼ κρίνω (“Therefore, I judge”; 15:19) indicates that James is the final authority in Jerusalem at the time.

²²⁵ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 252. See also Bauckham (2002), 280n52.

²²⁶ Catchpole (2002), 77.

in a chronological sense (1 Cor. 15:24; James 1:15; Mark 4:17, 28; 8:25; Luke 8:12; John 13:5; 19:27; 20:27; 1 Tim. 2:13; 3:10), although it appears once in a transitional sense (Heb. 12:9). After stating the tradition, Paul adds that he himself was a recipient of a resurrection appearance and that this event was the ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων (last of all) of the appearances (1 Cor. 15:8). In summary, the multiple use of “then . . . then . . . then . . . then” followed by “last of all” indicates a chronological sequence ending with the appearance to Paul.²²⁷

Of course, it seems plausible that, in 1 Corinthians 15:5 and 7, εἶτα could be used in a weak transitional sense as though providing continuity in a narrative that includes the appearances without interest in an order. However, this tradition is not a narrative and καί would have been a better term in that instance. Moreover, in Luke 24:34 the chronological order of the appearances—to Peter first then to the Twelve—provides another testimony of a chronological sequence of the appearances, at least to Peter and to the Twelve (cf. 1 Cor. 15:5). In 15:8 Paul adds that Jesus appeared to him ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων (last of all). It seems that Paul is referring to a chronological order where he is the last to receive an appearance. However, his statement that follows could also be interpreted to support a positional order of the appearances: Ἐγὼ γάρ εἰμι ὁ ἐλάχιστος τῶν ἀποστόλων ὃς οὐκ εἰμὶ ἱκανὸς καλεῖσθαι ἀπόστολος, διότι ἐδίωξα τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ (For I myself am the least of the apostles and I am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God). In this case, we may posit that Paul appears last on the list because that is where he stands positionally in importance. If this is correct, the “pecking order” is as follows: Peter, the Twelve, a group of over five hundred, James, all of the apostles (i.e., the extended group that included Barnabas and others), Paul. But this is problematic. For while this order seems plausible with some members on the list, it does not with others. One can easily understand why Peter would be first, since he appears to have been the first church leader, and why Paul is last, since he persecuted the Church. One can also understand why the Twelve might precede James who was not a disciple of Jesus prior to his crucifixion and why James might precede the larger group of apostles who perhaps converted after him. However, it is difficult to see how the appearance to the more than five hundred at one time would have been intended to bestow authority upon them. There is no hint of an authoritative group of more than five hundred.²²⁸ And how may it be said that they enjoyed a position of greater authority in the church than James and the rest the larger group of apostles? Moreover, even if we understand this text as a conglomerate of competing traditions—Peter and the Twelve/James and the apostles—one must strain to explain why the group of more than five hundred precedes Paul.²²⁹ On the other hand, the list

²²⁷ Wenham (1995), 367n87. See also Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 260.

²²⁸ Wedderburn (1999), 117. See also Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 237; Craig (*Assessing*, 1989), 35; Dunn (“How are the Dead Raised,” 2002), 108-09. Bauckham (2002) thinks it possible that the individual appearances listed served to legitimize the authority of Peter, James, the twelve, and all of the apostles, while the appearance to the more than five hundred was added by Paul because of its usefulness (308). However, he adds that he regards that as very unlikely (see 279-80).

²²⁹ Painter in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001) sees here competing traditions between Peter and James (30). Replying to the view that competing authorities are seen in a race to the tomb between Peter and John, Craig (*Assessing*, 1989) says not only is there no evidence that any church group made any mention of such a competition, but also that “the Beloved Disciple should outrun Peter seems unremarkable, especially if he is younger; to hesitate before the open door of a tomb where a man had recently been buried would be the natural reaction of any of us. But true to his character, Peter brashly enters without hesitation” (237-39).

fits very well given a chronological order. Accordingly, interpreting the list of appearances in a chronological manner is more plausible than interpreting it in a manner of positional importance.

The proposal that two competing traditions are present, one supporting Peter's leadership and the other supporting that of James, is problematic; it does not address the data supporting the fact that they experienced something that led them to believe Jesus was still alive and had appeared to them. Wedderburn asserts that the competing traditions proposal is "insufficient reason to doubt the tradition, for, as we have seen, it seems that James and other members of Jesus' family did not believe in him during his ministry (Mark 3.21 and also John 7.5), but James clearly played a leading role in the early church in Jerusalem (cf. above all Gal. 1.19; 2.9)." He adds that "Paul gives no hint that he had any cause to doubt James's claim, however much it might have been convenient to do so at certain points in his career (cf. Gal. 2.12!)." ²³⁰

Accordingly, there is nothing that compels me to see a rhetorical device giving authority to the recipient of the first appearance or any subsequent appearances for that matter. ²³¹

4.3.2.3. Mark and Resurrection Appearances

The majority scholarly opinion at the moment is that Mark is the earliest of the four Gospels and originally ended at 16:8, leaving his readers without any narrative of a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus. ²³² If Mark ended his Gospel here, we would like to know why and whether it is likely that he knew of the appearances.

²³⁰ Wedderburn (1999), 116.

²³¹ Bauckham (2002) states that "First Corinthians 15:5 is far too slender a basis on which to build such a theory against the evidence of the Gospels" (308). Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005) opines that the legitimating of leadership proposal "strikes me as overdone" (285). However, he comments that even if the authority of Peter was not legitimized by his being the first recipient of an appearance, "the memory that Jesus appeared first to Peter helped cement his authority" and that a "desire to safeguard the apostle's status might, then, have been enough to demote Mary's role in the rise of Easter faith" (251). He adds that it may likewise be the case that the appearances to Peter, the Twelve, and James may have been singled out over the broader "all of the apostles," since they were well-known (237).

²³² R. Brown (1973), 123; Dunn (2003), 826n7; France (2002), 685; Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998), 467; Heil (1991), 357; Hoover in Copan and Tacelli, eds. (2000), 135; Keener (2003), 2:1194-95; Osiek (1997), 104; Waterman (2006), 37. There is, however, what appears to be a growing number of scholars who argue that either Mark never completed his Gospel or his ending was lost. Most of these are significant scholars. See Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 241; Croy (2003) who provides a list of 87 scholars who reject the idea that Mark 16:8 was his intended ending (174-77); Davis (2006), 54; C. A. Evans (2001), comment on Mark 16:8 (Logos Libronix); France (2002), "The Empty Tomb (Mark 16:1-8), Textual Notes" comment on Mark 16:8 (Logos Libronix); Gundry (1993), 1009-21; Metzger and Ehrman (2005), 325-26; Segal (2004), 450; Witherington (2001), 411; Wright ("Early Traditions," 1998), 136; cf. (2003), 623. Also see Waterman (2006) who mentions six advocates of a lost original ending since 1980 most of whom "are becoming very influential on this topic" (75-82): G. Osborne, R. Gundry, C. A. Evans, B. Witherington, N.T. Wright, and R. Swinburne. For arguments for a lost ending, see Gundry (1993) who provides twelve arguments (1009-1021), Metzger and Ehrman (2005), 325-26, and Witherington (2001), 411, 415, 415n14, 416, 417. Some hold that Mark's ending may be preserved in Matthew 28 and even Luke 24 (see Carnley [1987], 236; Witherington [2001], 416); Wright ("Early Traditions," 1998): "I am sure, however, that [Mark's lost ending] told stories not unlike those in Matthew, Luke, and John, though no doubt in Mark's own way: stories about a risen Jesus appearing and disappearing, teaching and commissioning, and finally being seen in that way no more. If so many others within the scholarly world have the right to invent new early Christian texts,

The final statement in Mark's resurrection narrative has baffled many:

καὶ ἐξελθοῦσαι ἔφυγον ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου, εἶχεν γὰρ αὐτὰς τρόμος καὶ ἔκστασις· καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν· ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ.

And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and amazement had taken hold of them. And they said nothing to no one, for they were afraid.

Why is it that the women appear to disobey the angel's command to communicate such a vital truth to Jesus' disciples and why would Mark end his Gospel in this manner? We may only speculate and the reasons provided are legion. It has been suggested that an androcentric bias, namely the problem of female witnesses, led Mark to want the men to be the first witnesses of the risen Jesus or simply not complicate matters by listing the women as witnesses.²³³ Perhaps this is why the appearance to the women is also absent in Luke's narrative and in the tradition preserved in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7.²³⁴ It has also been suggested that their silence is an apologetic move on Mark's part to explain why the discovery of the empty tomb was unknown to others for a number of years after the purported resurrection of Jesus.²³⁵ Crossley asserts the silence suggests there were no reliable witnesses to the empty tomb.²³⁶ Others have suggested that their silence is an indication of the women's unbelief.²³⁷ Fisher understands it as a narrative device meant to stir the reader's imagination.²³⁸ Dunn explains the silence as Mark wanting his readers to know that *they* are the witnesses and that they should therefore go tell what they know happened to Jesus.²³⁹ Crossan argues that Mark avoided awarding any apparitions to the

why should not I do so as well, just this once?" (136-37). J. Wenham (1984) is one of the very few scholars who believe Mark's original ending was 16:9-20 (46). Of interest is Waterman's (2006) findings that the number of scholars maintaining that Mark's intended ending is 16:8 *and* is Mark's creation has been on the decrease (82) and that there is a trend to accepting the position that 16:8 was not Mark's intended ending (83).

²³³ Bryskog (2002), 197; cf. 82; Dunn (2003), 830; Osiek (1997) attributes the omission of the women to the male apostles' desire to "shield the women of his group from such public scrutiny and the risk of scorn" (113); cf. 115. Contra is Witherington (2001) who disputes this interpretation, adding that Mark "has just portrayed the women disciples in a more positive light than the male ones in Mark 15" (417).

²³⁴ Lüdemann (2004) attributes the omission of the women in 1 Cor. 15:3-8 as being due to the "misogyny" of Paul (36). However, Bauckham comments that, since Paul referred to a woman named Junias as an apostle (Rom. 16:7), the appearance to the women may be included in 1 Corinthians 15:7: "then [he appeared] to all the apostles." While possible, if the appearances are listed chronologically, the appearance to the women is either omitted or covertly combined with the appearance to all the apostles in 15:7 in order to avoid the problem of women witnesses or it is unknown.

²³⁵ Theissen and Merz (1998), 501, who also suggest that the reason the women were silent was to avoid being accused of grave robbery, 502; Goulder in D'Costa, ed. (1996), 57-58; cf. (2005), 192. Fisher (1999) attempts to answer this charge saying that this silence that may even have been for years was "understandable, as they were in a state of shock. Eventually they reported their story" (74). This seems very implausible to me. Why would they wait years if the male disciples were proclaiming the resurrection shortly after Jesus' death?

²³⁶ Crossley (2005), 177.

²³⁷ However, Bauckham (2002) notes that the unbelief reported in the resurrection narratives is not confined to the women. In Matthew's Galilee appearance, the disciples see Jesus and some doubt (28:17). In Luke, the disciples are even "unbelieving" when Jesus appears to them in a room (24:37-41). In John, Thomas refuses to believe until he sees Jesus (20:24-25). In Mark's longer ending, the Emmaus disciples are not believed by the main group of disciples (269; cf. 288).

²³⁸ Fisher (1999), 72.

²³⁹ Dunn (2003), 833.

disciples since they had been discredited.²⁴⁰ Sheehan thinks that Mark is communicating that seeking evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is to go down the wrong path, since he sees one's faith as the main issue.²⁴¹ Bauckham suggests two possibilities: "(1) Mark wanted to preserve the mystery of the risen one; (2) Mark does not want his readers to forget that "suffering and the possibility of failure in discipleship in the face of suffering are still a reality."²⁴² Others have suggested that the women must have told the story to someone, since Mark knows it.²⁴³

What I find weightier than those just mentioned is a phrase amazingly similar to the puzzling οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν (they said nothing to no one) earlier in Mark 1:44. Having healed a leper, Jesus sternly warns him:

ὄρα μηδενὶ μηδὲν εἶπης, ἀλλὰ ὑπάγε σεαυτὸν δεῖξον τῷ ἱερεὶ καὶ προσένεγκε περὶ τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ σου ἃ προσέταξεν Μωϋσῆς, εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς.

See that you say nothing to no one. But go show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.²⁴⁴

The message seems to be that he is to go show himself to the priest without stopping along the way to share the news of his healing with anyone. In a similar way, the women leave the tomb and run quickly to tell the disciples as commanded without stopping along the way to tell anyone.²⁴⁵ While I like this explanation, it is not without its challenges. The reason provided for the womens' silence is because they were afraid (ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ), not because of an urgency to get the message to the disciples. However, the use of the terms elsewhere in Mark may provide clarity.

Φοβέομαι (fear), which ends 16:8, appears in eleven other occasions in Mark.²⁴⁶ In just over half of these, it refers to a type of fear that accompanies an encounter with divinity.²⁴⁷ We may also note that in the only other use of ἔκστασις in Mark (5:42),

²⁴⁰ Crossan, "Appendix: Bodily-Resurrection Faith" in Stewart, ed. (2006), 177.

²⁴¹ Sheehan (1986), 44. He adds that the women simply did not believe the angel and we need not either. See also Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003), 311, 311n138.

²⁴² Bauckham (2002), 286-87. Kendall (1988) examines the works of ten scholars for their explanations pertaining to why Mark's women are silent upon leaving an empty tomb. The scholars he examines are von Campenhausen, Fuller, Allen, Lightfoot, Pesch, Nineham, Marxsen, Boomershine, Bartholomew, and Mann. He concludes that, although a plurality certainly exists, they agree on three points: (1) the silence should be compared to the Messianic Secret where people did precisely the opposite of what they were told; (2) "apologetic reasons are at work to explain why empty tomb stories emerged after the appearance stories"; (3) "Mark wished to show the actual reaction of fear on the part of the community in the face of divine revelation and the consequences of preaching the resurrection" (96).

²⁴³ Bauckham (2002), 289; Dunn (2003), 832-33n26; Wright (2005), 224.

²⁴⁴ See Lev. 13.

²⁴⁵ Allison ("Explaining," 2005), 130; Bauckham (2002), 289; Hendriksen (1975), comments on Mark 16:8; Bauckham (2002) also suggests that, as Paul reported hearing things he could not repeat (2 Cor. 12:4), the women understand the angel's word as an "apocalyptic secret" that they may only reveal to the male disciples for the moment and that "[t]here is no suggestion in any of the Gospels that any of the disciples, women or men, communicate the news of the resurrection outside the circle of the disciples until the risen Lord explicitly commissions them to do so. I am inclined to think this the most convincing explanation of the women's silence in Mark 16:8" (290).

²⁴⁶ 4:41; 5:15, 33, 36; 6:20, 50; 9:32; 10:32; 11:18, 32; 12:12.

²⁴⁷ 4:41; 5:15, 33; 6:20, 50; 10:32. In the remaining, it refers to the fear of man (5:36, 9:32; 11:18, 32; 12:12). See Bauckham (2002), 290; France (2002), 682.

Jesus raises from the dead the daughter of the synagogue official Jairus, and those present (i.e., Jairus, his wife, Peter, James, John) are ἐκστάσει μεγάλη (greatly amazed). Intense joy is certainly present.²⁴⁸ Another term, τρόμος (trembling), appears only in Mark 16:8. However, Paul uses it four times, all of which seem to speak of a respect for the subject that motivates one to be on her best behavior.²⁴⁹ Given these common uses of the terms elsewhere, it is by no means a stretch to understand Mark as saying the following:

And the women left fleeing from the tomb. For as a result of seeing the angel and hearing the news of the risen Lord, the motivation to be on their best behavior and amazement had gripped them, and they said nothing to any one on their way to tell the disciples the news. For they had a reverential fear as a result of the revelation that kept them laser focused on their assigned task.

Accordingly, it is my opinion that the reason provided by Mark for the women's silence is not at all problematic when considering Mark's use of a similar phrase in 1:44.

Even if the women did immediately inform the male disciples of the angelic appearance to them, we are still left without a narrative of an appearance of the risen Jesus. Does this imply that Mark was unaware of any appearance traditions prior to the time in which he wrote his Gospel? We must keep in mind that if Mark was writing between AD 65 and 70 as most scholars believe, oral traditions about Jesus' resurrection that included the appearances were already in circulation and had been for some time. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians a decade or more before Mark penned his Gospel and the tradition embedded in 1 Corinthians 15:3ff. is at least a few years earlier. Since it is highly probable that the appearance traditions in this text go back to the Jerusalem apostles, it seems a bit of a strain to hold that Mark knew nothing of the appearances.²⁵⁰

Moreover, although Mark may have ended his Gospel at 16:8 without any appearances, his readers probably suspected them.²⁵¹ Mark mentions Jesus' resurrection a number of times throughout his Gospel (8:31-38; 9:9, 31; 10:34; 12:10-11, 18-27, 35-37; 13:26-27; 14:28, 58, 62; 16:6), and twice says that Jesus will meet his disciples in Galilee after his resurrection (14:28, 16:6).²⁵² Thus, the lack of an appearance of the risen Jesus is not enough to postulate that Mark did not know of one or more of them. This is especially true given 14:28 where Jesus predicts the very thing the angel announces.

²⁴⁸ It is of interest here that in what immediately follows Jesus commands the girl's parents not to tell anyone about what he had just done (5:43).

²⁴⁹ 1 Cor. 2:3; 2 Cor. 7:15; Eph. 6:5; Phil. 2:12. The latter three have μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου.

²⁵⁰ Carnley (1987), 216. France (2002): "It is one thing to emphasise and exploit paradoxical elements within the story of Jesus' ministry and passion, as we have seen Mark doing again and again, but quite another to conclude his gospel with a note which appears to undermine not only his own message but also the received tradition of the church within which he was writing" (683).

²⁵¹ R. Brown (1973), 123; Keener (2003), 2:1194-95.

²⁵² Allison ("Explaining," 2005), 130; Borg and Crossan (2006), 196; Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003), 311n138.

Furthermore, Keener notes that

ancient writers could predict events never recounted in their narratives but that the reader would understand to be fulfilled in the story world; the Greek East's favorite work, the *Iliad*, could predict, without recounting, the fall of Troy, which was already known to the *Iliad*'s tradition and which it reinforced through both subtle allusions and explicit statements in the story. The book ends with Hector's burial, but because the book emphasized that Hector was Troy's last adequate defender, this conclusion certainly implies the tragic demise of Troy. The *Odyssey* predicts but does not narrate Odysseus's final trial, but in view of the other fulfillments in the story, the reader or hearer is not left with discomfort. The *Argonautica* will not directly address Medea's unpleasant slaying of Pelias yet hints at that tradition. Likewise, that Mark probably ends without resurrection appearances (Mark 16:8) hardly means that Mark wanted his readers to doubt that they occurred (cf. Mark 14:28)!²⁵³

We may never know with certainty whether Mark intended to end his Gospel at 16:8. If he did, we may also never know why he chose to do so. What I have attempted to show in this section is that the contention that Mark was unaware of any appearances is quite weak. It is very probable that reports of post-resurrection appearances of Jesus were coming from the Jerusalem apostles and would have been known to virtually all of the early Christians. The post-resurrection appearances are predicted by Jesus on numerous occasions in Mark, and the angel affirms that Jesus has risen and that he will appear to his disciples as soon as they arrive in Galilee. Finally, writings known to many in Mark's day, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, predict events only later to assume their occurrence without narration.

4.3.2.4. Women as Eyewitnesses

All four canonical Gospels report that the women saw one or two angels at Jesus' tomb who told them Jesus had been resurrected. In two of these accounts (Matthew and John), Jesus appears to the women after their angelic encounter. Are there reasons for historians to conclude that one or more women had an experience that they interpreted as an encounter with the risen Jesus?

The main argument posited for the historicity of the appearance to the women, and the empty tomb for that matter, is that the early Christians would not have invented the story, since the low view of women in first-century Mediterranean society would raise problems of credibility. Bauckham provides evidence that in the Greco-Roman world educated men regarded women as "gullible in religious matters and especially prone to superstitious fantasy and excessive in religious practices" (Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.511-91; Plutarch, *De Pyth.* 25 [*Mor.* 407C]; Fronto *apud* Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 8-9;

²⁵³ Keener (2003), 2:1194-95. See also Allison ("Explaining," 2005), 129-30; Bauckham (2002), 294. Alsop (1975) proposes that both Mark 14:28 and 16:7 are "redactional and provide for Mk the essential theological seam between the passion narrative and the empty tomb story" (92). While this is possible, it seems unlikely to me. For if Paul and the early Christians understood that Jesus had been raised bodily as I have earlier proposed, then various hypothetical redactional layers that separated the empty tomb from the appearances are not needed. Lüdemann (2004) notes that "the tradition that Peter and the disciples will see Jesus is backed by the report in 1 Cor. 15:5. This means that the historical kernel of Mark 16:1-8 is an appearance of the 'Risen One' to Peter and the other disciples" (88).

Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 34.28; Celsus *apud* Origen, *C. Cels.* 3.55; 2 Tim. 3:6-7; Strabo, *Geog.* 1.2.8).²⁵⁴ A number of Jewish sources indicating the low view of women in Jewish culture may likewise be cited, although those from the Talmud are admittedly later (Jos. *Ant.* 4.8.15; t. Ber. 7:18; Sotah 19a; Kiddushin 82b;²⁵⁵ Rosh Hashannah 1.8²⁵⁶).²⁵⁷ We may also note Luke 24:11.

Precisely because of the low view of women in antiquity, many see the appearance to the women, and to Mary Magdalene especially, as historical given the criterion of embarrassment. It seems unlikely that the Evangelists, especially Mark, would either invent or adjust existing testimonies to make the women the first witnesses of the risen Jesus if that is not what was remembered in the earliest traditions.²⁵⁸ Why fabricate a report of Jesus' resurrection that already would have been difficult for many to believe and compound that difficulty by adding women as the first witnesses?²⁵⁹ If Matthew originated the story of the appearance to the women disciples, it seems far more likely that he would have depicted men as being the first to see the risen Jesus, especially if Mark did not provide such an appearance in his Gospel. Why not list the Sanhedrist Joseph of Arimathea and avoid the female issue

²⁵⁴ Bauckham (2002), 270-71. That women were esteemed less than men is suggested in Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, Augustus, 44. Also see 1 Tim 4:7 where old women are mentioned in a manner lacking respect.

²⁵⁵ In this text, perfume-makers and tanners (i.e., leather workers) are contrasted. The former is highly regarded, while the latter is not. The analogy of male and female children seems to be an attempt to clarify the point: The former is highly regarded, while the latter is not. This makes sense, especially if contemporary writers confirm that tanners were not considered among those esteemed. In *Contra Celsum*, Origen quotes the second-century critic of Jesus, Celsus, as saying, "We see, indeed, in private houses workers in wool and leather, and fullers, and persons of the most uninstructed and rustic character, not venturing to utter a word in the presence of their elders and wiser masters" (3.55). According to Celsus, workers in wool and leather were considered to be of questionable character. Given that exceptions could be cited, as a general rule, it appears that females were esteemed as lowly as tanners were. Origen recorded other remarks by Celsus concerning women: "Speaking next of the statements in the Gospels, that after His resurrection He showed the marks of His punishment, and how His hands had been pierced, he asks, 'Who beheld this?' And discrediting the narrative of Mary Magdalene, who is related to have seen him, he replies, 'A half-frantic woman, as you state.' And because she is not the only one who is recorded to have seen the Savior after His resurrection, but others also are mentioned, this Jew of Celsus culminates these statements also in adding, 'And some one else of those engaged in the same system of deception'" (Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 2.59); "Only foolish and low individuals, and persons devoid of perception, and slaves, and women, and children, of whom the teachers of the divine word wish to make converts" (ibid., 3.49); cf. ibid., 3.55.

²⁵⁶ According to this statement, the value of a woman's testimony was equal to that of a thief.

²⁵⁷ See also Byrskog (2002), 73-82.

²⁵⁸ Bauckham (2002), 259. Setzer (1997) notes, "The fact that it is Mary Magdalene who fills these roles in John, combined with the unanimity of the Synoptics and the *Gospel of Peter* concerning her place in the empty-tomb tradition, suggests that it is a firmly fixed tradition that John cannot violate" (262). Setzer adds that the clear reports of women as witnesses in Mark and Matthew are not as clear in Luke and John, indicating that these "later Gospel authors or the traditions they received were not entirely at ease" with them (268). This indicates that the report(s) of women witnesses was early and subsequently 'cleaned up' though not eliminated by the later Evangelists. (We may also note that in *Gospel of Peter* the women are eyewitnesses of the empty tomb and the appearance of Jesus with everyone else who is present for the resurrection event.) While this observation may be somewhat true of Luke who does not report an appearance of Jesus to the women, the women are the first to receive a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus in John, and Luke reports the women as recipients of revelation from the angels.

²⁵⁹ The resurrection narratives were mocked by Celsus in the second century precisely because of the appearance to the women (Origen, *Contra Celsus* 2.55).

altogether?²⁶⁰ Thus, as Bauckham assesses, the reason for the report's lack of credibility in the first century is a reason for its credibility in the twenty-first: "Since these narratives do not seem well designed to carry conviction at the time, they are likely to be historical, that is, believable by people with a historically critical mind-set today."²⁶¹ Accordingly, the most plausible explanation for the inclusion of women witnesses in the resurrection narratives is that the remembrance of the tradition was so strong and widespread that it had to be included.²⁶²

Further support for the embarrassing nature of the appearance to the women is evident in how other New Testament texts handle the women witnesses. The women witnesses, including Mary Magdalene, are omitted from the tradition in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7, which predates the Markan narrative, and from the kerygmatic summaries in Acts, the latter of which certainly postdate the resurrection narratives in the Synoptics, although they may have an origin much earlier.²⁶³

The criterion of embarrassment applied to the women's testimony can be pressed only so far. Women could testify in some cases and a higher view of women is found in Jewish writings, although these are in the Talmud which is later and may not reflect first-century Jewish thought.²⁶⁴ However, should there have been a need to fabricate appearances, it is doubtful that women would have been the recipients in such a prominent manner because of the "general reluctance in ancient Mediterranean society" to regard women as credible witnesses.²⁶⁵ Accordingly, what can be stated with certainty is that a woman's testimony would have been less preferable to a man's, whether or not it may have been allowable. And the more important the testimony, the less likely a woman's word would have been taken at face value.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁰ Gundry (1993): "the distrust in women's testimony, especially in Jewish culture, bespeaks an early date. And quite apart from the question of date, fabrication is likely to have supplied culturally more credible witnesses to the emptiness of the tomb" (995; cf. 1002 in which he also notes the exclusively male list in 1 Cor. 15); Theissen and Merz (1998), 501.

²⁶¹ Bauckham (2002), 259. He contends that the women witnesses are an unlikely invention and lists twelve scholars in support, adding that "serious attempts to refute this argument are surprisingly rare" (258n2). To Bauckham's list we may add Fisher (1999), 72; Maier (1997), 184; Montefiore (2005), 113.

²⁶² Bauckham (2002), 259; Dunn (2003), 843; Osiek (1997), 116; Setzer (1997), 262.

²⁶³ Bauckham (2002), 307; Byrskog (2002), 196; J. Wenham (1984), 53. Bauckham (2002) adds that John employs Peter and the beloved disciple as the official witnesses of the empty tomb, since the women could not serve in that role because they did not observe Jesus' burial by Joseph and could not identify the correct tomb (283). However, neither John nor the Synoptics list Peter or the beloved disciple as eyewitnesses of Jesus' burial by Joseph. Instead, these go to the empty tomb based on the women's report and also find it empty (20:3-10). Moreover, even in John, Mary is the first recipient of an appearance of the risen Jesus.

²⁶⁴ Ketubot 2:6-7; Niddah 45. Bauckham (2002) adds that the low value placed on a woman's testimony may not have been present "in the early Christian communities in which these stories of women were first told and transmitted" (260). However, this does not appear to be the case given the report in Luke 24:11 that the disciples first regarded the women's report of the angels' revelation as λῆρος (nonsense). Catchpole (2002) opines, "The instinct that caused Luke to superimpose a checking visit to the tomb by Peter because the adequacy of the women is doubted is exactly the instinct that would have kept the women out of any story created *ex nihilo*—and yet they are here! . . . The pre-Gospel tradition of the women's discovery of the emptiness of the known tomb of Jesus therefore seems to rest on a sound foundation" (150).

²⁶⁵ Osiek (1997), 112-13 (esp. 113); Bauckham (2002), 270; Byrskog (2002), 193-94; Habermas ("Resurrection Research," 2005), 141; Theissen and Merz (1998), 501; Witherington (2001), 401.

²⁶⁶ Bauckham (2002) also notes that a more serious problem with the role of women as witnesses in the resurrection narratives involves "something even dearer to patriarchal religious assumptions: the

“Christ is risen” is certainly an important testimony. That the mission given to the women was to inform the men rather than the world reflects a status below that of the male disciples. Even so, that the women are the first recipients of that revelation is profound for us, since it is unlikely an invention by Mark. If it had appeared in a pre-Markan tradition that had no relation to the apostolic testimony, it most likely would have been corrected either by Mark or a subsequent Evangelist who could claim eyewitness testimony in support as we find directly in Luke and alluded to in John. Since there is strong evidence elsewhere that the original disciples sincerely believed the risen Jesus had appeared to them, it seems unlikely that these disciples would have invented narratives about appearances to those who had never received them.

Crossley argues that the embarrassment argument is not “as strong as is sometimes thought. What we should not forget is that women had been given a notably significant role in Jesus’ ministry which may have made their testimony more acceptable for some.”²⁶⁷ But this misses the point. Not only does it say nothing that directly addresses the problem of women witnesses, one could counter-argue that it is this very component of the involvement of women in the ministry of Jesus that lends credibility to the accounts. Furthermore, while their involvement may have made their testimony more acceptable to some, overall it would have done more harm than good.

Another challenge to the embarrassment factor is that if the male disciples had already fled Jerusalem for Galilee, they could not have been around to witness the empty tomb on Easter Sunday. Accordingly, no matter how distasteful an appearance to women may have been, it was the only option available to a narrator inventing the report. Moreover, since the surviving tradition is that only the women were those present at Jesus’ crucifixion and burial, they would have been the only ones capable of providing eyewitness testimony, despite their competency challenges.²⁶⁸ I see two

priority of men in God’s dealings with the world. In these stories women are given priority by God as recipients of revelation and thereby the role of mediators of that revelation to men” (275). In support, Bauckham observes how Josephus minimizes the role of women in receiving revelation from God: “Whereas in Genesis Rebekah inquires of the Lord about her unborn children and receives a prophetic oracle about them (Gen 25:22-23), in Josephus it is her husband Isaac who prays and receives the prophecy from God (*Ant.* 1:257). Pseudo-Philo’s *Biblical Antiquities* provides two additional examples of how women were viewed as not those who would receive divine revelations (9:10; 42:1-5)” (271-74). While Bauckham’s comparison of the report in Genesis and Josephus is compelling, those listed for Pseudo-Philo are not as strong. In the former, a daughter (Maria) has a dream that the child to be born of her parents (Moses) will be a son who will perform miracles and deliver his people. When she shares the dream with her parents they do not believe her. While this probably hints at an androcentric bias, we must keep in mind that the opposite occurs when Joseph dreams that his brothers and parents will bow down to him. When he shares the dream with his brothers and father, his father rebukes Joseph (Gen. 37:3-10). In the latter reference in Pseudo-Philo, a woman is blamed for her barrenness while her husband is blameless. Whether this actually reflects an androcentric bias is not clear to me, since the reverse can likewise be cited where the male is the one carrying blame: Nabal and Abigail (1 Sam. 25:2ff.), Zacharias and Elizabeth (Luke 1:5ff.). Moreover, while acknowledging that women would not have been thought by Jewish men to be candidates for the reception of divine revelation, Byrskog (2002) notes that this carries limitations in our present discussion, since the revelation given to the women at the empty tomb by the angel(s) was not the type assigned to the men directly by the risen Lord in Matt. 28:16-20, Luke 24:36-49, and Acts 1:8. Instead, the angel tells them to inform the male disciples. Thus, while the women—and especially Mary—were not to be ignored, they were not prominent as witnesses of the risen Jesus or the empty tomb (82). The male disciples remained in leadership.

²⁶⁷ Crossley (2005), 184.

²⁶⁸ Carnley (1987), 60.

problems with this thesis. There are no reports that the disciples fled from Jerusalem for Galilee whereas its being the Sabbath is reason to believe they had stayed put.²⁶⁹ Furthermore, even if the disciples had all fled Jerusalem, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus may have been better candidates than women for discovering the empty tomb.

There are a few additional considerations that lend credibility to the appearance to the women. We may first note that the appearance to the women appears to be multiply-attested (Matthew 28:1, 8-10; John 20:11-18; Ps-Mark 16:9-11) and is thus quite early.²⁷⁰ However, Pseudo-Mark is very probably late and John could have rewritten Matthew's account. But the latter seems unlikely. Allison argues that the two share few words and that the Johannine account does not contain any clear theme or interest noticeable in Matthew.²⁷¹ Of course, it is possible that John took the core of the narrative and rewrote it. Thus, the claim of multiple attestation could be firmer.

Furthermore, it does not appear that the resurrection narratives were meant to stir up confidence in church leadership. In all four canonical Gospels, none of Jesus' disciples were expecting him to rise from the dead even though he had predicted it on several occasions. And even after Jesus' resurrection is reported to them, they are incredulous (Luke 24:11). Thus, there is a double-embarrassment factor present, since the women serve as both witnesses and as the recipients of divine revelation while the men are presented as thick-headed. These are not the kind of reports one invents in order to boost confidence in Church leadership.

Another counter-argument to the embarrassment factor is that it is natural that the women are the witnesses of the appearances and the empty tomb since they were the witnesses of Jesus' burial. This is not apparent to me. There was no known need to fabricate an appearance to the women. A fabricated report may have had Joseph and/or Nicodemus lead the male disciples to the tomb, discover it empty, and be the recipients of an appearance. Or why not have the women discover the empty tomb and inform the male disciples as we find in John but then have the men be the recipients of the angelic announcement and initial appearance of Jesus, had the story been a complete fabrication? Moreover, an invented story of the resurrection could have recorded the appearance to the men while they were waiting at the tomb for the women to show up or after the women did their part in dressing the corpse. The women need only have played a secondary role.

Perhaps we could nuance the argument to claiming that the women naturally would be the first to see the risen Jesus, since it was their responsibility to anoint the body. However, this does not square with the Gospels' testimony that Joseph of Arimathea and/or Nicodemus prepared the body for burial with a substantial amount of spices prior to the women's visit (Mark 15:42-47; Matt. 27:57-61; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-40).

²⁶⁹ Bauckham (2002), 258n2; Wedderburn (1999), 58-60.

²⁷⁰ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 247. Many scholars maintain that the tradition is very old pertaining to the appearance to Mary if not the other women too. See Allison [*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005], 249; Lüdemann (2004), 87.

²⁷¹ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 247-48.

In the end, the embarrassment factor weighs quite heavily in favor of the historicity of the appearance to the women and counterarguments simply carry too little weight.

4.3.2.5. Appearance to the Emmaus Disciples

A large number of scholars have contended that the appearance to the Emmaus disciples is an invention, perhaps Lukan, symbolic of the Eucharist in the early church.²⁷² There are reasons for disputing this conclusion.²⁷³ Alsup counters that “the assumed lines of contact with the words of institution and the practice of the church in its eucharistic fellowship with the resurrected One are simply missing.” He adds that even more difficult is the fact that at the very moment when meal fellowship with Jesus could take place, Jesus disappears.²⁷⁴ Waterman argues that since the Emmaus disciples were not with the Twelve at the Last Supper, the Emmaus meal could not remind them of it.²⁷⁵ Catchpole argues that there is nothing to suggest that when Jesus broke the bread and handed it to the Emmaus disciples they interpreted him as saying, “This is my body.” He concludes that their recognition of Jesus is not brought on by a Eucharistic motif.²⁷⁶

These counterarguments are not conclusive in my opinion. One could answer Alsup that the Emmaus disciples showed that others could partake of the Eucharist even though they were not present at the Last Supper. In answer to Waterman, Luke may have Jesus disappear when the Emmaus disciples recognize him because he wants his present readers to know that they can recognize Jesus in the Eucharist although they cannot see him with their physical eyes. Even these answers cannot be proven. The entire dialogue on the Eucharistic meaning behind the narrative involves speculation, although I find Catchpole’s counterargument difficult to dismiss.²⁷⁷ While historical reconstruction often involves speculation, we want to base our investigation of whether Jesus rose from the dead on much firmer ground. A verdict of “possible” is all that is warranted for the Eucharistic interpretation. But we may say as much in regard to the historicity of the appearance reported in this narrative.

Funk and the Jesus Seminar suggest that the original Emmaus appearance may have been an angelophany.²⁷⁸ Catchpole argues for a pre-Lukan version of the narrative and sees a parallel in the angel Raphael with Tobiah in Tobit, noting fifteen areas of

²⁷² Alsup (1975): “It is widely accepted in NT research that we have here, in fact, the Eucharistic setting of the early church with all of the ramifications of the institution of the Lord’s Supper on the night of Jesus’ betrayal not only redactionally, but also traditionally” (197). Also see Crossan (1991), 399-401; (1995), 205-06.

²⁷³ See Alsup (1975), 197. Some see the story as pre-Lukan (Catchpole [2002], 88-102; Dunn [2003], 848-49). Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005) is undecided (254).

²⁷⁴ Alsup (1975), 197.

²⁷⁵ Waterman (2006), 25n58.

²⁷⁶ Catchpole (2002), 76. This is only the fourth of four arguments he provides on 75-76.

²⁷⁷ It is also worth noting that the story is found in a much shorter version without any hints of the Eucharist in Ps-Mark 16:12-13.

²⁷⁸ Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998), 481-82. In support they cite reports of angels and deities appearing in Gen. 18:1-15; 19:1-11; Heb. 13:2, and *Metamorphoses* 8. They also think that Emmaus and Cleopas may have been Lukan inventions (482). However, it is doubtful that the three persons in Gen. 18 were all angels. In Gen. 17:1, it is YHWH himself who appears to Abram and in Gen. 18:1 it is YHWH who again appears to Abram, although in the latter, YHWH appears with two others who are presumably angels.

parallel thoughts.²⁷⁹ Some are more striking than others. Consider the following four, which seem to me the most striking of the bunch:

The traveling companion possesses vital information about the solution to the problem, but even in affirming it authoritatively [the deity of the traveler] is not recognized.²⁸⁰

The solution to the problem is found within the Mosaic writings.²⁸¹

Each stage of the journey ends with the provision of hospitality and a celebratory meal.²⁸²

An outpouring of emotion greets the solution of the problem.²⁸³

While similarities cannot be denied, there are a number of differences to which Catchpole gives no attention. It is an angel who appears to Tobiah, whereas it is the Lord himself who appears to the Emmaus disciples, and there is no indication that Jesus was ever regarded as an angel by his early followers. The angel is sent in response to the prayers of Tobiah—who prays for death—and those of the daughter of Raguel—who prays for a husband.²⁸⁴ The appearance to the Emmaus disciples is not in response to any prayer. They grieve over the death of the one who is walking with them. Tobiah seeks a traveling companion and finds the angel Raphael, whereas Jesus approached the Emmaus disciples and sought to travel with them.²⁸⁵ Moreover, while stories circulated among the early Christians that angels had sometimes been among the pious without their awareness, the high Christology present at such an early stage restrained them from confusing Jesus with an angel (Heb. 13:2).²⁸⁶ Although Catchpole thinks that Tobit provides a “remarkably clear analogy and parallel,”²⁸⁷ this seems overly hopeful. It is possible that an analogy is present. But we cannot affirm it with any degree of certainty.

While many have argued that Jesus’ post-resurrection appearance to the Emmaus disciples may have been invented to describe the early Church practice of the Eucharist, we may say that this is possible but that there is nothing to commend this interpretation over an actual appearance. That the appearance is a modified angelophany has even less to commend it. It is possible that the appearance is multiply-attested in Ps-Mark 16:12-13, a passage that is far shorter and without any theological overtones. However, Ps-Mark may have reduced Luke’s narrative in the interest of economy. Moreover, while it is possible that Ps-Mark preserves an earlier tradition, this is pure speculation and is not the type of evidence we want to employ if we wish to conduct responsible historical work. This leaves us with only one firm source that reports the Emmaus appearance. The historicity of Luke’s Emmaus narrative must be judged as indeterminate. However, an interpretation that suggests

²⁷⁹ Catchpole (2002), 69, 70ff. However, he adds that this was not Luke’s view (69).

²⁸⁰ Catchpole (2002), 72.

²⁸¹ Catchpole (2002), 72.

²⁸² Catchpole (2002), 73.

²⁸³ Catchpole (2002), 73.

²⁸⁴ Tobit 3:1-17.

²⁸⁵ Tobit 5:1-6; Luke 24:14-15.

²⁸⁶ See Boa and Bowman, Jr. (2007), 94-95.

²⁸⁷ Catchpole (2002), 70.

that this appearance tradition was not meant to be understood as a historical appearance is on less firm ground.

4.3.2.6. Those Who “Doubted” in Matthew 28:17-18

καὶ ἰδόντες αὐτὸν προσεκύνησαν, οἱ δὲ ἐδίστασαν. καὶ προσελθὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς λέγων· ἐδόθη μοι πᾶσα ἐξουσία ἐν οὐρανῶ καὶ ἐπὶ [τῆς] γῆς.

And seeing him, they worshipped, but some doubted. And coming Jesus spoke to them saying, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.”

This report is puzzling. If the risen Jesus is before their very eyes, why do some experience doubt? Was there ambiguity in the experience? Was it visionary in nature in terms of being a heavenly experience rather than a concrete appearance of a physical Jesus in space-time? Dunn asks whether this means that “not all were so persuaded of what they saw and experienced” or whether there was “some confused perception.”²⁸⁸ Walsh & Keesmaat are not troubled, explaining that these doubted in the presence of the risen Jesus. The reason for their doubt is that they “were still expecting a nationalistic restoration! . . . It was not that they doubted that this was in fact the risen one. Their question was: what’s going on here?”²⁸⁹

I have serious doubts about any interpretation that understands Matthew as providing a hint that the appearances were either ethereal or of a vision of Jesus in the heavens or outside of space-time. We must remember that only a few verses earlier Matthew reports that the tomb was empty. Jesus’ body has been raised and he appeared in space-time so that the women could hold onto his feet.

There are a number of plausible explanations for their doubting.²⁹⁰ Perhaps those who doubted were not members of Jesus’ disciples. The οἱ δὲ can point to a group outside of the disciples who were present.²⁹¹ Jesus had been crucified on Friday and his resurrection was reported on Sunday. The walk from Jerusalem to Galilee would have taken a few days. This could have placed Jesus’ disciples in Galilee on Tuesday or Wednesday. Since we would imagine that they would have been anxious to get to

²⁸⁸ Dunn (2003), 854, 858.

²⁸⁹ Walsh & Keesmaat (1992), 194-95. They likewise contend that they doubted because they experienced cognitive dissonance (193-200).

²⁹⁰ Of course, others have been offered than are presented in this chapter. Welker (1994) asserts that their doubt concerned not whether they saw something, but the status of the person they saw. In their culture, one should only bow in that sense before divinity (6-7). Wedderburn (1999) asserts that “[s]ome were perhaps initially unbelieving” (67). However, “the fact that the ‘doubt’ of some is mentioned suggests that this is no mere mundane encounter. What they ‘see’ also induces worship (v. 17)” (71). See also Bowman and Komoszewski (2007), 294-95n7.

²⁹¹ J. Wenham (1984) notes that the nearest parallel to the *hoi de* (but others) in Matt. 28:17 is in Matt. 26:67: then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others [*hoi de*] slapped Him (114). Wenham wants to say these others in Matt. 28:17 consist of a different group than the disciples. While possible, this is not required. After all, those who spat in Jesus’ face and those slapping him were members of the same group and it goes without being said that those who worshipped Jesus were not the same persons who doubted. They could have been members of the same group, perhaps of the more than five hundred or of the disciples themselves. Since others are not mentioned, there is a slight bit more weight tipping to the disciples only.

Galilee both to see Jesus and for fear of the Jews, let us suppose that they arrived there on Tuesday. Either sometime on Tuesday or Wednesday the appearance of Jesus takes place. Jesus is seen publicly on the mount. The disciples are excited and begin to worship him while he comes to them and others gather to see what is going on and to hear Jesus again. In the back of the crowd one man says to another, “What is all the excitement about? We have heard Jesus before. What is so special this time?” The other answers, “Didn’t you hear? Jesus was crucified last Friday in Jerusalem and he has risen from the dead!” The first is skeptical of the report and says, “Someone got things wrong. The Romans must have crucified someone else.” Thus, they did not doubt that Jesus was before them but that he had been crucified a few days ago. While I regard this explanation as plausible, there is another that I think is most likely what Matthew was thinking.

Matthew uses *ἐδίστασαν* to communicate doubt in this passage. There is only one other occurrence of this term in the New Testament and it is also in Matthew (14:30-31). Matthew reports that the disciples see Jesus walking on water. Peter accepts Jesus’ invitation to do likewise and while walking on water feels the strong wind around him, is overcome by fear and begins to sink. Jesus rescues him and asks why he doubted (*ἐδίστασας*). *Διστάζω* has the meaning of having two (*δίς*) thoughts on a matter. That is what we find here with Peter. His belief was accompanied by doubt. Bracketing the issue of the historicity of the story, we can imagine Peter walking on water and being completely overwhelmed with what was taking place. As the wind picks up and the waves crash around him, perhaps Peter begins thinking about his last experience on a boat when a similar wind was blowing and he wonders how he is now walking atop deep water and what would happen to him if something went wrong. Fear arises in the midst of faith.

Is this far different than our first experience in an airplane? After the thrill of a speedy takeoff and watching the buildings and automobiles become smaller as we lifted higher into the sky, many of us experienced wonder over the flight. But as we looked at the ground thousands of feet below, some of us pondered our fate should a wing fall off, and fear resulted.

A similar message of dual thoughts is communicated in Mark 9:24. When a man comes to Jesus to have his son exorcized of demons, Jesus tells him that all things are possible to the one who believes. The man replies, *πιστεύω· βοήθει μου τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ* (I believe. Help my unbelief). Any believer knows of a time when she has uttered a sincere prayer out of faith while also asking God to increase her faith. The point I would like to make here is that in both Matthew 14:31 and Mark 9:24 we do not see those doubting as one having his arms crossed and saying “I don’t agree with your assessment of the situation.”²⁹² We do not have a doubting Thomas. Peter is walking on water and the man has brought his son to Jesus to have him healed. Thus, an incomplete or challenged faith that includes both belief and doubt is present in these uses of *ἐδίστασας* and *ἀπιστίᾳ*.

I am convinced there is a parallel thought to Matthew 28:17 in Luke 24:41 that supports this view and clarifies for us Matthew’s words. After Jesus had appeared to the Emmaus disciples, they ran into Jerusalem to tell the eleven that Jesus was alive.

²⁹² Keener (1999), 716.

When the disciples heard the news they replied that they already knew Jesus had risen from the dead because he had earlier appeared to Peter. At that moment Jesus appeared before them in the room and they were frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost. Jesus told them not to be afraid and showed them his hands and feet. It is at this point that Luke makes the following comment in 24:41a:

ἔτι δὲ ἀπιστούντων αὐτῶν ἀπὸ τῆς χαρᾶς καὶ θαυμαζόντων εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ἔχετε τι βρώσιμον ἐνθάδε;

And [while they were] still *unbelieving* from joy and astonishment, he said to them, “Do you have any food to eat here?”

Notice why they were in disbelief: from joy and amazement. I have a friend who once asked me about this passage. His mother had died only two years prior. I answered, “What if while we are talking your mother walked into the room? She smiles and says, ‘Hi, Son.’ You are overcome with joy and quickly rise up and hug her. You kiss her head and realize that she has the same smell and touch as before. It is definitely her. But then you remember seeing her in a casket and burying her. This cannot be—or can it?” Is this not a description of what the disciples were experiencing? They were there when Jesus was arrested and knew he had been crucified just a few days earlier. But with open mouths and wide eyes that are filled with tears they now see him standing before them in perfect health. Does this not describe how they were “unbelieving from joy and astonishment”? I think this passage sheds light on Matthew 28:17 where upon seeing Jesus they worshiped him while some doubted or had two thoughts simultaneously.

This is a far more plausible interpretation of the doubt passages than the claim that Matthew and Luke were trying to answer those contending that the appearances were ethereal in nature. Had that been the case, the empty tomb was sufficient to accomplish the task and to mention doubts and unbelief would have been counterproductive to such a purpose.²⁹³

Before moving along, I would like to address an interesting counter-explanation by Carnley. He asserts that Matthew had a need to include a passage where the disciples doubted. He contends that at the Great Commission, all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to Jesus. He is already exalted and yet there is no suggestion that this has already taken place.

The only indication in this pericope that Jesus was understood to have appeared as a material or physical body walking on this earth (as in a Christepiphany), rather than more elusively ‘from heaven’ (as in a Christophany), are the words “Jesus came near and said” in verse 18. But this phrase is a typical Matthean one which is found some thirty times in Matthew's gospel but nowhere else in the New Testament. It is clearly an editorial comment which Matthew elsewhere adds to his source material and it seems likely he has added it here also, to an original resurrection tradition which, without it, unequivocally implied that Jesus appeared “from heaven.”²⁹⁴

²⁹³ See Catchpole (2002), 67.

²⁹⁴ Carnley (1987), 237. Sympathetic to Carnley is Dunn (2003), 858.

I was able to identify 33 references in Matthew where *someone came near and said something*.²⁹⁵ So, Carnley is correct on this point. However, although typical for Matthew, the phrase is found elsewhere in the New Testament contrary to Carnley, appearing twice in Mark, seven times in Luke/Acts, and once in John.²⁹⁶ Below is a list of every Matthean occurrence of the phrase “coming to and saying” (προσέρχομαι, λαλέω or λέγω) with its parallels in the other canonical Gospels:

1. Matt 8:2/Mark 1:40/Luke 5:12
2. Matt 8:19/Luke 9:57
3. Matt 8:25/Mark 4:38/Luke 8:24
4. Matt 9:14/Mark 2:18/Luke 5:33
5. Matt 13:10/Mark 4:10/Luke 8:9
6. Matt 13:27 (no parallel)
7. Matt 13:36 (no parallel)
8. Matt 14:15/Mark 6:35/Luke 9:12
9. Matt 15:1-2/Mark 7:1-5/Luke 11:37-38 (In this pericope, Matthew is closer to Mark who provides more information and Luke differs from both)
10. Matt 15:12/Mark 7:17
11. Matt 15:23/Mark 7:24-30 (In this pericope, Matthew provides a statement by the disciples not reported by Mark)
12. Matt 17:6-7/Mark 9:2-10/Luke 9:28-36 (In this pericope, Matthew provides a statement by Jesus not reported by Mark and Luke)
13. Matt 17:19/Mark 9:28/Luke 9:37-43a (In this pericope, Matthew and Mark are very close whereas the disciples’ question is not reported by Luke although Jesus’ reply is)
14. Matt 17:24 (no parallel)
15. Matt 18:1/Mark 9:33-37/Luke 9:46-48 (In this pericope, Matthew portrays the disciples asking the question “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” whereas in Mark and Luke the disciples debate the question among themselves and Jesus knew what was in their hearts. Thus, the Markan and Lukan Jesus is a little more Christologically charged than the Matthean Jesus.)
16. Matt 18:21-22/Luke 17:4 (In this pericope, Matthew reports Jesus answering a question asked by his disciples, whereas Luke reports Jesus’ words as teaching. It is possible that these are two different occasions.)
17. Matt 19:3/Mark 10:2
18. Matt 19:16/Mark 10:17/Luke 18:18
19. Matt 21:23/Mark 11:27-28/Luke 20:1-2
20. Matt 21:28, 30 (no parallel)
21. Matt 22:23-24/Mark 12:18/Luke 20:27-28
22. Matt 24:3/Mark 13:3/Luke 21:7 (Matthew and Mark are close.)
23. Matt 25:20, 22, 24/Luke 19:16, 18, 20
24. Matt 26:17/Mark 14:12/Luke 22:7-9 (Matthew and Mark are close while Luke first adds a question by Jesus to which their question is a reply.)
25. Matt 26:49/Mark 14:45/Luke 22:47-48/John 18:3-4 (Matthew and Mark report that Judas came to Jesus and said “Rabbi!” In Luke, Judas comes near and it

²⁹⁵ Matt. 4:3; 8:2, 19, 25; 9:14, 27ff.; 13:10, 27, 36; 14:15; 15:1, 12, 23; 17:7, 19, 24; 18:1, 21; 19:3, 16; 21:23, 28, 30; 22:23; 24:3; 25:20, 22, 24; 26:17, 49, 69, 73; 28:18.

²⁹⁶ Mark 6:35; 14:45; Luke 7:14; 8:24; 9:12; 13:31; John 12:21; Acts 22:26, 27; 23:14.

- is Jesus who speaks to him. In John, when Judas and the others come, Jesus goes to them and speaks.)
26. Matt 26:69/Mark 14:66-67/Luke 22:56/John 18:25 (Matthew reports that a maid came to Peter and spoke, while Mark reports that a maid came into the courtyard and spoke to Peter, while Luke reports that a maid in the courtyard spoke to the others, while John reports that others spoke to Peter.)
 27. Matt 26:73/Mark 14:70/Luke 22:59/John 18:25-27 (Matthew reports that others came to Peter and spoke, while Mark reports that others spoke to Peter, while Luke reports that an individual spoke to the others, while John does not report the third accusation.)
 28. Matt 28:18/Mark 16:15/Luke and John omit (Mark does not report Jesus coming to them but reports Jesus' words.)

Looking through these occurrences, we can make the following observations concerning the phrase “coming to and saying” (προσέρχομαι, λαλέω or λέγω) in primarily Matthew but also the other Synoptics:

- In more than half of the occurrences, the same event is reported in one or more of the other Gospels although a different word may be employed. For example, Matthew prefers προσέρχομαι to Mark's έρχομαι (1:40; 2:18; 7:17; 9:28; 11:27-28; 12:18; 14:66-67).
- In one passage Matthew and Mark report a question not reported by Luke (13),²⁹⁷ while in another Matthew and Mark do not report a question reported by Luke (24).
- In two passages, Matthew provides a statement not reported by Mark and Luke (11, 12).
- In one passage Matthew provides less information than Mark (9).
- There are four passages in Matthew where the phrase occurs without parallel reports in the other Gospels (6, 7, 14, 20).
- In two passages where the phrase appears, Matthew's report appears less Christologically charged than the reports of Mark and Luke (15) and while Matthew agrees with Mark, Jesus is presented as being more in control of the situation in Luke and John who do not use the phrase (25).
- Matthew reports that Jesus came and spoke while Mark reports that Jesus spoke (28).

For New Testament uses of the phrase outside of Matthew 28:18, both occurrences in Mark also appear in Matthew and thus cannot be said to be Matthean, given Markan priority (Mark 6:35; 14:45). In Luke, two occurrences also appear in Matthew (Luke 8:24; 9:12), while another is unique to Luke (13:31). There are three occurrences of the phrase in Acts (22:26, 27; 23:14). The only occurrence of the phrase in John is unique (12:21).

While the phrase “coming to and saying” (προσέρχομαι, λαλέω or λέγω) is preferred by Matthew, it is not uniquely his. In no case outside of 28:18 do we observe him employing it to bolster his narrative in order to promote orthodoxy. In fact, we see almost the opposite occurring (15, 25). Moreover, it is important to note that this is the same Matthew writing who reports only a few verses earlier that Jesus has been

²⁹⁷ Numbers here in parentheses refer to the list of 28 above.

raised from the dead, is no longer in his tomb, but is on his way to Galilee where they will meet him (28:6-7). It is the same Matthew who also provides the report of the women that they had met Jesus on their way to tell his disciples the news and who then hold onto his feet and worship him (28:9-10). These reports could not be more physical in nature. When Jesus reiterates that the women are to tell his disciples to go to Galilee where they will see him, we may assume that he is not referring to an appearance different than what they have just experienced, although this cannot be stated with certainty. Given what we have observed from Matthew's use of the phrase in question, his reporting of the empty tomb, and the grasping of Jesus' feet, I see no reason to hold that Matthew sensed a need to add the phrase "Jesus came near and said" in order to be clear that the Galilean appearance was physical in nature. Moreover, had that been his intentions, we may rightly expect Matthew to omit the clause "but some doubted" (οἱ δὲ ἐδίσταναν) if he believed it stood in contrast to the type of appearance that he envisioned and reported.²⁹⁸

4.3.2.7. Fates of the Apostles

After Jesus' death, the disciples endured persecution and a number of them experienced martyrdom. The strength of their conviction indicates they were not just claiming that Jesus had appeared to them after rising from the dead. They really believed it. They willingly endangered themselves by publicly proclaiming the risen Christ. A number of texts may be cited in support.

One need only read through the book of Acts to find reports that the disciples were willing to suffer for their belief that the risen Jesus had appeared to them.²⁹⁹ Jesus' statement to Peter in John 21:18-19—that when he is old he will stretch out his hands, signifying the type of death he would die—is typically taken to mean that Peter was martyred by crucifixion.³⁰⁰ Jesus' statement to James and John that they will drink the cup he drinks and be baptized with the baptism in which he is baptized may indicate that they were both martyred (John 10:35-40). This interpretation is strengthened by the report that James the brother of John was martyred (Acts 12:2). Elsewhere, Jesus tells his disciples that persecution awaits them (John 15:19-21; 16:1-3). Perhaps written around the same time as John, 1 Clement reports the sufferings and probably the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul:

διὰ ζῆλον καὶ φθόνον οἱ μέγιστοι καὶ δικαιοτάτοι στύλοι ἐδώθησαν καὶ ἕως θανάτου ἤθλησαν ³ λάβωμεν πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν ἡμῶν τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς ἀποστόλους ⁴ Πέτρον ὃς διὰ ζῆλον ἄδικον οὐχ ἕνα οὐδὲ δύο ἀλλὰ πλείονας ὑπήνεγκεν πόνους καὶ οὕτω μαρτυρήσας ἐπορεύθη εἰς τὸν ὀφειλόμενον τόπον τῆς δόξης ⁵ διὰ ζῆλον καὶ ἔριν Παῦλος ὑπομονῆς βραβεῖον ὑπέδειξεν ⁶ ἑπτάκις δεσμὰ φορέσας φυγαδευθεὶς λιθασθεὶς κήρυξ γενόμενος ἔν τε τῇ ἀνατολῇ καὶ ἐν τῇ δύσει τὸ γενναῖον τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ κλέος ἔλαβεν ⁷ δικαιοσύνην διδάξας ὅλον τὸν κόσμον καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ τέλος τῆς δύσεως ἐλθὼν

²⁹⁸ Wright (2003), 643-44. In fact, Wright argues that Matthew's mention of those who doubted is "[t]he strongest mark of authenticity in this paragraph" (643).

²⁹⁹ See Acts 4, where Peter and John are arrested and imprisoned; Acts 5, where the apostles are arrested, imprisoned, and flogged; and Acts 12, where James the brother of John is martyred and Peter is imprisoned. Other persecutions are reported in Acts but not targeted specifically against the original disciples. We are specifically told that the resurrection of Jesus was their central message (Acts 4:2, 33).

³⁰⁰ Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998), 491; Witherington (2006), 92; cf. *John's Wisdom* (1995), 356.

καὶ μαρτυρήσας ἐπὶ τῶν ἡγουμένων οὕτως ἀπηλλάγη τοῦ κόσμου καὶ εἰς τὸν ἅγιον τόπον ἀνελήμφθη ὑπομονῆς γενόμενος μέγιστος ὑπογραμμός

Because of envy and jealousy, the greatest and most righteous pillars have been persecuted and contended unto death.³ Let us set the good apostles before our eyes.⁴ Peter, who because of unrighteous envy, not once or twice but endured many afflictions and having borne witness went to the due glorious place.⁵ Because of envy and rivalries, steadfast Paul pointed to the prize.⁶ Seven times chained, exiled, stoned, having become a preacher both in the East and in the West, he received honor fitting of his faith,⁷ having taught righteousness to the whole world, unto the boundary on which the sun sets; having testified in the presence of the leaders. Thus he was freed from the world and went to the holy place. He became a great example of steadfastness.³⁰¹

Clement reports that Peter and Paul suffered multiple attacks, and likely refers to their martyrdoms, although the latter is not without question. “Unto death” (ἕως θανάτου) appears sixteen times in the LXX and can refer to dying or being on the verge of death.³⁰² In Mark 14:34 and Matthew 26:38 Jesus says, περίλυπός ἐστιν ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἕως θανάτου (“My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death”). Jesus did not die while experiencing this extensive grief. A few years later, Clement’s friend and colleague Polycarp (Pol. *Phil.* 1.2) used the same phrase in a manner certainly referring to the death of Jesus: τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν ὃς ὑπέμεινεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν ἕως θανάτου καταντῆσαι ὃν ἤγειρεν ὁ θεός λύσας τὰς ὠδίνιας τοῦ ἔδου (“our Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sins suffered even unto death, [but] ‘whom God raised from the dead, having loosed the bands of the grave’”). Thus, without contextual considerations, an interpretation based solely on the term ἕως θανάτου is inconclusive.

Martyrdom may be seen with the use of μαρτυρήσας in 1 Clement 5:4, 7. However, those in the Asia Minor church may not have employed the word in that sense until the middle of the second century in *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* where the author uses it several times in this sense.³⁰³ A possible earlier exception is found in Revelation 2:13, which mentions Ἀντιπᾶς ὁ μάρτυς μου ὁ πιστός μου, ὃς ἀπεκτάνθη παρ’ ὑμῖν (Antipas, my martyr, my faithful one, who was killed in the presence of you). However, we cannot be certain this is what the author had in mind. Was Antipas a ‘martyr’ because he was killed or was he a ‘witness’ who was killed? While the meaning of the term also leaves us without a firm answer in 1 Clement, the context leads me to conclude that Clement was referring to the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul. In 1 Clement 6, Clement continues his thoughts in 5:1–2, saying that, in addition to Peter, Paul, and possibly all of the apostles, there was a vast number of other believers who became examples for us, because they had been through horrible persecutions. He adds that Christian women suffered horrible torture but that “they reached and achieved the suitable honorable prize.” Holmes comments on the women Danaids and Dircae: “In ancient mythology, the daughters of Danaus were given as prizes to the winners of a race; thus it is likely that *Danaids* is a reference to Christian women

³⁰¹ 1 Clem. 5:2-7.

³⁰² 2 Chron. 32:24; Isa. 38:1; 39:1; Jon. 4:9; Zech. 5:3 (twice); 4 Macc. 1:9; 14:19; Sir. 4:28; 18:22; 34:12; 37:2; 51:6; Odes Sol. 16:6.

³⁰³ E. H. Strathmann in *TDNT* 4:504–508.

being raped prior to being martyred. Dirce died by being tied to the horns of a bull and then dragged to death.”³⁰⁴ So it seems that Clement is reporting that Christian women were martyred, and the language used was euphemistic (βέβαιον δρόμον κατήντησαν [they finished the course strongly]). Thus, there is good reason to hold that similar words used for Peter and Paul (ἐπορεύθη εἰς τὸν ὀφειλόμενον τόπον τῆς δόξης [went to his appointed place of glory] and εἰς τὸν ἅγιον τόπον ἀνελήμφθη [went to the holy place]) meant that they died a martyr’s death, especially since this is attested elsewhere and no conflicting accounts exist. In summary, Clement refers at minimum to the continuous sufferings of Peter and Paul and probably refers to their martyrdoms for two reasons: (1) A euphemism similar to what Clement uses for their deaths is used in the chapter that follows for other Christians who were certainly martyred: “they safely reached the goal” (6:2); (2) Their martyrdoms are attested by other sources. Either way, Peter and Paul are described as being *willing* to suffer continuously and greatly for their faith, irrespective of whether they were martyred. I must add that Clement of Rome is of limited use in our investigation, since we have assigned a rating of “*possible-plus*” in terms of the strength of this document as a source that reliably preserves apostolic testimony given that we cannot confirm the author’s relationship to the apostles.

Polycarp likewise provides us with reports pertaining to the fate of some early Christians, including Paul. After mentioning the “endurance” (πάσαν ὑπομονήν) the church had seen in Ignatius, Zosimus, Rufus, the apostle Paul, the rest of the apostles, and others, Polycarp comments that “They are in the place due them with the Lord, with whom also they suffered” (εἰς τὸν ὀφειλόμενον αὐτοῖς τόπον εἰσὶ παρὰ τῷ κυρίῳ ᾧ καὶ συνέπαθον).³⁰⁵ Through Polycarp, we know that Paul, other apostles, and other believers suffered for their faith. Polycarp himself would follow their example of strength and conviction in the face of martyrdom. We are also reminded that Polycarp’s letter is of limited weight, since we have assigned it a rating of “*possible.*” What we can say with certainty, however, is that by AD 110 in the case of Polycarp and AD 97 in the case of Clement there were strong traditions that Peter and Paul had suffered the fate of martyrs.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ Holmes (2007), 53, note on 6.2.

³⁰⁵ Pol. *Phil.* 9.2.

³⁰⁶ For other reports pertaining to the fates of the disciples, see Ign. *Smyrn.* 3:2, 4 where the disciples are said to have acted in a manner that they thought little of dying and that “beyond death they were found,” which may refer to their attitude toward death being proved or demonstrated by their own boldness when the moment of execution actually came. He at least means that the disciples were so strengthened by seeing the risen Jesus that they preached without a thought for their earthly fates because they believed immortality awaited them. Think of an employee who suffers under an unreasonable boss, then suddenly inherits enough money to become independently wealthy. With the money deposited safely in the bank, the employee can go to work on his last day and smile at whatever abuse his supervisor dishes out.; Tertullian, *Scorpiace*, 15 (Peter crucified); Tertullian also claims that the martyrdoms of some of the apostles were a matter of public record, being reported in “the lives of the Caesars.” This book has either been lost or he is referring to Nero’s campaign to kill Christians in Tacitus’ *Annals* (15.44); Origen reported that Peter was crucified upside down in his commentary on Genesis, vol. 3. This work has been lost but is mentioned by Eusebius in *HE* 3.1. Crucifying victims upside down or in positions other than upright is also mentioned by Seneca (*Dialogue* 6, 20.3) and Josephus (*War* 5:449–51). Elsewhere Origen strongly implies that the disciples were so strengthened in their faith after the risen Jesus had appeared to them that they continued to preach without hesitation in the face of death (*Contra Celsum* 2.56, 77). Dionysius of Corinth (cited by Eusebius, *HE* 2.25.8) reports that Peter was martyred in Italy during the persecution by Nero (AD 64–68). Hippolytus was a disciple of Irenaeus and a leader in the church of the late second and early third centuries. The fates of

All of these sources affirm the disciples' willingness to suffer and die for their faith. Of course the conviction of the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead and had appeared to them does not necessarily mean they were right. After all, followers of other religions and causes have willingly suffered and died for their beliefs. However, this does not mean that their beliefs were true or worthy. This misses the point: The disciples' willingness to suffer and die for their beliefs *indicates that they certainly regarded those beliefs as true*. The case is strong that they did not willfully lie about the appearances of the risen Jesus. Liars make poor martyrs.

No one questions the sincerity of the Muslim terrorist who blows himself up in a public place or the Buddhist monk who burns himself alive as a political protest. Extreme acts do not validate the truth of their beliefs, but their willingness to die indicates that they are sincerely convinced of the truth of their beliefs. Moreover, there is an important difference between the martyred apostles and those who die for their beliefs today. Modern martyrs act solely out of their trust in beliefs passed along to them by others. The apostles died for holding to their own testimony that they had *personally* seen the risen Jesus. Contemporary martyrs die for what they *believe* to be true. The disciples of Jesus suffered and were willing to die for what they *knew* to be either true or false.

We may ask whether it is likely that the disciples *willingly* suffered and/or died for the beliefs? What if they were arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and executed against their wills and may have even recanted prior to their death and that Acts cleaned up the historical recollections of their ordeals? This seems unlikely. The disciples became well aware that publicly proclaiming Jesus as risen Lord on certain occasions and locations would likely result in sufferings and possible martyrdom. Accordingly, to continue on this path while being fully aware of the outcomes to be anticipated demonstrated their willingness to endure suffering and martyrdom regardless of whether these were actually experienced. We must also keep in mind that there is an absence of any hints that any of the Twelve (other than Judas) had recanted or walked away from the Christian community. If the news had spread that one or more of the original disciples had recanted, we would expect for Christianity to have been dealt a severe blow. If those in management of a publicly traded company are bailing out, the workers are not going to dump their life savings into company stock. And yet we find early Christians willingly suffering and dying for their beliefs.³⁰⁷ We may also expect

the apostles are reported in a work attributed to him. However, the actual dating and authorship of this text is doubtful. The fates given for Peter and Paul are consistent with what others wrote. The accounts regarding the remaining apostles are interesting and may contain historical kernels, but they are anecdotal and cannot be accorded too much weight. See "Appendix to the Works of Hippolytus: Containing Dubious and Spurious Pieces" in Roberts, Donaldson, and Coxe, eds. and trans., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, V (1.5.0.2.3.0, XLIX).

³⁰⁷ A selection of these sources might include *Shepherd of Hermas* (parable 9, section 28; vision 3, section 1, verse 9–2:1; 5:2); Melito of Sardis (cited by Eusebius, *HE* 4.26.3); Dionysius of Corinth (cited by Eusebius, *HE* 2.25.8); Hegesippus (cited by Eusebius, *HE* 3.32.3; 2.23.18; 4.22.4); Eusebius, *HE* 2.25; 5.2.2–3; Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, in his letter to Victor of Rome; Josephus, *Ant.* 20:200; and the correspondence of Pliny (10.96–97). The New Testament notes the martyrdoms of Stephen (Acts 7:59–60), James the brother of John (Acts 12:2), and Antipas (Rev. 2:13); Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44. This passage is also interesting in that Tacitus wrote that Jesus' execution by Pontius Pilate "checked [the Christian movement] for the moment," but then it "broke out not only in Judaea . . . but even in Rome." Tacitus is consistent with the reports in the Gospels and Acts of the transformation of the disciples, who had been emboldened through seeing the risen Jesus to proclaim him publicly in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth (Acts 1:8).

that a recantation by any of the disciples would have provided much ammunition for Christian opponents like Celsus and Lucian in the third quarter of the second century, the former of which wrote against the Church while the latter wrote of the Christian movement in a pejorative manner. Thus, to suggest that the disciples did not willingly suffer for their message would be to posit a scenario greatly lacking in plausibility. It may likewise be suggested that to claim that the disciples suffered because they believed in the risen Christ is to claim too much, because they suffered for Christian teachings, of which the Resurrection was only one. However, if the original disciples had not believed that they had seen the resurrected Jesus, their firm commitment to the Christian faith after the death of their leader is not easily explained.

4.3.2.8. Conclusion Pertaining to the Appearances to the Disciples

What may we conclude about the appearances to the disciples? A similarity exists with the miracles of Jesus. Bracketing the issue of the nature of the event itself, that is, was it a divine act, magic, psychological or trickery, a paucity of evidence prohibits us from affirming the historicity of particular miracles of Jesus. Historians may conclude that Jesus performed acts that he and others interpreted as miracles and exorcisms and that these acts caused many onlookers to drop their jaws in amazement. However, it is difficult to award historicity with a great deal of certainty to any particular miracle or exorcism reported in the Gospels. In a similar manner, historians may conclude that subsequent to Jesus' death by crucifixion, a number of his followers had experiences, in individual and group settings, that convinced them Jesus had risen from the dead and had appeared to them. We may affirm with great confidence that Peter had such an experience in an individual setting and we will see that the same may be said of an adversary of the Church named Paul.³⁰⁸ We may likewise affirm that there was at least one occasion when a group of Jesus' followers including "the Twelve" had such an experience.³⁰⁹ Did other experiences reported by the Gospels occur as well, such as the appearances to the women, Thomas, the Emmaus disciples, and the multiple group appearances reported by the tradition in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 and John? Where did these experiences occur? Historians may be going beyond what the data warrants in assigning a verdict with much confidence to these questions.

I reiterate that historians may conclude that subsequent to Jesus' execution, a number of his followers had experiences, in individual and group settings, that convinced them Jesus had risen from the dead and had appeared to them in some manner. This

³⁰⁸ See section 4.3.3.

³⁰⁹ Ehrman (2000) grants that some and maybe all of the disciples had an experience (178). Given that the appearance to the Twelve is early (1 Cor. 15:5) and multiply-attested in independent sources (1 Cor. 15:5; Mark 16:7 [implied]; Matt. 28:16-17; Luke 24:33-51; John 20:19-29), there is no reason to deny an experience of the Twelve as a group which they interpreted as a post-mortem appearance of the risen Jesus. Catchpole (2002) states that the appearance to the Twelve "is in fact the best attested of all the appearances, and cannot easily be set aside as dependent. . . . the appearance to the group is a central feature of early Christian resurrection claims" (157). Catchpole (2002) sees three appearance traditions behind the resurrection narratives: a group appearance to the disciples, an individual appearance to Simon, and a group appearance to the Emmaus disciples (152-53). Dunn (2003) sees multiple appearances (861-62). Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998) grant visionary religious experiences to Peter, Paul, and Mary Magdalene (454) but were doubtful of any group appearances (484). Goulder in Copan and Tacelli, eds. (2000) sees multiple individual and multiple group appearances (98).

conclusion is granted by a nearly unanimous consensus of modern scholars and may, therefore, be added to our “historical bedrock.” Paula Fredriksen asserts that “the disciples’ conviction that they had seen the Risen Christ . . . [is part of] historical bedrock, facts known past doubting.”³¹⁰ E. P. Sanders agrees: “That Jesus’ followers (and later Paul) had resurrection experiences is, in my judgement, a fact.”³¹¹ Wedderburn writes, “It is an indubitable historical datum that sometime, somehow the disciples came to believe that they had seen the risen Jesus.”³¹²

These are only a sampling.³¹³ Habermas has catalogued the opinions of hundreds of scholars writing on the subject of Jesus’ resurrection in French, German, and English since 1975. His database divides the opinions into more than one hundred categories pertaining to questions and subquestions related to the resurrection of Jesus. He comments, “As firmly as ever, most contemporary scholars agree that, after Jesus’ death, his early followers had experiences that they at least believed were appearances of their risen Lord.”³¹⁴ Scholars differ, however, on the perceived nature of the experiences.³¹⁵

4.3.3. The Conversion of the Church Persecutor Paul

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus, better known in history as the apostle Paul, to an aggressive Christian missionary who was largely responsible for the early spread of the Church is a historical fact which must be adequately accounted for by any responsible historical hypothesis.³¹⁶

In his letters to the churches in Galatia, Corinth, and Philippi, Paul himself writes of his conversion from being a persecutor of the church to one who strongly promoted the Christian message.³¹⁷ His hostile actions against the Church and his conversion

³¹⁰ Fredriksen (1999), 264.

³¹¹ Sanders (1993), 280; cf. 11.

³¹² Wedderburn (1999), 13.

³¹³ See also Borg in Borg and Wright (1998), 135; Braaten (1999), 148; Carnley (1987), 224; Craffert (2002), 99-100; Ehrman (1999), 230-32; cf. (2000), 282-83; Lapidé (2002), 126; Lüdemann (1995), 80; Montefiore (2005), 105; Vermes (2008), 149; Viney (1989), 126; Wright (2003), 710.

³¹⁴ Habermas (“Mapping,” 2006), 79. Elsewhere Habermas (*Risen Jesus and Future Hope*, 2003) provides a list of more than sixty “recent critical scholars who believe that Jesus’s disciples had real experiences that led them to conclude that they saw appearances of the risen Jesus, whether or not the resurrection actually occurred” (46-48n148).

³¹⁵ Craffert (2002), 91; Fredriksen (1999), 261-62; Habermas (*Resurrection Research*, 2005), 151; Sanders (1993), 280; Wedderburn (1999), 143.

³¹⁶ A detailed account of the life of Paul would, of course, take us far off topic. For recent treatments on the subject, see Bruce (1977); Crossan and Reed (2004); Kim (2002); Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid, eds. (1993); Lüdemann (2002); Wenham (1995); Witherington (*The Paul Quest*, 1998); Wright (1997); Wright (*Paul*, 2005).

³¹⁷ Gal. 1:12-16, 22-23; 1 Cor. 15:9-10; Phil. 3:6-7; 1 Tim. 1:13. Koester (2000) doubts the Acts reports pertaining to the extent and manner in which Paul persecuted the Church: “It is unthinkable that Paul, equipped with letters from the high priest, could have taken Christians from outside Palestine to Jerusalem for punishment. Neither the high priest nor the Jewish Sanhedrin in Jerusalem ever had such powers of jurisdiction” (107). Instead, he suggests the persecutions took place in the local synagogues. Witherington (*Acts*, 1998) finds support for Acts in Josephus (*Ant.* 14:192-200): “There we are told that Julius Caesar confirmed such rights and privileges to the Jewish people and the high priest in particular, even though they were no longer a sovereign or independent state. This privilege may have still existed in Saul’s day” (316).

experience are also reported in Acts.³¹⁸ The story of Paul's conversion from persecutor to promoter of the Church also appears to have been circulating around Judea within three years of his conversion, being hinted at in a statement by Paul to the Galatians. He tells them that during the period of three years to, perhaps, a decade or so after his conversion he was not known by sight to the believers in Judea. Despite this, these believers had heard of his conversion and were saying, ὁ διώκων ἡμᾶς ποτε νῦν εὐαγγελίζεται τὴν πίστιν ἣν ποτε ἐπόρθει ("The one who once persecuted us now preaches the faith which once he [sought to] destroy"), verifying that others either knew or had heard of his pre-Christian actions against the Church.³¹⁹ Thus, Paul's notorious pre-Christian activities and conversion are multiply attested by Paul's own testimony that he himself writes within roughly twenty to thirty years of the events, Luke's record in Acts written thirty to sixty years of the events, and a story that was probably circulating among Christians in Galatia and that most likely dates to within three to a little more than ten years of Paul's conversion.³²⁰

4.3.3.1. Pauline Texts on Paul's Conversion Experience

We will give consideration to the texts that specifically mention or may allude to Paul's experience that led to his conversion to Christianity. We start with texts written by Paul himself.

4.3.3.1.a. Galatians 1:11-19

Γνωρίζω γὰρ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τὸ εὐαγγελισθῆν ὑπ' ἐμοῦ ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν κατὰ ἄνθρωπον.¹² οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐγὼ παρὰ ἀνθρώπου παρέλαβον αὐτὸ οὔτε ἐδιδάχθην ἀλλὰ δι' ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. . . .¹⁵ Ὅτε δὲ εὐδόκησεν [ὁ θεὸς] ὁ ἀφορίσας με ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός μου καὶ καλέσας διὰ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ¹⁶ ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐμοί, ἵνα εὐαγγελίζωμαι αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, εὐθέως οὐ προσανεθέμην σαρκὶ καὶ αἵματι¹⁷ οὐδὲ ἀνήλθον εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα πρὸς τοὺς πρὸ ἐμοῦ ἀποστόλους, ἀλλὰ ἀπήλθον εἰς Ἀραβίαν καὶ πάλιν ὑπέστρεψα εἰς Δαμασκόν.¹⁸ Ἐπειτα μετὰ ἔτη τρία ἀνήλθον εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα ἰστορήσαι Κηφᾶν καὶ ἐπέμεινα πρὸς αὐτὸν ἡμέρας δεκαπέντε,¹⁹ ἕτερον δὲ τῶν ἀποστόλων οὐκ εἶδον εἰ μὴ Ἰάκωβον τὸν ἀδελφὸν τοῦ κυρίου.

³¹⁸ Acts 7:58; 8:1–3. 22:1–5; 26:4–5, 9–11. In 22:4–5, Paul says that he persecuted the church to the death, arresting men and women, throwing them into prison, and finally bringing them to Jerusalem in order to be punished (ἄχρι θανάτου in 22:4 is not found in the LXX. In the New Testament it appears only here and in Rev. 2:10 and 12:11). Paul's testimony in Acts 26:10 indicates that these persecutions included seeing Christians put to death. In Acts 26:4–5, Paul says that "all the Jews" knew of his prior life in Judaism as a strict Jew and is very similar to what he writes in Galatians 1:22–23. In Acts 26:9–11, he confesses to imprisoning many Christians, voting that they be put to death resulting in their execution, punishing them often, trying to make them blaspheme Christ, and persecuting them even outside of Jerusalem to foreign cities. Witherington (*Acts*, 1998): "The more one is inclined to believe Luke was a sometime companion of Paul, the more one is inclined to believe [sic.] in the veracity of his portrayal of the Apostle to the Gentiles" (308).

³¹⁹ Gal. 1:22-23; cf. Acts 9:21.

³²⁰ It would be nice to have a letter written by Paul prior to his conversion that expresses his hatred for the Church or a mention of Saul by a Jewish source confirming his anti-Christian actions. Unfortunately, if any of these ever existed, they have not survived.

For I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel being preached by me is not according to man.¹² For neither from man did I receive it or was taught it, but through a revelation of Jesus Christ. . . .¹⁵ But when the one who set me apart from my mother's womb and called [me] through his grace was pleased¹⁶ to reveal his son in me, in order that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles (or nations), I did not consult immediately with flesh and blood.¹⁷ Neither did I go up to Jerusalem to those apostles before me. But I went away to Arabia and again returned to Damascus.¹⁸ Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days.¹⁹ But I did not see any other of the apostles except James the brother of the Lord.

Much discussion has occurred over this passage, specifically as it relates to Paul's conversion. What insights may we gain from him? Most scholars maintain that Paul is referring here to his conversion experience on the road to Damascus.³²¹ Some want to go further and propose that the words of Paul here suggest that his conversion experience did not involve an external appearance of the resurrected Jesus but rather it was something that occurred inside of him—perhaps a subjective vision or an epiphany.³²² In support of this proposal, these scholars note Paul's use of the term "revelation" in verse 12 to describe how he received the gospel that he preached and his statement in verse 16 that God "was pleased to reveal his son *in me*."

While this interpretation seems initially plausible, it is far from clear. The term ἀποκάλυψις is employed on a number of occasions throughout the Pauline corpus to refer to a physical revealing.³²³ Even where Paul's use of the term on other occasions appears very close in meaning to our Galatians passage, it is uncertain that an internal experience is how Paul necessarily regarded divine revelations. For example, in 2 Corinthians 12:1 Paul says that he is about to report "visions and revelations of the Lord" he had received.³²⁴ In the three verses that follow Paul claims to have been taken to heaven and that he is uncertain whether he was in or out of his body during the experience. In saying this, Paul seems to be inferring that the "revelation" was not merely something in his mind.

The ἐν ἐμοί of Galatians 1:16 is even more ambiguous. A number of scholars render it "in me"³²⁵ while others "to me" or "through me [to the Gentiles]."³²⁶ Here is how Paul uses the phrase elsewhere:

- Galatians 1:24: "they were glorifying God *in me*" (i.e., because of me)
- Galatians 2:20: "Christ lives *in me*"

³²¹ Dunn (2003), 857; 873.

³²² Carnley (1987), 209; Segal (2004), 407.

³²³ Certain: Rom. 8:19; 1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Thess. 1:7; Possible: Rom. 2:5.

³²⁴ Note the ὀπτασίαις καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως κυρίου of 2 Cor. 12:1 with ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ of Gal. 1:12.

³²⁵ Bruce (1977), 75; Dunn (2003), 857, 873; Longenecker (2002), 30; Lüdemann (2002), 174; Morris (1996), 55-56.

³²⁶ RSV, NRSV, NAB, NLT. Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 264; Arichea and Nida (1993), 22; Borg and Crossan (2006), 206; Ehrman (*The New Testament*, 2008), 301; Wright (2003), 380. Elsewhere, Paul writes that the "mystery" made known is that Gentiles are now fellow-heirs, fellow-members of the body of Christ, and fellow-partakers of the promise of the gospel (Eph. 3:1-11, especially 3:6). Paul asserts that he was specifically selected to bring this good news to the Gentiles (especially 3:2-3, 7-8).

- 1 Corinthians 9:15: Having mentioned his right to receive financial and material support from the Corinthian church as well as to take along a Christian wife on his journeys, Paul says that he has chosen not to and does not mention these things in order that “it may be [this way] *in me*” (i.e., he is not laying the ground that he might start claiming these rights)
- 1 Corinthians 14:11: Paul says that it is not beneficial for believers to speak in tongues to one another. For if Paul cannot understand what is being said, “I will be a foreigner to the one speaking and the one speaking a foreigner *in me*” (i.e., to me, from my point of view)
- 2 Corinthians 11:10: “The truth of Christ is *in me*” (i.e., I am telling you the truth of Christ)
- 2 Corinthians 13:3 “Since you are seeking proof of the one speaking *in me*: Christ, who is not weak toward you, but powerful in you” (i.e., they wanted proof that Christ was speaking through Paul)
- Romans 7:8: “through the commandment sin produced *in me* all kinds of wrong desires”
- Romans 7:17, 20: “sin which lives *in me*”
- Romans 7:18: “for I know that nothing good lives *in me*”
- Philippians 1:26: “your proud confidence *in me*”
- Philippians 1:30: “having the same conflict which you saw *in me*” (i.e., you saw me experiencing), and now hear [to be] *in me*” (i.e., you hear that I am experiencing)
- Philippians 4:9: “practice the things you have learned and received and heard and seen *in me*”
- Colossians 1:29: “his working that works powerfully *in me*”³²⁷

I have translated every occurrence as “in me,” although the reader will notice numerous shades of meaning. It seems clear that when Paul asserts that it pleased God “to reveal his son *in me*” that he could with *at least* equal plausibility have been meaning “to reveal his son *to me*.” Moreover, a number of commentators interpret Paul in Galatians 1:16 as focusing on the inward illumination that coincided with his external experience.³²⁸

My opinion is that in Galatians 1:16 it is unclear whether Paul is revealing some of his thoughts pertaining to the nature of Jesus’ resurrection body, and if he is, his expression of them is quite ambiguous. As a result, one’s view of the resurrection of Jesus will most likely be the guiding force behind their exegesis of Galatians 1:16. Having observed other passages in Paul related to the resurrection of Jesus, it is clear to me that he thought of the resurrection of Jesus in terms of an event that revived his corpse and transformed it into a new and immortal body. Therefore, *if* Paul is referring to his conversion experience in Galatians 1, it is my opinion that he is not conveying even indirectly that he understood that experience as being only an internal phenomenon and that the resurrected Jesus is an ethereal being. For that would be in

³²⁷ See also 1 Tim. 1:16.

³²⁸ Bruce (1982), 92; cf. (1977), 75; Bryskog (2002), 227; See also Hendriksen (1995), 53; Longenecker (1990), 30. For Craig (*Assessing*, 1989), “Paul is referring to what God did in his heart, not the mode of the appearance which he saw” (81). Witherington (*Acts*, 1998) maintains that the real issue in Galatians is “the *content*” of the gospel revealed to Paul. It is “a revelation *about* the Son of God” *in me* [i.e., to Paul], specifically that the benefits of Christ were available to Gentiles (314; cf. *Paul*, 1998, 75).

stark contrast to everything Paul has taught about the resurrection elsewhere. To make such a proposal given the amount of ambiguity present in this passage betrays the canons of sound exegesis.³²⁹ Ambiguous passages must be interpreted in light of clear passages by the same author. We should never do violence to multiple clear texts in order to make them agree with a desired interpretation of a text that possesses significant ambiguity.

4.3.3.1.b. 1 Corinthians 9:1

οὐχὶ Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν ἐώρακα;

Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?

This statement only informs us that Paul believed he had seen Jesus. No details pertaining to the appearance are provided.³³⁰

4.3.3.1.c. 1 Corinthians 15:8

ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων ὡσπερὶ τῷ ἐκτρώματι ὤφθη κάμοί.

³²⁹ Price notes what he understands as a contradiction between what Paul says here and elsewhere (see Price's comments during "Gary Habermas, Robert Price, Mike Licona and Richard Spencer Debate the Resurrection of Jesus" on Infidel Radio, Jan. 17, 2007). Paul's statement in Galatians 1:12 and the emphatic tenor throughout the rest of the passage is that he received this revelation from God and not from any man. However, in 1 Corinthians 15:3 he writes, "For I delivered to you of first importance what I also received." This statement is followed by the teachings of the death, burial, resurrection, and post-mortem appearances of Jesus. Simply put, in 1 Corinthians Paul states that he received the gospel from others whereas in Galatians he says that he did not receive it from man but from God. This contradiction does not seem at all apparent to me. As we will discuss in the following chapter, there is virtually unanimous agreement among New Testament scholars from numerous theological and philosophical persuasions that in 1 Corinthians 15:3ff. Paul is providing tradition he had received. It is this tradition in its formal structure, then, that he received from man and passed along to the Corinthians rather than the gospel. This by no means suggests that Paul is contradicting himself in Galatians 1:11ff., as Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998) explains: "[In Galatians 1:11-12] Paul does not thereby claim that he did not learn summaries of the so-called kerygma—the first creedal statements of the Jesus movement—from his predecessors, summaries like the one he cites in 1 Cor 15:3-8: Christ died, was buried, rose on the third day, and appeared to several of us. He is referring rather to what he calls 'the truth of the gospel'—the meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus from Christian behavior, especially with respect to circumcision and observing kosher. The significance of Jesus' death—that no one is justified by observing circumcision and kosher—he learned, so he claims, not from the Jerusalem leaders, Cephas (Peter), James, and John, but directly from Jesus Christ (Gal 2:1-14)" (458). Moreover, Gerhardsson (1998) notes that in 1 Cor. 15:1-2 Paul reminds the Corinthians of what they received (ὃ καὶ παρελάβετε), that is the word (τῶν λόγων) he had preached to them. "He thus made use, when preaching the gospel, of a logos which he himself had received as authoritative tradition (ὃ καὶ παρελάβετε). How are we to reconcile this with his definite denial of having received the gospel by means of human mediation? Here we must draw a distinction between τὸ εὐαγγέλιον and ὁ λόγος τοῦ εὐαγγελίου. When we read, in the passage of tradition which describes Peter's authorization as chief Apostle (Matt. 16.16 ff.), that his insight that Jesus was the Son of God was not due to flesh and blood, this does not imply that he received no instruction from Jesus or about Jesus. The same is true of Paul. His declaration that he did not receive 'his gospel' from man does not mean that he received no teaching, no tradition whatever, derived from the Lord. Here he states expressly that he received the logos of the gospel as authoritative tradition. He says the same thing, as we shall see, about other parts of this *didache*. He has thus received authoritative tradition from, and about, the Lord" (296). Also see Wenham (1995), 396; Wright (2003), 319.

³³⁰ See section 4.3.2.1.d above for a discussion of the term ἐώρακα (ὄραω).

And last of all as to one untimely born he appeared to me.

This text has likewise been discussed above.³³¹ It most likely is a supplement by Paul to the remnants of the early tradition included in his letter. We do not find specific details about the appearance to Paul other than its chronological order in relation to the other appearances.

4.3.3.1.d. 2 Corinthians 4:6

ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ὁ εἰπὼν· ἐκ σκοτῶν φῶς λάμψει, ὃς ἔλαμψεν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν πρὸς φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ [Ἰησοῦ] Χριστοῦ.

For God, the One who said, “Light will shine out of darkness,” is He who shined in our hearts with light [or enlightenment] of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.³³²

A number of scholars have proposed that Paul is or may be referring to his conversion experience in this text.³³³ Harris notes “the many similarities in thought and diction between 2 Cor. 4:6 and the three Lukan accounts of Paul’s conversion in Acts.”³³⁴ In each, the inward and outward characteristics of Paul’s conversion experience are expressed, although Paul emphasizes the inward traits in 2 Corinthians 4:6—and Galatians 1:12, 15-16 for that matter—while Luke places an emphasis on the external components in his three accounts of the event.³³⁵

If the “light” to which Paul refers alludes to the bright light Luke describes in the three Acts texts we will examine momentarily, it would double up as a description of the revelation and good news that is eternity-changing. This would be in line with Harris’s proposal.³³⁶ However, we must also regard it as possible that Luke has added an external aspect to Paul’s conversion experience of which Paul knew nothing and that 2 Corinthians 4:6 is referring only to the inward illumination aspect of Paul’s experience.

While some exegetes see in 2 Corinthians 4:6 support for Luke’s report of Paul’s conversion experience in Acts, others see support for an interpretation of Paul’s experience as an internal illumination, moment of insight, or epiphany of a sort. It is difficult to choose between the two if the text is taken in isolation. But a responsible exegesis should consider all of Paul’s comments on the subject. In 2 Corinthians 4:6, Paul writes of the God “who shined in *our* hearts,” which appears to include the Corinthian believers. Earlier he wrote that the risen Jesus had appeared to him “last

³³¹ See chapter 3.2.3.4.d, sections 4.3.2.1.a above and 4.3.3.9.b below.

³³² Cf. 2 Cor. 4:4.

³³³ Bruce (1977) opines that Paul’s language here “perhaps implies a reminiscence of the same event” (75) while Harris (2005, 334) and Lüdemann (2002, 167-74) are confident.

³³⁴ Harris (2005), 334.

³³⁵ Harris acknowledges the presence of a tension in his view. In 2 Cor. 4:6, God has shone in “your hearts” (pl./pl.), whereas in 6:11 it is “our heart” (pl./s.). He answers that Paul may be wishing to convey that the internal aspect of his experience is common to all Christian conversion experiences (334).

³³⁶ Lüdemann (2004) likewise understands the mention of “light” as a possible reference to Paul’s Damascus experience (46-47).

of all” (1 Cor. 15:8). We may infer that Paul knew of a major difference between his experience and those of the Corinthian believers: He was the recipient of an appearance of the risen Jesus.³³⁷ Thus, not only is it unlikely that the “light” of which Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4:6 is a reference to the bright light found in the appearance to Paul reported in Acts, it is at least equally unlikely that the shining in the heart in 2 Corinthians 4:6 was the only aspect of Paul’s conversion experience. Paul may have been speaking solely of the insightful aspect of his experience in this text. But we need not conclude that this is all there was to it any more than one describing the peace he or she received through counseling excludes the external aspect of the experience: the counselor.

4.3.3.1.e. 2 Corinthians 12:2-4

οἶδα ἄνθρωπον ἐν Χριστῷ πρὸ ἐτῶν δεκατεσσάρων, εἴτε ἐν σώματι οὐκ οἶδα, εἴτε ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν, ἀρπαγέντα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ. ³ καὶ οἶδα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἄνθρωπον, εἴτε ἐν σώματι εἴτε χωρὶς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα, ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν, ⁴ ὅτι ἠρπάγη εἰς τὸν παράδεισον καὶ ἤκουσεν ἄρρητα ῥήματα ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι.

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in or out of the body I do not know, God knows—was taken up to the third heaven. ³ And I know such a man, whether in or out of the body I do not know, God knows. ⁴ He was taken up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words that are not permissible for a human to utter.

Funk and the Jesus Seminar suggest that this text “depicts a vision of his own that may be his account of the appearance to him. These and other epiphanies provide essential clues to the nature of the appearances.”³³⁸ That Paul is referring to his Damascus road experience here seems highly unlikely, since he states that this vision occurred fourteen years prior (12:2). If 2 Corinthians was composed around AD 56, this places Paul’s vision around AD 42, about a decade after his conversion. If we accept the later dating of Galatians at AD 55 and that Paul wrote it shortly after the Jerusalem Council to which he refers, this places Paul’s conversion no later than seventeen years before in AD 38, still too early to have been the experience that he describes in 2 Corinthians 12.³³⁹

Our brief survey of five Pauline texts thought to be referring to his conversion experience has yielded precious little information pertaining to that experience. We may say that Paul’s conversion experience provided illumination or insight into God’s glory through Christ, but that this was not its only aspect. We may also conclude that, whatever its nature, he viewed it as the last appearance made by the risen Jesus up to the time he had written 1 Corinthians (c. AD 54-55).

³³⁷ See also Acts 9:10 where the appearance to Paul is distinguished from a “vision” (ὄραματι) in which the Lord appears to Ananias after he appeared to Paul.

³³⁸ Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998), 452. Crossan (1994) regards this text as a possible reference to Paul’s conversion experience (168); cf. Crossan (1995) 204.

³³⁹ Wedderburn (1999), 123; Wright (2003), 387.

4.3.3.2. Acts Texts on Paul's Conversion Experience

Many more details of Paul's conversion experience have been reported by Luke in his three accounts of the event. The value of these reports to our investigation largely hinges upon how one answers two questions: Was Luke a traveling companion of Paul, and how much literary freedom did Luke take when providing the reports? Perhaps one half or more of modern English-speaking commentators on Acts maintain that Luke was a traveling companion of Paul.³⁴⁰ There is no consensus opinion pertaining to the extent of liberties Luke took in writing Acts. Whatever one believes regarding to the historicity of Jesus' virgin birth or the presence of angels at the empty tomb will impact one's opinion pertaining to how much liberty Luke took. Since we are attempting to employ only the historical bedrock and there is no consensus concerning these two questions, we will not take a position on the three accounts of Paul's conversion in Acts. Instead, we will only claim that they provide a *possible* account of his conversion experience.

Since our discussion of Paul's conversion experience and weighing of hypotheses in the chapter that follows may require an extent of interaction with Luke's rendition(s) of the event, I will provide his three accounts followed by a few observations.

4.3.3.2.a. Acts 9:3-20

Ἐν δὲ τῷ πορεύεσθαι ἐγένετο αὐτὸν ἐγγίξειν τῇ Δαμασκῷ, ἐξαίφνης τε αὐτὸν περιήστραψεν φῶς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ⁴ καὶ πεσὼν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἤκουσεν φωνὴν λέγουσαν αὐτῷ· Σαοὺλ Σαοὺλ, τί με διώκεις; ⁵ εἶπεν δέ· τίς εἶ, κύριε; ὁ δέ· ἐγὼ εἰμι Ἰησοῦς ὃν σὺ διώκεις· ⁶ ἀλλὰ ἀνάστηθι καὶ εἰσελθε εἰς τὴν πόλιν καὶ λαληθήσεται σοι ὃ τί σε δεῖ ποιεῖν· ⁷ οἱ δὲ ἄνδρες οἱ συνοδεύοντες αὐτῷ εἰστήκεισαν ἐνεοί, ἀκούοντες μὲν τῆς φωνῆς μηδένα δὲ θεωροῦντες· ⁸ ἠγέρθη δὲ Σαῦλος ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς, ἀνεωγμένων δὲ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτοῦ οὐδὲν ἔβλεπεν· χειραγωγοῦντες δὲ αὐτὸν εἰσήγαγον εἰς Δαμασκόν· ⁹ καὶ ἦν ἡμέρας τρεῖς μὴ βλέπων καὶ οὐκ ἔφαγεν οὐδὲ ἔπιεν· ¹⁰ Ἦν δὲ τις μαθητῆς ἐν Δαμασκῷ ὀνόματι Ἀνανίας, καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐν ὄραματι ὁ κύριος· Ἀνανία· ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· ἰδοὺ ἐγώ, κύριε· ¹¹ ὁ δὲ κύριος πρὸς αὐτόν· ἀναστὰς πορεύθητι ἐπὶ τὴν ῥύμην τὴν καλουμένην Εὐθείαν καὶ ζήτησον ἐν οἰκίᾳ Ἰούδα Σαῦλον ὀνόματι Ταρσέα· ἰδοὺ γὰρ προσεύχεται ¹² καὶ εἶδεν ἄνδρα [ἐν ὄραματι] Ἀνανίαν ὀνόματι εἰσελθόντα καὶ ἐπιθέντα αὐτῷ [τὰς] χεῖρας ὅπως ἀναβλέψῃ· ¹³ ἀπεκρίθη δὲ Ἀνανίας· κύριε, ἤκουσα ἀπὸ πολλῶν περὶ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς τούτου ὅσα κακὰ τοῖς ἀγίοις σου ἐποίησεν ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ· ¹⁴ καὶ ᾧδε ἔχει ἐξουσίαν παρὰ τῶν ἀρχιερέων δεῖν πάντα τοὺς ἐπικαλουμένους τὸ ὄνομά σου· ¹⁵ εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁ κύριος· πορεύου, ὅτι σκευὸς ἐκλογῆς ἐστίν μοι οὗτος τοῦ βαστάσαι τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐνώπιον ἔθνων τε καὶ βασιλέων υἰῶν τε Ἰσραὴλ· ¹⁶ ἐγὼ γὰρ ὑποδείξω αὐτῷ ὅσα δεῖ αὐτὸν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματός μου παθεῖν· ¹⁷ Ἀπῆλθεν δὲ Ἀνανίας καὶ εἰσηλθεν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν καὶ ἐπιθεὶς ἐπ' αὐτὸν τὰς χεῖρας εἶπεν· Σαοὺλ ἀδελφέ, ὁ κύριος ἀπέσταλκέν με, Ἰησοῦς ὁ ὀφθείς σοι ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ἣ ἦρχου, ὅπως ἀναβλέψῃς καὶ πλησθῆς πνεύματος ἁγίου· ¹⁸ καὶ εὐθέως ἀπέπεσαν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ὡς λεπίδες, ἀνέβλεψέν τε καὶ ἀναστὰς ἐβαπτίσθη ¹⁹ καὶ λαβὼν τροφήν ἐνίσχυσεν· Ἐγένετο δὲ μετὰ τῶν ἐν Δαμασκῷ μαθητῶν ἡμέρας τινὰς ²⁰ καὶ

³⁴⁰ I am grateful to Craig Keener who provided this figure as a rough estimate in a personal email correspondence dated March 27, 2008. Keener's massive commentary on Acts is currently in the editing process. Of course, like other estimates pertaining to a consensus, this is an educated hunch rather than an actual count.

εὐθέως ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς ἐκήρυσσεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.

Now as he was traveling, he came near Damascus. And, suddenly, a light from heaven flashed brightly around him.⁴ And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”⁵ And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he *answered*, “I am Jesus whom you persecute.⁶ But get up and enter the city and you will be told what you must do.”⁷ And the men traveling with him had been standing speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.^{341 8} And Paul rose up from the ground and, although his eyes were open, he could see nothing. And leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus.⁹ And he was without sight for three days and he did not eat or drink.¹⁰ Now there was a certain disciple in Damascus named Ananias. And the Lord spoke to him in a vision. And he said, “Here I am, Lord.”¹¹ And the Lord *said* to him, “Arise *and* go to Straight Street and seek in the house of Judas a Tarsian named Saul. For, behold, he is praying.¹² And he saw [in a vision] a man named Ananias come and lay hands on him in order that he may receive sight.”¹³ But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many concerning this man, how much evil he did to your saints in Jerusalem.¹⁴ And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind everyone calling on your name.”¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, “Go, because he is to me a chosen instrument. This one is to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the people of Israel.¹⁶ For I myself will make known to him how much he must suffer for my name.”¹⁷ Ananias went away and came into the house, and laying his hands upon him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord has sent me, [that is,] Jesus who appeared to you on the road on which you were coming, in order that you may receive your sight and may be filled with the Holy Spirit.”¹⁸ And immediately, something like scales fell from his eyes, he received his sight, rose up and was baptized.¹⁹ He took food and was strengthened. And he was with the disciples in Damascus for several days.²⁰ And immediately, he began preaching in the synagogues, “This one is the Son of God.”

4.3.3.2.b. Acts 22:6-16

Ἐγένετο δέ μοι πορευομένῳ καὶ ἐγγίζοντι τῇ Δαμασκῷ περὶ μεσημβρίαν ἐξαίφνης ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ περιεστράψαι φῶς ἰκανὸν περὶ ἐμέ,⁷ ἔπεσά τε εἰς τὸ ἔδαφος καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς λεγούσης μοι· Σαοὺλ Σαοὺλ, τί με διώκεις;⁸ ἐγὼ δὲ ἀπεκρίθην· τίς εἶ, κύριε; εἶπέν τε πρὸς με· ἐγὼ εἰμι Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος, ὃν σὺ διώκεις.⁹ οἱ δὲ σὺν ἐμοὶ ὄντες τὸ μὲν φῶς ἐθεάσαντο τὴν δὲ φωνὴν οὐκ ἤκουσαν τοῦ λαλοῦντός μοι.¹⁰ εἶπον δέ· τί ποιήσω, κύριε; ὁ δὲ κύριος εἶπεν πρὸς με· ἀναστὰς πορεύου εἰς Δαμασκὸν κακεῖ σοι λαληθήσεται περὶ πάντων ὧν τέτακταί σοι ποιῆσαι.¹¹ ὡς δὲ οὐκ ἐνέβλεπον ἀπὸ τῆς δόξης τοῦ φωτὸς ἐκείνου, χειραγωγούμενος ὑπὸ τῶν συνόντων μοι ἦλθον εἰς Δαμασκόν.¹² Ἀνανίας δέ τις, ἀνὴρ εὐλαβῆς κατὰ τὸν νόμον, μαρτυρούμενος ὑπὸ πάντων τῶν κατοικούντων Ἰουδαίων,¹³ ἔλθων πρὸς με καὶ ἐπιστὰς εἶπέν μοι· Σαοὺλ ἀδελφέ, ἀνάβλεψον. καὶ γὰρ αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ ἀνέβλεψα εἰς αὐτόν.¹⁴ ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν προεχειρίσατό

³⁴¹ While the masculine μηδένα could be translated “nothing,” φῶς in 9:3 is neuter. Accordingly, I have offered the translation “no one,” since Luke would probably have used the neuter μηδέν if either he was referring to the flash of light or the entire experience. Indeed, Luke uses the neuter οὐδὲν ἔβλεπεν to say just that in the verse that immediately follows (9:8).

σε γινῶναι τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἰδεῖν τὸν δίκαιον καὶ ἀκοῦσαι φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ, ¹⁵ ὅτι ἔση μάρτυς αὐτῷ πρὸς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὧν ἑώρακας καὶ ἤκουσας. ¹⁶ καὶ νῦν τί μέλλεις; ἀναστὰς βάπτισαι καὶ ἀπόλουσαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας σου ἐπικαλεσάμενος τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ.

And while on my way and approaching Damascus, it happened to me about midday that suddenly, an intense light from heaven flashed around me. ⁷ I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” ⁸ And I answered, “Who are you, Lord?” He said to me, “I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you persecute.” ⁹ Now those who were with me saw the light, but did not hear the voice of the one speaking to me. ¹⁰ And I asked, “What should I do, Lord?” And the Lord said to me, “Arise and go into Damascus and it will be told to you everything that has been arranged for you to do.” ¹¹ And since I could not see because of the glory of that light, I came into Damascus being led by the hand by those with me. ¹² Now a certain Ananias, a pious man according to the Law being testified by all of the Jews living there, ¹³ came to me and standing near said to me, “Brother Saul, receive your sight.” And that very hour, I looked up and saw him. ¹⁴ He said, “The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear the voice from his mouth.” ¹⁵ For you will be a witness for him to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now, why do you delay? Arise, be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”

4.3.3.2.c. Acts 26:12-18

Ἐν οἷς πορευόμενος εἰς τὴν Δαμασκὸν μετ’ ἐξουσίας καὶ ἐπιτροπῆς τῆς τῶν ἀρχιερέων ¹³ ἡμέρας μέσης κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν εἶδον, βασιλεῦ, οὐρανόθεν ὑπὲρ τὴν λαμπρότητα τοῦ ἡλίου περιλάμπαν με φῶς καὶ τοὺς σὺν ἐμοὶ πορευομένους. ¹⁴ πάντων τε καταπεσόντων ἡμῶν εἰς τὴν γῆν ἤκουσα φωνὴν λέγουσαν πρὸς με τῇ Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ· Σαοὺλ Σαοὺλ, τί με διώκεις; σκληρόν σοι πρὸς κέντρα λακτίζεις. ¹⁵ ἐγὼ δὲ εἶπα· τίς εἶ, κύριε; ὁ δὲ κύριος εἶπεν· ἐγὼ εἰμι Ἰησοῦς ὃν σὺ διώκεις. ¹⁶ ἀλλὰ ἀνάστηθι καὶ στήθι ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας σου· εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ ὤφθην σοι, προχειρίσασθαί σε ὑπηρέτην καὶ μάρτυρα ὧν τε εἶδές [με] ὧν τε ὀφθήσομαί σοι, ¹⁷ ἐξαιρούμενός σε ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰς οὓς ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω σε ¹⁸ ἀνοῖξαι ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν, τοῦ ἐπιστρέψαι ἀπὸ σκοτῶν εἰς φῶς καὶ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σατανᾶ ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν, τοῦ λαβεῖν αὐτοὺς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν καὶ κληρον ἐν τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις πίστει τῇ εἰς ἐμέ.

In these things, I proceeded to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. ¹³ In the middle of the day during my journey I saw, King, from heaven, brighter than the sun, a light *which* shined around me and those going with me. ¹⁴ And all of us having fallen down to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? *It is hard for you to kick against the goads.*” ¹⁵ And I said, “Who are you, Lord?” And the Lord said, “I am Jesus whom you persecute.” ¹⁶ But get up and stand on your feet. For to this I have appeared to you, to appoint you as an assistant and witness to the things which you saw [me] and

³⁴² Harris (2005): “In Acts 22:14 ἀκοῦσαι φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ would seem to imply that the preceding statement ἰδεῖν τὸν δίκαιον includes the seeing of Christ’s face” (334n111).

to those in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷ rescuing you from the people and from the Gentiles unto whom I am sending you, ¹⁸ to open their eyes, to turn from darkness unto light and from the authority of Satan to God, for them to receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who have been sanctified by faith in me.”

4.3.3.3. Similarities Between Paul and Acts Texts

While we did not see corroboration of the Acts accounts in 2 Corinthians 4:6, specifically the “light,” we find corroboration of other details from a few of Paul’s other letters. From these we learn that Paul was a zealous Jew, advancing beyond his peers, extremely zealous for the traditions of the fathers (Gal. 1:14), a circumcised Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee, zealous, righteous according to the Law (Phil. 3:5-6). Compare this with his words reported in Acts that he was brought up in Jerusalem, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of the fathers, zealous for God (Acts 22:3), lived among Jerusalem Jews from his youth, and was a Pharisee according to the strictest sect (Acts 26:4-5).³⁴³ In the letters we read that Paul persecuted the Church beyond measure and tried to destroy it (Gal. 1:13, 23; 1 Cor. 15:9; Phil. 3:6) and was a blasphemer, persecutor, violent aggressor, and the foremost of sinners because of these actions (1 Tim. 1:13-16). Compare these with Acts where he went door to door in Jerusalem arresting and imprisoning Christians (8:3), was passionate about threatening and murdering Christians, went to the high priest and obtained letters to the synagogues in Damascus to arrest Christians and bring them to Jerusalem (9:1-2), persecuted Christians unto death, arresting and imprisoning men and women, obtained letters from the high priest and entire Council of elders to the Jews in Damascus to arrest Christians and bring them to Jerusalem for punishment (22:4-5), felt obligated to be hostile against the Church, received authority from the chief priest to imprison and vote against Jerusalem Christians resulting in their executions, punished them in the synagogues, compelled them to blaspheme (Christ), was extremely enraged against Christians, persecuted them outside of Jerusalem, and even set out for Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests (26:9-12). In Paul’s letters and Acts we read that the risen Jesus appeared to Paul (Gal. 1:12, 16; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8; Acts 9:3-6; 22:6-20; 26:13-18). In both we also learn of Paul’s commissioning by God to preach to the Gentiles and Jews (Gal. 1:16; Acts 9:15; 26:17-18), and that he went to Damascus after his experience (Gal. 1:17; Acts 9:8; 22:10-11; 26:20).³⁴⁴

Given the number of details corroborated by Acts, Allison comments, “We can be fairly certain that the author of Acts had access to a traditional call story that included most or all of the elements just enumerated, a story that, even if expanded with legendary elements and revised by Luke, goes back ultimately to Paul’s own narrative.”³⁴⁵ On the other hand, it is possible that Luke had Paul’s letters before him and invented narratives in which he situated the details found in the letters.

³⁴³ Witherington (*Paul*, 1998) asserts that the majority of Acts specialists accept the testimony of Acts 22:3 that Paul was raised and educated in Jerusalem (306-07). One such scholar is F. F. Bruce, “Paul in Acts and Letters” in Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid, eds. (1993), 682. Against reports that Paul lived in Jerusalem, Koester (2000) asserts that Paul “was probably a resident” in Damascus to where his persecuting activities were confined (108; cf. 107-08 for his reasons).

³⁴⁴ However, Gal. 1:17 implies that he left Damascus for Arabia before returning to Damascus.

³⁴⁵ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 263.

4.3.3.4. Differences among the Acts Texts

The observant reader will also note numerous similarities and differences among the three accounts in Acts. The differences primarily involve Paul’s traveling companions.

- Light: Not excluded in 9:3-7; present in 22:9 and 26:13
- Voice: Present in 9:7; absent in 22:9; not excluded in 26:13-14
- Posture: Standing in 9:7; not specified in 22:6-9; on ground in 26:14

There appear to be contradictions within Luke’s accounts pertaining to whether Paul’s traveling companions heard the voice and their posture at the time. What may be said of these?

Regarding whether they heard the voice, there are 153 occurrences of ἀκούω in Luke’s writings (Luke: 65; Acts: 88). Most of these refer simply to “hearing.” Luke employs it 57 times to refer to “listening with an intent to understand”³⁴⁶ and seven occurrences where it means “to obey.”³⁴⁷

Some have noted that in Acts 22:9 ἀκούω appears with the accusative and can be understood as meaning “to understand.” Robertson writes, “The accusative (case of extent) accents the intellectual apprehension of the sound, while the genitive (specifying case) calls attention to the sound of the voice without accenting the sense.”³⁴⁸ However, Wallace regards this as “doubtful,” since the New Testament literature is “filled with examples” of where ἀκούω plus the genitive is employed to mean “understanding” and ἀκούω plus the accusative “*where little or no comprehension takes place*” (ital. his). He adds, “The exceptions, in fact, are seemingly more numerous than the rule!”³⁴⁹

We may likewise note that Luke does not appear to prefer use of this distinction elsewhere where he has a clear opportunity to employ it, although the very few examples we have give us great pause toward making a firm conclusion on the matter. Before turning to Luke, it may be helpful to observe a text to which Luke (or Jesus) was referring and to observe how it was employed by others.

Isaiah 6:9-10 (LXX)

πορεύθητι καὶ εἰπὸν τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ ἀκοῆ ἀκούσετε καὶ οὐ μὴ συνῆτε καὶ βλέποντες βλέψετε καὶ οὐ μὴ ἴδῃτε. ¹⁰ ἐπαχύνθη γὰρ ἡ καρδία τοῦ λαοῦ τούτου καὶ τοῖς ὠσὶν αὐτῶν βαρέως ἤκουσαν καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν ἐκάμμυσαν μήποτε ἴδωσιν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς καὶ τοῖς ὠσὶν ἀκούσωσιν καὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ συνῶσιν καὶ ἐπιστρέψωσιν καὶ ἰάσομαι αὐτούς

³⁴⁶ Luke 2:46, 47; 5:1, 15; 6:18, 27, 47, 49; 8:8, 10, 18, 21; 10:39; 11:28, 31; 14:35 (2x); 15:1; 16:14, 29, 31; 18:6; 19:11, 48; 20:45; 21:38; Acts 2:6, 8, 11, 22; 7:2; 10:22, 33, 44; 13:7, 16, 44; 14:9; 15:7, 12, 13; 16:14; 17:21, 32 (*bis*); 22:1, 22; 24:4, 24; 25:22 (2x); 26:3, 29; 28:22, 26, 27 (2x), 28.

³⁴⁷ Luke 8:8; 9:35; 10:16 (2x); Acts 3:22, 23; 4:19.

³⁴⁸ Robertson (1934), 506. See also Witherington (*Acts*, 1998), 312.

³⁴⁹ Wallace (1996), 133.

“Go and say to this people, ‘Hearing, you will hear and never understand and seeing you will see and never perceive.’¹⁰ For the heart of this people has become insensitive and their ears dull of hearing and their eyes have closed, lest they would see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand in their heart and turn and I heal them.”

Matthew 13:13-15

διὰ τοῦτο ἐν παραβολαῖς αὐτοῖς λαλῶ, ὅτι βλέποντες οὐ βλέπουσιν καὶ ἀκούοντες οὐκ ἀκούουσιν οὐδὲ συνίουσιν,¹⁴ καὶ ἀναπληροῦνται αὐτοῖς ἡ προφητεία Ἰσαΐου ἣ λέγουσα· ἀκοῆ ἄκούσετε καὶ οὐ μὴ συνῆτε, καὶ βλέποντες βλέψετε καὶ οὐ μὴ ἴδητε.¹⁵ Ἐπαχύνθη γὰρ ἡ καρδιά τοῦ λαοῦ τούτου, καὶ τοῖς ὠσὶν βαρέως ἤκουσαν καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν ἐκάμμυσαν, μήποτε ἴδωσιν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς καὶ τοῖς ὠσὶν ἀκούσωσιν καὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ συνώσιν καὶ ἐπιστρέψωσιν καὶ ἰάσομαι αὐτούς.

Because of this, I speak to them in parables. For seeing they do not see and hearing they do not hear nor do they understand.¹⁴ And to them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says, “Hearing, you will hear and never understand and seeing you will see and never perceive.”¹⁵ For the heart of this people has become insensitive and [their] ears dull of hearing and their eyes have closed, lest they would see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand in their heart and turn and I heal them.”

Acts 28:26-27

πορεύθητι πρὸς τὸν λαὸν τοῦτον καὶ εἰπὸν· ἀκοῆ ἄκούσετε καὶ οὐ μὴ συνῆτε καὶ βλέποντες βλέψετε καὶ οὐ μὴ ἴδητε.²⁷ Ἐπαχύνθη γὰρ ἡ καρδιά τοῦ λαοῦ τούτου καὶ τοῖς ὠσὶν βαρέως ἤκουσαν καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν ἐκάμμυσαν· μήποτε ἴδωσιν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς καὶ τοῖς ὠσὶν ἀκούσωσιν καὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ συνώσιν καὶ ἐπιστρέψωσιν, καὶ ἰάσομαι αὐτούς.

“Go to this people and say, ‘Hearing, you will hear and never understand and seeing you will see and never perceive.’²⁷ For the heart of this people has become insensitive and [their] ears dull of hearing and their eyes have closed, lest they would see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand in their heart and turn and I heal them.”

John 12:40

τετύφλωκεν αὐτῶν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ ἐπώρωσεν αὐτῶν τὴν καρδίαν, ἵνα μὴ ἴδωσιν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς καὶ νοήσωσιν τῇ καρδίᾳ καὶ στραφῶσιν, καὶ ἰάσομαι αὐτούς.

He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and they would not understand with their heart and they would turn and I heal them.

In Isaiah, Matthew, Acts, and John, ears, eyes, and the heart are all mentioned in relation to understanding. In Matthew, Jesus uses a clear play on the terms βλέπω and ἀκούω, being employed as physical senses and also of understanding: βλέποντες οὐ

βλέπουσιν καὶ ἀκούοντες οὐκ ἀκούουσιν οὐδὲ συνίουσιν. This is not repeated elsewhere.

Luke's Jesus appears to have Isaiah 6:9 in mind.

Luke 8:10

ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· ὑμῖν δέδοται γινῶναι τὰ μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ, τοῖς δὲ λοιποῖς ἐν παραβολαῖς, ἵνα βλέποντες μὴ βλέπωσιν καὶ ἀκούοντες μὴ συνιῶσιν.

And he said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the remaining *it is* in parables, in order that seeing they may not see and hearing they may not understand."³⁵⁰

We observe that, bracketing Acts 22:9, Luke never employed ἀκούω in a clear sense of "to understand," although it was certainly used in that sense by others in his day (Matt. 13:13). Moreover, it should be remembered that while various definitions of terms appear in our Greek lexicons, these are only to assist us in our understanding of how the terms were employed and that nuances are common so that the lines separating one definition from another are often blurred. For example, hearing accompanied by understanding appears to be strongly implied on numerous occasions in Acts (2:6, 8, 11; 10:44; 13:7 [12]; 14:9; 15:7; 16:14; 22:22; 24:24 [25]; 28:22 [24], 28).

In summary, it is *possible* that a contradiction exists pertaining to whether Paul's traveling companions heard the voice that spoke to him (9:7; 22:9). But the presence of a contradiction should not be stated with any certainty (e.g., *probable*). It is one thing to note a contradiction between two authors. However, it is another thing to claim that an author is contradicting himself, within his same writing no less. Unless Luke was being careless, it seems to me that it is better to be charitable in our interpretations of surface contradictions within the same work as long as they do not require much strain. The following translation is plausible, given numerous occurrences in Acts where ἀκούω refers to hearing with understanding: "Now those who were with me saw the light, but did not *understand* the voice of the one speaking to me."³⁵¹

This brings us to our next difference among the three accounts pertaining to the posture of Paul's traveling companions during the experience. They are standing in 9:7, but are on the ground in 26:14. At first glance, this seems to present a more dramatic difference than what we find in the question of whether they heard the voice. But a closer look reveals a simple resolution. There are 26 occurrences of ἴστημι in

³⁵⁰ Mark appears to have Jeremiah rather than Isaiah in mind. Mark 8:18: ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχοντες οὐ βλέπετε καὶ ὠτα ἔχοντες οὐκ ἀκούετε (Having eyes they do not see and having ears they do not hear); Jer. 5:21 (LXX): ἀκούσατε δὴ ταῦτα λαὸς μωρὸς καὶ ἀκάρδιος ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῖς καὶ οὐ βλέπουσιν ὠτα αὐτοῖς καὶ οὐκ ἀκούουσιν (Now hear this, foolish and heartless people, who have eyes and do not see, who have ears and do not hear). See also Ezek. 12:2.

³⁵¹ So with the ESV, GWN, NAU, NET, NIB, NIV, NLT.

Luke's Gospel and 35 in Acts.³⁵² Luke employs ἵστημι in the sense of “stopped,”³⁵³ being stationary or in a fixed position,³⁵⁴ to be present,³⁵⁵ to put forward,³⁵⁶ to remain intact,³⁵⁷ and to appoint or hold to one's account.³⁵⁸ In Luke 7:38 while Jesus is reclining to eat in the house of Simon the Pharisee, an immoral woman stood (στᾶσα) behind him and wet his feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with perfume. Since Jesus is reclining, it is difficult to interpret the woman's position of στᾶσα as “standing up” while she is honoring Jesus. She would need to be an extraordinary gymnast! The meaning of remaining in a particular location should be preferred.

Of the 61 occurrences of ἵστημι in Luke/Acts, 16 percent refer to being stopped, in a stationary or fixed position, present, or together.³⁵⁹ Thus, one need not strain in the least to interpret Acts 9:7 as follows: “And the men traveling with him *remained with him* speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.”³⁶⁰ If this interpretation is correct, the posture of Paul's traveling companions is not stated other than that they were with him. All we can say on this matter is that it is not at all clear that the differences between the accounts often cited are contradictory.

We may likewise discuss the differences among the accounts pertaining to what Jesus said to Paul. All three accounts agree on a number of details pertaining to the conversation between Jesus and Paul.

Jesus: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” (9:4; 22:7; 26:14) 26:14 adds, “*It is hard for you to kick against the goads.*”

Saul: “Who are you, Lord?” (9:5; 22:8; 26:15)

Jesus: “I am Jesus (of Nazareth—22:8) whom you persecute.” (9:5; 22:8; 26:15)

Saul: “What should I do, Lord?” (22:10 only)

Jesus: “Get up and enter the city and you will be told what you must do.” (9:6)

“Arise and go into Damascus and it will be told to you everything that has been arranged for you to do.” (22:10)

³⁵² Luke 1:11; 4:9; 5:1, 2; 6:8 (2x), 17; 7:14, 38; 8:20, 44; 9:27, 47; 11:18; 13:25; 17:12; 18:11, 13, 40; 19:8; 21:36; 23:10, 35, 49; 24:17, 36; Acts 1:11, 23; 2:14; 3:8; 4:7, 14; 5:20, 23, 25, 27; 6:6, 13; 7:33, 55, 56, 60, 60; 8:38; 9:7; 10:30; 11:13; 12:14; 16:9; 17:22, 31; 21:40; 22:25, 30; 24:20, 21; 25:10, 18; 26:6, 16, 22; 27:21.

³⁵³ Luke 5:2; 7:14; 8:44; 18:40; 19:8; 24:17; Acts 8:38. Similar to a soldier's response when ordered to “Stand down.”

³⁵⁴ Luke 7:38.

³⁵⁵ Luke 9:27.

³⁵⁶ Acts 1:23.

³⁵⁷ Luke 11:18.

³⁵⁸ Acts 7:60; 17:31.

³⁵⁹ Luke 5:2; 7:14, 38; 8:44; 9:27; 11:18; 18:40; 19:8; 24:17; Acts 8:38.

³⁶⁰ This solution may likewise be proposed to solve the tension between Luke's report that the two angels were “standing” (ἐπέστησαν) in the tomb (Luke 24:4) as opposed to reports by Mark 16:5 (καθήμενον), Matt. 28:2 (ἐκάθητο), and John 20:12 (καθεζομένους) that he or they were sitting.

“Get up and stand on your feet. For to this I have appeared to you, to appoint you as an assistant and witness to the things which you saw [me] and to those in which I will appear to you, rescuing you from the people and from the Gentiles unto whom I am sending you, to open their eyes, to turn from darkness unto light and from the authority of Satan to God, for them to receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who have been sanctified by faith in me.” (26:16-18)

Paul was blinded by the light and had to be led by his traveling companions.

There are slight differences between the accounts in the conversation between Paul and Ananias in Damascus. In Acts 9:11-16, there is first a conversation between the Lord and Ananias in a vision:

“Arise *and* go to Straight Street and seek in the house of Judas a Tarsian named Saul. For, behold, he is praying.¹² And he saw [in a vision] a man named Ananias come and lay hands on him in order that he may receive sight.”¹³ But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many concerning this man, how much evil he did to your saints in Jerusalem.¹⁴ And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind everyone calling on your name.”¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, “Go, because he is to me a chosen instrument. This one is to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the people of Israel.¹⁶ For I myself will make known to him how much he must suffer for my name.”

When he arrives at the house where Saul is staying, Ananias says,

9:17-18: “Brother Saul, the Lord has sent me, [that is,] Jesus who appeared to you on the road on which you were coming, in order that you may receive your sight and may be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Paul regained his sight, got up and was baptized.

22:13-16: “Brother Saul, receive your sight.” After Paul regained his sight, Ananias said, “The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear the voice from his mouth. For you will be a witness for him to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now, why do you delay? Arise, be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”

It is obvious in these passages that Luke is not attempting to provide a word-for-word accounting of the event. He knows what he has written earlier and is paraphrasing. In Acts 26:16-18, Luke provides additional details pertaining to Jesus’ words to Paul on the road to Damascus than he has in his two previous accounts. Only in Acts 9:10-16 does Luke provide details of the conversation between the Lord and Ananias, although it is assumed in 22:12. There is no reason to require Luke to recount every detail in all three accounts. Indeed, since Acts 22 and 26 are direct speeches, we expect that Luke is already reporting summaries of what was said.³⁶¹ Perhaps he is providing additional details in the other renditions of the event.³⁶²

³⁶¹ See chapter 3.2.3.3. See also Witherington (*Acts*, 1998), 311-13.

³⁶² Soards (1994): “Luke has a well-known practice of omitting material from one context and then using it later in another story” (207n52).

We have already determined that, given the lack of strong agreement pertaining to the reliability of the three Acts accounts, we will regard them as *possible* sources for obtaining information pertaining to Paul's conversion experience. Keeping the limited historical value of these accounts in mind, we note that they report that Paul's experience, perceived as the risen Jesus appearing to him, involved both visual and auditory components. Paul saw a very bright light which he believed to have been Jesus himself (22:14) and heard the voice of Jesus which communicated to him specific information within a dialogue. Paul believed that his experience differed from a vision that had no external reality in the material world, given his "last of all" statement in 1 Corinthians 15:8 and with Acts 9:10 and Luke's report that his traveling companions perceived portions of the audio and visual aspects of the experience, although to a limited extent.³⁶³

4.3.3.5. Addressing Others

While we are intentionally restraining our use of the Acts accounts of Paul's conversion experience in our historical investigation, we may use the results of our survey to assess the proposals of a few. Borg writes, "Paul saw a great light and heard the voice of Jesus. Those traveling with Paul did not share the experience, indicating that it was a private and not a public experience. It was what is commonly called a vision."³⁶⁴ However, our observations led us to a different conclusion. If Borg is going to include the Acts accounts as Paul's recollections of his conversion experience (which he does), he should certainly take them in light of what Paul himself says about the experience in his letters. As just stated in the previous paragraph, in 1 Corinthians 15:8 Paul tells us that he regarded his conversion experience as the last post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to others, at least of the same nature. In Acts 9:10, Luke reports that Jesus appeared to Ananias "in a vision" (ἐν ὁράματι) sometime after appearing to Paul, indicating that it is not of the same sort as what Paul experienced on the road to Damascus. Moreover, the Acts accounts lead us to the conclusion that Paul's traveling companions were partakers of the experience, although to a limited extent. Contrary to Borg's assertion, the experience was shared and it was public.

Allison comments that Christians continued to report christophanies (Acts 7:56; Rev 1:9-10) and that Acts and Paul report several other appearances of Jesus to Paul (Acts 18:9; 22:18; 23:11; 2 Cor. 12:8-9).³⁶⁵ But we need to remember that these appearances were different in Paul's eyes, as described both by Paul in his own words and in words attributed to him in Acts. In Acts 18:9, Jesus speaks to Paul "through a vision" (δι' ὁράματος). In Acts 22:17-18, Paul says that Jesus appeared to him after "he fell into a trance" (γενέσθαι με ἐν ἐκστάσει). In Acts 23:11, Jesus appeared to Paul at night. Did this occur in a dream? If it was an appearance in the same room as Paul, was it of the same nature as his conversion experience? The text does not say. In 2 Corinthians 12:8-9, there are no details pertaining to the nature of the communication between Jesus and Paul regarding his thorn in the flesh. In the others, there is no indication that anyone else experienced any aspect of Stephen's vision in Acts 7:55-56. In Acts 26:19 Paul refers to his conversion experience as "a heavenly

³⁶³ Craig (*Assessing*, 1989), 75, 393.

³⁶⁴ Borg (2006), 277.

³⁶⁵ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 260-61.

vision” (τῆ οὐρανίῳ ὀπτασίᾳ). However, as earlier noted, there are only five occurrences of this term in the New Testament literature and its meaning in a text such as this one is ambiguous, since each of the occurrences may refer to natural sight of something in space-time or visionary sight where only those permitted are able to see.³⁶⁶ In Revelation 1:9-10, John said he was “in the Spirit” when the experience occurred. His similar words in 4:10 may indicate that this was not something that occurred in space-time. If these appearances are different in nature than Paul’s conversion experience, the continued christophanies appealed to by Allison tell us nothing about Paul’s conversion experience.

Segal asserts that the experience Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4 is similar to his conversion experience in Acts.³⁶⁷ But this seems a bit of a stretch. In the former, Paul was not certain whether he was in or out of his body when he was caught up into Paradise, and heard words he was forbidden to repeat—which is in line with later Rabbinic rules.³⁶⁸ In the latter, Paul is in his body, in a specific location on earth, among others who partook of the experience, eliminating the possibility that Paul in Acts viewed it purely as an event with no correspondence to a material reality in this world, and heard words he was instructed to repeat (Acts 22:15; 26:16). Segal may wish to reject or ignore Paul’s traveling companions and the instruction to tell others what he had heard and seen as Lukan additions. But on what basis would he be warranted in doing so? Why is the voice from heaven in Acts a more historically reliable detail of the event than what the voice said or the joint experience of his traveling companions whom we would expect to accompany Paul on such a journey?

Segal argues that the aorist passive ὤφθη is frequently employed in the sense of “visionary seeing” or “seeing a divine being.”³⁶⁹ Thus, Paul’s use of the aorist passive ὤφθη in 1 Corinthians 15:5-8 indicates that he viewed the appearances as more visionary in nature. However, while the aorist passive ὤφθη is commonly used for an appearance of the divine, there are numerous exceptions.³⁷⁰ Moreover, in many instances the appearance of the divine was not a heavenly vision but took place in space-time.³⁷¹ Thus, Paul’s use of the aorist passive ὤφθη does not warrant the conclusion that Paul regarded his conversion experience of the risen Jesus to be a vision with no external reality in the material world such as may have been the case with the later appearances of Jesus to him and others.³⁷²

³⁶⁶ See section 4.3.2.1.d above.

³⁶⁷ Segal (2004), 415; cf. 409 where he writes that Paul’s conversion experience “may have been one such prophetic incident, though it need not have been one.” Segal refers to the experience as “mystical” (415) and a “religiously altered state of consciousness (RASC)” (402). Contra is Wright (1997) who opines that Luke’s description of Paul’s conversion experience “is not the language of mystical vision, of spiritual or religious experiences without any definite objective referent” (35).

³⁶⁸ Segal (2004), 416.

³⁶⁹ Segal (2004), 406.

³⁷⁰ Gen. 1:9; 2 Sam. 22:11; 1 Macc. 4:6, 19; 9:27; Song of Solomon 2:12; Bar. 3:22; Dan. 4:22; Acts 7:26. See also Jos. *Ant.* 7:298; 16:12; 18:239; *War* 6:306.

³⁷¹ Gen. 18:1; Exod. 3:2; 16:10; Lev. 9:23; Num. 14:10; 16:29, 42; Judges 6:11-12; Tobit 12:22; 2 Macc. 3:25; Bar. 3:37; Matt. 17:3; Mark 9:4; Luke 1:11; 24:34 (the corpse is gone); Acts 7:30; 13:31 (13:30, 34 indicate bodily resurrection). Moreover, many other examples provide no details, simply stating that the Lord appeared and, thus, cannot be employed to support either.

³⁷² Segal (2004) himself writes that in 1 Corinthians 9:1, Paul used perfect tense ἐώρακα to describe his visionary experience “have I not seen the Lord?” By this, “Paul emphasized that his vision was equivalent to normal ‘seeing,’ just as you and I might see each other” (405-06). See also Wright (2003), 376.

Those mining Acts in their historical investigations must keep a few principles in mind. When considering Paul's conversion experience, Paul's letters must be given priority over Acts.³⁷³ Stated differently, historically speaking, Paul on Paul is more valuable than Luke on Paul. Moreover, when electing to use Acts as a source, we must use it consistently with other passages in Acts as well as with Paul. For example, those who use the three accounts of Paul's conversion experience in Acts to support their position that Paul viewed the risen Jesus as a "spiritual" (i.e., ethereal, immaterial) being should likewise consider that in Paul's speech in Acts 13, he states in the clearest of terms that Jesus was raised bodily (13:28-37). Jesus was executed by Pilate (28), removed from the cross, and buried in a tomb (29). God raised him from the dead (30). For many days he appeared to his disciples (31). Jesus' resurrection was in fulfillment of prophecy: Psalm 2:7 and 16:10 (32-35). In the latter it is prophesied that God will not allow his holy one to undergo decay. David (who wrote the psalm) died, was buried, and decayed (36). Thus, the psalm refers to Jesus. God raised him and his body did not decay (37).

One should not uncritically accept the three accounts of Paul's conversion experience in Acts while rejecting Paul's teaching on Jesus' resurrection in Acts 13, a teaching that, as we will see below, is in line with what we observe in Paul's letters: Paul believed that Jesus had been raised bodily. Thus, contentions that Paul had Jesus' immaterial body in mind in the three accounts of his conversion experience in Acts are not strong enough to commend acceptance by historians.

4.3.3.6. The Fate of Paul

Paul reports of the sufferings he endured for the gospel.³⁷⁴ In 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, Paul says that he has been imprisoned on account of the gospel many times and beaten so many times that he cannot count them. He has lived often in danger of death, having received thirty-nine lashes five times from the Jews. He has been beaten with rods three times, stoned once, shipwrecked three times, been in danger in every conceivable place, gone sleepless nights, endured hunger, cold, and exposure. In Acts, Luke reports the numerous sufferings of Paul. In 14:19, Paul is stoned, dragged outside the city, and left for dead. In 16:19-24, Paul and Silas are flogged, thrown into prison, and their feet fastened in stocks. In 17:5, Paul and Silas are hunted by a mob. In 17:13-15, the crowds are stirred up against Paul, forcing him to be escorted outside of the city. In 18:12-13, the Jews arrest Paul and bring him before a Roman proconsul. In 21:27-36, a Jewish crowd seizes Paul, drags him from the temple, and attempts to kill him. Additional reports exist, reporting that Paul suffered and was martyred for his faith.³⁷⁵ Paul's commitment to the message he preached leads us to conclude that he sincerely believed in the truth of his message.

³⁷³ Crossan and Reed (2004) understand Paul's belief in bodily resurrection to be so clear that they are willing, in a sense, to ignore the accounts of Paul's conversion experience in Acts (8).

³⁷⁴ 2 Cor. 1:5-11; 4:8-14; 17; 6:4-5; 7:4-5; 11:23-28; Eph. 6:20; Phil. 1:7, 13, 14, 17, 29-30; 3:10; Col. 1:24; 4:3, 18; 1 Thess. 1:3-4, 7; 2:2; 3:4; 2 Tim. 1:8, 12, 16; 2:3, 9; 3:11; Philemon 1:10, 13.

³⁷⁵ See Clement of Rome (*1 Clem* 5:2-7), Polycarp (*Pol. Phil.* 9:2), Tertullian (*Scorpiace* 15; cited in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2:25:8), Dionysius of Corinth (cited in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2:25:8), Origen (*Commentary on Genesis*; cited in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3:1). Tertullian reports that Paul was beheaded while Origen and Dionysius—to our knowledge—only reported that he was martyred.

4.3.3.7. Parallels

Some have noted parallels to Paul's conversion in Acts. Heliodorus attempts to take the temple treasury but is stopped and beaten nearly to death by three heavenly beings. The traveling companions of Heliodorus ask the high priest Onias to pray that Heliodorus will live. He does and Heliodorus is healed. The heavenly beings who had beaten Heliodorus appear before him and instruct him to thank Onias for his prayers. He obeys, departs, and testifies to the works of the great God (2 Macc. 3:1-39; cf. 4 Macc. 4:1-14).³⁷⁶

In Ezekiel 1:25-3:11, a heavenly being appears and tells Ezekiel to stand up and receive instruction. In Daniel 10:2-21, a heavenly being appears, Daniel is present with others who do not see the being but are fearful and run away. Daniel falls on his face asleep, is touched by the being, stands up, is given information, and is touched again by the being to give him strength. In *Joseph and Aseneth* 14:1-14, there is a bright light, Aseneth falls to ground, is addressed with a double use of her name (Aseneth! Aseneth!), stands up, and receives further instruction.³⁷⁷

Wright comments that "Luke's underlying aim, and perhaps that of his original sources, seems to have been to tell the story in such a way as to align Paul with the prophets and visionaries of Israel's history."³⁷⁸ Koester opines that "the report given in Acts is told in the style of a legend of a prophetic call." He does count the appearance as one of the "resurrection epiphanies of Christ."³⁷⁹ Even if these speculations turn out to be correct, this would only call into question Luke's rendition of the conversion experience. Since Paul claimed that the risen Jesus had appeared to him and his letters contain numerous details that corroborate the three reports of the appearance to Paul in Acts, we know that the Acts reports are not wholesale inventions of Luke.

4.3.3.8. Conclusions Related to the Appearance to Paul

The majority of modern scholars grant that Paul had an experience he was convinced was an appearance to him of the risen Jesus. As mentioned earlier, Habermas has surveyed more than thirty years of German, French, and English critical scholarship relating to Jesus' resurrection. He writes, "Perhaps no fact is more widely recognized than that early Christian believers had real experiences that they thought were appearances of the risen Jesus. In particular, virtually all scholars recognize Paul's testimony that he had an experience that he believed was an appearance of the risen Jesus. . . . Seldom is the historical authenticity of any of these testimonies or the genuine belief behind them challenged by respected critical scholars, no matter how skeptical."³⁸⁰

Some scholars, while granting Paul's conversion experience, do not acknowledge that Paul's experience requires the conclusion that Jesus actually appeared to Paul.

³⁷⁶ Catchpole (2002), 160; Craig (*Assessing*, 1989), 73-75; Wright (2003), 390-92.

³⁷⁷ Wright (2003), 390-92. He also mentions Philo *Praem.* 165 (390n49).

³⁷⁸ Wright (2003), 393.

³⁷⁹ Koester (2000), 108. See also Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 264-65.

³⁸⁰ Habermas and Licona (2004), 74. See Ehrman (*Lost Christianities*, 2003), 96; Koester (2000), 108.

Marxsen: “one can say with some certainty that Paul understood the resurrection of Jesus as having happened through an act of God. To use our term, he regarded it as an *event*. This much is very clear, because Paul was a Jew. Right here, however, we have to be very careful not to jump to an unwarranted conclusion. Although Paul *conceived* of the resurrection of Jesus as an event brought about by God at a given point in the past, that does not mean that it *was* an event which once took place.”³⁸¹

Crossan and Reed: “To take seriously Paul’s claim to have *seen* the risen Jesus, we suggest that his inaugural vision was of Jesus’s body simultaneously wounded *and* glorified. . . . We propose, therefore, that in reading the Lukan accounts of Paul’s inaugural conversion and vocation experience, we bracket that blinded-by-light sequence and imagine instead a vision in which Paul both *sees* and hears Jesus as the resurrected Christ, the risen Lord. It need not be added that, then as now, dreams and visions are hard-wired possibilities of the human brain.”³⁸²

Lüdemann: “the objectivity that his account assigned to the event in no way impugns the fact that his report details a subjective rather than an objective occurrence.”³⁸³

We must agree that Paul’s belief that the risen Jesus had appeared to him is not proof that he, in fact, did. For our purposes we may conclude that Paul converted from a staunch persecutor of the Church to one of its most aggressive advocates. What led him to such a dramatic and unexpected reversal? Why did one who so vehemently persecuted Christians suddenly become one? Paul himself and Luke report that it was because he firmly believed he had experienced an encounter with Jesus who had been raised. Early, multiple, and firsthand testimony support our conclusion. Moreover, the large majority of scholars grant it, regardless of where they lay on the theological spectrum. Accordingly, we may add the appearance to Paul to our collection of facts that make up our historical bedrock.

4.3.3.9. What did Paul Believe About Jesus’ Resurrection?

This brings us to six important passages in the Pauline corpus.

4.3.3.9.a. Romans 8:11

εἰ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἐγείραντος τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ νεκρῶν οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν, ὁ ἐγείρας Χριστὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν ζωοποιήσει καὶ τὰ θνητὰ σώματα ὑμῶν διὰ τοῦ ἐνοικοῦντος αὐτοῦ πνεύματος ἐν ὑμῖν.

Now if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Jesus from the dead will give life also to your mortal bodies through the dwelling of His Spirit in you.

³⁸¹ Marxsen (1990), 86.

³⁸² Crossan and Reed (2004), 8.

³⁸³ Lüdemann (2004), 47.

There are four occasions outside this passage where Paul draws a close connection between Jesus' resurrection and the resurrection of believers (1 Cor. 6:14; 15:12-23; 2 Cor. 4:14; 1 Thess. 4:14).³⁸⁴ The word ζωοποιήσει (life giving) appears eleven times in the New Testament.³⁸⁵ For most of these, God is said to be the giver of eschatological life and the future tense indicates that this will be a future event, namely the final resurrection of the dead.³⁸⁶

Paul says the "life-giving Spirit" will give life to the *mortal bodies* of believers. Accordingly, "Not only has the spirit of the Christian been made alive (v. 10), but in time the body (now under the curse of death) will be resurrected as well. The indwelling Spirit is the guarantee of the believer's future resurrection."³⁸⁷ Moo comments "Because reference to resurrection is so plain in the protasis of the sentence, the future ζωοποιήσει . . . must also refer to future bodily transformation."³⁸⁸ For Käsemann, "The promise, then, is not for the present life."³⁸⁹ Likewise Dunn, "So here, even when he focuses on the 'mortal body,' Paul's point is precisely that the life-giving work of the Spirit will finally embrace that too; salvation will be completed not by escape from the body but by redemption of the body (v 23). . . . Of this Christ's own resurrection from the dead has provided both the pattern and the assurance."³⁹⁰

As Dunn notes, in verse 23 Paul writes, "We have the Spirit as the first portion. And we groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for our adoption, the redemption of our body."³⁹¹ The term ἀπολύτρωσις is in the accusative and is in simple apposition to our adoption (υἰοθεσίαν), thus explaining what will occur in the future at our adoption. This redemption could refer to a "releasing of" or "releasing from" our bodies.³⁹² Given a parallel thought in Ephesians 1:14 which speaks of a redemption of God's possession,³⁹³ "releasing of" is to be preferred. Moreover, as Büschel notes, the redemption of our bodies in Romans 8:23 is related to 8:21-22 where Paul asserts that "the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to corruption into the glorious freedom of the children of God. For we know that all of creation groans together and suffers together until the present day."³⁹⁴ To this Paul adds verse 23: "and not only

³⁸⁴ In 1 Corinthians 6:13-20, a passage that is all about our bodies, Paul says in verse 14 that God raised Jesus and his Spirit will raise us too (ὁ δὲ θεὸς καὶ τὸν κύριον ἡγείρειν καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐξεγερῆι διὰ τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ). Paul also asserts that God raised Jesus in Rom. 4:24, 17; 10:9. See also Rom. 6:4-9; Phil. 3:10-11, 20-21; Col. 1:18; 2:12-13; 3:3-4.

³⁸⁵ John 5:21 (twice); 6:63; Rom. 4:17; 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:22, 36, 45; 2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 3:21; 1 Pet. 3:18; seven are in the Pauline corpus.

³⁸⁶ Brodeur (1996), 214.

³⁸⁷ Mounce (1995), 179-80. See also Byrne (1996), 241; Craig (*Assessing*, 1989), 146-47; Davis (1993), 76n24; Dunn (1988), 445; Fitzmyer (1993), 491; Morris (1976), 227-28; Moule (1965), 108; Murray (1968), 291-92; Osborne (2004), 201; Schreiner (1998), 416; Wright (2003), 256; contra Dodd (1932), 125.

³⁸⁸ Moo (1991), 525-26.

³⁸⁹ Käsemann (1980), 225.

³⁹⁰ Dunn (1988), 445; cf. Murray (1968), 292.

³⁹¹ αὐτοὶ τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ πνεύματος ἔχοντες, ἡμεῖς καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς στενάζομεν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπεκδεχόμενοι, τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν.

³⁹² BDAG (2000), 117; Liddell-Scott (1996), 208.

³⁹³ ὅ ἐστιν ἀρραβὼν τῆς κληρονομίας ἡμῶν, εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν τῆς περιποιήσεως

³⁹⁴ Büschel in *TDNT* (1964), 4:351. αὐτὴ ἡ κτίσις ἐλευθερωθήσεται ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς εἰς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν τῆς δόξης τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ. οἴδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις συστενάζει καὶ συνωδίνει ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν.

this, but also we ourselves, having the first portion of the Spirit, groan in ourselves, eagerly waiting for our adoption, the redemption of our body.”³⁹⁵ Along with all of creation, our bodies will be redeemed from its bondage to corruption. This can only be said to occur in the future at the Parousia. Therefore, Romans 8:11 and 23 present similar thoughts regarding the dual benefits of the work of Christ. There are benefits for the present and for the future and those future benefits include the bringing to life and redemption of our mortal bodies.³⁹⁶ Accordingly, in Romans 8:11, Paul seems to be saying that the mortal bodies of believers will be raised even as the body of Jesus was raised.³⁹⁷

4.3.3.9.b. 1 Corinthians 15:42-54

οὕτως καὶ ἡ ἀνάστασις τῶν νεκρῶν. σπείρεται ἐν φθορᾷ, ἐγείρεται ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ·⁴³ σπείρεται ἐν ἀτιμίᾳ, ἐγείρεται ἐν δόξῃ· σπείρεται ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ, ἐγείρεται ἐν δυνάμει·⁴⁴ σπείρεται σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἐγείρεται σῶμα πνευματικόν. Εἰ ἔστιν σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἔστιν καὶ πνευματικόν.⁴⁵ οὕτως καὶ γέγραπται· ἐγένετο ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος Ἀδὰμ εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν, ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν.⁴⁶ ἀλλ’ οὐ πρῶτον τὸ πνευματικόν ἀλλὰ τὸ ψυχικόν, ἔπειτα τὸ πνευματικόν.⁴⁷ ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος ἐκ γῆς χοϊκός, ὁ δεύτερος ἄνθρωπος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ.⁴⁸ οἷος ὁ χοϊκός, τοιοῦτοι καὶ οἱ χοϊκοί, καὶ οἷος ὁ ἐπουράνιος, τοιοῦτοι καὶ οἱ ἐπουράνιοι.⁴⁹ καὶ καθὼς ἐφορέσαμεν τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ χοϊκοῦ, φορέσομεν καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ ἐπουρανοῦ.⁵⁰ Τοῦτο δὲ φημι, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα βασιλείαν θεοῦ κληρονομήσαι οὐ δύναται οὐδὲ ἡ φθορὰ τὴν ἀφθαρσίαν κληρονομεῖ.⁵¹ ἰδοὺ μυστήριον ὑμῖν λέγω· πάντες οὐ κοιμηθησόμεθα, πάντες δὲ ἀλλαγησόμεθα,⁵² ἐν ἀτόμῳ, ἐν ῥίπῃ ὀφθαλμοῦ, ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ σάλπιγγι· σαλπίζει γὰρ καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ ἐγερθήσονται ἄφθαρτοι καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀλλαγησόμεθα.⁵³ Δεῖ γὰρ τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀφθαρσίαν καὶ τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀθανασίαν.⁵⁴ ὅταν δὲ τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσῃται ἀφθαρσίαν καὶ τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσῃται ἀθανασίαν, τότε γενήσεται ὁ λόγος ὁ γεγραμμένος· κατεπόθη ὁ θάνατος εἰς νίκος.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption. It is raised in incorruption.⁴³ It is sown in dishonor. It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power.⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual [body].⁴⁵ So

³⁹⁵ οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοὶ τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ πνεύματος ἔχοντες, ἡμεῖς καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς στενάζομεν υἱοθεσίαν ἀπεκδεχόμενοι, τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν.

³⁹⁶ We find a similar thought in John 5. In 5:21 Jesus says, “ὡςπερ γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ ἐγείρει τοὺς νεκροὺς καὶ ζωοποιεῖ, οὕτως καὶ ὁ υἱὸς οὓς θέλει ζωοποιεῖ” (“For just as the Father raises the dead and gives life [to them], so also the son gives life to whomever he desires”). This refers to the present given one may have eternal life now (5:24) and that the time “νῦν ἔστιν ὅτε οἱ νεκροὶ ἀκούσουσιν τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ οἱ ἀκούσαντες ζήσουσιν” (“is now when the dead will hear the voice of the son of God and those hearing will live”). Jesus so far has referred to the eternal life he gives at the present. However, the future bodily resurrection is included a few verses later in 5:28-29: “μὴ θαυμάζετε τοῦτο, ὅτι ἔρχεται ὥρα ἐν ἣ πάντες οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις ἀκούσουσιν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκπορεύονται οἱ τὰ ἀγαθὰ ποιήσαντες εἰς ἀνάστασιν ζωῆς, οἱ δὲ τὰ φαῦλα πράξαντες εἰς ἀνάστασιν κρίσεως” (“Do not marvel at this, for an hour comes in which all those in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out; those who did good deeds unto a resurrection of life, and those who practiced bad deeds unto a resurrection of judgment”).

³⁹⁷ Wright (2003), 256.

also it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living soul. The last Adam [became] a life-giving spirit.”⁴⁶ But the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.⁴⁷ The first man is from the dust; the second man is from heaven.⁴⁸ As the dust is, such also are the dusty [i.e., earthly] ones. And as the heaven is, such also are the heavenly ones.⁴⁹ And just as we have borne the image of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.⁵⁰ Now this I say, brothers: Flesh and blood is not able to inherit the kingdom of God; nor can the corruptible inherit the incorruptible.⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery. All shall not sleep, but all will be changed⁵² in a moment, in a blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and the dead in Christ will be raised incorruptible and we will be changed.⁵³ For, it is necessary that this corruptible will put on incorruption and this mortal will put on the immortality.⁵⁴ Now when this corruptible has put on incorruption and this mortal has put on immortality, then the word that was written shall be [fulfilled]: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

In this passage, Paul answers two questions: How are the dead raised and what will our future bodies be like? He answers both questions, “So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown . . . It is raised” (15:42). At first glance the change from plural to singular in his answer appears awkward. A closer look provides clarity. For in 15:42 Paul is answering the questions asked in 15:35: How are the dead (plural) raised and with what kind of body (singular) do they come? In 15:42ff., he writes, “So also is the resurrection of the dead (plural): It [i.e., the body] (singular) is sown . . . It is raised.” In the text immediately preceding (15:37-38) Paul provides the analogy of a seed: A seed is sown and something different comes up. But there is continuity between the seed and the plant which comes forth from it as indicated by 15:36: “That which you sow is not *made alive* [here is our word ζωοποιεῖται from Romans 8:11] unless it dies.”³⁹⁸ The seed that is dead and sown (buried) is made alive once again. In the same way, there is continuity between the believer’s present body (the seed) and the resurrection body. What dies and goes down in burial comes up in resurrection, having been made alive and transformed.³⁹⁹ This is confirmed by Paul’s

³⁹⁸ οὐ ὁ σπείρεις, οὐ ζωοποιεῖται ἐὰν μὴ ἀποθάνῃ.

³⁹⁹ Ellingsworth and Hatton (1993), 317; Fee (1987), 777; Gwynne (2000), 12; Kistemaker (1993), 572-73; Osiek (1997), 110. See also Braaten (1999), 156; Robinson (1982): “He [Paul] conceives of the resurrection as bodily, but emphasizes change within the continuity of corporeality (1 Cor 15:40, 43, 48, 54)” (7); Wright (2003): “The new resurrected body will be in continuity and discontinuity with the present one” (341). The discontinuity pertains to the corruption/incorruption, etc. (360; cf. 371). Garland (2003) differs and argues that it is improbable that “‘sowing’ refers to burial. . . . ‘Sowing’ was used as a metaphor in the Greco-Roman world for human origins” (733). Meyer (1986) renders 15:44 as “a natural body is sown, a spiritual body is raised” (378). This rendering is possible, since the nouns “natural body” and “spiritual body” are in the nominative case. Carrier’s translation of 15:44 is identical. (See my debate with Carrier [Carrier and Licona (2004)] and Carrier in Price and Lowder, eds. [2005], 127.) However, his interpretation differs from Meyer, who envisions a transformation of the natural body (378-79). Carrier envisions an exchange. Moreover, Carrier’s statement during our debate that the word “it” does not appear here in Greek is deceptive, although I am not implying that he meant it that way. In first-semester Greek, everyone learns that Greek verbs imply their subject. On many occasions a verb appears without its subject, because it is implied in the verb’s inflection. This is like the waiter who says “Enjoy!” upon delivering a meal; the subject “you” is implied. The passage under consideration is a perfect example of this occurring, even when verse 44 is excluded. What we have in verse 44 is a third-person singular verb. Thus, if the nouns “natural body” and “spiritual body” are to be understood as predicate nominatives, the implied subject of the verb “sown” is “it.” Predicates rename the subject and are usually interchangeable. Of twenty-nine English translations in

use of τοῦτο in 15:53-54: τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο will put on the imperishable; τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο will put on immortality; etc.⁴⁰⁰ One can almost see Paul grabbing his arm as he emphasizes that it is *this* body that will put on immortality as one puts on a coat. A transformation of the corpse will occur and it will be clothed with immortality and imperishability. There can be no doubt that what is being sown in 15:42-44 is our present body. There can be little doubt that the third person singular “it” that is sown is what is raised. Thus, the body that is sown is transformed and raised. There is neither an elimination of a body nor an exchange of one for the new. Rather, it is the mortal being transformed into immortality.

This implies a bodily resurrection and an empty tomb. If it is true that in this context Paul uses the term *resurrection* to imply that the body that is buried is the same body that is raised, though transformed, one need not ask why the empty tomb is never mentioned in the Pauline corpus. For him, it is so clear that it need not be mentioned. Today, if a child dies of SIDS, the parents would not need to make a point of an empty crib. It is implied. Thus, Lüdemann is mistaken when he writes, “For that

BibleWorks 7.0, only one renders 15:44 as Meyer and Carrier do (NJB). However, in 15:42, five of the twenty-nine render as Carrier does (ESV, NET, NJB, NRS, RSV) and in 15:43 only one (NJB).

We have two possible translations:

Carrier: “A natural body is sown. A spiritual body is raised.”

Licona: “It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body.”

Carrier’s translation is meant to support the conclusion that the action of raising is not done to the same subject as the action of sowing, so that what is sown is not then raised. Let me explain why I believe my translation is to be preferred. First, as noted above, the plural-singular structure in Paul’s answers in 15:42 mirrors his questions in 15:35. Moreover, in the context of 15:42b-44a, Paul writes the following:

- (1) σπείρεται ἐν φθορᾷ
- (2) ἐγείρεται ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ
- (3) σπείρεται ἐν ἀτιμίᾳ
- (4) ἐγείρεται ἐν δόξῃ
- (5) σπείρεται ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ
- (6) ἐγείρεται ἐν δυνάμει
- (7) σπείρεται σῶμα ψυχικόν
- (8) ἐγείρεται σῶμα πνευματικόν

Paul uses the verbs “σπείρεται” and “ἐγείρεται” four times each in these verses. Note that even if we exclude the last two statements (7-8; which is verse 44), all of the others (1-6) represent a clear case where the “it” (i.e., the corpse) is implied in the verb. This is indisputable. Otherwise, there are no subjects in 1-6 and the sentences are incoherent. Paul is crystal clear in 1-6: “It is sown...It is raised.” What about statements 7-8? Carrier’s translation requires that, after Paul has said “it is sown” and “it is raised” three times each (1-6) that he suddenly switches the thought so that the “it” is not implied in the verb even though the verbs and grammatical order of 7-8 are identical to what he writes in 1-6. Paul has changed what completes the thought of the verbs from the dative case in 1-6 to the nominative in 7-8. But the strength of the precise repetition of the exact verbs and grammatical order virtually requires that the nominatives be taken as predicates to the subject “it,” which is implied in the verbs in 7-8 as in 1-6. The translation that I and the large majority of modern translators offer is simple and smooth. Carrier’s translation is anything but simple or smooth when it is placed in its immediate context. Instead, it breaks the smooth thought that proceeds through Paul’s text.

⁴⁰⁰ Craig (*Assessing*, 1989), 144; R. H. Gundry, “Trimming the Debate” in Copan and Tacelli, eds. (2000), 122; Segal (2004), 433; cf. 439-40.

reason alone [1 Cor. 15:50] it is questionable whether the apostle was interested in the empty tomb.”⁴⁰¹

We come now to four points of contention in this passage. The first is Paul’s statement that the body is sown *natural* (ψυχικόν) and raised *spiritual* (πνευματικόν) (15:44). Wedderburn and the earlier Dunn to which he appeals interpret these words with the RSV/NRSV to mean *physical* and *immaterial*.⁴⁰² Dunn later seems to have backed away from this position.⁴⁰³ We will need to search the ancient literature carefully in order to obtain a good understanding of these words.

There are 846 occurrences of ψυχικόν from the eighth century BC through the third century AD.⁴⁰⁴ There are only five occurrences prior to the fourth century BC, but usage explodes in the first century BC and continues into the first century AD. Then the occurrences in the first century grow one thousand percent in the second century. Especially interesting is that ψυχικόν is often contrasted with σώματος. In fact, ψυχικόν dwells in the σώμα. Starting with Pseudo-Galen in the second/third century AD, ψυχικόν is often contrasted with φυσικόν.⁴⁰⁵ In Pseudo-Plutarch, *daimonioi* are described as ψυχικάς.⁴⁰⁶ Of even more interest are the combinations ψυχικόν πνεύμα, πνεύματος ψυχικοῦ, ψυχικοῦ πνεύματος, and τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ψυχικόν, first appearing in the third century BC in Erasistratus⁴⁰⁷ and Chrysippus,⁴⁰⁸ then Alexander,⁴⁰⁹ then Cassius Iatrosophista,⁴¹⁰ and Vettius Valens.⁴¹¹ Although I did not look at all of the 846 occurrences, I viewed most. I failed to find a single reference where ψυχικόν possessed a meaning of “physical” or “material.”

There are 1131 occurrences of πνευματικόν during the same time period.⁴¹² It first appears in the sixth century BC, with an explosion of occurrences in the first century AD. There is an almost four hundred percent growth that occurs in the second century. On numerous occasions the word appears to refer to the immaterial. However, there are a robust number of exceptions. Of particular interest is Zeno’s “spiritual ones” (οἱ πνευματικοί) who enjoy Stoic teachings (fourth/third century BC).⁴¹³ The Corpus Hermeticum (second century AD) mentions the πνευματικόν ἄνθρωπον.⁴¹⁴ Chrysippus (third century BC) speaks of our *bodies* (σώματικῶν) having a *spiritual* (πνευματική) essence⁴¹⁵ and of a σώμα πνευματικόν και ἀίθερωδες⁴¹⁶

⁴⁰¹ Lüdemann (1995), 46.

⁴⁰² Wedderburn (1999), 66; cf. Dunn (1985), 74. See also Dunn (1995), 40; R. Brown (1997), 525.

⁴⁰³ Dunn (2003), 870-72.

⁴⁰⁴ These and the findings for πνευματικόν below are the results of a TLG search (disk E). There were no occurrences of either word in the Oxyrhynchus papyri.

⁴⁰⁵ See *Introductio seu medicus* 14.697.7; 14.726.7; Alexander, *De anima libri mantissa* 104.4, mentions a σώματος φυσικοῦ.

⁴⁰⁶ *Placita philosophorum* 882.B.5.

⁴⁰⁷ *Testimonia et fragmenta* 112.2; 147.17; 203.1.

⁴⁰⁸ *Fragmenta logica et physica* 716.2; 722.2; 781.3; 783.2; 870.2.

⁴⁰⁹ *Problemata* 2.64.28; 2.67.40.

⁴¹⁰ *Quaestiones medicae et problemata physica* 52.3; 72.9.

⁴¹¹ *Anthologiarum libri ix* 109.13.

⁴¹² Of these, 610 appear in Origen, the majority of which describe the “spirituality” of the Law.

⁴¹³ *Testimonia et fragmenta* 33.2.

⁴¹⁴ *Fragmenta varia* 21.2.

⁴¹⁵ *Fragmenta logica et physica* 389.5.

⁴¹⁶ *Fragmenta logica et physica* 1054.13.

(notice that “spiritual” is distinguished from “ethereal”). A “spiritual body” is mentioned also by Democritus (fifth century BC),⁴¹⁷ Straton (third century BC),⁴¹⁸ Comarius (second century AD),⁴¹⁹ Clement of Alexandria (third century AD),⁴²⁰ and Pseudo-Plutarch (third/fourth century AD).⁴²¹ With the possible exception of Chrysippus, none of these seem to be referring to ethereal bodies. However, Ptolemaeus (second century AD) appears to think along these lines when he speaks of converting or changing from “bodily” to “spiritual.”⁴²² Philo argues that some prophets and angels changed their former essence from *spiritual* and *psuchikal* (πνευματικῆς και ψυχοειδοῦς) to *one of human form* (ἀνθρωπόμορφον).⁴²³

In summary of our discussion thus far, we have combed through eleven centuries of the extant Greek literature and observed that πνευματικόν has numerous meanings throughout this period. While it can refer to something as “ethereal,” other meanings appear frequently. We noticed six occurrences of “spiritual body” and noticed that with one improbable exception, the term is never employed to mean an “immaterial body.” We also observed that ψυχικόν never takes a meaning of “physical” or “material.” Focusing our attention on early Christian uses of these two words will prove even more helpful.

The term πνευματικόν appears twenty-six times within the New Testament literature; all of these are within the Pauline corpus except for two occurrences in 1 Peter 2:5.⁴²⁴ Πνευματικός is employed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:15; 3:1; 14:37; Galatians 6:1 in the sense of the spiritually mature. In 1 Corinthians 2:13 (spiritual wisdom), 9:11 (spiritual blessings), 10:3-4 (spiritual food and drink in the wilderness; i.e., physical food provided by God), 12:1 (spiritual gifts), and 14:1 (spiritual gifts) it refers to something that has to do with the Holy Spirit, or has the Holy Spirit as its origin or power. Other occurrences in the Pauline corpus include Romans 1:11 (spiritual gift), 7:14 (the Law is spiritual), 15:27 (spiritual blessings), Ephesians 1:3 (spiritual blessing), 5:19 (spiritual songs), 6:12 (where “spiritual” forces of evil are contrasted with “flesh and blood”), Colossians 1:9 (spiritual wisdom and understanding), and 3:16 (spiritual songs). In the New Testament, the term appears outside of Paul only in 1 Peter 2:5 in reference to “spiritual sacrifices.” Πνευματικός is absent in the LXX. Therefore, with the possible exception of Ephesians 6:12, Paul never employs πνευματικόν in a sense that means “ethereal.”⁴²⁵

⁴¹⁷ *Testimonia* 140.2.

⁴¹⁸ *Fragmenta* 94.2.

⁴¹⁹ *De lapide philosophorum* 2.290.18.

⁴²⁰ *Eclogae propheticae* 55.1.1.

⁴²¹ *Placita philosophorum* 905.B.7.

⁴²² *Epistula ad Floram* 6.4.2.

⁴²³ *On Abraham* 113.2, but note that ψυχοειδοῦς is likewise employed in contrast to human form. See also *1 Genesis* 1.92.

⁴²⁴ Rom. 1:11; 7:14; 15:27; 1 Cor. 2:13 (twice), 15; 3:1; 9:11; 10:3, 4 (twice); 12:1; 14:1, 37; 15:44 (twice), 46 (twice); Gal. 6:1; Eph. 1:3; 5:19; 6:12; Col. 1:9; 3:16; 1 Pet. 2:5 (twice). The related adverb πνευματικῶς occurs in 1 Cor. 2:14 and Rev. 11:8.

⁴²⁵ We will observe below that the term “flesh and blood” refers to “mortals” rather than “physical.” Thus, even in Ephesians 6:12, πνευματικός probably does not mean “ethereal.” It is also noteworthy that this is the only text in which Paul uses πνευματικός in reference to demonic spirits; elsewhere, Paul always uses it in reference to effects of the Spirit of God.

Ψυχικόν appears only six times in the New Testament, four of which are in the Pauline corpus, all of which are in 1 Corinthians (2:14; 15:44 [two times], 46). The first reference (2:14) is of particular interest, since not only is it the lone appearance in Paul outside of 1 Corinthians 15, but also because Paul uses the precise contrast of terms he employs in 1 Corinthians 15:44 and 46. He writes,

ψυχικὸς δὲ ἄνθρωπος οὐ δέχεται τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ θεοῦ· μαρτία γὰρ αὐτῷ ἐστὶν καὶ οὐ δύναται γινῶναι, ὅτι πνευματικῶς ἀνακρίνεται.

But the *natural* man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him. And he is unable to understand them because they are *spiritually* examined.

In the following verse (15), Paul speaks of the πνευματικὸς in contrast to the ψυχικὸς: “But the *spiritual* examine all things, but he himself is examined by no one” (ὁ δὲ πνευματικὸς ἀνακρίνει [τὰ] πάντα, αὐτὸς δὲ ὑπ’ οὐδενὸς ἀνακρίνεται). It is clear here that Paul is not contrasting physical beings with ethereal ones. Rather, he is contrasting those governed or animated by their fleshly and sinful desires and who think in accordance with the world’s wisdom with those governed by holy desires and heavenly wisdom that are centered on God. In fact, the NRSV, which translates ψυχικὸς as “physical” in 15:44 translates the same word as “unspiritual” in 2:14. Richard Hayes puts it this way: “The term *psychikoi* is difficult to translate properly; it refers to human beings living in their natural state apart from the Spirit of God and therefore unenlightened and blind to the truth. They just don’t ‘get it.’”⁴²⁶ On the other hand, the *spiritual* person “has a privileged understanding of reality.”⁴²⁷ We can imagine Paul handing out T-shirts to the members of the Corinth Community Church. The front of the shirt reads “The Wisdom of God.” The back says, “You wouldn’t understand. It’s a spiritual thing.” It is clear that Paul is not contrasting material and immaterial objects, since for him humans can be natural or spiritual. In other words, when employing the terms “natural” and “spiritual” Paul is not referring to the substance of the old and new bodies, but rather their mode of existence.⁴²⁸ Later on in 15:44 when Paul employs these same terms, he is saying that our current body is buried with all of its “natural” or “this-worldly” appetites and weaknesses but is raised and transformed into a new body with spiritual appetites and qualities.⁴²⁹ He may also be including the power that animates the body.⁴³⁰ Modern machines are empowered by steam, diesel, nuclear, etc. Our present mortal body is animated by a heart, lungs, etc. Our resurrection body will be animated by God’s Spirit.

Other New Testament occurrences of the term only support an interpretation along these lines. Ψυχικός appears on two other occasions in the New Testament. In James

⁴²⁶ Hayes (1997), 46. Ackerman (2006) renders *psychikos* in 1 Cor. 2:15 as “unspiritual” (53) and in 15:44 as “earth-bound” or “unspiritual” (94).

⁴²⁷ Hayes (1997), 46.

⁴²⁸ Johnson (2004), 304-05; Keener (2005), 132; MacGregor (2006), 233; Quest (1994), 96; Watson (1992), 176.

⁴²⁹ Ackerman (2006), 96.

⁴³⁰ Hayes (1997) offers the following interpretation: “It is to be a ‘spiritual body’ not in the sense that it is somehow made out of spirit and vapors, but in the sense that it is determined by the spirit and gives the spirit form and local habitation” (272). Also Thiselton (2000), 1277, 1279. Contra is Orr and Walther (1976), who hold that Paul is not speaking of the Eschaton. Rather, he is saying that the resurrection occurs to individuals as they die (345).

3:15 it is used to contrast a proper spiritual state of the heart with one that is not from God, which James describes as earthly, natural (ψυχική), or even demonic. In Jude 19, the term refers to mockers focused on their ungodly lusts, who cause divisions, are natural (ψυχικοί), and do not have the Holy Spirit.⁴³¹ The word appears just one time in the LXX, in the Apocrypha. In 4 Maccabees 1:32, being temperate is mastery over the desires of “souls” (ψυχικαί) and the desires of bodies (σωματικάί). As examples of the former, the author mentions overcoming greed, choosing virtue over affection for parents, and a willingness to rebuke one’s wife, children, and friends when they act wrongly. It repels the love of power, vainglory, pride, arrogance, slander, and anger (2:8-20). Thus, with the lone improbable exception of Ephesians 6:12, neither Paul nor any other New Testament author nor any writer or translator of the LXX refers to ψυχικός or πνευματικός in the senses understood by Wedderburn.⁴³² Granted,

⁴³¹ In chapter 1.3.2, letter b, we noted that some scholars use exegesis as a torture chamber where texts and Greek words are stretched until they confess to the particular interpretation desired by the exegete. Good examples of this brutality are found in Carrier in reference to 1 Cor. 2:14-15, James 3:15, and Jude 19-20 (Carrier in Price and Lowder, eds. [2005]). Of 1 Cor. 2:14-15 he writes, “So we can infer that the *psychikos anthrōpos* has only a *psychikon sōma* and therefore is doomed to destruction. . . . In contrast, the *pneumatikos anthrōpos* will be given by God a *pneumatikon sōma*, and thus will survive the destruction of his body and the world by escaping into a new, superior one . . . Many of the concepts here also turn up in Paul’s many discussions of resurrection” (130). But Paul makes no such inference here. If the inference is that the natural man has a natural body that is doomed, this might likewise infer that the spiritual man has a spiritual body that will not be doomed. But Paul is clear a few chapters later that *both* the natural man and the spiritual man *have a natural body*. Moreover, Paul is not discussing bodies in the context of 1 Cor. 2:14-15. It is about the natural man who, unlike the spiritual man, cannot understand spiritual things. Carrier imports his interpretation of 1 Cor. 15:44 into 2:14-15 where he applies it to bodies, then claims that this conclusion will turn up in Paul’s discussion of resurrection in 1 Cor. 15—a perfect circle! In James 3:15ff., James is contrasting conduct, asserting that bitter jealousy and rivalry is wisdom not from heaven, but rather is earthly, natural, and demonic and creates disorder and all evil practices. In contrast, the wisdom from heaven is above all pure, then peaceable, yielding, considerate, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and genuine. James then accuses the believers to whom he writes of exhibiting the former type of wisdom. Carrier stretches the text to get a confession when he writes, “So by extension, if a *psychic* wisdom is not from heaven but comes from earth and is subject to demonic forces and attached to perishable life, then a *psychic* body comes from earth and is subject to demonic forces and attached to perishable life, and consequently can have no place in heaven or our new and future life” (131). In Jude 19-20, he warns his readers of these evil men in their midst who live for their impious lusts, are divisive, natural, and without the Holy Spirit. Instead they are to build themselves up in the holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keeping themselves in the love of God, expecting the Lord’s mercy for eternal life, having mercy on those who doubt, and saving others (perhaps by sharing with them the message of salvation through Christ). Carrier notes Jude’s strong warning against evil men who, like others before them, will be destroyed. He then writes, “It follows that the *psychic* man will perish because all he has is a *psychic* body, and all *psychic* bodies will be destroyed, but the spiritual man is building for himself a spiritual body (as in Jude 20) and will thus be saved, jumping into it like an escape pod at the end of days” (131). Carrier knows where he wants to go and once again stretches the text to assist him. We can hear the screams of Paul, James, and Jude coming from his exegetical chamber until there is silence after which Carrier emerges with a new confidence.

⁴³² The following modern commentators maintain that Paul’s contrast between ψυχικός and πνευματικός does not refer to a contrast between the “physical” and “immaterial”: Ackerman (2006), 96; Barnett (1994), 9; Barrett (1968), 373; Bostock (2001), 271; Brodeur (1996), 122; Collins (1999), 567; Conzelman (1975), 290; Fee (1987), 788-89; Gundry (1976), 165-66; Harris (1985), 118; Hayes (1997) contends that the “NRSV’s translation (‘physical body’) is especially unfortunate, for it reinstates precisely the dualistic dichotomy between physical and spiritual that Paul is struggling to overcome. In any case, *psychikon* certainly does not mean ‘physical’” (272); Héring (1962), 176-77; Hurtado (*LJC*, 2003): “‘Spiritual’ here can only mean empowered by the Spirit, as Paul consistently uses the term in this epistle” (170-71n29). Elsewhere (Hurtado in “Jesus’ Resurrection in the Early Christian Texts,” 2005) he opines that the translation “physical” has “seriously misleading connotations” (200); Johnson

the terms maintain a degree of ambiguity for us modern readers and, perhaps, for Paul's readers as well. Notwithstanding, we can come fairly close to understanding Paul's meaning and we may have certainty that this does not include his comparing a physical and material body with one that is non-physical and immaterial.⁴³³

Although later than the New Testament literature, uses of these terms by the Apostolic Fathers may likewise be helpful to us. *Ψυχικόν* does not appear in the Apostolic Fathers. However, there are twenty-two occurrences of *πνευματικόν*.⁴³⁴ The term generally carries the same meanings that are found in New Testament usage. However, of interest is that Ignatius provides a number of passages contrasting or combining "flesh" and "spirit." He refers to Jesus as the "physician, who is flesh and spirit (*σαρκικός καὶ πνευματικός*), born and unborn" (Ign. *Eph.* 7:2). Although the "spiritual" to which Ignatius refers is immaterial, it is not clear that this is what "spiritual" means in this context. Here it appears to denote the divine nature of Christ in contrast to his human nature. Ignatius's point is that the whole person of Christ, human and divine, rose from the dead. In Ign. *Eph.* 10:3, Christians are told to abide in Christ "physically" and "spiritually." In Ign. *Magn.* 13:1-2, Christians are told to be grounded in the dogmas of the Lord and the apostles so that they may prosper "physically" and "spiritually" and that they should obey the bishop so that there may be "physical" and "spiritual" unity (Ig. *Smyr.* 13:2). Only in Ig. *Eph.* 8:2 does Ignatius employ "fleshly" in a negative sense: οἱ σαρκικοὶ τὰ πνευματικὰ πράσσειν οὐ δύνανται, οὐδὲ οἱ πνευματικοὶ τὰ σαρκικά ("Those who are *fleshly* are not able to do *spiritual* things. Neither can the *spiritual* do *fleshly* things"). This looks much like Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 2:14 and 3:1. Ignatius urges Polycarp to give all

(2004), 304-05; Kistemaker (1993), 573; Lockwood (2000), 584-85, 589, 594-95, 602; D. M. Martin (1995), 189; Segal (2004), like Hayes above, refers to "physical body" as "an unfortunate English translation" (429); Snyder (1992), 206; Thiselton (2000), 1275-78; Witherington, (*Corinth*, 1995), 309; Wright (2003), 282, 348-55. Ehrman (*The New Testament*, 2008) likewise understands Paul as referring to the transformation of the present body (330). For a contrary position, see Baxter (1999), 27; Barclay in D'Costa, ed. (1996), 17; Borg (Borg and Wright, 1998) correctly understands what these terms mean before allowing his misunderstanding of the term "flesh and blood" to lead him astray: "the Greek phrase behind 'physical body' means literally 'a body animated by soul,' and the second phrase means 'a body animated by spirit.' Yet the context suggests to me that the contrast 'physical body' and 'spiritual body' does express what Paul means. According to other things Paul says in the immediate context the 'body animated by soul' is 'flesh and blood,' 'perishable,' 'of the earth,' 'of dust.' This is what we typically mean by a physical body. The 'body animated by spirit,' on the other hand, is none of these things" (133); Dunn (1995): "It makes better sense to see his distinction between the 'natural (physical) body' of this life and the 'spiritual body' of the resurrection (15.44) as an attempt to re-express Jewish understanding of existence as always an embodied existence in a way which made more sense to those who thought in Greek terms" (40); Hooke (1967), 55; Murphy-O'Connor (1998), 171; Quest (1994), 96, 122-23; Tabor (2006), 232; Wedderburn (1999), 66. Also see Gooch (1987), 69-70 and Harrisville (1987), 274, 281 who understand the resurrection state of believers as one of disembodiment and without continuity with our present body, although Harrisville contends that "natural" does not mean physical (276). I found five of thirty-two English translations that rendered *ψυχικόν* as "physical": RSV, NRSV, REB, GWN (God's Word to the Nations Bible), and the Amplified Bible. The following lexicons rendered *ψυχικόν* in 1 Cor. 15:44 as "physical": BDAG (2000), 1100 (The influence of BDAG on translators has probably been quite significant here.); Friberg, Friberg, and Miller (2000), 414; Newman (1993), 201; Louw and Nida (1996, c 1989), 1:693.

⁴³³ Accordingly, it was an innocent but incorrect understanding of Paul which led the widely-respected philosopher Antony Flew to comment, "I find the idea of a spiritual body very peculiar in that, after all, when you say something is spiritual it's rather like saying it's immaterial." (Flew's comments in Ankerberg, ed. [2005], 17).

⁴³⁴ 1 *Clem.* 47:3; 2 *Clem.* 14:1ff; *Barn.* 1:2; 4:11; 16:10; Ign. *Eph.* 5:1; 7:2; 8:2 (thrice); 10:3; 11:2; Ign. *Magn.* 13:1f; Ign. *Smyrn.* 3:3; 12:2; 13:2; Ign. *Pol.* 1:2; 2:2; *Did.* 10:3.

attention to things “fleshly” and “spiritual” (Ign. *Pol.* 1:2). Polycarp should ask that the unseen things may be revealed to him (i.e., spiritual discernment). This is why he is both “fleshly” and “spiritual” (2:2). Of special interest is Ign. *Smyrn.* 3:1-3 where he states that Jesus was in the “flesh” when after his resurrection he appeared to the disciples, inviting them to touch him so that they would see that he was not a δαιμόνιον ἀσώματον (bodiless *daimonion*). They touched him and believed because they could relate to his flesh and blood [or spirit] (κραθέντες τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ αἵματι [A] πνεύματι [GLC] “blended with his flesh and blood [spirit]”). Jesus then ate and drank with his disciples as in the *flesh* (ὡς σαρκικός) although he had been *spiritually* united with the Father. In 12:2, Ignatius greets all in the name of Jesus Christ and τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ αἵματι, πάθει τε καὶ ἀναστάσει σαρκικῇ τε καὶ πνευματικῇ, ἐν ἐνότητι θεοῦ καὶ ὑμῶν (“in his flesh and blood, he suffered and was resurrected both in the *flesh* and in the *spirit*, in unity with God and you”). Accordingly, for Ignatius, although flesh and spirit were distinct, they were not necessarily set in antithesis to one another any more than “tall” is the antithesis of “heavy.” It was not an either/or but a both/and.

Our word study of ψυχικόν and πνευματικόν has taken us from the eighth century BC through the third century AD. We have observed that ψυχικόν is never employed in a sense that carries the meaning of “physical” or “material.” Of greater importance is that this conclusion carries throughout the writings of the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers. Of greatest importance is that Paul did not employ ψυχικόν and πνευματικόν to describe a contrast of “physical/material” and “ethereal/immaterial” in 1 Corinthians. Moreover, I would like to add that had Paul desired to communicate this sort of contrast, he had better words at his disposal, one of which he had employed just a few chapters earlier while using a seed analogy similar to that of 1 Corinthians 15. In 9:11 he writes, “If we sowed spiritual (πνευματικὰ) things in you, is it too much if we reap material (σαρκικὰ) things from you?”⁴³⁵ If the apostles were providing spiritual teachings to the Corinthian Christians, were not they entitled to receive material benefits like food, clothing, and shelter?⁴³⁶ Since Paul had used both ψυχικός and σαρκικός earlier, if he had desired to communicate that our resurrection body would not be physical but rather immaterial in nature, why use the former term in a sense not employed earlier in his letter or for that matter anywhere else in the Pauline corpus, the New Testament, or by any known author from the eighth century BC through the third century AD, while ignoring a clearer term used just a few chapters earlier in a similar seed analogy?⁴³⁷ Moreover, had Paul wanted to communicate that our resurrection bodies will be ethereal, he may have used ἀόρατος. Within the Pauline corpus, this term is found in Romans 1:20; Colossians 1:16; 1 Timothy 1:17, all in this sense.⁴³⁸ While many question Pauline authorship of

⁴³⁵ See also Rom. 15:27 where Paul writes, “For if the Gentiles shared in their [i.e., Jews] spiritual things, they ought also in their material things to serve them.” Paul employs the same Greek words for “spiritual” and “material” that he does in 1 Cor. 9:11.

⁴³⁶ Σαρκικός is likewise found in Rom. 15:27; 1 Cor. 3:3; 2 Cor. 1:12; 10:4; 1 Pet. 2:11. All but the Petrine reference are found in Paul’s letters.

⁴³⁷ Brodeur (1996), 101n21. Moule (1965) notes that πνευματικῇ, ψυχικῇ, and σαρκικῇ all appear in a passage in the Reginus *de resurrectione* from Nag Hammadi (45:14-46:2) but then notes the problems with dating this text (112).

⁴³⁸ Outside the Pauline corpus, ἀόρατος appears in Heb. 11:27. In the LXX, it occurs in Gen. 1:2, Isa. 45:3, and 2 Macc. 9:5.

Colossians⁴³⁹ and most reject it for 1 Timothy,⁴⁴⁰ a large number agree that these contain Pauline thought.⁴⁴¹

We now move to the second point of contention which appears in the next verse where Paul refers to Adam as a “living soul” (ψυχὴν ζῶσαν) and Jesus as a “life-giving spirit” (πνεῦμα ζωοποιῶν). He alludes to Genesis 2:7 which reads:

καὶ ἔπλασεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν.

And God formed man from the dust of the earth and breathed into his face the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

In 15:45, Paul provides further explanation of what he means by natural and spiritual bodies:

οὕτως καὶ γέγραπται· ἐγένετο ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος Ἀδὰμ εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν, ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιῶν.

Thus also it is written: the first Adam became a living soul. The last Adam a life-giving spirit.

According to Genesis 2:7 God breathed on Adam with the result that he became a ψυχὴν ζῶσαν. In 15:45, Paul asserts that Jesus, who is the last Adam, became a πνεῦμα ζωοποιῶν. The words Paul use for *soul* (ψυχὴν) and *spirit* (πνεῦμα) are roots of *natural* (ψυχικός) and *spiritual* (πνευματικός), which appear in the previous verse. The *ικός* has been omitted, since the terms appear substantively rather than adjectivally as in 15:44. We may very roughly translate Paul’s thought as “Adam became a *natural* entity that is living, whereas Jesus became a *spiritual* entity that is life-giving.” God breathed on *natural* matter and it came to life. The resurrected Jesus will breathe on others at the general resurrection and they will become *spiritual* entities. The verses that follow (46-49) provide additional context for interpretation:

ἀλλ’ οὐ πρῶτον τὸ πνευματικὸν ἀλλὰ τὸ ψυχικόν, ἔπειτα τὸ πνευματικόν.⁴⁷ ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος ἐκ γῆς χοϊκός, ὁ δεύτερος ἄνθρωπος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ.⁴⁸ οἶος ὁ χοϊκός, τοιοῦτοι καὶ οἱ χοϊκοί, καὶ οἶος ὁ ἐπουράνιος, τοιοῦτοι καὶ οἱ ἐπουράνιοι.⁴⁹ καὶ καθὼς ἐφορέσαμεν τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ χοϊκοῦ, φορέσομεν καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ ἐπουρανοῦ.

But the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.⁴⁷ The first man is from the earth, of dust; the second man is from heaven.⁴⁸ As the dusty one

⁴³⁹ R. Brown (1997) notes that “at the present moment about 60 percent of critical scholarship holds that Paul did not write the letter” (610). Wright (2003) places himself in the “recalcitrant minority” of scholars who regard Ephesians and Colossians as from Paul (236). Contra is Witherington (*Acts*, 1998) who writes, “Most scholars still believe that Paul wrote Colossians” (58).

⁴⁴⁰ R. Brown (1997): “about 80-90 percent of modern scholars would agree that the Pastorals were written after Paul’s lifetime, and of those the majority would accept the period between 80 and 100 as the most plausible context for their composition” (668, emphasis in original).

⁴⁴¹ R. Brown (1997): “What is assured is that Col belongs in the Pauline heritage” (617). “The majority would also interpret [the Pastorals] as having some continuity with Paul’s own ministry and thought, but not so close a continuity as manifested in Col and Eph and even II Thess” (668).

is, such also are the dusty [i.e., earthly] ones. And as the heavenly one is, such also are the heavenly ones.⁴⁹ And just as we have borne the image of the dusty one, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one.

The future tense indicates this change will occur at the general resurrection, which is confirmed by the remainder of chapter 15 and especially 15:52. Accordingly, in context, Paul provides four ways in which our present body differs from our resurrection body with additional comment on the fourth: *natural* and *spiritual*. Our present bodies are corruptible, dishonorable, weak, natural, and composed of an inanimate and earthly substance which came to life through the breath of God. Our future bodies will be incorruptible, glorious, powerful, spiritual, and composed of heavenly substance that is given life by Christ. It is helpful to remember that neither Paul nor any other known author from the eighth century BC through the third century AD employed these terms to contrast *physical* and *immaterial* bodies. This is crushing to any hope of interpreting Paul as suggesting an ethereal body when he refers to Jesus as a “life-giving spirit.” Moreover, as we also previously observed, the word for “life-giving” (ζωοποιῶν) is used by Paul in Romans 8:11 where he says, “the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead will also *give life* [ζωοποιήσει] to your mortal bodies.” Since Paul uses the same Greek word on the same subject of our future bodies, it seems quite clear that, in 1 Corinthians and Romans, Paul held that a transformation of our present and mortal body will occur. Since Jesus was the “first fruit” (ἀπαρχή) of those who have died (1 Cor. 15:20), it seems that Paul would likewise have thought Jesus’ mortal body was raised as he implies in Romans 8:11.

The third point of contention in 1 Corinthians 15 is verse 50. Paul states that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα βασιλείαν θεοῦ κληρονομήσαι οὐ δύναται οὐδὲ ἡ φθορὰ τὴν ἀφθαρσίαν κληρονομεῖ). Are Dunn and Wedderburn correct that Paul is contradicting Luke who reports Jesus saying “a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have” (Luke 24:39)? A significant minority of today’s commentators interpret “flesh and blood” as a synonym for “physical.”⁴⁴² Most agree it is a figure of speech—and probably a Semitism—referring to man as a mortal being, rather than simply stating “*the living* cannot inherit the kingdom of God.”⁴⁴³ It resembles North American idioms that refer to a person as being cold-blooded, hot-blooded, or red-blooded. When referring to a “red-blooded male,” North Americans are not

⁴⁴² Borg (2006), 289 (cf. Borg in Borg and Wright [1998], 133); R. Brown (1973), 87; Crossan in Halstead (1995), 521; Dunn (2002), 11; Viney (1989), 130; Watson (1992), 179.

⁴⁴³ Jeremias (1955-56) notes that βασιλείαν θεοῦ κληρονομήσα is “semitic language” (cf. Matt. 25:34). Thus, the entire sentence “is not a creation of the apostle himself but originates from the eschatological teaching of the early Church” (152); Barnett (1994), citing similar meaning in other passages where the phrase appears, although he makes no mention of it being a figure of speech (9); Carson (1998) comments on Matthew 16:17; Collins (1999), 579; Conzelmann (1975), 289-90; Garland (2003), 739-41. Gundry (1976) contends that the term “connotes the present body’s weakness and perishability (the parallel is *phthora*), but does not imply immateriality of the resurrected body. On the contrary, *sōma* in and of itself implies materiality” (166); Kistemaker (1993), 580-81; Lockwood (2000), 596; Johnson (2004), 306; Eriksson (1998), 273; Keener (2005), 133. Craig (*Assessing*, 1989) notes that “most commentators are agreed that ‘flesh and blood’ is a typical Semitic expression denoting the frail human nature” (141). He then cites ten scholars in support, none of whom has been listed above. Thiselton (2000) does not note the Semitism. However, he asserts that “flesh and blood” denotes “humankind in its weakness and vulnerability” and that 50a refers to “holiness in place of sin” and 50b refers to “the reversal of weakness, degeneration, and decay” (1291); Orr and Walther (1976) likewise note that the term’s meaning refers to humanity (349-50); Wright (2003) does not note the Semitism (359).

contrasting him with one who is green-blooded. The color and temperature of one's blood is not relevant. The expression "flesh and blood" appears five times in the New Testament (two of which are in the Pauline corpus),⁴⁴⁴ appears twice in the LXX,⁴⁴⁵ and is common in the Rabbinic literature, all carrying the primary sense of mortality rather than physicality.⁴⁴⁶ That "flesh and blood" is employed in this sense in 1 Corinthians 15:50 is undergirded by the fact that, elsewhere in 1 Corinthians 15 where the present body is described, its mortality rather than physicality is the issue.

Joachim Jeremias convinced many scholars that Paul is here employing synthetic parallelism to contrast the living with the dead. The term "flesh and blood" simply refers to those living at the parousia and the "perishable" refers to the dead in Christ at the parousia.⁴⁴⁷ According to Jeremias, the thought behind verse 50 is "neither the living nor the dead can take part in the Kingdom of God—as they are."⁴⁴⁸ However, many commentators now disagree with Jeremias. They argue that Paul is employing synonymous rather than synthetic parallelism.⁴⁴⁹ In this structure, the latter statement "the corruptible cannot inherit the incorruptible" is a restatement of the former "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Collins suggests that the former is a statement in Semitic terms and the latter in Hellenistic terms.⁴⁵⁰ In this case, Paul is saying that our mortal bodies with their weaknesses cannot inherit the kingdom of God, that is, our corruptible bodies cannot inherit incorruptibility. A slightly different interpretation of verse 50 results: "That which is sinful and corrupt cannot enter the presence of God and obtain that which is incorrupt. When that which is corrupt has been changed to a state of incorruption, we can speak of laying claim to the inheritance God offers to us."⁴⁵¹

In favor of synthetic parallelism, there are three other occasions in the New Testament where the $\sigma\tau\iota \dots \sigma\upsilon\delta\epsilon$ may slightly favor the interpretation of Jeremias: Acts 2:27; Philippians 2:16; Hebrews 10:8.⁴⁵² However, it must be admitted that in each instance, the second thought in these passages may also be interpreted exegetically to the first thought without strain, supporting synonymous parallelism.

That neither interpretation stands out as significantly weightier is evidenced by the lack of even a resemblance of a majority view. Notwithstanding, whichever position one may adopt (synthetic or synonymous), there is no support from either for interpreting Paul to be implying that our incorruptible bodies will be ethereal. "Flesh and blood" is better interpreted "mortal," and even by Jeremias' view, "the living" is not necessarily synonymous with "physical" or "material."⁴⁵³ If "flesh and blood" is

⁴⁴⁴ Matt. 16:17; 1 Cor. 15:50; Gal. 1:16; Eph. 6:12; Heb. 2:14.

⁴⁴⁵ Ecclesiasticus 14:18; 17:31.

⁴⁴⁶ R. Meyer, *TDNT*, 7:116.

⁴⁴⁷ Jeremias (1955-56), 157-58. Also see Barrett (1968), 379. Thiselton (2000) agrees with Jeremias that synthetic parallelism is used by Paul, but does not agree with his definition of "flesh and blood" (1291).

⁴⁴⁸ Jeremias (1955-56), 152.

⁴⁴⁹ Collins (1999), 579; Conzelmann (1975), 290; Fee (1987), 798; Garland (2003), 741; G. Harder, *TDNT*, 9:103-05; Kistemaker (1993), 581.

⁴⁵⁰ Collins (1999), 579.

⁴⁵¹ Kistemaker (1993), 581.

⁴⁵² Luke 12:24 is not a good example, since the construction is not the same: $\sigma\tau\iota \dots \sigma\upsilon \dots \sigma\upsilon\delta\epsilon$.

⁴⁵³ Meyer (1986): "Jeremias' 1955 essay all but put an end to the idea that 'flesh and blood' (interpreted as the corporeal principle itself) had no part in final salvation. After 1955 that particular

understood with the majority of commentators as a figure of speech, interpreting Paul as claiming in 15:50 that our future bodies will be ethereal is exegetically unfounded. He is saying that our mortal bodies in their weak state will not be what we have in the resurrection. They must be transformed. Since “flesh and blood” is a figure of speech and “flesh and bone” apparently was not, Paul is not at all contradicting Luke. Moreover, since Paul strongly suggests a resurrection of our mortal bodies elsewhere (e.g., Rom. 8:11, 23; 1 Cor. 15:42ff, 53; Phil. 3:21), any interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:50 that has Paul referring to an ethereal body proposes a Paul who not only contradicts Luke, but also himself.

The fourth and final point of contention results from verses 51-52, where Paul says that on the day of resurrection “we will be changed” (ἀλλαγησόμεθα). This text appears to have an earlier parallel in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 where Paul writes, “For with a shout of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God the Lord Himself will descend from heaven and the dead in Christ will be raised first.¹⁷ Next, we who are living and remaining will be taken at the same time with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we will be with the Lord always.”⁴⁵⁴ Paul does not appear to believe in a “soul sleep,” since, for him, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord and this will occur immediately upon death (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:21-24). Paul envisions instead that dead believers are with Christ until the Parousia, at which time they return to their bodies and are resurrected. Believers who are alive at the Parousia will have their bodies changed to immortality and will be similar to the resurrection bodies of the now formerly dead believers. Paul’s thoughts in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 support a “transformation” view.

Some have contended that Paul is not communicating that we will be changed in the sense of altering, but is instead employing a meaning of mercantile exchange, in other words, of *trading* one thing for another.⁴⁵⁵ While this meaning is possible, it seems unlikely. It is difficult to translate 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 to mean an exchange. If the dead experience resurrection at death, why are they raised at the Parousia: “the dead in Christ will be raised incorruptible” (1 Cor. 15:52); “the dead in Christ will be raised first” (1 Thess. 4:16)?⁴⁵⁶ These texts likewise make

reading of the text of 1 Cor 15:50 was largely abandoned, few today being ready to follow Teichmann in suppressing the prima-facie sense of ‘change’ (‘we shall all be changed’) in favor of making it mean annihilation and new creation. [In a footnote here, Meyer cites Lüdemann “among the exceptions.”] With the loss of 1 Cor 15:50, the full-blown hypothesis of ‘development’—a complete trajectory with visible point of departure (1 Thess 4), apogee (1 Cor 15), and arrival at a new eschatology (2 Cor 5)—did indeed collapse” (375).

⁴⁵⁴ ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος ἐν κελεύσματι, ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου καὶ ἐν σάλπιγγι θεοῦ, καταβήσεται ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστήσονται πρῶτον, ¹⁷ ἔπειτα ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου εἰς ἄερα· καὶ οὕτως πάντοτε σὺν κυρίῳ ἔσόμεθα.

⁴⁵⁵ Dunn (1985) seems to support this view: “Paul believed in the resurrection of the *body*, but not the resurrection of *this* body” (74); Barrett (1973), 153; Carnley (1987), 58; Harris (1990) writes that in verse 44 the discontinuity is so emphasized that “the ‘exchange’ motif is present,” but only alongside a dominant transformation motif in verses 36-37 and 51-54 (201-02). Also see Jos. War 2:162-63.

⁴⁵⁶ Word usage elsewhere is not very helpful. Several instances in biblical texts exist where the meaning of *exchange* is present (Gen. 41:14; Lev. 27:10, 33; Jdg. 14:13; 2 Sam. 12:20; 1 Ki. 5:28; 2 Ki. 5:5, 22, 23; Neh. 9:26; Ps. 101 [102]:27; 105 [106]:20; Isa. 24:5; Jer. 2:11; 52:33.). However, there are also instances, though fewer, where the term is used of *altering*, such as in Gen. 31:7 (“your father has cheated me and *changed* my wages ten times”). For other uses in non-biblical sources more

it clear that resurrection for Paul did not occur at death. The continuing life of the soul is not ‘resurrection.’

Thus far, we have discovered that the meaning of *altering* is clearly more at home than *exchanging* in 1 Corinthians 15 through verse 50. Paul has stated that *this* present mortal body will put on immortality and the remaining scholars who understand “flesh and blood” and πνευματικόν to be referring to an ethereal existence are mistaken. But what about verse 51? Jeremias links this statement to verse 35 and says this is Paul’s answer to the question “How are the dead raised?” Verses 51-52 is Paul’s answer, the πῶς.⁴⁵⁷ The mystery revealed to Paul is that the change of the dead in Christ as well as believers living at the time will take place at the parousia. Jeremias draws this conclusion based on 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 which Paul wrote prior to 1 Corinthians and is a parallel passage. He also notes that in the Jewish apocalyptic literature the dead are raised in their earthly state (*Syriac Apoc. of Baruch* 49-51; esp. 50:2). “Only after the judgment the righteous are changed.”⁴⁵⁸ I regard it as being more likely that Paul is rather answering the question implicitly prompted by the statement that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,” which is, “How will the believer be changed in order to inherit the kingdom of God?” Either way, most agree that Paul meant *altering*.⁴⁵⁹

For Paul to be thinking of an exchange, he would have to be going against what he had just written in 15:42-44 and what he would later write in Romans and Philippians. Thus, there is no indication that Paul imagines an exchange. Everything points to an altering.

We have looked carefully at four points of contention in this passage and discovered that it is highly likely that Paul held to a transforming resurrection of Jesus’ corpse. To the extent that this observation is correct, the interpretations of Wedderburn, Dunn, and others who place Paul’s view of resurrection in conflict to the Evangelists are mistaken.⁴⁶⁰

4.3.3.9.c. Philippians 3:21

ὃς μετασχηματίσει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ δύνασθαι αὐτὸν καὶ ὑποτάξει αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα.

contemporary with 1 Cor. 15, see Jos. *Ant.* 2:97, where Joseph’s face had *changed* over the years due to aging so that his brothers did not recognize him, and the *Shepherd of Hermas* Parable 9, 4:5, 8 which tells of stones that change or alter their colors. A few other texts could adopt either meaning: 3 Macc. 1:29; *Barn.* 10:7; 15:5. The only biblical references contemporary with 1 Cor. 15 are likewise found in Paul who only employs it twice (Rom. 1:23; Gal. 4:20) and Heb. 1:12. In Rom. 1:23 the meaning of *exchanging* is clear, but in Gal. 4:20 the meaning of *altering* is clear. Heb. 1:12 means an exchange.

⁴⁵⁷ In agreement is Soards (1999), 351.

⁴⁵⁸ Jeremias (1955-56), 158-59.

⁴⁵⁹ Brodeur (1996), 31, 83, 96; Fee (1987), 800; Garland (2003), 743; Harris (1985), 216; Héring (1962), 180; Horsley (1998), 214; Kistemaker (1993), 582; Morris (1976), 233; Moule (1965), 120; Oster (1995), 407; Pannenberg in D’Costa, ed. (1996), 67; Talbert (1987), 103; Thiselton (2000), 1294-95.

⁴⁶⁰ Borg is, thus, seriously mistaken when he asserts that 1 Corinthians 15 is “a chapter that strongly suggests that the resurrection body is not a physical body” (Borg in Borg and Wright, 1998, 134). See also Gwynne (2000): “Admittedly, Paul’s writings certainly create difficulties for supporters of an historical empty tomb” (12).

He will transform our humble body to be in similar form to his glorious body according to the working of his power even to subject all things to himself.

Μετασχηματίσει (transform) in Philippians 3:21 is employed by Josephus to mean “to change” as in changing clothes.⁴⁶¹ Is it possible that Paul was thinking more of an exchange of our present mortal body for a new one, rather than a transformation when he wrote to the Philippians?

There are five occurrences of the term in the Pauline corpus (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 Cor. 11:13, 14, 15; Phil. 3:21). 1 Corinthians 4:6 provides a unique instance where it apparently means “to apply to.”⁴⁶² In each appearance in 2 Corinthians, either definition will work. False apostles are said to *disguise* (μετασχηματιζόμενοι) themselves as true ones. *Disguise* could mean that they are altering or changing their identity. However, one may claim that they exchanged their identity for another, although lexicographers do not appear to have understood it in the latter sense.⁴⁶³ However, we will explore this thought further. Since Paul’s use of this word in his other writings is not of much help, let us look elsewhere. The word does not appear in the Apostolic Fathers and only once in the LXX. In 4 Maccabees 9:22, a man being tortured is said to be transformed by fire into immortality. This seems to be referring to his inner being, rather than his body. Nevertheless, it is a transformation rather than an exchange.

The matter may be decided by reading Philippians 3:21 employing each definition:

Christ will *transform* our humble body into conformity with his glorious body.
Christ will *exchange* our humble body into conformity with his glorious body.

In our first option, Paul is saying that Jesus will alter our mortal bodies to be like (lit. *to have the same form as*) his own. This fits very well. In the second option, Paul says that Jesus will exchange our mortal bodies to be like his own. Exchanging something to be in conformity with something else does not read well. What is Jesus exchanging with our bodies? It is as though two different and disconnected thoughts are being presented. One must do violence to the text in order to arrive at such an interpretation. Thus, the text itself seems quite clear that Paul is referring to an altering of our present body.⁴⁶⁴

4.3.3.9.d. Colossians 2:9

ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς

For in him dwells all the fullness of deity bodily

⁴⁶¹ Jos. Ant. 7:257; 8:267.

⁴⁶² BDAG (2000), #3, 641.

⁴⁶³ BDAG (2000), #1, 641; LS (1996), #1, 1117.

⁴⁶⁴ Lüdemann (2004), 45; Moule (1965), 108; Witherington (*Paul*, 1998), 150-51. Contra is Lindars (1986) who argues that “following the lead of Paul, we can conclude that at his resurrection Jesus assumed ‘his glorious body’ (Philippians 3.21), suited to his status as the exalted Messiah. This view permits (but does not necessitate) the corollary that the physical body of Jesus remained in the unknown place of burial and decomposed in the same way as our own” (95). Lindars fails to note that in this same verse Paul says that our present bodies will be transformed.

We will only mention this passage in passing, since there is no consensus regarding authorship of Colossians or whether it contains Pauline thought.⁴⁶⁵ Since a healthy number of scholars believe Paul wrote Colossians, it should at least be noted that in 2:9 the present tense of κατοικέω is employed. The author held that all of the fullness of God's nature and essence dwells presently (that is, in the post-ascension state) in Jesus' body. Although not as precise as the other references considered, Jesus in his resurrected state is said to possess a body of a sort.

Thus far, we have examined texts attributed to Paul. Of these, three strongly suggest his belief in the resurrection of the corpse and are located in his undisputed letters. The fourth suggests Paul's belief that Jesus has a body in his post-ascension state and is found in a letter for which there is heavy dispute over Pauline authorship. Before drawing a final conclusion on Paul, we will need to consider his teaching in a passage that has created much controversy and which presents the possibility that he changed his view of the meaning of "resurrection" after writing 1 Corinthians.

4.3.3.9.e. 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:8

Διὸ οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν, ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ ὁ ἕξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος διαφθείρεται, ἀλλ' ὁ ἕσω ἡμῶν ἀνακαινοῦται ἡμέρα καὶ ἡμέρα.¹⁷ τὸ γὰρ παραυτίκα ἐλαφρὸν τῆς θλίψεως ἡμῶν καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν αἰώνιον βάρος δόξης κατεργάζεται ἡμῖν,¹⁸ μὴ σκοποῦντων ἡμῶν τὰ βλεπόμενα ἀλλὰ τὰ μὴ βλεπόμενα· τὰ γὰρ βλεπόμενα πρόσκαιρα, τὰ δὲ μὴ βλεπόμενα αἰώνια.¹ Οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι ἐὰν ἡ ἐπίγειος ἡμῶν οἰκία τοῦ σκήνου καταλυθῇ, οἰκοδομήν ἐκ θεοῦ ἔχομεν, οἰκίαν ἀχειροποίητον αἰώνιον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.² καὶ γὰρ ἐν τούτῳ στενάζομεν τὸ οἰκητήριον ἡμῶν τὸ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἐπενδύσασθαι ἐπιποθοῦντες,³ εἶ γε καὶ ἐκδυσάμενοι οὐ γυμνοὶ εὐρεθησόμεθα.⁴ καὶ γὰρ οἱ ὄντες ἐν τῷ σκήνῳ στενάζομεν βαρούμενοι, ἐφ' ᾧ οὐ θέλομεν ἐκδύσασθαι ἀλλ' ἐπενδύσασθαι, ἵνα καταποθῇ τὸ θνητὸν ὑπὸ τῆς ζωῆς.⁵ ὁ δὲ κατεργασάμενος ἡμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο θεός, ὁ δοὺς ἡμῖν τὸν ἀρραβῶνα τοῦ πνεύματος.⁶ Θαρροῦντες οὖν πάντοτε καὶ εἰδότες ὅτι ἐνδημοῦντες ἐν τῷ σώματι ἐκδημοῦμεν ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου.⁷ διὰ πίστεως γὰρ περιπατοῦμεν, οὐ διὰ εἶδους.⁸ θαρροῦμεν δὲ καὶ εὐδοκοῦμεν μᾶλλον ἐκδημῆσαι ἐκ τοῦ σώματος καὶ ἐνδημῆσαι πρὸς τὸν κύριον.

Therefore, we do not lose heart. But even if our physical body is wearing down our inner person is being renewed day by day.¹⁷ For momentarily, our light sufferings are producing in [or for] us an eternal weight of glory beyond comparison.¹⁸ We are not concerned about the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen. For the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are not seen are eternal.¹ For we know that if our earthly house of dwelling is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house made without hands eternal in the heavens.² For even in this we groan, longing to be further clothed by our heavenly dwelling.³ If indeed, even having taken it off, we will not be found naked.⁴ For indeed we groan, being burdened while in this house, because we do not desire to be unclothed but to be further clothed in order that the mortal may be swallowed up by life.⁵ God is the one who

⁴⁶⁵ In favor of Pauline thought are R. Brown (1997), 617; Ehrman (2000), 349; Johnson (1986), 359; Wright (1986), 34.

prepared us for this very thing, who gave his Spirit to us as a deposit.⁶ Therefore, we are confident always and know that to be at home in the body is to be absent from the Lord.⁷ For we walk by faith, not by sight.⁸ And we are confident and rather pleased to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

This passage has been one of the most difficult in the New Testament for scholars to decipher and little agreement exists regarding its meaning. John Gillman lists three general categories of interpretations of this text:⁴⁶⁶ (1) Paul has changed his mind pertaining to post-mortem existence during the time between writing 1 and 2 Corinthians and is saying in this passage that believers receive their new body at death.⁴⁶⁷ (2) Paul is speaking of the resurrection of the body at the Parousia.⁴⁶⁸ (3) Paul is speaking of a different matter than he was in 1 Corinthians 15, perhaps an intermediate state.⁴⁶⁹ I agree with Moule as he writes, “I am not so simple as to imagine that I can provide clarity and precision where great scholars, past and present, have confessed to bewilderment.”⁴⁷⁰ However, I would like to offer a few thoughts in the hopes they will contribute to the discussion and in the process suggest with a few others before me that a version of category three is correct that has Paul referring to *both* the Parousia and an intermediate stage. It is not an either/or of categories two and three, but both.

We begin by noting that in 5:3 there is a textual discrepancy: ἐκδυσάμενοι or ἐνδυσάμενοι.⁴⁷¹ Nestle’s 27 and UBS 4 both prefer ἐκδυσάμενοι.⁴⁷² Thus, the NRSV reads “if indeed, when we have *taken it off* [ital. mine] we will not be found naked” (εἰ γὰρ καὶ ἐκδυσάμενοι οὐ γυμνοὶ εὕρεθησόμεθα). However, the statement including the variant reads: “if indeed, when we have *put it on* [ital. mine] we will not be found naked” (εἰ γὰρ καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι οὐ γυμνοὶ εὕρεθησόμεθα).

In *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, the committee preferred ἐκδυσάμενοι, with Metzger dissenting in favor of ἐνδυσάμενοι. The committee admitted that ἐνδυσάμενοι enjoys superior manuscript evidence. However, it ruled

⁴⁶⁶ Gillman (1988), 439-54.

⁴⁶⁷ Gillman (1988), 439. Glasson (1990) comments, “It is difficult to harmonise the views of resurrection given in 1 Cor. xv and 2 Cor. v. . . . it seems that Paul’s thinking had moved forward a stage if, as appears to be the case, the building from God is to be given at death, rather than at some future climax” (154). Moule (1965) argues “the difference between I Cor. Xv and II Cor. V concerns the manner, rather than the moment, of the change. Whereas I Cor. Xv implies that the new is *added to* the old and *superimposed upon* it, II Cor. Iv. 5 implies that the new is received only *in exchange for* the old” (116, also 107).

⁴⁶⁸ Gillman (1988), 440. See Bultmann (1985), 134; Young and Ford (1987), 132.

⁴⁶⁹ Gillman (1998), 441. See Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (1997), 262-63; Barrett (1973), 152-57; Fryer (1987); Harris (1985), 99; Héring (1967), 36-37; Hughes (1962), 171; Kistemaker (1997), 171; Raymond Martin (1986), 104-05; Osei-Bonsu (1986); Thrall (1994), 376-78; Witherington (*Corinth*, 1995), 318, 391; Woodbridge (2003), 17; Yates (1987).

⁴⁷⁰ Moule (1965), 106.

⁴⁷¹ Uncertainty likewise exists concerning the correct interpretation of Paul’s use of the terms “naked” and “house.” While most commentators hold that “naked” refers to a disembodied state, a few others adopt a very wide range of other interpretations. Ellis (1959) understands it as a way of expressing guilt for not having a wedding garment (221); Furnish (1984) understands it as “alienation from Christ, to having in some way denied one’s baptism” (298); Scott (1998) sees Paul’s view of being naked as his being “physically buried without receiving a reward for his apostolic suffering and labor” (113).

⁴⁷² The NET has modified the Greek text to ἐνδυσάμενοι.

that had Paul employed ἐνδυσάμενοι, his statement would be “banal and even tautologous, whereas with ἐκδυσάμενοι it is characteristically vivid and paradoxical (‘inasmuch as we, though unclothed, shall not be found naked’).”⁴⁷³ Therefore, they assigned ἐκδυσάμενοι a confidence grade of {C}.⁴⁷⁴ Metzger preferred ἐνδυσάμενοι because of its “superior external support” and because the ἐκδυσάμενοι is probably “an early alteration to avoid apparent tautology.”⁴⁷⁵ It is also noteworthy that the vast majority of English translations adopted ἐνδυσάμενοι.⁴⁷⁶

Initially, there appears to be a good reason for taking ἐκδυσάμενοι as original. The translation is fair and quite smooth. As just noted by the committee, it creates a paradox. We may render the καὶ as “even” so that 5:3 reads, “if indeed, even having taken if off, we will not be found naked.” To paraphrase 5:1-4, then, “We know that when our present body dies another one awaits us in heaven, an eternal body made by God. For now, we long to be clothed by that heavenly body. Thus, even when we lay aside our earthly body, we will not be naked [or disembodied].”

However, the smooth paradox is the only argument in favor of this rendering and I see four challenges to it. First, we should not be alarmed if Paul is “banal and tautologous” in this verse, since he is elsewhere. Consider the closely related passage of 1 Corinthians 15:53-54:

Δεῖ γὰρ τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀφθαρσίαν καὶ τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀθανασίαν.⁵⁴ ὅταν δὲ τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσῃται ἀφθαρσίαν καὶ τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσῃται ἀθανασίαν, τότε γενήσεται ὁ λόγος ὁ γεγραμμένος· κατεπόθη ὁ θάνατος εἰς νίκος.

For it is necessary for this perishable to clothe itself with incorruptibility and this mortal to clothe itself with immortality.⁵⁴ But when this perishable shall clothe itself with incorruptibility and this mortal shall clothe itself with immortality, then shall be the word that has been written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

This passage provides a clear example of Paul doing the very thing the committee rules against his doing in 2 Corinthians 5:3, while writing on the same subject no less.⁴⁷⁷ However, I admit his redundancy seems greater in 2 Corinthians 5:3 than in 1 Corinthians 15:53-54. In the latter passage he repeats himself, whereas in the former he would have no worry about being disembodied if he was to further cloth himself. Notwithstanding, this may be Paul’s reassurance to his fellow believers in the

⁴⁷³ Metzger (1994), 511.

⁴⁷⁴ This is an upgrade from the UBS 3 {D}.

⁴⁷⁵ Metzger (1994), 511.

⁴⁷⁶ In favor of the latter reading is Amplified Bible, ASV, Darby, DRA, ESV, KJV, NASB, NASB (Updated), NEB, NET, NIB, NIV, NJB, NKJV, NLT, RWB, TNIV. The German ELB is likewise in agreement. In favor of the former reading is NAB, NRSV, RSV. The German HOF-IBS is in agreement with this reading, but only noted in a footnote. This is a 17:3 ratio for the English translations in favor of the reading “put it on.”

⁴⁷⁷ Gillman (1988) holds that ἐνδυσάμενοι is not banal or tautologous, “but may be taken as a ‘virtual repetition’ of the double compound ἐπενδύω. The emphatic καὶ (see 1 Cor 4:7; 7:10-11) supports this reading” (447).

Hellenistic culture of Corinth that they will not become disembodied spirits at the general resurrection but rather they will be embodied.⁴⁷⁸

Second, as noted by Metzger, the textual evidence supporting ἐκδυσάμενοι is inferior to ἐνδυσάμενοι.

Third, ἐπενδύσασθαι in 5:4 generally refers to “further clothing” by placing a garment on top of other clothing and appears to be a thought parallel with the transformation of mortal bodies by putting on further clothing in 1 Corinthians 15:52-54.⁴⁷⁹

Fourth, the καταπίνω in the clause that follows describes that which is mortal being swallowed up by life and appears to fit with the further clothing picture (ἐπενδύσασθαι) immediately preceding it and has a parallel in 1 Corinthians 15:54. Thus, not only is the reason for accepting the weaker reading unsustainable, the other Greek terms employed by Paul in the immediate context weigh in against it.

If we adopt ἐνδυσάμενοι, a transformation of our earthly body seems more likely to be Paul’s thought and is similar to what Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 15. However, I see a major challenge. The καταλυθῆ in 5:1 seems a better fit with an exchange of bodies; in other words, an abandoning of our present body in order to get a new one.⁴⁸⁰ The Synoptics report Jesus’ use of the term in reference to the destruction of the temple, which will be torn down (καταλυθῆ) without one stone being left upon another (Mark 13:2; Matt. 24:2; Luke 21:6). John employs a similar term (λύσατε) which was interpreted in the same way by the Jewish leaders when Jesus refers to the execution and resurrection of his body (John 2:19-21). Although his body would be destroyed in terms of being killed, he would raise it in three days. Therefore, total annihilation is by no means required by καταλυθῆ.⁴⁸¹

With these thoughts let us look at our text in light of Gillman’s three categories of interpretations. Category one sees a shift in Paul’s thought from 1 Corinthians 15. I see three challenges to this view. First, the ἐπενδύσασθαι of 5:4 speaks not of clothing but of further clothing, a thought consistent with ἐνδυσάμενοι but not with ἐκδυσάμενοι. Second, in 5:4 Paul speaks of our current body being swallowed up by life, a statement that makes little sense if he holds that the current body will simply decay and be annihilated. Finally, this view requires that Paul altered his thoughts pertaining to post-mortem existence not once, but twice. For in 1 Corinthians 15 (c. AD 54-55) Paul is thinking of a transformation of the mortal body only to change his mind to an exchanged body when he wrote 2 Corinthians (c. AD 56), only then to return to his earlier view when he wrote Romans (c. AD 55-58; assuming the latter end) and Philipians (AD 59-63).⁴⁸² This is possible, of course, but it hints of an *ad*

⁴⁷⁸ Harris (2005), comment on 2 Cor. 5:3 (Logos Libronix).

⁴⁷⁹ Wright (“Early Traditions,” 1998), 129.

⁴⁸⁰ Harris (1990), 202. Wright (2003) says that “Moule is no doubt right that Paul can envisage here the possibility of ‘exchange’ (losing one body, getting another one) rather than ‘addition’, as in 1 Corinthians 15” (367), although Wright takes a position that in 2 Corinthians 5 the body experiences a *change* rather than an *exchange* (366).

⁴⁸¹ In Acts 5:39, καταλύσαι (“destroy”) is a synonym for ἀνελεῖν (“to kill”) a few verses earlier in Acts 5:33. Moreover, καταλυθήσεται means “to fail” in the same context (Acts 5:38).

⁴⁸² Fryer (1987), 460; Osei-Bonsu (1986), 87-88; Wright (2003), 365.

hoc component and should be rejected if another interpretation possesses greater explanatory scope and power pertaining to related statements by Paul.⁴⁸³

Category two sees a consistency of thought in Paul, since he is speaking of the Parousia in both 1 Corinthians 15 and 2 Corinthians 5. However, it is difficult to massage 2 Corinthians 5:6, 8 in such a manner that the text can accommodate the view that Paul is thinking only of the Parousia. I think this view would be smooth had Paul not written verses 6-9. If speaking only of the Parousia, how can verses 6-9 contribute to the discussion, since Paul contrasts being away from or absent from the body (ἐκδημησαι) and being with the Lord (ἐνδημησαι), whereas in 1 Corinthians 15 he is clearly thinking of a transformation of the present body?

Category three sees a difference in subject matter. Whereas Paul writes of a transformation at the Parousia in 1 Corinthians 15, he is writing solely of an intermediate state experienced by the dead in Christ prior to the Parousia in 2 Corinthians 5. This seems plausible at first. Paul speaks of our present body wearing down and finally being destroyed and replaced by a new one (5:1). We could interpret 5:3 as Paul asserting that believers need not fear disembodiment at death, since they will discard their earthly body and get a new one temporarily in heaven until the general resurrection at the Parousia. We may then interpret 5:4 as stating Paul's desire to remain embodied without interruption which he admits is in contrast to how he believes things will actually occur for those who die prior to the Parousia: "For indeed we groan, being burdened while in this house, because we do not desire to be unclothed [as we actually will be] but to be further clothed in order that the mortal may be swallowed up by life [which will not occur to those who die prior to the Parousia]." However, this interpretation is spoiled by Paul's assertion in 5:1 that the new body is not temporary but "eternal." It is further spoiled by the αὐτὸ τοῦτο in his statement that follows: "The one who will bring about *this very thing* is God." To what referent then does the αὐτὸ τοῦτο point? The οὖν of 5:6 brings everything to a conclusion and makes it unlikely that the αὐτὸ τοῦτο is kataphoric. If we understand αὐτὸ τοῦτο as anaphoric, it would seem most natural to connect it to that which immediately precedes it in 5:4: We will not be unclothed but further clothed and the mortal will be swallowed up by life in the process. We again note Paul's language of further clothing and that he speaks of our current body being swallowed up by life, a statement that makes a lot of sense with a further clothing but makes little sense if the believer is to jettison the present body and receive a new one. The only other referent

⁴⁸³ Moreover, if the Jerusalem apostles believed Jesus' tomb was empty, this would serve as still another reason against a shift in Paul's view concerning the nature of post-mortem existence for believers. For if Paul had actually heard the Jerusalem disciples claim that the tomb of Jesus was empty because his corpse had been resurrected, why would he later change his view of our future resurrection since he linked the mode of our resurrection to the mode of Jesus' resurrection? Pannenberg explains that "[i]f the Christian proclamation of Jesus has to be accounted for in connection with the emptying of his tomb, the possibilities of spiritualizing interpretations of the Christian Easter message are seriously reduced. Resurrection has to be understood in terms of transformation of the old life into the new one rather than in terms of replacing the perishable body by another one" (Pannenberg in D'Costa, ed. [1996], 70). Moreover, if Paul had actually changed his mind by the time he wrote 2 Corinthians, we may ask why Paul would rush to return to his previous view of transformation. We may only speculate, of course. But had he realized that his new belief pertaining to the mode of post-mortem existence for believers in 2 Corinthians was in conflict with the mode of Jesus' resurrection and, as just mentioned, claims of an empty tomb, he may have revised what he regarded as a more speculative belief in deference to another that he held to be much more secure.

is the statement in 5:3 that having put on a new body we will not be disembodied. This seems plausible. In this case, 5:4 would then be understood as supporting 5:3. But this supports a consistency of thought with 1 Corinthians 15 maintained in category two and is incompatible with a different subject matter seen by exegetes embracing the third category.

I would like to suggest an amended form of the third category: Paul mentions *both* stages of resurrection.⁴⁸⁴ The first refers to the state of believers who die prior to the Parousia while the second refers to the state of believers at the general resurrection at the Parousia. In this passage, Paul speaks first of the latter then of the former.

I paraphrase what I think Paul is saying:

Although our bodies are wearing down, our inner person is being renewed daily. For the tribulations we are experiencing produce for (in) us an eternal weight of glory far beyond comparison. We do not concentrate on the things that are seen but the unseen. For the things that are seen are temporal while the unseen things to which I am referring are eternal. For we know that if and when our *earthly* body dies, we have a body made by God in heaven that is an eternal one.⁴⁸⁵ For we long to be further clothed with our heavenly body. Thus, when we put it on, we will not be naked [i.e., disembodied]. For we are troubled at present, because we do not want to be unclothed [or disembodied, which will be the case if we die prior to the Parousia] but further clothed in order that our current body may be swallowed up by life [which will occur to those believers alive at the Parousia]. [In other words, rather than die and become disembodied, we prefer to be changed at the Parousia.] God is the one who brought us about for this and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing we will be embodied at the general resurrection. Accordingly, we are confident [in our dependence on God], knowing that while we are in our current body we are away from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident [in our dependence on God] and would rather be away from the body and with the Lord [in the event that we do not live to see the Parousia].

This interpretation eliminates the tensions created by the other categories while creating no new ones of which I am aware and is consistent with Paul's thoughts elsewhere (1 Cor. 15:42-54; Phil. 1:21-24; 3:21; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; Rom. 8:11-25). Indeed, Paul has stated this same idea in Philippians 1:23-24 where, in his personal situation of being imprisoned and awaiting trial, he understands his options as dying and being with Christ or continuing life in this world. Since Paul certainly understands a transformation of our mortal body two chapters later (Phil. 3:21), Paul's thinking in Philippians 1:23-24, like 2 Corinthians 5:8, refers to the state of believers who die prior to the general resurrection—disembodiment, while Philippians 3:21 parallels 2 Corinthians 5:2-5 and refers to the transformation of the bodies of believers at the general resurrection.

⁴⁸⁴ Craig (*Assessing*, 1989), 154-57; Fryer (1987), 478; Meyer (1986), 380-81; Nichelsburg (2006), 235; Osei-Bonsu (1986), 95; Witherington (*Corinth*, 1995), 391; Woodbridge (2003), 17.

⁴⁸⁵ "Earthly" (ἐπίγειος). Compare with φθορά, ἀτιμία, ἀσθένεια, and ψυχικός in 1 Cor. 15:42-44 and χοϊκός in 15:47.

In fact, there are impressive parallels relevant to this discussion of post-mortem existence in the Pauline corpus, both prior and posterior to 2 Corinthians—all located in his undisputed letters to boot—which assist us in discerning Paul’s thoughts in the difficult 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:8:

i) *There is a further clothing and swallowing up:*

a. 2 Cor. 5:4: “We do not wish to be unclothed, but clothed [or further-clothed], in order that the mortal may be swallowed up by life.”⁴⁸⁶

b. 1 Cor. 15:54: “But when this perishable puts on the imperishable and this mortal puts on immortality, then the word which was written shall be [fulfilled]: Death is swallowed up in victory [Is. 25:8].”⁴⁸⁷

ii) *Our mortal bodies will be transformed:*

a. 1 Cor. 15:51: “we will all be changed”⁴⁸⁸

b. Phil. 3:21: “he will transform our humble body”⁴⁸⁹

c. Rom. 8:11: the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead “will also give life to your mortal bodies”⁴⁹⁰

iii) *Our present body is “earthly” whereas our new body will be “heavenly”:*

a. 2 Cor. 5:1: “For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”⁴⁹¹

b. 1 Cor. 15:47: “The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.”⁴⁹²

c. 1 Cor. 15:49: “Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.”⁴⁹³

⁴⁸⁶ οὐ θέλομεν ἐκδύσασθαι ἀλλ’ ἐπειδύσασθαι, ἵνα καταποθῆ τὸ θνητὸν ὑπὸ τῆς ζωῆς.

⁴⁸⁷ ὅταν δὲ τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσῃται ἀφθαρσίαν καὶ τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσῃται ἀθανασία, τότε γενήσεται ὁ λόγος ὁ γεγραμμένος: κατεπόθη ὁ θάνατος εἰς νίκος.

⁴⁸⁸ πάντες δὲ ἀλλαγησόμεθα

⁴⁸⁹ ὃς μετασχηματίσει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν

⁴⁹⁰ εἰ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἐγείραντος τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ νεκρῶν οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν, ὁ ἐγείρας Χριστὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν ζωοποιήσῃ καὶ τὰ θνητὰ σώματα ὑμῶν

⁴⁹¹ Οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι ἐὰν ἡ ἐπίγειος ἡμῶν οἰκία τοῦ σκηνῶν καταλυθῆ, οἰκοδομήν ἐκ θεοῦ ἔχομεν, οἰκίαν ἀχειροποίητον αἰώνιον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. Harris (2005) makes the following observation: “That Paul is alluding in v. 1 to the dominical saying recorded in Mark 14:58 is highly probable because of the remarkable verbal correspondence between the two passages (καταλύσω–καταλυθῆ, ἀχειροποίητον–ἀχειροποίητον, οἰκοδομήσω–οἰκοδομήν)” (comment on 2 Cor. 5:1, Logos Libronix).

⁴⁹² ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος ἐκ γῆς χοϊκός, ὁ δεύτερος ἄνθρωπος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ.

⁴⁹³ καθὼς ἐφορέσαμεν τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ χοϊκοῦ, φορέσομεν καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ ἐπουρανοῦ. Also see Phil. 3:21.

iv) *When we leave our body we are with the Lord:*

a. 2 Cor. 5:6: “while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.”⁴⁹⁴

b. 2 Cor. 5:8: “[we] prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.”⁴⁹⁵

c. Phil. 1:23-24: “[I have] the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better;²⁴ but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you.”⁴⁹⁶

v) *Tribulation produces future glory for us:*

a. 2 Cor. 4:17: “For momentarily, our light sufferings are producing for⁴⁹⁷ (in) us an eternal weight of glory beyond comparison.”⁴⁹⁸

b. Rom. 8:18: “For I consider that our present sufferings are not worthy to be compared to the future glory to be revealed to us.”⁴⁹⁹

vi) *Concern for the unseen rather than the seen:*

a. 2 Cor. 4:18: “We are not concerned about the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen.”⁵⁰⁰

b. Rom. 8:25: “But if we hope for that which we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.”⁵⁰¹

vii) *We groan in our present condition and have received the Spirit as a deposit:*

a. 2 Cor. 1:22: “[God is] the one who marked us with a seal and gave us the deposit (ἀρραβώνα) of the Spirit in our hearts.”⁵⁰²

b. 2 Cor. 5:2-5: “For even in this we groan (στενάζομεν), longing to be further clothed by our heavenly dwelling. . . .⁴ For indeed we groan (στενάζομεν), being burdened while in this house, because we do not desire to be unclothed but to be further clothed in order that the mortal may be swallowed up by life.

⁴⁹⁴ ἐνδημοῦντες ἐν τῷ σώματι ἐκδημοῦμεν ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου·

⁴⁹⁵ εὐδοκοῦμεν μᾶλλον ἐκδημῆσαι ἐκ τοῦ σώματος καὶ ἐνδημῆσαι πρὸς τὸν κύριον.

⁴⁹⁶ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων εἰς τὸ ἀναλῶσαι καὶ σὺν Χριστῷ εἶναι, πολλῶ [γὰρ] μᾶλλον κρείσσον· ²⁴ τὸ δὲ ἐπιμένειν [ἐν] τῇ σαρκὶ ἀναγκαιότερον δι’ ὑμᾶς.

⁴⁹⁷ Given Rom. 8:18, I prefer “for us.”

⁴⁹⁸ τὸ γὰρ παρατύκα ἐλαφρὸν τῆς θλίψεως ἡμῶν καθ’ ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν αἰώνιον βάρος δόξης κατεργάζεται ἡμῖν

⁴⁹⁹ Λογίζομαι γὰρ ὅτι οὐκ ἄξια τὰ παθήματα τοῦ νῦν καιροῦ πρὸς τὴν μέλλουσαν δόξαν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι εἰς ἡμᾶς.

⁵⁰⁰ ἡ σκοπούμενων ἡμῶν τὰ βλεπόμενα ἀλλὰ τὰ μὴ βλεπόμενα·

⁵⁰¹ εἰ δὲ ὁ οὐ βλέπομεν ἐλπίζομεν, δι’ ὑπομονῆς ἀπεκδεχόμεθα.

⁵⁰² ὁ καὶ σφραγισάμενος ἡμᾶς καὶ δοὺς τὸν ἀρραβώνα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν.

⁵ God is the one who prepared us for this very thing, who gave his Spirit to us as a deposit (ἀρραβών).⁵⁰³

c. Rom. 8:23: “We have the Spirit as the first portion (ἀπαρχή). And we groan (στενάζομεν) within ourselves, eagerly waiting for our adoption, the redemption (ἀπολύτρωσις) of our body.”⁵⁰⁴

Given these numerous parallels that appear both before and after Paul’s penning of 2 Corinthians and that an interpretation is available that eliminates existing tensions without creating new ones, it is my opinion that there are no longer good reasons for maintaining that Paul changed his views on the post-mortem existence of believers in 2 Corinthians.

In summary, if I am correct, Paul sees two options for believers. Some believers will die prior to the Parousia and will become disembodied⁵⁰⁵ until the general resurrection, while believers alive at the Parousia will have their earthly bodies clothed with their new resurrection body made by God. Paul certainly prefers to avoid the former. But his faith gives him confidence that, if he dies prior to the Parousia, even in a disembodied state Paul will be with the Lord—which he prefers over present life in the earthly body—and that is what matters most to him.⁵⁰⁶

4.3.3.9.f. Galatians 1:11-19

Since we have already visited this text I will only reiterate our conclusions.⁵⁰⁷ Some have proposed that Paul’s statements that he received the gospel through a “revelation of Jesus Christ” and that God revealed his Son “in me” suggest an experience more in line with a hallucination or epiphany than an objective reality. We observed that this is far from clear, since Paul employs ἀποκάλυψις on numerous occasions to refer to a revealing that is physical in nature and that ἐν ἐμοί could in this text just as plausibly be translated “to me.” We concluded that Paul’s description of his conversion experience in this text is too ambiguous to obtain details pertaining to the nature of his conversion experience that would be helpful to our investigation.

⁵⁰³ καὶ γὰρ ἐν τούτῳ στενάζομεν τὸ οἰκητήριον ἡμῶν τὸ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἐπενδύσασθαι ἐπιποθοῦντες. . . .⁴ καὶ γὰρ οἱ ὄντες ἐν τῷ σκήνει στενάζομεν βαρούμενοι, ἐφ’ ᾧ οὐ θέλομεν ἐκδύσασθαι ἀλλ’ ἐπενδύσασθαι, ἵνα καταποθῇ τὸ θνητὸν ὑπὸ τῆς ζωῆς. ⁵ ὁ δὲ κατεργασάμενος ἡμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο θεός, ὁ δὸς ἡμῖν τὸν ἀρραβῶνα τοῦ πνεύματος. See also Eph. 1:13-14.

⁵⁰⁴ αὐτοὶ τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ πνεύματος ἔχοντες, ἡμεῖς καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς στενάζομεν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπεκδεχόμενοι, τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν. For a discussion of the meaning of “redemption,” see my explanation of Rom. 8:11 above.

⁵⁰⁵ See Jubilees 23:30-31.

⁵⁰⁶ So Harris (2005): “In this regard he may have viewed Christ’s experience as paradigmatic. Just as Jesus experienced an interval of disembodiment between his death and his resurrection, so too will the Christian who dies before the parousia. Also, just as Paul must have believed in the preservation of the spirit of Jesus during his period of disembodiment, so also he taught the safekeeping of believers as, in a bodiless state, they await the resurrection: they are in active communion with Christ in his immediate presence (v. 8b). The difference between “the dead in Christ” and living Christians is not in their status (τὸ εἶναι ἐν Χριστῷ; cf. 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Thess. 4:16), but in their somatic state (disembodied vs. embodied) and in the quality of their fellowship with Christ and the degree of their proximity to Christ (τὸ εἶναι σὺν Χριστῷ; cf. Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:8)” (see comments on 2 Cor. 5:8).

⁵⁰⁷ See section 4.3.3.1.a.

We have looked carefully at a number of Pauline passages and have observed that Paul never regarded the final post-mortem state of believers to be one of disembodiment. While Galatians 1 is consistent with a disembodiment view, its ambiguity prevents it from affirming or implying it. Accordingly, no Pauline text can be employed legitimately to assert that Paul's view of resurrection in general and Jesus' resurrection in particular differed fundamentally from that of the Evangelists.⁵⁰⁸ When Paul and the Evangelists claimed that Jesus had resurrected, they intended to communicate that the corpse of Jesus had returned to life.

Last evening I watched a popular American television news program named *20/20*. The first news item concerned kidnapped children and featured Jessyca Mullenberg, who was abducted just days after her thirteenth birthday and kept for three and a half months at a hotel.⁵⁰⁹ Her kidnapper repeatedly molested her until an alert hotel maid reported her suspicion to the FBI who in turn rescued her. Jessica told authorities that the man told her every day that her new name was Cindy Johnson. After hearing this for months, when the FBI rescued her she was asked if she was Jessyca Mullenberg. She told them no, because at that point she had been brainwashed into thinking she was Cindy Johnson.⁵¹⁰ Analogously, for decades we have heard from a number of scholars, some of whom are academic heavyweights, that "resurrection" as defined by Paul was not something that involved the corpse. This interpretation has been reiterated so often that some scholars appear to regard it as a foregone conclusion. However, we have now seen that this interpretation is no longer sustainable.

4.3.3.10. Why is Paul so important to historians interested in Jesus' resurrection?

A priority must be assigned to Paul because he is the earliest known author to mention the resurrection of Jesus and there are numerous extant texts he wrote that give us clues pertaining to the nature of Jesus' resurrection. Paul's letters are the only verifiable reports by a verifiable eyewitness of the risen Jesus himself.⁵¹¹ And he personally knew the other disciples who were also claiming that the risen Jesus had appeared to them in both individual and group settings. Paul's conversion is especially interesting because he was an enemy of the Church when his experience of the risen Jesus occurred. Therefore, Jesus' resurrection is reported not only by his friends but also by at least someone who was a vehement foe at the time of the experience. Paul's belief that he had witnessed the risen Christ was so strong that he, like the original disciples, was willing to suffer continuously for the sake of the gospel, even to the point of martyrdom.

Given the historical nuggets provided by Paul that can assist historians in their investigation of the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus, it is not surprising to find a few who have attempted to downplay its value. Roy Hoover writes, "No New

⁵⁰⁸ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005): "despite some scholarly opinion to the contrary, there is just no good evidence for belief in a non-physical resurrection in Paul, much less within the primitive Jerusalem community. . . . even Paul, in 1 Cor 15, when defending the notion of a 'spiritual body,' teaches—like 2 Bar. 51:10—the transformation of corpses, not their abandonment" (317; cf. 324, 325).

⁵⁰⁹ The story is posted at <http://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=2954522&page=1> (accessed March 21, 2007).

⁵¹⁰ This part of the story does not appear in the article but was on the television program aired March 16, 2007.

⁵¹¹ Hoover in Copan and Tacelli, eds. (2000), 129; cf. Lüdemann (2004), 34-35.

Testament text claims that the risen Jesus appeared to anyone who had not been a follower of Jesus *or who did not become a believer* [ital. mine].⁵¹² This is quite a move, simply writing off those who became believers after they were convinced that they had seen the risen Jesus. Hoover fails to address the question of what may have led them to this belief against their previous wishes to reject who they believed was a false Messiah. So how does Hoover account for Paul's experience? He writes, "The risen Jesus was seen by one Pharisee who was a zealous enemy of the early church—Paul, from Tarsus; but so far as we know, Paul never met the Jesus of history and cannot, therefore, be counted among his enemies."⁵¹³ If we followed Hoover's logic, no one fighting against the Nazis in World War II or imprisoned in one of the Nazi death camps could consider Hitler his enemy unless he had personally met him!

Atheist philosopher Michael Martin offers a similar argument.

Why should the fact that Paul persecuted Christians and was subsequently converted to Christianity by his religious experience be given special existential significance? Whatever his past record, at the time of his report he was a zealous, religious believer and not a religious skeptic.⁵¹⁴

For Martin, it seems that in order to be regarded as a credible witness, it is not good enough to be opposed to everything about Christianity, including her followers; one must also be no less than an agnostic. But as we observed earlier, historians are quite unanimous in their opinion that there is no neutrality when it comes to these matters. When we speak of bias, the knife cuts both ways and it is quite clear that some religious skeptics reveal their own bias, which is anti-religious in nature.

Martin cites as a primary source of revelation the conversion of Muhammad from polytheism to monotheism based on an appearance to him of the angel Gabriel. According to Muhammad, Gabriel directly communicated revelation from heaven: the *Qur'an*. So, why accept Paul's testimony while rejecting Muhammad's?⁵¹⁵ Martin's point has some weight. Muhammad's testimony that Gabriel revealed the *Qur'an* to him appears four times in the *Qur'an*.⁵¹⁶ Accordingly, both the *Qur'an* and Paul may qualify as providing eyewitness testimony. However, Martin overlooks some very important differences. First, the overall sources for the event are far from equal in quality. Outside of the Quranic texts, the appearance of Gabriel to Muhammad is found in the early biographies and hadith, all of which were written more than 200 years after Muhammad's death.⁵¹⁷ These are secondary sources that are, in a sense, similar to Luke's accounts of Paul's conversion. However, Luke's accounts are much closer to the time of the events they purport to describe and may even be provided by a traveling companion of Paul, whereas the Muslim sources are more than 200 years removed from Muhammad. For example, Luke is reporting events in Acts that

⁵¹² Hoover in Copan and Tacelli, eds. (2000), 134. Similar is Harrington (1986): "It is not at all coincidental that the New Testament speaks of 'appearances' of Jesus *only* to disciples, that is, to believers; for the resurrection is accessible only to faith. . . . The 'appearances' of the Lord mean that he was truly encountered, in faith, by his disciples" (96-97). Harrington completely misses that fact that Paul was not a believer.

⁵¹³ Hoover in Copan and Tacelli, eds. (2000), 135.

⁵¹⁴ M. Martin (1991), 84.

⁵¹⁵ M. Martin (1991), 84.

⁵¹⁶ 2:97; 26:192-93; 53:10; 81:19.

⁵¹⁷ Sahih al-Bukhari 1:1:2-5.

allegedly occurred between AD 30-62 and is writing between AD 61-90. He is writing 31-60 years after the events and may have personally known some of the subjects. In the case of the biographies and hadith, the earliest sources are more than 200 years removed from the subjects and could not have had any first, second, third, or fourth hand acquaintance with them. Accordingly, although the biographies and hadith probably contain some traditions that go back to Muhammad, those traditions are not of the same historical quality of the traditions preserved in the New Testament literature. Second, Paul's experience is in a sense corroborated by other eyewitnesses who claimed that the risen Jesus had appeared to them. Friend and foe alike reported that the resurrected Jesus had appeared to them in both individual and group settings. On the other hand, Muhammad is the only one who claimed to have been visited by Gabriel in connection with the rise of Islam. Third, Muhammad's dissatisfaction with the paganism and idolatry in his society existed prior to his alleged revelations.⁵¹⁸ Thus, no conversion from polytheism occurred as a result of his religious experience, as even according to Muslim sources. On the other hand, Paul seems to have been quite content with and extremely sold out to his strict sect within Judaism. Indeed, he was on his way to arresting Christians on his own initiative when his experience occurred. Muhammad's experience confirmed his views while Paul's opposed his. Perhaps most important of all, however, is that historians need not deny that Muhammad had an experience that he interpreted as a supernatural being appearing to him. They are at liberty to support an alternate explanation to Muhammad's for the experience just as they do for the experiences of Jesus' disciples.

We may wish to know from Martin and Hoover how they would respond if they had that for which they ask. Let us assume for a moment that we have a source from the middle of the first century who is a not a Christian (per Hoover) or is an agnostic or atheist (per Martin) and who reported that Jesus had risen from the dead and had appeared to him—and that he remained a nonbeliever. Would we not question the credibility of such a witness who was the recipient of a divine appearance, yet still rejected him? Would Hoover and Martin end up dismissing such a source for that very reason?

A critic may assert that Paul's conversion is no big matter, since many have converted from one set of beliefs to another. However, the cause of Paul's conversion makes his different. People usually convert to a particular religion because they have heard the message of that religion from a secondary source and believed the message. Paul's conversion was based on what he perceived to be a personal appearance of the risen Jesus. Today we might believe that Jesus rose from the dead based on secondary evidence, trusting Paul and the disciples who saw the risen Jesus. But for Paul, his experience came from primary evidence: He had an experience he perceived as the risen Jesus who had appeared directly to him.

4.3.4. The Conversion of James the Skeptical Brother of Jesus

Although not in his current list of three facts that are virtually undisputed by specialists on the subject of Jesus' resurrection, in previous lists Habermas included the conversion of James, the skeptical half-brother of Jesus, because of an experience he regarded as the risen Jesus appearing to him.

⁵¹⁸ Sahih-Al-Bukhari 5:58:169; A. Guillaume, *Islam* (New York: Penguin Books, reprinted 1990), 26-27.

4.3.4.1. Evidence of James’s Skepticism from the Canonical Gospels. We will study four passages in the canonical Gospels which have commonly been employed to suggest that James was not a follower of Jesus prior to his purported resurrection.

4.3.4.1.a. Mark 3:20-35

Καὶ ἔρχεται εἰς οἶκον· καὶ συνέρχεται πάλιν [ὁ] ὄχλος, ὥστε μὴ δύνασθαι αὐτοὺς μηδὲ ἄρτον φαγεῖν. ²¹ καὶ ἀκούσαντες οἱ παρ’ αὐτοῦ ἐξήλθον κρατῆσαι αὐτόν· ἔλεγον γὰρ ὅτι ἐξέστη. ²² Καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς οἱ ἀπὸ Ἱεροσολύμων καταβάντες ἔλεγον ὅτι Βεελζεβούλ ἔχει καὶ ὅτι ἐν τῷ ἄρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων ἐκβάλλει τὰ δαιμόνια. ²³ Καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος αὐτοὺς ἐν παραβολαῖς ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· πῶς δύναται σατανᾶς σατανᾶν ἐκβάλλειν; ²⁴ καὶ ἐὰν βασιλεία ἐφ’ ἑαυτὴν μερισθῆ, οὐ δύναται σταθῆναι ἢ βασιλεία ἐκείνη. ²⁵ καὶ ἐὰν οἰκία ἐφ’ ἑαυτὴν μερισθῆ, οὐ δυνησεται ἢ οἰκία ἐκείνη σταθῆναι. ²⁶ καὶ εἰ ὁ σατανᾶς ἀνέστη ἐφ’ ἑαυτόν καὶ ἐμερίσθη, οὐ δύναται στήναι ἀλλὰ τέλος ἔχει. ²⁷ ἀλλ’ οὐ δύναται οὐδεὶς εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν τοῦ ἰσχυροῦ εἰσελθὼν τὰ σκευὴ αὐτοῦ διαρπάσαι, ἐὰν μὴ πρῶτον τὸν ἰσχυρὸν δῆσῃ, καὶ τότε τὴν οἰκίαν αὐτοῦ διαρπάσει. ²⁸ Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι πάντα ἀφεθήσεται τοῖς υἱοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὰ ἁμαρτήματα καὶ αἱ βλασφημίαι ὅσα ἐὰν βλασφημήσωσιν. ²⁹ ὃς δ’ ἂν βλασφημήσῃ εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, οὐκ ἔχει ἄφεσιν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, ἀλλὰ ἔνοχος ἐστὶν αἰωνίου ἁμαρτήματος. ³⁰ ὅτι ἔλεγον· πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον ἔχει. ³¹ Καὶ ἔρχεται ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔξω στήκοντες ἀπέστειλαν πρὸς αὐτὸν καλοῦντες αὐτόν. ³² καὶ ἐκάθητο περὶ αὐτὸν ὄχλος, καὶ λέγουσιν αὐτῷ· ἴδου ἡ μήτηρ σου καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοί σου [καὶ αἱ ἀδελφαί σου] ἔξω ζητοῦσίν σε. ³³ καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς αὐτοῖς λέγει· τίς ἐστὶν ἡ μήτηρ μου καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοί [μου]; ³⁴ καὶ περιβλεψάμενος τοὺς περὶ αὐτὸν κύκλῳ καθημένους λέγει· ἴδε ἡ μήτηρ μου καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοί μου. ³⁵ ὃς [γὰρ] ἂν ποιήσῃ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, οὗτος ἀδελφός μου καὶ ἀδελφὴ καὶ μήτηρ ἐστίν.

And he went home. And the crowd came together again so that they were not able to eat a meal. ²¹ And having heard, his own went out to seize him. For they were saying that he is out of his mind. ²² And the scribes who came from Jerusalem were saying, “He has Beelzebul” and “He casts out demons by the ruler of demons.” ²³ And he summoned them and was speaking to them in parables, “How is Satan able to cast out Satan? ²⁴ And if a kingdom is divided against itself, how is that kingdom able to stand? ²⁵ And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and has been divided, he is not able to stand but his end has come. ²⁷ But no one is able to enter the house of the strong man to plunder his goods without first binding the strong man and then he can plunder his house. ²⁸ Truly I say to you, all sins of the sons of men and whatever blasphemies they may utter will be forgiven. ²⁹ But whoever may blaspheme against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness but is guilty of eternal sin.” ³⁰ For they were saying he has an unclean spirit. ³¹ And his mother and his brothers came. And standing outside they sent for him, calling him. ³² And a crowd was sitting near him and said to him, “Behold, your mother and your brothers are outside seeking you.” ³³ And he answered them saying, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” ³⁴ And looking at those sitting all around him, he said, “Look! My

mother and my brothers! ³⁵ For whoever does the will of God, this one is my brother and sister and mother.”

In this text, Jesus comes home and a large crowd assembles to hear him teach. Thinking he has lost his senses, his mother and brothers come to take hold of him (3:21). Jesus responds that he regards his followers as being closer to him than his own family.

Painter may stand alone in his belief that this interpretation is mistaken. He argues that this pericope starts in 3:13 where Jesus called to himself twelve whom he wanted to be with him (13-14).⁵¹⁹ When his own (οἱ παρ’ αὐτοῦ), who according to Painter are his twelve disciples rather than his family, get word of it they went to seize him, thinking he was out of his mind (3:21).⁵²⁰ Painter regards this as “the most natural reading,” since his disciples were those just mentioned and there is no clear mention of his family until 3:32.⁵²¹ However, Mark’s statement in the previous verse that Jesus had come home (3:20) would allow the οἱ παρ’ αὐτοῦ to fit very nicely as a reference to his mother and brothers. And Mary may have been accompanying Jesus’ brothers with the hope of softening or even dissuading them of their plans. Such a suggestion has plausibility, given that Mary is not mentioned among Jesus’ family members who did not believe in Jesus in John 5, which will be discussed below.⁵²²

Painter then addresses the tension his reading brings, since it is Jesus’ own disciples who seize him because they think he is out of his mind. Why would his disciples whom he had just appointed think this of their leader who has now attracted so many people to listen to his message? Painter answers that painting a negative picture of Jesus’ disciples is not uncommon for Mark. Judas betrays Jesus (3:19) and Peter becomes the mouthpiece of Satan (8:32-33).⁵²³ But this does not answer the *why*. For certain, Mark reports the good, the bad, and the ugly when it comes to Jesus’ disciples. Peter’s rebuking Jesus for predicting his forthcoming execution and Judas’ betrayal approach the insolence on the part of Jesus’ disciples required in Painter’s reading. However, such audacity on their part on the heels of their appointment by

⁵¹⁹ Painter doubts the historicity of this incident (3:20-35), arguing that the story is reported only by Mark and contains Markan vocabulary and construction (25). However, Markan vocabulary and construction are of no surprise if Mark was retelling a story *ipsissima vox*. Single attestation on the other hand cannot be ignored. However, if another independent source attests to the brothers of Jesus being nonbelievers—and at least one does as we will shortly see—that would provide multiple attestation to their unbelief. Moreover, if these texts actually report nonbelief on the part of Jesus’ brothers, this would certainly fulfill the criterion of embarrassment. When a condition such as the nonbelief of Jesus’ brothers is supported by a fulfillment of the criterion of multiple independent reports and the criterion of embarrassment, we may be quite confident that we are in possession of a historical kernel.

⁵²⁰ The term οἱ παρ’ αὐτοῦ is found only here in the New Testament. In the LXX, it only appears in 1 Macc. (9:58; 12:28, 29; 13:52; 15:15; 16:16), where in each occurrence, companions rather than family is meant. In Josephus (*Ant.* 1:193) the term references Abraham’s family. The term is absent in Philo and the Apostolic Fathers.

⁵²¹ Painter in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001), 26.

⁵²² Painter notes that “[s]cholars generally do not include the mother of Jesus in their negative evaluation, though she is present in 3:31-35” (27).

⁵²³ Painter in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001), 26. Painter also notes as examples Mark 9:19, 34; 10:37; 14:27-31; 16:7-8. However, it is not clear that Jesus is referring to his disciples in 9:19 given that in 9:28-29 a lack of faith on the part of his disciples is not the reason why they had difficulty expelling the demon. Moreover, these point to the self-centeredness and fear of Jesus’ disciples, which is far different than the insolence Painter’s reading requires.

Jesus seems unlikely to me and we would expect most if not all of them to be with him while teaching as is stated in 6:1. Moreover, the *why* of their insolence is fairly clear in these other instances. Peter does not believe the Messiah should be executed and Judas was no longer on board with Jesus' agenda. But guessing why Jesus' newly appointed disciples would think of him as being out of his mind when teaching is a difficult task. If you are new to the team and have such suspicions, why not desert him and chalk up the experience to a temporary lack of judgment? Accordingly, Painter's assertions that the usual reading—that Jesus' brothers are the hostile ones—is “improbable” and “ill founded” appear to be overstatements.⁵²⁴

4.3.4.1.b. Mark 6:2-4, 6a

καὶ γενομένου σαββάτου ἤρξατο διδάσκειν ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ, καὶ πολλοὶ ἀκούοντες ἐξεπλήσσοντο λέγοντες· πόθεν τούτῳ ταῦτα, καὶ τίς ἡ σοφία ἢ δοθεῖσα τούτῳ, καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις τοιαῦται διὰ τῶν χειρῶν αὐτοῦ γινόμεναι; ³ οὐχ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τέκτων, ὁ υἱὸς τῆς Μαρίας καὶ ἀδελφὸς Ἰακώβου καὶ Ἰωσήτου καὶ Ἰούδα καὶ Σίμωνος; καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν αἱ ἀδελφαὶ αὐτοῦ ὧδε πρὸς ἡμᾶς; καὶ ἐσκανδαλίζοντο ἐν αὐτῷ. ⁴ καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν προφήτης ἄτιμος εἰ μὴ ἐν τῇ πατρίδι αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τοῖς συγγενεῦσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ. . . . ⁶ καὶ ἐθαύμαζεν διὰ τὴν ἀπιστίαν αὐτῶν.

And the Sabbath having come, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many listeners were overwhelmed saying, “From where [did] this one [get] these things and what is the wisdom given to him and the miracles that are done by his hands? ³ Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they were offended by him. ⁴ And Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his house.” . . . ⁶ And he was marveling on account of their unbelief.

Having heard Jesus teach, those in his hometown took offense at him, to which Jesus replies that that he is without honor in his hometown, among his relatives, and even among his immediate family. Painter again takes exception with this interpretation, arguing that the statement “are not his sisters here with us” implies that his mother and brothers are not, probably because they were accompanying Jesus as his disciples. He adds that “nothing is said of the action of any member of the family of Jesus in this rejection.”⁵²⁵ While this interpretation is possible, it seems unlikely to me. Ἐν τῇ

⁵²⁴ Painter in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001), 27. Although Bauckham sides with Painter that James was a follower of Jesus during at least portions of his ministry, he remains unpersuaded by Painter's position pertaining to Mark 3 (R. Bauckham, “James and Jesus” in Chilton and Neusner, eds. [2001], 108).

⁵²⁵ Painter in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001), 25. Bauckham in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001) argues that “Luke conveys no hint of any rift between Jesus and his family or even of misunderstanding (see Luke 8:19-21; 11:27-28)” (199). The brothers are portrayed neither as followers nor adversaries and readers are not surprised to find them as followers after Jesus' ascension. On the contrary, I think we may detect hints of a rift between Jesus and at least some of his family members in both references provided by Bauckham, although we can go no further than to say that these *may suggest* that they were not among his followers at the time. If we regard Mark as Luke's source of the former text, Luke is aware of and omits the embarrassing details but retains Jesus' preference of his spiritual family over those related to him by blood. In the latter text, he exalts those who follow God's word over his mother. Moreover, as every ancient writer selected the material in which he was interested, Luke may very well have chosen to omit reports that Jesus' brothers were non-believers during his ministry

οἰκία αὐτοῦ may indeed be inclusive of his immediate family. Moreover, the offended listeners may simply be adding Jesus' sisters to those already mentioned, namely his mother and four brothers. Finally, Jesus' reply is that a prophet does not receive honor from those in his hometown, his relatives, *and in his own house*. But who might those be in his immediate family who refuse him honor? Painter would have to answer that they were Jesus' sisters. But this is not at all clear. If the previous text considered (Mark 3:20-35) clearly referred to Jesus' disciples as those who came to seize him, then the present text may be used as support. But it is far from clear. I must admit that Painter has introduced another reading that to me seems *possible*. However, as I read these two texts, the clearer and more plausible reading of both is that Jesus' brothers were non-believers at the time.

4.3.4.1.c. John 7:1-5

Καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα περιεπάτει ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ· οὐ γὰρ ἤθελεν ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ περιπατεῖν, ὅτι ἐζήτουν αὐτὸν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἀποκτείνειν.² Ἦν δὲ ἐγγὺς ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἢ σκηνοπηγία.³ εἶπον οὖν πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ· μετάβηθι ἐντεῦθεν καὶ ὕπαγε εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν, ἵνα καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ σου θεωρήσουσιν σοῦ τὰ ἔργα ἃ ποιεῖς·⁴ οὐδεὶς γάρ τι ἐν κρυπτῷ ποιεῖ καὶ ζητεῖ αὐτὸς ἐν παρρησίᾳ εἶναι. εἰ ταῦτα ποιεῖς, φανέρωσον σεαυτὸν τῷ κόσμῳ.⁵ οὐδὲ γὰρ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ ἐπίστευον εἰς αὐτόν.

And after these things Jesus was walking in Galilee. For he was not wanting to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill him.² Now the Jewish Booths Festival was near.³ Therefore, his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea in order that your disciples will also behold your works which you are doing."⁴ For no one does something in secret and seeks to be in the public eye. If you are doing these things, reveal yourself to the world."⁵ For not even his brothers were believing in him.

This is the most explicit passage pertaining to the unbelief of Jesus' brothers. The brothers of Jesus taunt him, "If you are doing these things, reveal yourself to the world." We are reminded of similar taunting received by Jesus while on the cross, "If you are the son of God, come down from the cross." (εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ, [καὶ] κατὰβηθι ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ.)⁵²⁶ Painter asserts that "[t]here is no suggestion that the brothers did not accept that Jesus performed signs. Indeed, when the brothers urge Jesus to go to Jerusalem it is 'so that your disciples may see your *works* which you do.' Here the brothers use the more positive term *works* which, in John, also covers the signs but frequently draws attention to Jesus' relation to the Father (see 5:17, 36)." Accordingly, Jesus' brothers urge him to perform his works openly in Judea in order to establish this position for all to see. Painter consequently contends that the suggestion of Jesus' brothers should not be read in a cynical sense.⁵²⁷

precisely because of its embarrassing nature. In other words, Luke's apparent redaction of the Markan material may well reflect a very early understanding of Mark as reporting that Jesus' brothers did not believe in him during his itinerant ministry.

⁵²⁶ Matt. 27:40; cf. Mark 15:30; Luke 23:37-39.

⁵²⁷ Painter in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001), 27. Who were the disciples in Judea referred to by Jesus' brothers in 7:3? They were probably followers of Jesus living in Judea and not the Twelve whom he had called, since the latter had allegedly already witnessed Jesus perform a number of miracles. In John 2:1-11, Jesus' disciples saw him turn water into wine and believed in him. In 4:43-54,

There are a number of problems with these arguments. First is Painter's noting "the more positive term *works* which, in John, also covers the signs but frequently draws attention to Jesus' relation to the Father (see 5:17, 36)." However, this term τὰ ἔργα is also frequently employed by John in a negative sense, even just a few verses later (7:7; see also 3:19, 20; 8:41, cf. 44).⁵²⁸ Second, that Jesus' brothers are hostile toward him and speak here with sarcasm is suggested by where they encourage him to go. In 7:1 Jesus will not go to Judea since the Jews there are seeking to kill him. In 7:3 his brothers propose that he go to Judea! A third problem concerns Painter's argument that "the use of the imperfect tense with *oude* . . . lacks the definitive sense of unbelief that can be communicated with the aorist tense."⁵²⁹ The combination of οὐδὲ plus the imperfect appears ten times in the New Testament, none of which is in John.⁵³⁰ Of these there are eight occurrences close to John's usage, the closest are Mark 14:59 and Luke 18:13 neither of which lack a definitive sense.⁵³¹

Painter then brings attention to the unbelief of Jesus' disciples. In John 14:10-11, Jesus tells Philip and the disciples that if they cannot believe that Jesus and the Father are in one another, then they should believe because of the works they have seen. In 16:29-31, after the disciples affirm their belief that Jesus is from God, Jesus asks or says to them, "Do you now believe?" or "You believe now" then adds that they will all abandon him. Based on these texts, Painter concludes that the belief of Jesus' brothers in him "was based on the works he performed but did not (according to John) penetrate the mystery of his relation to God."⁵³²

I do not see enough here for a case that Jesus' disciples shared a type of unbelief similar to that of his brothers. The former text reports the result of a theological misunderstanding while the latter results from fear. I do not see the clear indicators in John 7:3-5 Painter sees that Jesus' brothers believed in him although with an imperfect belief. In fact, when the disciples witness Jesus' turning water into wine in John 2:11, John reports, ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ (his disciples believed in him). Compare with 7:5 where John reports οὐδὲ γὰρ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ ἐπίστευον εἰς αὐτόν (For not even his brothers believed in him). Painter notes Jesus' negative words to his brothers that follow in 7:6-9, but makes no attempt to explain their presence.⁵³³ Jesus' words are pointed. In 7:7 he tells his brothers, "οὐ δύναται ὁ κόσμος μισεῖν ὑμᾶς, ἐμὲ δὲ μισεῖ, ὅτι ἐγὼ μαρτυρῶ περὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ πονηρὰ ἔστιν" ("The world is not able to hate you, but it hates me, because I testify concerning it that its works are evil"). Jesus' statement indicates that his brothers are not on board with his message. This receives confirmation from what Jesus would say to his disciples a few chapters later in 15:18-19:

Jesus' disciples probably saw him heal the official's son, since they were with him in 4:8 when they went for food. The healing occurred several days later and we may assume that the disciples must have returned not long after their search began. In John 5, Jesus heals a sick man. While it is not clear that his disciples were with him at the time, 6:1-3 may suggest that they were. In John 6:5-21, the disciples were present when Jesus fed five thousand and walked on water.

⁵²⁸ The term is employed in a positive sense in 3:21; 4:34; 5:20, 36 (2x); 6:28, 29; 7:3, 21; 8:39; 9:3, 4; 10:25, 32 (2x), 33, 37, 38; 14:10, 11, 12; 15:24; 17:4.

⁵²⁹ Painter in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001), 27.

⁵³⁰ Matt. 22:46; Mark 5:3; 6:31; 14:59; Luke 18:13; John 7:5; Acts 4:32, 34; 8:4; Rev. 5:3.

⁵³¹ Matt. 22:46; Mark 5:3; 6:31; 14:59; Luke 18:13; Acts 4:32, 34; Rev. 5:3.

⁵³² Painter in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001), 28.

⁵³³ Painter in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001): "Yet readers may point to Jesus' rather negative response to his brothers (7:6-9)" (28).

Εἰ ὁ κόσμος ὑμᾶς μισεῖ, γινώσκετε ὅτι ἐμὲ πρῶτον ὑμῶν μεμίσηκεν. εἰ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἦτε, ¹⁹ ὁ κόσμος ἂν τὸ ἴδιον ἐφίλει· ὅτι δὲ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου οὐκ ἐστέ, ἀλλ' ἐγὼ ἐξελεξάμην ὑμᾶς ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου, διὰ τοῦτο μισεῖ ὑμᾶς ὁ κόσμος.

If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before you. ¹⁹ If you were from the world, then the world would love its own. But because you are not from the world, but I myself chose you from the world, on account of this the world hates you.⁵³⁴

The world hates Jesus because of his message and hates his disciples because of their relation to Jesus. However, in 7:7 the world does not hate the brothers of Jesus, with the inference that they are not bringing it the same message Jesus is bringing.⁵³⁵

Painter then turns our attention to similarities between John 2:1-11 and 7:3-9. Both concern family members. Both contain a request of Jesus from his family members; from Mary in the former and from his brothers in the latter. In both instances Jesus declines their request and does so using similar language (“My hour is not yet” [2:4]; “My time is not yet here” [7:6]). Finally, Jesus ends up granting both requests.⁵³⁶ Painter concludes, “All of this suggests that the brothers were believers but their belief sought a different goal for Jesus than the one to which he was committed, according to John.”⁵³⁷ This seems a bit of a stretch to me. Family members are not the only ones to make a request of Jesus, to have him decline it, only then to grant it. Jesus declines the request of a Canaanite woman to heal her demon-possessed daughter only to grant it a moment later (Mark 7:26-30; Matt. 15:22-28). Painter could, however, answer that the Canaanite woman was positive in her view of Jesus when she came to him, thus, indicating the positive attitude of his brothers. While this may be a difference it is hardly an important one. Coming to Jesus with a pressing personal request is not the same as approaching him as a disciple. The Canaanite woman may have been a distant disciple of Jesus after he healed her daughter. But his initial response to her as well as the desire of his disciples to send her away empty-handed makes it clear that she was not a disciple of Jesus at the time she approached him.

Painter notes Acts 1:14 where “the mother of Jesus is grouped clearly with his brothers and their place amongst the followers of Jesus is stated as a matter of course with no suggestion that this constituted a remarkable change.”⁵³⁸ A closer look at the context is revealing. In Acts 1:1-14, it is the disciples whom Jesus had chosen to whom he gives orders (1:2), are addressed as “Men of Galilee” (1:11), and who return to the upper room in Jerusalem (1:13) where they are continually devoted to prayer

⁵³⁴ See also John 3:19-20.

⁵³⁵ Painter asserts that in John 7:1-10, “it is clear that Jesus’ brothers are with him, traveling in his company” (28). I fail to see this. Although Jesus indeed goes to Jerusalem, 7:10 indicates that he went separately from his brothers and there are no indicators that he joined them there.

⁵³⁶ Painter in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001), 28. In the former he turns water to wine, while in the latter he heals a man born blind (9:1-7) and raises Lazarus from the dead (11:7-47). See John 10:30-40 where it is reported that the Jews attempted to kill Jesus for healing the blind man as he had feared in 7:1.

⁵³⁷ Painter in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001), 28.

⁵³⁸ Painter in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001), 28-29. See also Bauckham in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001), 109.

along with [certain] women and Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers. Apparently Jesus' brothers and mother are not among the leadership at that point nor were they with the disciples at the ascension.

Painter contends that when Paul adds his own experience to the tradition and describes himself "as one untimely born," this indicates that James (unlike Paul) was a believer when he experienced an appearance of the resurrected Jesus, since the appearance to James is listed with the others in regular sequence and these were believers at the time of Jesus' resurrection.⁵³⁹ This is neither necessary nor even hinted. The meaning of Paul's statement that Jesus appeared to him last of all ὡσπερὲν τῶ ἑκτρώματι ("like to one untimely born") is contested. The word ἑκτρώμα typically refers to a miscarriage.⁵⁴⁰ Was Paul converted out of a traumatic experience as narrated in Acts 9? Even in Acts, the brothers of Jesus have become disciples by Pentecost whereas it is generally accepted that Paul's conversion took place approximately one to three years after the crucifixion of Jesus. Thus, it is untimely when compared to the others.

However, Painter sticks to his hypothesis that "it seems better to speak of a deepening of belief with James, brought about by the appearance of the risen Jesus to him reported by Paul [as opposed to thinking of James as a skeptic prior to the resurrection of Jesus]. This view is what we find in the evidence outside the New Testament, in evidence reported by Clement of Alexandria, the *Gospel of Thomas*, and the *Gospel of the Hebrews*."⁵⁴¹ Painter notes that in the fragment from the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, James is not only "the first believing witness to the risen Jesus, he is also portrayed as one who was present at the Last Supper when 'he had drunk the cup of the Lord.' . . . Thus it is clear in this tradition that James was among the followers of Jesus."⁵⁴²

A lot may be said of the three sources to which Painter appeals. Clement of Alexandria is perhaps the least critical of the early Church Fathers and none of the three texts provided by Painter mention whether James was a disciple prior to Jesus' crucifixion.⁵⁴³ The *Gospel of Thomas* is held by most scholars to be a second-century text and, as we argued in the previous chapter, should be assigned—at best—a rating of *possible* in terms of the historical reliability of its contents. Although the Jesus Seminar dates the original *Gospel of Thomas* earlier than most scholars, the majority of its members do not regard the scene appealed to by Painter as historical.⁵⁴⁴ The point to be made is this: Since even the Jesus Seminar, whose scholars are largely more skeptical of the canonical literature and much less skeptical of *Thomas* than the large majority of scholars, rejects the historicity of the specific text in *Thomas* to which Painter appeals, a prudent historiography must omit its use until Painter or someone else provides good reasons for regarding it as historical—and Painter does not.

⁵³⁹ Painter in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001), 29.

⁵⁴⁰ See Num. 12:12; Job 3:16; Ecc. 6:3; Philo, *Leg.* 1:76.

⁵⁴¹ Painter in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001), 29. The reference in *Gos. Thom.* is 12.

⁵⁴² Painter in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001), 30; cf. 34.

⁵⁴³ Clement of Alexandria, preserved by Eusebius in *EH* 2.1.2-5; 6.2.10; 7.2.1. Meier (1991), 151n50.

⁵⁴⁴ Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998), 492. They maintain, however, that this passage in *Gos. Thom.* agrees with others in the New Testament that James was among the early church leaders.

The text in the *Gospel According to the Hebrews* is of interest:

The Gospel that is called “according to the Hebrews,” which I have recently translated into both Greek and Latin, a Gospel that Origen frequently used, records the following after the Savior’s resurrection: “But when the Lord had given the linen cloth to the servant of the priest, he went and appeared to James. For James had taken a vow not to eat bread from the time he drank the cup of the Lord until he should see him raised from among those who sleep.” And soon after this it says, “The Lord said, ‘Bring a table and bread.’” And immediately it continues, “He took the bread and blessed it, broke it, gave it to James the Just, and said to him, ‘My brother, eat your bread. For the Son of Man is risen from among those who sleep.’”⁵⁴⁵

As Ehrman notes, this report is “highly legendary.”⁵⁴⁶ No other authority cites it.⁵⁴⁷ It is later than the canonical Gospels and probably all of the New Testament literature, none of which includes or alludes to it.⁵⁴⁸ Allison adds that “it places James at the Last Supper, for which there is otherwise no evidence. The passage can be no guide to what really happened.”⁵⁴⁹ We may also note that, as observed above, it contradicts the clear statement in the canonical Gospels that Jesus’ disciples—among whom are Jesus’ brothers according to Painter—are portrayed in the embarrassing manner of not anticipating Jesus’ resurrection.⁵⁵⁰

It is plain that Painter’s case is desperate. Not only must he assign problematic interpretations to the canonical Gospels to get Jesus’ brothers into the community of believers, he also appeals to three sources of dubious value to our investigation.

4.3.4.1.d. John 19:25b-27

Εἰστήκεισαν δὲ παρὰ τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἡ ἀδελφὴ τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ, Μαρία ἡ τοῦ Κλωπᾶ καὶ Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνῆ. ²⁶ Ἰησοῦς οὖν ἰδὼν τὴν μητέρα καὶ τὸν μαθητὴν παρεστῶτα ὃν ἠγάπα, λέγει τῇ μητρὶ· γύναι, ἴδε ὁ υἱός σου. ²⁷ εἶτα λέγει τῷ μαθητῇ· ἴδε ἡ μήτηρ σου. καὶ ἀπ’ ἐκεῖνης τῆς ὥρας ἔλαβεν ὁ μαθητὴς αὐτὴν εἰς τὰ ἴδια.

And standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary of Magdalene. ²⁶ Therefore, Jesus seeing his mother and the disciple whom he loved by her, said to his mother, “Woman, behold your son.” ²⁷ Then he said to his disciple, “Behold your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

⁵⁴⁵ Jerome, *Illustrious Men*, 2 in Ehrman (*Lost Scriptures*, 2003), 16, fragment 5.

⁵⁴⁶ Ehrman (*Lost Scriptures*, 2003), 15-16. See also Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005): “The legendary character of this story is patent” (261).

⁵⁴⁷ Ehrman (*Lost Scriptures*, 2003), 16.

⁵⁴⁸ Ehrman (*Lost Scriptures*, 2003) dates its composition “probably during the first half of the second century” (15).

⁵⁴⁹ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 261. The Synoptics report that Jesus ate his last supper with the Twelve (Mark 14:13; Matt. 26:20; Luke 22:14). See where these are named in Mark 3:16-19; Matt. 10:2-4; Luke 6:13-16.

⁵⁵⁰ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 261.

It is the beloved disciple who is charged by Jesus with taking care of his mother. We would expect one of Jesus' brothers to have received the nod. Instead, it is the beloved disciple. We may speculate that Jesus' reason was that he desired that his mother be cared for by a member of his spiritual family.⁵⁵¹ We observed in Mark 3:31-35 that Jesus regarded his spiritual family as being more important to him than his family by blood. Had James or any other of Jesus' brothers been a member of that spiritual family at the time, surely he would have been given the responsibility for the caring of his mother. Indeed, such a charge would have been normal and probably would have gone unmentioned. It may be objected that if James and the brothers of Jesus were disciples at that time, they were probably in hiding with all of the remaining disciples. Accordingly, since the beloved disciple appears to have been the only disciple at the cross, he was the only candidate to receive the responsibility. However, it is difficult to see why a brother would have had to have been at the cross in order to know that the responsibility to care for his mother now fell upon him. Peter, who was not at the cross but in hiding, later received a charge from Jesus to feed and tend the flock (John 21:15-17).

4.3.4.2. Additional Counterarguments

Aside from Painter, only a very few scholars have defended the position that James was a believer during Jesus' ministry.

Richard Bauckham asserts that John 2:12 provides "the best evidence that the brothers of Jesus were followers of Jesus during his ministry."⁵⁵² After the wedding in Cana, Jesus went to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples. Thus, his brothers are "accompanying Jesus and his disciples in the earliest period of Jesus' itinerant ministry in Galilee."⁵⁵³ I do not find Bauckham's "best evidence" convincing. The occasion of Jesus' miracle apparently had no relation to his itinerant ministry. Jesus was simply present as a wedding guest and is even hesitant to perform a miracle. The event is presented as a break for Jesus and his disciples from his ministry activities.

Bauckham understands the mentioning of Jesus' brothers in John 2:12 and then again in 7:10 as indicating that they were members of his entourage during the entire period in between. While this is possible, it seems implausible. When Jesus' brothers are mentioned in 2:12 and 7:10, they are distinguished from his disciples. Paul likewise makes this distinction in 1 Corinthians 9:5. Between 2:12 and 7:3, only Jesus and his disciples are mentioned (3:22; 4:2, 7-8, 27, 31-38; 6:3-24; 60-71) and there is nothing in these texts that indicate his brothers were with him during this period. If they are, they appear to be only bystanders. Thus, even this "best evidence" that Jesus' brothers were followers of Jesus is unconvincing.

James Tabor is a third modern scholar who contends that Jesus' brothers were among his disciples. He goes further than Bauckham and Painter and asserts that "the best-kept secret in the entire New Testament" is that "*Jesus' own brothers were among the so-called Twelve Apostles.*"⁵⁵⁴ For Tabor, "James is none other than the mysterious

⁵⁵¹ Shanks and Witherington (2003) make this observation (108-09).

⁵⁵² Bauckham in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001), 106.

⁵⁵³ Bauckham in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001), 107.

⁵⁵⁴ Tabor (2006), 165.

‘beloved disciple’ of the gospel of John.”⁵⁵⁵ Rather than attempt to reinterpret John 7:5, he argues that the “spurious opinion” that Jesus’ brothers were nonbelievers during his ministry is “based on a *single* phrase in John 7:5 that many scholars consider to be a late interpolation. Modern translations even put it in parentheses.”⁵⁵⁶ Tabor notes the two passages in Mark we have examined and asserts “they have been misread based on the false assumption that the brothers did not believe in Jesus.”⁵⁵⁷ He explains that in these Markan passages Jesus was “showing no dishonor to Mary or to his brothers” and that the actions of his mother and brothers was “very possibly to protect him.”⁵⁵⁸ Tabor remarks, “It is amazing what firm opinions have been built upon such shaky foundations.”⁵⁵⁹

I must admit that I find this last comment amusing, since it is Tabor who in the same book finds “much we can responsibly determine” about the ‘lost years’ of Jesus in the non-canonical Christian writings and finds evidence for the location of Jesus’ actual burial in the writings of the “16th-century Kabbalistic Rabbi Isaac ben Luria.”⁵⁶⁰ Tabor’s actual case that Jesus’ brothers were members of the Twelve lacks supporting argumentation.⁵⁶¹ He provides no documentation of his “many scholars” arguing that John 7:5 is an interpolation. Indeed, the textual evidence is quite strong for its inclusion. And there are only three English translations placing it in parentheses: HCSB, NRSV, NET.⁵⁶² Most scholars are persuaded by arguments that the “Beloved Disciple” is either the apostle John or a minor disciple.⁵⁶³ To the extent that these arguments are correct, James cannot have been the “Beloved Disciple.” We have also observed that the traditional readings of the relevant Markan and Johannine passages are to be preferred.

Let us summarize our findings thus far. We have observed four texts in the New Testament, which report that Jesus’ brothers were not among his followers during his earthly ministry. The “brothers” of Jesus are mentioned in the Gospels in three pericopes (Mark 3:31-35; Matt. 12:46-49; Luke 8:19-21/Mark 6:1-5; Matt. 13:54-58; cf. Luke 4:16-30; John 4:44/John 7:1-10). In none of these are they mentioned in a positive sense, at least not clearly. It is not until after the resurrection of Jesus that Jesus’ brothers are clearly mentioned among his followers (1 Cor. 9:5; Acts 1:14). We have also engaged with the contentions of three scholars (Painter, Bauckham, and

⁵⁵⁵ Tabor (2006), 165.

⁵⁵⁶ Tabor (2006), 165.

⁵⁵⁷ Tabor (2006), 165.

⁵⁵⁸ Tabor (2006), 336-37n14.

⁵⁵⁹ Tabor (2006), 165.

⁵⁶⁰ Tabor (2006), 87, 238-40. It is also worth noting that Tabor seems to have been one of the very few scholars in support of *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* proposal advanced by Jacobovici and Pellegrino (2007) that the family tomb of Jesus had been identified along with the skeletal remains of Jesus, his wife Mary Magdalene, his son Judah, and some others.

⁵⁶¹ Tabor provides little in his 2006 book. Those interested may read his expanded case on his personal web site: <http://jesusdynasty.com/blog/2006/07/06/the-identity-of-the-beloved-disciple/> (accessed September 15, 2007).

⁵⁶² Daniel Wallace, a translation committee member for the NET, told me that the committee placed the text of 7:5 in parentheses because “they regard this as an editorial note, added by the evangelist. It’s not a comment about authenticity” (Personal email correspondence, 9/17/07). The following English translations do not place the text in parentheses: ESV, GWN, KJV/NKJ, NAB, NAU, NIV/NIB, NLT, RSV, RWB.

⁵⁶³ See especially Keener (2003), 1:82-115, although he opts for Johannine authorship. Also see Blomberg (2001), 22-41; R. Brown (2003), 189-98; Witherington (*John’s Wisdom*, 1995), 11-18.

Tabor) that Jesus' brothers were indeed among his followers during most of his ministry.⁵⁶⁴ However, we noted that their arguments cannot stand up to a closer examination of the texts they cite.

A majority of scholars who comment on the subject agree that the New Testament texts just examined all report that Jesus' brothers were not counted among his believers during his ministry as Bauckham admits.⁵⁶⁵ I see two reasons for granting historicity. The nonbelief of Jesus' brothers is multiply attested, being found in Mark and John. Mark includes two pericopes whereas John presents one not found in Mark. The reports of their nonbelief also fulfill the criterion of embarrassment. As we will see momentarily, after Jesus' resurrection we find Jesus' brothers counted among his followers. James was counted among the top three leaders in Jerusalem and even the head of the Church located there. Why would all four canonical Gospels paint a negative picture of Jesus' brothers, writing during or after the period in which James had been a leader of the church in Jerusalem? This would only serve to undermine the church authority the Evangelists would be expected to support.⁵⁶⁶ The same may be said of Peter's denial. Lüdemann asserts that "no Christian would have sullied the reputation of the leader of the Jerusalem church. . . . Therefore, the tradition of Peter denying Jesus during the latter's arrest has a solid historical foundation."⁵⁶⁷ This is all the more true of the reports pertaining to the nonbelief of Jesus' brothers. The preponderance of the evidence favors the conclusion that the brothers of Jesus were not counted among his followers through the time of Jesus' execution. By all accounts, they appear to have maintained a distance from their brother's ministry.

4.3.4.3. James after the Resurrection of Jesus

We are surprised to read that Jesus' brothers have become his followers shortly after his resurrection. They are among his followers in Acts 1:14. Later in Acts, James appears to be the leading spokesman and perhaps the final authority in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:1-21; 21:17-26). James' leadership in the Jerusalem church and as an apostle is mentioned even earlier in Paul's letter to the church in Galatia (Gal. 1:19; 2:1-10). Paul also mentions the brothers of Jesus as followers in 1 Corinthians 9:5.

⁵⁶⁴ While Painter and Bauckham believe Jesus' brothers were among his followers throughout most of his ministry, Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005) takes a weaker position, although somewhat in empathy with Painter and Bauckham. He asserts that we cannot be certain that Jesus' brothers were *not* among his followers during that period: "Apologists for the resurrection have often emphasized that it must have been a christophany that changed James from an outsider to an insider. This is far from certain. We cannot assume that the tension between Jesus and his family was at all times the same, or that things were not better toward the end than they were at the beginning. Further, Acts 1:14 has Mary, immediately after the crucifixion, with the disciples in Jerusalem, and I am unaware of anyone who has argued that her post-Easter devotion to Jesus, if we accept it as historical, could be explained only by a resurrection appearance. The same holds for James's ἀδελφοί, brothers, referred to in 1 Cor 9:5: the plural implies that prominence of more than just James. Did they also see Jesus? Another possibility is that James joined the Christian community and only subsequently had a vision of Jesus. The frustrating truth is that we just do not know the circumstances of the postmortem appearance to James, only that, if Paul had his facts straight, it took place between the appearances to Peter and Paul; and we can guess that it was a factor in his rise to ecclesiastical power" (262-63).

⁵⁶⁵ Bauckham admits that the "usual view" maintained by scholars is that Jesus' brothers were not followers during his ministry and did not believe that his mission was from God (106).

⁵⁶⁶ Habermas (2003), 22; Meier (1994), 2:70; Wright (2003), 704.

⁵⁶⁷ Lüdemann (2004), 162.

James' commitment to Jesus' message became so strong that it appears that he died a martyr. His martyrdom as a follower of his brother is reported by Josephus, Hegesippus, and Clement of Alexandria. The latter two are no longer extant. However, fragments from their writings pertaining to the martyrdom of James are preserved in Eusebius.⁵⁶⁸ In the first passage, Eusebius relates that Clement reported that James the Just was thrown off the pinnacle of the temple and beaten to death with a fuller's club. Eusebius adds that this is the same James that Paul mentions in Galatians 1:19 as "the brother of the Lord."⁵⁶⁹

I summarize the second as follows:

"James the brother of the Lord" had the leading seat in the Jerusalem church which had been given him by the apostles. Because he was esteemed by many for his pious and just life, the Jewish leaders brought him out before all and demanded that he publicly renounce faith in his brother. To their disappointment, he did precisely the opposite and publicly confessed that Jesus is the Son of God. Since Festus had just died and there was no Roman leader in Judea at the moment, the Jewish leaders seized the opportunity and killed James. Clement of Alexandria reported that he was thrown off the pinnacle of the temple and subsequently beaten to death with a club. But Hegesippus who lived much closer to the time of the event provides the most accurate account, writing that "James, the brother of the Lord" had been known for a long time as a pious man and was highly regarded by the people. Indeed, some became Christians in spite of the Jewish authorities because of James' testimony concerning Jesus. Therefore, many of the Jewish leaders came to James and asked him to lead the people away from Jesus. They encouraged him to stand at the temple pinnacle so that all may see and hear him, for many were present at that time celebrating the Passover. They took him to the pinnacle and asked him what he thought of Jesus. But he confessed that Jesus is the Son of Man who will come in judgment. As a result of this confession, a number believed in Christ. The Jewish leaders then threw James off the pinnacle. But James did not die from the fall. So, they began to stone him at which point James prayed for their forgiveness. Hearing James' prayer, one of the priests told them to stop. But a fuller took one of his clubs and hit James in the head, killing him. James was buried on that spot. And immediately afterward, Vespasian besieged the city.⁵⁷⁰

Eusebius then reports that Josephus wrote the following about the event:

ταῦτα δὲ συμβέβηκεν Ἰουδαίοις κατ' ἐκδίκησιν Ἰακώβου τοῦ δικαίου, ὃς ἦν ἀδελφός Ἰησοῦ τοῦ λεγομένου Χριστοῦ, ἐπειδὴ περ δικαιοτάτων αὐτόν ὄντα οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἀπέκτειναν

And these things came about by the Jews in order to punish James the Just who was the brother of Jesus the one called Christ, because he was the most just the Jews killed [him].⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁸ For Clement's account, see *EH* 2.9.1-3. For Hegesippus' account, see *EH* 2.23.3-19.

⁵⁶⁹ *EH* 2.1.5.

⁵⁷⁰ *EH* 2.23.1-18.

⁵⁷¹ *EH* 2.23.20

It is of interest that these words are not found in any extant manuscripts of Josephus. However, Josephus mentions James' execution in *Antiquities* 20:200:

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

Therefore, seeing that now these things being Ananas in common [with the Sadducees who are more rough than others Jews in judging others] considered to have a suitable time because Festus had died and [his replacement] Albinus was still on his way. He assembled the Sanhedrin of judges and passed along to it James the brother of Jesus the one called Christ and some others as lawbreakers. Making accusation, he delivered them to be stoned.

Differing from Hegesippus and Clement, Josephus does not state that James was killed as a Christian martyr. However, Josephus reports that James and some others were executed as παρανομησάντων (lawbreakers). This could mean that James was executed for crimes he had committed such as robbery or murder. However, in the New Testament, Christians were often regarded as lawbreakers by the Jewish authorities because they were perceived as promoting ideas that were contrary to the Jewish Law (Acts 6:13; 18:13; 21:28).⁵⁷² Bock asks, “What Law was it James broke, given his reputation within Christian circles as a Jewish-Christian leader who was careful about keeping the Law? It would seem likely that the Law had to relate to his christological allegiances and a charge of blasphemy. This would fit the fact that he was stoned, which was the penalty for such a crime, and parallels how Stephen was handled as well.”⁵⁷³

As discussed in the previous chapter, with the large majority of scholars, there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of this passage.⁵⁷⁴ Recent scholars commenting on the subject of the death of James generally regard Josephus' account as the most reliable of the three.⁵⁷⁵ Josephus' account also provides the fewest details and lacks the Christological affirmations found in Clement of Alexandria and Hegesippus.⁵⁷⁶ This does not necessarily mean these were embellishments that later found their way into the narrative, since Josephus may not have been interested in including them and may very well have taken liberties in his narrative for purposes of economy or for an unstated reason. I do not wish to pursue the details of James' martyrdom here. What can be said for our purposes is that all three accounts appear to report that James was executed by direction of the Jewish leadership. That he was regarded as a “lawbreaker” by Josephus suggests that the Jewish leadership believed him to have broken the Jewish Law. This is in accord with the reports of Hegesippus and Clement of Alexandria and is probably how the Jewish leadership perceived the early Christians. Moreover, James' martyrdom is multiply attested by at least two

⁵⁷² See Acts 23:3 where Paul refers to the high priest Ananias as παρανομῶν.

⁵⁷³ Bock (2000), 196n30.

⁵⁷⁴ See chapter 3.2.4.1.

⁵⁷⁵ Painter in Chilton and Neusner, eds. (2001), 48; Shanks and Witherington (2003), 173, 192. See also Barnett (1999) who comments, “It is a measure of James's prominence in Jerusalem that his death is described at such length by the historian Josephus” (324).

⁵⁷⁶ We must again note the lack of critical work often performed by Clement of Alexandria.

independent sources: Josephus and one or more Christian sources. We do not know anything about the origin of the tradition(s) from which Hegesippus and Clement drew. However, given James' status as a leader of the Jerusalem church and a brother of Jesus, there can be no doubt that his martyrdom would have been remembered from its time and passed on in tradition throughout the Christian Church. It is very doubtful that Josephus invented the event, since his account shows no signs of dependence on Christian sources, the two extant differing from Josephus in their details. Accordingly, the historian is warranted in concluding that James was probably martyred for his Christian faith.

4.3.4.4. The Reason James Converted

Of course, historians want to know what it was that brought out such a significant reversal in the brothers of Jesus and especially James. In the early tradition of 1 Corinthians 15:7 it is reported that the risen Jesus appeared to James.⁵⁷⁷ If a narrative of this event ever existed, it most likely has not been preserved. The only extant hint of the existence of a narrative is found in the *Gospel According to the Hebrews* for which only a few fragments exist that are preserved in the writings of others and we have observed that its historical reliability is dubious. We are left with a report of an appearance to James without a narrative in 1 Corinthians 15:7.

Still, the report in 1 Corinthians 15 is early and possesses a great deal of plausibility. With the skepticism of Jesus' brothers in mind, Catchpole comments,

For James to become an integral part of the earliest community at a very early stage of its life (cf. Galatians 1:19), and moreover to become later the leading pillar-type witness (cf. Galatians 2:9), even during the period of Peter's presence within that community, is a development that requires some explanation. . . . [T]he appearance to James was therefore not one that could work from an already existing sympathy or commitment. In that respect it was not dissimilar to what happened later to Paul.⁵⁷⁸

Shanks and Witherington similarly comment,

It appears that James, like Paul, was a convert to the Jesus movement because at some juncture he saw the risen Jesus, for nothing prior to Easter can explain his having become such a follower of Jesus, much less a leader of Jesus' followers. . . . [James was not present at the cross of Jesus.] Something dramatic must have happened to James after the death of Jesus to account for his being included in Acts among the disciples and later named as leader of the Jerusalem church. It seems clear that it was Jesus' appearance to him that mainly accounts for his conversion to the movement and his rise to prominence.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁷ Dunn (2003) comments, "No one doubts that the James of 1 Cor. 15.7 is the James of Gal. 1.19 and 2.9, 12" (862n168).

⁵⁷⁸ Catchpole (2002), 157-58. See also R. Brown (1973), 95.

⁵⁷⁹ Shanks and Witherington (2003), 107-09. See also Maier (1991), 204.

Habermas writes,

While we are not told that it was Jesus's appearance to James (1 Cor. 15:7) that caused his conversion, we have to provide the best explanation for the change and for James's promotion as one of the chief leaders in the early church. Given his previous skepticism, the appearance to James is significant.⁵⁸⁰

I must agree that an appearance to James is a plausible explanation for his conversion. However, with Allison, I am open to the possibility that James and his brothers had heard from their mother or others of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances and, having noted their sincere conviction that Jesus had appeared, it seems plausible that James and his brothers converted based on their conviction that Jesus had appeared to others and that Jesus appeared to James sometime after his conversion, either prior to or after Pentecost.⁵⁸¹

4.3.4.5. Summary and Conclusion

We may summarize our findings on James as follows:

- Jesus' brothers did not believe in him during his ministry (Mark 3:21, 31-35; 6:3; John 7:1-10).
- Jesus' brothers taunted him (Mark 6:3; John 7:1-10).
- Jesus' brothers were apparently absent at Jesus' crucifixion where Jesus entrusted the care of his mother to one of his disciples, suggesting his brothers were nonbelievers at the time (John 19:25-27).
- Jesus' brothers were in the upper room with Jesus' disciples and mother after the resurrection (Acts 1:14).
- James was an apostle and leader in the Jerusalem church (Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12; Acts 12:17; 15:13).
- Paul reported his activities to James (Acts 21:18).
- It would appear that at least some of Jesus' brothers became believers (1 Cor. 9:5).
- James' transformation from skeptic to believer is plausibly explained by his belief that Jesus had been raised and by a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to him (1 Cor. 15:7).
- James believed his risen brother appeared to him.

Habermas asserts that the majority of critical scholars writing on the subject grant the conversion of James as a result of what he perceived was a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to him. As examples he lists Betz, Conzelmann, Craig, Davis, Derret, Funk, Hoover, Kee, Koester, Ladd, Lorenzen, Lüdemann, Meier, Oden,

⁵⁸⁰ Habermas (2003), 28. Some express more confidence than Habermas that it was Jesus' appearance to James that resulted in his conversion. See Bruce (1977): "If we look for some explanation of their [i.e., Jesus' family members] sudden change in attitude towards Jesus, we can find it in the statement that in resurrection he appeared to James" (85). See also Byrskog (2002, 88) and Witherington (2006), 175.

⁵⁸¹ Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 262-63.

Osborne, Pannenberg, Sanders, Spong, Stuhlmacher, Wedderburn.⁵⁸² We may add Bryskog, Ehrman, and Wright to Habermas' list.⁵⁸³ There is significant heterogeneity within this group that includes atheists, agnostics, cynics, revisionists, moderates, and conservatives. With James, we have significant evidence that indicates he and his brothers were not among Jesus' followers. However, sometime after the crucifixion of Jesus, James became a follower of his brother, a leader in the Church he had started, and finally died as a Christian martyr. The best explanation for this change of heart is that James came to believe that his brother had risen from the dead. It is probable that James had an experience that he perceived as being a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus. However, it cannot be stated with certainty whether his conversion was prior to the experience or resulted from it.

Although the majority of scholars writing on the subject of Jesus' resurrection grant the appearance to James, the number who actually comment on the matter is small. I am, therefore, reluctant to include the appearance to James in the historical bedrock. We will regard it as a "second level fact" that may be included in a hypothesis should a "best explanation" of the historical bedrock alone prove elusive.

4.3.5. The Empty Tomb

The empty tomb of Jesus is perhaps the most hotly disputed of Habermas' twelve facts. Habermas claims that at least two out of three scholars (and maybe more) writing on the empty tomb since 1975 grant its historicity *with a view toward the resurrection of Jesus*. In other words, they either hold or are open to the resurrection of Jesus as the best explanation for why the tomb was empty.⁵⁸⁴ Habermas' moderate-to-strong majority does not include those who grant the historicity of the empty tomb while explaining it naturally. From my research, for this category I am thinking of scholars such as Allison, Bostock, Carnley, Ehrman, Fisher, Grant, and Vermes, all of whom grant the historicity of the empty tomb while doubting that its emptiness resulted from Jesus' bodily resurrection.⁵⁸⁵ When these are taken into consideration, and it is my opinion that they should, there is a degree of heterogeneity to the majority who argue for the historicity of the empty tomb, although its cause is disputed. Many of these scholars are significant. Thus, the empty tomb may be added to a collection of facts pertaining to Jesus' fate which are granted by a significant majority of scholars writing on the subject.

⁵⁸² Habermas (2003), 22, 44n118-121; cf. Habermas (2006), 79. For Funk, Habermas cites *Honest to Jesus* (33). Elsewhere, Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998) collectively deny the appearance to James (454-55).

⁵⁸³ Bryskog (2002), 85; Ehrman (1999), 229-30; Wright (2003), 325.

⁵⁸⁴ In a personal telephone conversation with Habermas on April 2, 2008. Elsewhere Habermas (*Resurrection Research*, 2005) claimed that a "strong majority" of approximately 75 percent favor one or more arguments for the empty tomb while roughly 25 percent favor one or more arguments against it (140-41; cf. Habermas [2003], 24; cf. [2006], 80). In both categories Habermas is including those scholars who appear to be leaning in that direction even with an absence of a direct statement for their own position. In a personal email correspondence dated April 1, 2008, Habermas shared with me that he recently updated his database and found the number to be slightly lower than 75 percent. Waterman's (2006) published dissertation on the empty tomb tradition in Mark comments: "not a few, but rather a majority, of contemporary scholars believe that there is some historical kernel in the empty tomb tradition" (192-93).

⁵⁸⁵ See Allison (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 2005), 331-32, 344; Bostock (1994), 202; Carnley (1987), 46, 60; Ehrman (1999), 229 (see Ehrman in Craig and Ehrman [2006, 21] where he may have changed his mind); Fisher (1999), 75; Grant (1977), 176; Vermes (2008), 140-41.

There are two important distinctions between the “facts” pertaining to Jesus’ fate we have discussed thus far and the empty tomb. The empty tomb does not enjoy the nearly unanimous majority agreement of the others. Numerous scholars who comprise a respectable minority argue against the historicity of the empty tomb.⁵⁸⁶ Another distinction is the absence of significant heterogeneity among those who grant the empty tomb. We noted the presence of a few who grant the empty tomb while leaning toward a natural cause. But these are comparatively small. Habermas provides an alarming comment:

I have compiled 23 arguments for the empty tomb and 14 considerations against it, as cited by recent critical scholars. Generally, the listings are what might be expected, dividing along theological ‘party lines.’⁵⁸⁷

This may indicate that scholars are allowing their horizons to exert excessive influence on their historical work—an observation that does not surprise us in our investigation of the resurrection of Jesus. Although the empty tomb enjoys a strong majority, it does not approach unanimity. Nor is the majority who grant the empty tomb composed of a significant number of scholars from numerous theological persuasions, although heterogeneity among them is certainly present.

A comparison with the appearance to James may be helpful. We observed that a small group of scholars have commented on the appearance to James, among whom we found a heterogeneous and near consensus granting historicity. In contrast, a large group of scholars have opined on the empty tomb of Jesus, among whom we found a moderate-to-strong majority (rather than a near consensus) that is somewhat heterogeneous (rather than having strong heterogeneity) granting historicity. As with the appearance to James, I do not believe we have enough here to warrant including the empty tomb as part of our historical bedrock. However, we might grant it status as a “second level fact,” if we were to investigate the matter and conclude that the reasons for accepting the empty tomb significantly outweigh the reasons for rejecting it. A discussion of the empty tomb would require a great amount of space. Since, we know ahead of time that it does not qualify as part of historical bedrock, I will refrain from such a discussion in the present research and from employing it in a resurrection hypothesis in the chapter that follows.

4.4. Conclusions

We began this chapter by discussing Habermas’ approach to the question of the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus. He lists twelve facts that he claims are regarded as historical by the majority of scholars. From these he developed a “minimal facts” approach in which he selects only four to six of the twelve facts and builds a historical case for the resurrection based only on these. Over time his approach has changed and his present contention is that the hypothesis that Jesus rose from the dead can be demonstrated to be superior to the others if one were to use only those facts which the vast majority of contemporary scholars grant as historical. Though his lists have varied, Habermas maintains that the following three facts

⁵⁸⁶ A few examples are Bentz-Letts (1997), 265, 268, 273-74; Funk and the Jesus Seminar (1998), 469; Goulder (2005), 58, 194; Henaut (1986), 177-90; Lindars (1986), 90, 94; Lüdemann (2004), 96.

⁵⁸⁷ Habermas (*Resurrection Research*, 2005), 140. See also Barclay in D’Costa, ed. (1996) who makes a similar observation (22, 23).

pertaining to the fate of Jesus are granted as historical by a nearly universal consensus of scholars writing on the subject since 1975.

1. Jesus died by crucifixion.
2. Very shortly after Jesus' death, the disciples had experiences that led them to believe and proclaim that Jesus had been resurrected and had appeared to them.
3. Within a few years after Jesus' death, Paul converted after experiencing what he interpreted as a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to him.

We discussed these three at length and saw that we are warranted in including them as our historical bedrock. We also discussed the appearance to James and took a brief look at the empty tomb, neither of which qualify as historical bedrock. It is important to note that the three facts that comprise our historical bedrock pertaining to the fate of Jesus have been arrived at through careful historical analyses and are accepted by the nearly unanimous consensus of scholars and that the membership of this group is quite heterogeneous.⁵⁸⁸

We discussed the historical bedrock pertaining to Jesus' life in order to gain an understanding of the context in which the historical bedrock pertaining to Jesus' fate appears. We observed that Jesus was a miracle worker and exorcist and that he believed he had a special relationship with God who had chosen Jesus to usher in his eschatological kingdom.

We also discussed six Pauline texts in order to ascertain what Paul believed concerning the nature of Jesus' resurrection body. I concluded that Paul certainly believed that resurrection was something that happened to a corpse. I further contended that, given Paul's high esteem of tradition that most likely came from the Jerusalem church, it is highly likely that he was teaching the same thing about resurrection as were the Jerusalem apostles. If Paul taught the resurrection of the body, so were the Jerusalem apostles. However, the nature of Jesus' resurrection does not belong to historical bedrock.

What do we do with the three facts pertaining to Jesus' fate? In the next chapter we will consider six hypotheses that purport to explain what happened to Jesus; specifically, whether he rose from the dead.

⁵⁸⁸ Baxter (1999), 20-21.