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The Resurrection of Jesus: A Methodological Survey and Introduction to the Present Volume

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Introduction

The resurrection of Jesus is a central tenet of historic Christian belief, and, for that reason alone, a matter of great historical significance. Virtually no biblical scholar, early church historian, or theologian disputes this point. However, a great deal of disagreement follows from that initial agreement.

A divergence of opinion has existed in serious historical study of Jesus for over 200 years concerning the historical reliability of the four canonical gospels. During much of this time most scholars have leaned to the skeptical side of the ledger concerning this question. No gospel stories, save, perhaps, the virgin birth narratives, have been as critically scrutinized as those concerning the resurrection. As a result, in the minds of many, the resurrection of Jesus, which undoubtedly lay at the heart of the earliest Christian confession of Jesus as Lord, is often either removed from the picture altogether or moved to one margin or another.

Such skepticism is largely the result of methodological presuppositions founded upon enlightenment thinking. Although many of those whose work was responsible for this sea change were not outright enemies of Christian faith or practice, the law of unintended consequences applies to historians as much as it does to those in other professions, and their skepticism had the effect of either reducing the importance of resurrection in Christian theology or redefining the meaning of resurrection. In what follows we shall attempt to paint a backdrop of roughly 200 years of historical scholarship concerning Jesus and his resurrection.

A Brief Survey of Resurrection Scholarship

In 1778 G. E. Lessing's edition of Hermann Samuel Reimarus's essay, "On the Aims of Jesus and His Disciples" was published.[1] Prior to Reimarus

[1] Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (trans. W. Montgomery; pref. F.C. Burkitt; London: Adam, Charles and Black, 1910), 13-14. Hermann Samuel Reimarus, "Concerning the Intention of Jesus and His Teaching," in

there were many harmonies of the gospels,[2] but there had been no scholarly attempt to study the gospels as historical documents. All that changed with G. E. Lessing's posthumous publication of Reimarus's work in a series Lessing named *Fragmente eines Ungenannten* (Fragments from an Unnamed Author), commonly referred to today as the *Wolfenbüttel* Fragments.[3] The influence of Deism upon Reimarus may be seen in his attempt to ground understanding of the historical Jesus in reason (*Vernunft*). Reimarus held that the preaching of Jesus was separate from the writings of the apostles and thus argued that the gospels, written by the evangelists, i.e., historians, not the New Testament epistles, written by the apostles, i.e., theologians, were where one found the historical Jesus. Reimarus defined the essence of religion as "the doctrine of the salvation and immortality of the soul."[4] No wonder then that denying Jesus' resurrection seemed no great loss.

Reimarus believed that after Jesus' death his disciples stole his body and declared his resurrection in order to maintain their financial security and ensure themselves some standing.[5] He maintained correctly that Jesus' mindset was essentially eschatological in nature. He rightfully discerned that the historical Jesus is never to be found in a non-Jewish setting, but wrongly saw Christianity as discontinuous with Judaism. Unfortunately he failed to grasp that resurrection was part of the Jewish hope in Jesus' day. Despite his concern to free Jesus from theology, Reimarus's Jesus was not free from the grave.

David Friedrich Strauss, influenced by Hegel's philosophy, pioneered an approach to understanding the gospels in which Jesus' resurrection was understood as myth. Jesus understood mythically is the synthesis of the thesis of supernaturalism and the antithesis of rationalism. As a committed Hegelian, the early Strauss maintained that the inner nucleus of Christian faith is not touched by the mythical approach.[6] Strauss emphasized not the *events* (miracles) in the gospels (although the book is structured as an analysis of Jesus' miracles), but the *nature* of the gospels. Unlike Reimarus, he was not interested in explaining (away) how events in the gospels took place. Neither was he interested in uncovering the sequence in which the gospels were produced. His interest lay in revealing the nature of the gospels as literature. By focusing on the literary nature of the gospels he anticipated several critical methods

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Reimarus: Fragments (ed. Charles H. Talbert; trans. Ralph S. Fraser; Lives of Jesus Series; ed. Leander Keck; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 59-269.

[2] See: Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 13-15.

[3] See H. S. Reimarus, *Reimarus: Fragments*. At the time of publication, Lessing was librarian to the Duke of Brunswick at the ducal library in Wolfenbüttel, hence the name of the series.

[4] Reimarus, *Fragments,* 61.

[5] Reimarus, *Fragments,* 243-50.

[6] David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (ed. Peter C. Hodgson; trans. George Eliot; Life of Jesus Series; ed. Leander E. Keck; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), lii.

that would arise in twentieth-century New Testament studies. Whereas Reimarus had proposed two possibilities: natural or supernatural; Strauss proposed two different categories for interpreting the gospels: mythic or historical. Unlike Reimarus Strauss did not attribute the non-historical to deliberate deception on the part of the apostles, but to their unconscious mythic imagination.[7] Strauss maintained that the biblical narratives were written well after they occurred and were embellished through years of oral retelling and religious reflection.[8] The biblical myths, according to Strauss, are poetic in form, not historical or philosophical.[9] In his second book on Jesus, *Das Leben Jesu: für das deutsche Volk*,[10] Strauss abandoned Hegelian categories for moral categories. Eventually Strauss repudiated entirely any attachment to Christianity, and died a committed materialist.[11]

Albrecht Ritschl and Adolf von Harnack are representative of a number of scholars who understood Jesus primarily as a great moral teacher whose life and teachings had a decisive impact upon the psyche of the early church. Conditioned by Kant's critique of rationality and the subsequent Protestant reaction of stressing ethics and piety, they combined ethics with something akin to pop psychology in an effort to understand the historical Jesus with the result being that the historicity of the resurrection was irrelevant for them. Both men understood Jesus primarily as a great moral teacher, whose life and teachings had a decisive impact upon the psyche of the early church. According to Ritschl the proper object of study is the *observable experience* of the church because the statements in Scripture become "completely intelligible only when we see how they are reflected in the consciousness of those who believe in Him."[12] He also taught not only that the kingdom of God and the message of Jesus were ethical in nature, but also that Jesus was the bearer of God's ethical Lordship over humanity.[13] Ritschl's moralizing theology focused on Jesus' death, not his resurrection. For von Harnack, Jesus' message of the kingdom emphasized: (1) the kingdom of God and its coming; (2) God the Father and the infinite value of the human soul; and (3) the higher righteousness and the commandment of love.[14] In other words, Ritschl and von

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[7] Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 39-92.

[8] Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 49.

[9] Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 53.

[10] Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu: fur das deutsche Volk. Bearb. von David Friedrich Strauss* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1874).

[11] Robert Morgan, "Strauss, David Friedrich," in *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters* (ed. Donald K. McKim; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 367.

[12] Albrecht Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation: The Positive Development of the Doctrine* (ed. H. R. Mackintosh and A. B. Macaulay; Clifton, NJ: Reference Book Publishers, 1966), 1.

[13] Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, 385-484.

[14] Adolf Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* (trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders; New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 19-78.

Harnack combined ethics with psychology in an effort to understand the historical Jesus. The historicity of Jesus' resurrection was simply not an issue for either man.

William Wrede responded to such ideas by insisting that the psychological theories of 19th century life of Jesus work were derived from somewhere other than the text. Wrede wrote: "And this is the malady to which we must here allude—let us not dignify it with the euphemism 'historical imagination.' *The Scientific study of the life of Jesus is suffering from psychological 'suppositionitis'* which amounts to a sort of historical guesswork."[15] Wrede's chief concern was with the messianic secret. He believed that the early church understood historically that Jesus *was made* messiah at his resurrection, not that he *was revealed* as messiah through the resurrection.[16] The idea that Jesus was the messiah before his resurrection was merely the result of the early church's theological reflection on his then-evident messiahship.[17] Simply put the messianic secret was Mark's attempt to harmonize history with theology.[18]

According to Wrede one must distinguish between historical and literary-critical questions, and literary-critical questions should be dealt with before historical ones. In this way Wrede was able to point to messianic passages in the gospels as support for his hypothesis, and problematic texts were thus neatly excised in the interest of historical tidiness. The result was predictable: truncated gospels resulted in a truncated picture of Jesus. Wrede's Jesus lacked both messianic consciousness and theological creativity. While Wrede allows that the messianic secret grew out of resurrection belief, his focus is consistently upon the effect of resurrection belief rather than the basis for belief in the resurrection.

On the same day in 1901 that Wrede published his book on the messianic secret, Albert Schweitzer published his *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus' Messiahship and Passion.*[19] Schweitzer pictured Jesus as thoroughly conscious of his messianic role. In fact it was this messianic consciousness that motivated Jesus to do all that he did. In contrast to Wrede, Schweitzer understood Jesus as a messianic hero, along the lines of Nietzsche's cult of the hero (*Übermensch*).[20] Schweitzer's Jesus was a heroic figure, who sought to usher in the kingdom through his decisive sacrifice of himself. Schweitzer saw the messianic themes, which Wrede understood to be later

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[15] William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret* (trans. J. C. G. Greig; Cambridge: James Clarke, 1971), 6.

[16] Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, 216-19.

[17] Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, 219-30.

[18] Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, 219-30.

[19] Albert Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus' Messiahship and Passion*, (trans. Walter Lowrie; New York: Macmillan, 1950).

[20] Schweitzer saw his philosophy of reverence for life as a superior version of Nietzsche's concern for life lived to fullest degree. Albert Schweitzer, *The Philosophy of Civilization* (trans. C. T. Campion; London: A. & C. Black, 1946), 174-6.

creations, as central to any understanding of Jesus. Tragically, although the idea of resurrection is clearly in the mind of Schweitzer's Jesus, his summary concludes, "On the afternoon of the fourteenth of Nissan, as they ate the Paschal lamb at even, he uttered a loud cry and died."[21] Related to the resurrection, Schweitzer contributed no more than any 19th century liberal Jesus scholar.

In addition to Schweitzer's critique of the liberal historical Jesus project, there was the influence of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* (history of religions school). The influence of Ernst Troeltsch upon Jesus studies cannot be overestimated. Troeltsch, the leading philosopher of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* saw Christianity, like all religions, as a historical phenomenon within its own time. Consequently Jesus was no different than any other historical figure, nor was the resurrection different than any other event in history. One cannot insist, like Martin Kähler, that faith in Jesus is not subject to historical critique;[22] the historian is bound to explain movements in terms of causal events *in the natural world.*[23] Troeltsch's commitment to naturalistic explanations, *à la* his criterion of analogy, made the historian's role in relation to Christian origins into one of explaining simply how Christianity came to be, not one of seeking to answer direct questions concerning Jesus. Any critical judgment concerning the historicity of Jesus' resurrection was thus illegitimate.

The shadow of Rudolf Bultmann falls over any attempt to understand New Testament theology in the twentieth century. Understanding the gospels as collections of fragments meant to address particular needs of the early church, not as single documents chronicling the life of Jesus, Bultmann saw the primary purpose of form criticism to be the discovery of the origin of the particular units of oral tradition that lay behind the written pericopae of the gospels.[24] In *Jesus and the Word* he declares, "I do indeed think that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since

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[21] Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom*, 173. Following Schweitzer's summary of the life of Jesus, there is a one page postscript that focuses upon recognition that the nature of Jesus is bound forever to be a mystery to modern man, and that modern culture can only be revived by grasping the nature of his conscious sacrifice for others. It fittingly concludes with a sentence reminiscent of Nietzsche: "Only then can the heroic in our Christianity and in our *Weltanschauung* be again revived" (Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom*, 174).

[22] Ernst Troeltsch, *Die Bedeutung der Geschichtlichkeit Jesus für den Glauben* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1929), 34. For an insightful discussion of Troeltsch's significance for biblical interpretation see Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Interpretation and Philosophical Description*, 69-74.

[23] Ernst Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1912-25), 2:734. Troeltsch is particularly critical of Christian theologians who attempt to use part of the historical-critical method, but reject the presuppositions of it (Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 2:730).

[24] Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. John Marsh; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), 3-4.

the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary; and other sources about Jesus do not exist."[25] Bultmann posited that due to infighting between Palestinian and Hellenistic believers sayings were attributed to Jesus that he did not utter. This leads Bultmann to declare: "One can only emphasize the uncertainty of our knowledge of the person and work of the historical Jesus and likewise of the origin of Christianity."[26] The result was not only that form criticism focused on something other than Jesus, i.e., the *Sitz im Leben* of the early church, but also that its foremost proponent announced that historical Jesus research could not succeed.

Bultmann's objections to historical Jesus research were not only methodological, but also philosophical and theological. Influenced as he was by Kierkegaard and Heidegger, as well as the early Barth,[27] Bultmann thought that historical knowledge of Jesus' personhood (*Persönlichkeit*) was secondary in importance to existential knowledge of his word.[28]

Bultmann's approach is first to recognize that the New Testament is mythological in nature, and second to demythologize the New Testament myths. Bultmann openly draws upon Heidegger's categories of existence and being to interpret the New Testament.[29] He thus emphasized Easter faith over the fact of the resurrection, i.e., the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The effect was that the resurrection of Jesus became unnecessary for Christian faith and perhaps even impossible.

A brief ray of hope shined through in the "New Quest of the Historical Jesus," championed by Ernst Käsemann, and the rise of redaction criticism.[30] Redaction criticism, primarily developed by Günther Bornkamm and Hans Conzelmann,[31] with its focus upon whole gospels as well as the individual pericopae, stressed the role of the evangelist before that of the community or tradition. In doing so it sought to answer the question: "What is the theology

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[25] Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (trans. Louise Pettibone Smith and Erminie Huntress Lantero; New York: Scribner's, 1958), 8.

[26] Rudolf Bultmann, "The Study of the Synoptic Gospels," in *Form Criticism: Two Essays on New Testament Research* (ed. R. Bultmann and Karl Kundsin; trans. Frederick C. Grant; n.p.: Willett Clark, 1934 / reprint, New York: Harper Torchbook, 1962), 17.

[27] Other influences on Bultmann include Luther, Collingwood, and the history of religions school, as well as the liberal theology of his teacher, Harnack. For a general discussion of influences upon Bultmann, see Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*, 205-51.

[28] Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, 9-12.

[29] Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in *Kerygma and Myth* (ed. Hans Werner Bartsch; trans. Reginald Fuller; London: S.P.C.K., 1953), 11-12.

[30] Ernst Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," in *Essays on New Testament Themes* (trans. W. J. Montague; London: SCM, 1964), 15-47. The New Quest began in 1953 with a speech by Ernst Käsemann to a group of Bultmann's former students.

[31] Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (trans. Percy Scott; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963); Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (trans. G. Buswell; New York: Harper & Row, 1960).

of this gospel?"[32] The hermeneutical effect of redaction criticism was to focus on how the gospel stories relate to each other, which led to reading the gospels as whole stories, not just as disparate fragments. This led to a renewal of interest among biblical scholars in theology. But as seen before with form criticism and the history of religions school the focus was still not upon Jesus, or the resurrection, but upon the theology of the evangelists. As a result the resurrection fared no better in the New Quest than it had during the so-called No Quest.

Any attempt to understand contemporary scholarship on the resurrection must reference the work of Munich systematic theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg. In *Jesus—God and Man*, Pannenberg, informed by the New Quest, surveyed attempts to ground New Testament Christology in Jesus' pre-Easter claims to authority and decisively rejected them. Instead, he maintained that "Jesus' claim to authority stood from the beginning in relationship to the question of the future verification of his message through the occurrence of the future judgment of the Son of Man."[33] Accordingly, the resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of any Christology from Below. The resurrection of Jesus by revealing that Jesus is the Son of Man and that God is revealed in Jesus establishes the identity of Jesus. Moreover it also makes sense of the Gentile mission as an expression of Jewish eschatology and thus serves as the key to understanding the gospels and Paul according to Pannenberg.[34]

In establishing the historicity of the resurrection Pannenberg surveyed two major lines of evidence for the resurrection: reports of appearances of the risen Jesus and the empty tomb and found that they arose independently and therefore mutually complement each other. He also noted and rejected several common objections to seeing the resurrection as historical. He thus deemed the resurrection as "historically very probable, and […] to be presupposed until contrary evidence appears."[35]

Pannenberg's most significant contribution, however, is his discussion of theological objections (most of these coming from "Christian" scholars) to viewing the resurrection as a historical event because it was in one way or another of a "unique" nature—and thus something beyond historical reach, i.e., something real in some sense but not historical. He asserts: "There is no justification for affirming Jesus' resurrection as an event that really happened, if it is not to be affirmed as a historical event as such. Whether or not a particular event happened two thousand years ago is not made certain by faith but only by historical research, to the extent that certainty can be attained at

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[32] Grant R. Osborne, "Redaction Criticism" in *New Testament Criticism and Interpretation* (ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 199-224.

[33] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man* (trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe; Philadelhia: Westminster, 1968), 66.

[34] Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, 66-74.

[35] Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, 105.

all about questions of this kind."[36] While agreeing that faith in Jesus' resurrection could not be the result of an isolated individual fact, Pannenberg insisted that primitive Christianity did not make a strong distinction between fact and meaning; rather than being separated from one another the two belong most closely together.[37]

One dares not ignore the work of Christian-turned-atheist, New Testament scholar Gerd Lüdemann on the resurrection of Jesus. Lüdemann appeals to psychology to make sense of the resurrection narratives and the birth of Christianity. According to Lüdemann, Peter felt so guilty about his denial of the now-dead Jesus, that he came to believe that he had been forgiven by the resurrected Jesus as the result of a stress-induced hallucination. "Under the impression of Jesus's proclamation and death, there finally awoke in Peter the 'And yet. . .' of faith. Thereby the crucified Jesus showed himself to be the living Jesus, so that Peter could once again apply to himself—and this time with profound clarity—God's word of forgiveness present in Jesus's work."[38] Saul's conversion was also the result of guilt as he labored under the yoke of the Law, and his zeal in persecuting Christians was a manifestation of a secret inner attraction to the Christian message. According to Lüdemann, "[I]f one had been able to analyze Paul prior to his Damascus vision, the analysis would probably have shown a strong inclination to Christ in his subconscious; indeed, the assumption that he was unconsciously Christian is then no longer so far–fetched."[39] On the Damascus road Saul hallucinated that he saw the risen Jesus, resulting in Paul's conversion to the faith he once persecuted. "The guilt complex which had arisen with the persecution was resolved through the certainty of being in Christ."[40] Peter and Paul's experiences soon spread among the early Christians, and before long others who did not share their trauma, also saw hallucinations of the risen Lord. Lüdemann understands the empty tomb as legend that serves a useful purpose in that when questions arose as to where the body was, "it could immediately be reported that the women had found the tomb empty and later that Jesus had even appeared to the women at the tomb."[41]

Among contemporary Jesus scholars concerning Jesus' resurrection John Dominic Crossan and N. T Wright stand out. Working from post-

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[36] Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, 99.

[37] Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, 109.

[38] Gerd Lüdemann, "*Die Auferstehung Jesu*," in *Fand die Auferstehung wirklich statt?* (ed. Alexander Bommarius; Düsseldorf: Parega Verlag, 1995), 25.

[39] Gerd Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus: History, Experience, Theology* (trans. John Bowden; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 26.

[40] Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 26–7.

[41] Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 174–5.

Bultmannian presuppositions informed by postmodern literary criticism,[42] Crossan insisted that since Jesus was a Jewish peasant, following his crucifixion, Jesus was probably never properly buried, given that victims of crucifixion were typically either left on the cross to be eaten by wild animals or buried in shallow graves, in which case the result was certain to be the same.[43] Part of the terror of crucifixion was the certain knowledge that one would not receive a decent burial and thus one's body would almost certainly be devoured.[44] He concluded, "With regard to the body of Jesus, by Easter Sunday morning, those who cared did not know where it was, and those who knew did not care."[45] Crossan posited a procession in the tradition "from burial by enemies to burial by friends, from inadequate and hurried burial to full, complete, and even regal embalming."[46] Therefore the passion narratives do not relay accurate historical information concerning either Jesus' death or his burial, but rather reflect "the struggle of Jesus' followers to make sense of both his death and their continuing experience of empowerment by him."[47] If the gospels are incorrect about his burial, then they are also wrong about his resurrection.

In more recent work, Crossan has distinguished between the *mode* and the *meaning* of Jesus' resurrection, and insisted that the most important question concerning the resurrection of Jesus was not one of *mode*: "Is bodily resurrection to be understood as literal or metaphorical?" Crossan allowed that then as now there is a spectrum of understanding running from 100% literal to 100% metaphorical.[48] One may understand resurrection either literally or metaphorically, so long as one takes its *meaning* seriously as general resurrection and apocalyptic consummation already begun, i.e., as long as one engages in making the world more just. He asserted, "Bodily resurrection is not about the survival of us but about the justice of God . . . *bodily* resurrection was not a philosophical vision of human destiny but a theological vision of divine character."[49]

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[42] For a detailed treatment, see Robert B. Stewart, *The Quest of the Hermeneutical Jesus: The Impact of Hermeneutics on the Jesus Research of John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008), 27-75.

[43] John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus, A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 123-26.

[44] Crossan, *Jesus, A Revolutionary Biography*, 125-27.

[45] John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1991), 394.

[46] Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, 393. C.f. Crossan, *Jesus, A Revolutionary Biography*, 156-8.

[47] John Dominic Crossan and Richard G. Watts, *Who Is Jesus? Answers to Your Questions About the Historical Jesus* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996), 121.

[48] John Dominic Crossan, "The Resurrection of Jesus in Its Jewish Context" in *Neotestamentica* 37/1 (2003): 55.

[49] Crossan, "The Resurrection of Jesus in Its Jewish Context," 42-43. For more, see Robert B. Stewart, "The Hermeneutics of Resurrection: How N. T. Wright and John Dominic Crossan Read the Resurrection Narratives," in *The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and*

On the other hand, Wright, influenced by critical realist presuppositions coupled with a well-articulated worldview analysis,[50] argued that one cannot separate the resurrection from the birth of early Christianity. It is the resurrection that makes sense of what follows, i.e., the establishment of the Christian community with its own distinctive story, praxis, and symbols.[51] Given that Jesus was not the first or the last to lead a messianic movement, and that such self-proclaimed messiahs were routinely put to death, Wright asks, why did his movement live on without replacing him as leader? The best explanation, he concludes, is the resurrection.[52]

In *The Resurrection of the Son of God* Wright spent over 500 pages demonstrating how the afterlife was understood and talked about, *and what the relevant terms meant*, in ancient pagan writings, the Old Testament, post-biblical Judaism, and various Christian writings (letters of Paul, the Gospels, Acts, Hebrews, General Letters, Revelation—and non-canonical early Christian texts).[53] He followed this historical and literary *Tour de Force* by arguing that while neither the empty tomb nor the subsequent sightings of the risen Jesus by themselves constituted a sufficient cause for resurrection belief, both taken together would.[54] Although Wright stated his position with humility, as a committed critical realist should, he also argued it with great passion.

No doubt there are other significant names that could be mentioned in this brief survey of how scholars have understood texts discussing the resurrection of Jesus but space does not permit such a full treatment. We hope, though, that this brief treatment has allowed readers to see the importance of method in Jesus research. Further, this background helps to situate the discussion in the present volume concerning Michael Licona's *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*. His is a groundbreaking work concerning historical method within the context of those who have preceded him. And Licona's *The Resurrection of Jesus* is certainly a welcome addition to this significant conversation.

N. T. Wright in Dialogue (ed. Robert B. Stewart; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 58-77; and John Dominic Crossan, "Appendix: Bodily-Resurrection Faith," in *The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright in Dialogue* (ed. Robert B. Stewart; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 171-86.

[50] For a detailed treatment, see Stewart, *The Quest of the Hermeneutical Jesus*, 77-124.

[51] N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (COQG 2; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1996), 658-9; N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (COQG 1; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), 399-401, 460.

[52] N. T. Wright, "How Jesus Saw Himself," *Bible Review* 12 (1996): 29.

[53] N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (COQG 3; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003).

[54] Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 686-93.

The Present Volume

STR is delighted to have a guest editor on board for this volume: Dr. Robert Stewart (New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary). Along with editorial oversight on the volume, Dr. Stewart has co-written the present essay. He is a philosopher who is well-acquainted with Dr. Licona's work in particular and resurrection studies in general. With his assistance, this edition of *STR* is devoted to engaging *The Resurrection of Jesus* from a variety of perspectives. Dr. Michael Licona currently serves as Associate Professor in Theology at Houston Baptist University, and his monograph represents the most recent and significant contribution to resurrection scholarship. As mentioned, the historiographical approach that he advances sets his research apart in the field; this approach positions him to argue constructively and, for many, persuasively for the plausibility of the resurrection of Jesus.

The present volume of *STR* addresses Dr. Licona's research from four primary angles: a resurrection specialist (Dr. Gary Habermas, Liberty University), a philosopher who assesses the viability of historical claims (Dr. Timothy McGrew, Western Michigan University), and a philosopher of history who has written on the logic, truth, and demonstrability of history (Dr. C. Behan McCullagh, LaTrobe University). Each of these scholars is well-seasoned and very well- published. And they have all had an influence on Licona's thought and research, as indicated in his bibliography of *The Resurrection of Jesus*. For these reasons, they are eminently suited to dialogue with Dr. Licona's *The Resurrection of Jesus*. Dr. Licona then offers a response to each of these scholars in a reply essay.

Following upon this critical engagement, *STR* is delighted to host a roundtable discussion on this important work. Other contributors include: Dr. Daniel Akin (President of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary), Dr. Craig Blomberg (Denver Seminary), Dr. Paul Copan (Palm Beach Atlantic University), Dr. Michael Kruger (Reformed Theological Seminary), and Dr. Charles Quarles (Louisiana College and Caskey School of Divinity). The roundtable is helpful in that it allows scholarly interaction via a "conversational" format. Each contributor provides a thoughtful response to Licona and to one another in the dialogue, and for this, we are grateful. The roundtable emerged as a result of an ongoing conversation (both popular and scholarly) regarding The Resurrection of Jesus, the potential value of the work, as well as its potential drawbacks. Many scholars have noted its significance and value, to be sure, and this is confirmed in the roundtable dialogue.

One of the important issues to arise in the discussion is the relationship between biblical interpretation and biblical inerrancy. Dr. Licona takes an approach to Matt. 27:52-3 that views the raised saints at the time of Jesus' death as *possibly* an apocalyptic symbol or something akin to it. At present, it seems he is undecided about the precise interpretation. This view has, at the very least, implications related to the doctrine of inerrancy, as the dialogue

surfaces. In our view, one of the constructive elements to emerge from the roundtable is firmer exegetical warrant for an interpretation of the raised saints in Matt. 27:52-3 as an historical event. It is interesting that Dr. Craig Blomberg, a Matthean specialist, suggests at the close of the discussion: "I do think *this* forum has helped solidify my interpretation of the raising of the saints as historical." We are pleased that *STR* has provided an avenue to further discussion in Christian scholarly community.

Each of the contributors was carefully sought out. Dr. Akin is a theologian and New Testament scholar with extensive expertise in hermeneutics. As a seminary president, Dr. Akin also brings a distinctive perspective to bear on Licona's work. Dr. Blomberg needs little introduction as a major New Testament scholar, with a commentary on Matthew (New American Commentary) and extensive publications in the gospels and biblical interpretation. Dr. Copan serves as professor of philosophy at Palm Beach Atlantic and has written extensively in the area of apologetics and interpretation, including his most recent works *Is God a Moral Monster* (Baker Academic) and *Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Religion* (Routledge). As such, he is well-equipped to explore the apologetic value of Dr. Licona's monograph. Dr. Kruger is professor of New Testament and Academic dean at Reformed Theological Seminary and has written extensively in the gospels. He was specifically asked to speak to the question of the raised saints in Matt. 27:52-3. His most recent publication is *Canon Revisited* (Crossway). Charles Quarles is Research Professor of New Testament and Greek, Dean of the Caskey School of Divinity, and Vice President of Faith and Learning at Louisiana College. Amongst his many publications is *Midrash Criticism* (University Press of America) as well as an edited volume entitled *Buried Hope or Risen Savior* (B&H Academic). STR would like to thank each of these scholars for their interaction with Dr. Licona in the roundtable and the constructive discussion that proceeds as a result. In our judgment, the tone of the roundtable discussion as well as the interaction in the essays is open, charitable, discerning, and honoring to the Lord Jesus Christ. May we always emulate such scholarship under his lordship!

Our Savior is risen indeed, and because of this, the Church of God lives under a distinctive moral order. It is the order of the Kingdom of God that is now, and not yet. As Oliver O'Donovan states,

> The resurrection carries with it the promise that "all shall be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). The raising of Christ is representative, not in the way that a symbol is representative, expressing a reality which has an independent and prior standing, but in the way that a national leader is representative when he brings about for the whole of his people whatever it is, war or peace, that he effects on their behalf. And so this central proclamation directs us back also to the message of the incarnation, by which we learn how, through a unique presence of God to his creation, the whole created order is taken up into the fate of this particular representative man at this

> particular moment of history, on whose fate turns the redemption of all. And it directs us forward to the end of history when that particular and representative fate is universalized in the resurrection of mankind from the dead. "Each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ [1 Cor. 15:23]."[55]

The Church, and thereby each of the Christian scholars who participate in this volume, looks to the risen Lord as the model and direction of its life, its work, its worship. As he has lived, so we live, as he is raised, in him we shall be raised as well. In him, by, him, and through him, all things will be new (Rev. 21:5).

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[55] Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* (second edition; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 15.

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The Minimal Facts Approach to the Resurrection of Jesus: The Role of Methodology as a Crucial Component in Establishing Historicity

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Introduction

In recent years, an increasing number of studies have begun to employ what I have termed the "Minimal Facts" approach to a critical study of the resurrection of Jesus. This methodology differs significantly from older apologetic tactics that usually argued from historically reliable or even inspired New Testament texts to Jesus' resurrection. The Minimal Facts outlook approaches the subject from a different angle.

In this essay, I will concentrate on the nature, distinctiveness, and value of the Minimal Facts methodological approach to the resurrection of Jesus. After a brief overview, I will interact directly with the use of such an approach by Michael Licona in his recent volume, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*,[1] including considering a few caveats for future study.

The Minimal Facts Method

For more than 35 years, I have argued that, surrounding the end of Jesus' life, there is a significant body of data that scholars of almost every religious and philosophical persuasion recognize as being historical. The historicity of each "fact" on the list is attested and supported by a variety of historical and other considerations. This motif began as the central tenet of my PhD dissertation.[2] This theme has continued in virtually all of my other dozens of publications on this subject since that time.[3] Interestingly, my second

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[1] Michael Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010). This work is a revised and updated version of Licona's PhD dissertation, as he says on p. 22. Additional page references to this volume will be listed in the text.

[2] Gary R. Habermas, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Rational Inquiry* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1976), especially Chapter 14.

[3] For a few examples, see Gary R. Habermas, *The Resurrection of Jesus: An Apologetic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980), 22-41; *Ancient Evidence for the Life of Jesus: Historical Records of His Death and Resurrection* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 124-134; with Antony Flew, *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? The Resurrection Debate*, (edited by Terry L. Miethe; San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 19-27, 42-46, 155-158; *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of*

debate on the resurrection of Jesus with philosophical atheist Antony Flew began with his general acceptance of my list of historical facts as a good starting point.[4]

From the outset of my studies, I argued that there were at least two major prerequisites for an occurrence to be designated as a Minimal Fact. Each event had to be established by more than adequate scholarly evidence, and usually by several critically-ascertained, independent lines of argumentation. Additionally, the vast majority of contemporary scholars in relevant fields had to acknowledge the historicity of the occurrence. Of the two criteria, I have always held that the first is by far the most crucial, especially since this initial requirement is the one that actually establishes the historicity of the event. Besides, the acclamation of scholarly opinion may be mistaken or it could change.[5]

Throughout this research, I have produced two lists of facts that have varied slightly in the numbering from publication to publication. The longer list was usually termed the "Known Historical Facts" and typically consisted of a dozen historical occurrences that more generally met the above criteria, but concerning which I was somewhat more lenient on their application. This would apply especially to the high percentages of scholarly near-unanimous agreement that I would require for the shorter list. From this longer listing, I would extrapolate a briefer line-up of from four to six events, termed the Minimal Facts.[6] This latter list is the stricter one that Licona is addressing and which is the focus of much of this essay.

I explain my use of the longer and shorter versions this way: since I have surveyed this material for decades, I can report that most contemporary critical scholars actually concede far more facts than those included even in the long list, let alone just the few Minimal Facts alone. But the problem is that, as the numbers of events expand, fewer scholars agree on each one. So there could be more give and take on "whose facts" ought to be utilized. Obviously then, longer lists would not fulfill especially the second strict criterion of the Minimal Facts method.

So I decided to be even more selective than the majority of critical scholars by shortening the list in order to get more scholars (and especially the skeptics) on board. This methodological move has the benefit of bypass-

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Christ (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1996), 152-170; "Resurrection Research from 1975 to the Present: What are Critical Scholars Saying?" *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, 3/2 (2005): 135-153.

[4] Gary R. Habermas and Antony G.N. Flew, *Resurrected? An Atheist and Theist Dialogue* (edited by John F. Ankerberg; Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 1-7. As the title indicates, Flew was still an atheist at the time this discussion occurred.

[5] Some examples of my early qualifications here include Habermas, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 33, 38; *Ancient Evidence*, 133-134; *Historical Jesus*, 169-170, 269.

[6] So as not to be confusing, my earliest publications sometimes designated this short list as the "Core Facts," but I settled soon afterward on the designation of "Minimal Facts."

ing the often protracted preliminary discussions of which data are permissible, by beginning with a "lowest common denominator" version of the facts. If I am correct in holding that this basis is still enough to settle the most pressing historical issues, then it is indeed a crucial contribution to the discussions. We will return below to some ramifications here.

Regarding my references to the "vast majority" or "virtually all" scholars who agree, is it possible to identify these phrases in more precise terms? In some contexts, I have identified these expressions more specifically. At least when referencing the most important historical occurrences, I frequently think in terms of a ninety-something percentile head-count. No doubt, this is one of the reasons why the concept has gained some attention.

But are figures like these based on something between a rough guess and an estimate? Academics quite often report things such as "most scholars hold that" or "the majority view here is that." Although similar phrases are found frequently in the literature, we may wonder how the knowledge of such conclusions were, or even could be, established. Those who specialize in the particular area are probably the best to consult on such matters. But even when the authors are well-respected, Licona still provides illustrations where different researchers produce estimated head counts that seem to be at odds with each other (pp. 278-9).

Still, the regularity of citing majority views may serve to illustrate how important we seem to think that such overviews of pertinent researchers might be, especially where such conclusions could be reasonably established.[7] Once again, the situation seems to be that there is an incessant search for a methodological starting point. Where are most scholars and *why*, precisely, are they there?

To answer this question in my case, what began as a rather modest attempt to update my resurrection bibliography grew by large increments until it developed into a full-blown attempt to catalog an overview of recent scholarship. The study dominated five straight years of my research time, as well as long intermittent stretches after that. Apparently, I was not very successful at drawing boundaries! I pursued an ongoing study that classified at least the major publications on these topics, continuing on through other representative sources. I counted a very wide spectrum of scholarly views, tracing the responses to about 140 sub-issues or questions related to the death, burial,

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[7] However, after referring specifically to my research on the resurrection (!), Dale Allison then avers that he is "incurably incurious" regarding scholarly surveys and the like, while acknowledging that there could still be some benefits to such exercise: Dale Allison, "Explaining the Resurrection: Conflicting Convictions," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, 3.2 (2005): 117-33 (125).

and resurrection of Jesus. My bibliography is presently at about 3400 sources and counting, published originally in French, German, or English.[8]

Initially I read and catalogued the majority of these publications, charting the representative authors, positions, topics, and so on, concentrating on both well-known and obscure writers alike, across the entire skeptical to liberal to conservative spectrum. As the number of sources grew, I moved more broadly into this research, trying to keep up with the current state of resurrection research.

I endeavored to be more than fair to all the positions. In fact, if anything, I erred in the direction of cataloguing the most radical positions, since this was the *only* classification where I included even those authors who did not have specialized scholarly credentials or peer-reviewed publications. It is this group, too, that often tends to doubt or deny that Jesus ever existed. Yet, given that I counted many sources in this category, this means that my study is skewed in the skeptical direction far more than if I had stayed strictly with my requirement of citing only those with scholarly credentials. Still, I included these positions quite liberally, even when the wide majority of mainline scholars, "liberals" included, rarely even footnoted this material.[9] Of course, this practice would also skew the numbers who proposed naturalistic theories of the resurrection, to which I particularly gravitated.[10]

The result of all these years of study is a private manuscript of more than 600 pages that simply does little more than line up the scholarly positions and details on these 140 key questions, without additional interaction or critique. Most of this material is unpublished, though I have released some of the results in essays that specifically attempt to provide overviews of some of these current academic positions.[11]

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[8] Not to be misunderstood here, as I have tried to explain elsewhere, I am making no claim to having done an exhaustive study of all these resurrection sources. My figures reflect a difference between representative sources that have been catalogued in all their significant, exhausting details, to those that were surveyed more briefly, to those that are simply listed in my ongoing bibliography.

[9] Strangely enough, in spite of "bending over backwards" to include radical writers who did not possess scholarly credentials, I have frequently received letters, emails, and comments over the years, complaining that I no doubt neglected many of the radical skeptics simply in order to make my numbers look better! Such responses seemed to border on a conspiracy theory of sorts. I confess that these often-emotional responses often made me want to drop the entire non-credentialed group from my study! It is not my fault that, if even after counting them, the research still did not favor these writers or their theories!

[10] Gary R. Habermas, "The Late Twentieth-Century Resurgence of Naturalistic Responses to Jesus' Resurrection," *Trinity Journal*, new series, 22 (2001): 179-96.

[11] Habermas, "Resurrection Research from 1975 to the Present," 135-53; "Experiences of the Risen Jesus: The Foundational Historical Issue in the Early Proclamation of the Resurrection," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 45/3 (2006): 288-97; "Mapping the Recent Trend toward the Bodily Resurrection Appearances of Jesus in Light of Other Prominent Critical Positions" in John Dominic Crossan and N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N.T.*

Michael Licona's Research

The heart of Michael Licona's astounding and excellent PhD dissertation of some 700 pages is an application of the Minimal Facts argument to several scholars and their research on the resurrection of Jesus, in order to ascertain how these authors fare against the known historical data. As reflected in this volume's subtitle, Licona began with great insight in some 200 pages on the study of historiography, including the relevant theory (chapter 1.2), methodology (chapter 1.3), and the ever-present question of history and miracles (chapter 2). To my knowledge, this is the best study in print on the overall application of historiography to the particular question of miracle-claims.[12]

Lengthy and detailed treatments follow, initially on the relevant historical sources for the existence of Jesus and his resurrection (chapter 3). From these sources, the historical bedrock data with regard to Jesus' fate is determined (chapter 4). The conclusions gleaned from this minimal factual material are then applied in the last portion of the volume (chapter 5), entitled "Weighing Hypotheses," along with an appendix (numbering a total of about 180 pages). Here the theses of five prominent critical scholars who propose naturalistic hypotheses regarding the resurrection are investigated (Geza Vermes, Michael Goulder, Gerd Lüdemann, John Dominic Crossan, and Pieter F. Craffert). Licona treats another recent thinker (Dale Allison) who takes a different angle in the Appendix.

Each of these scholars is evaluated to the extent to which they account for these minimal historical data, using criteria for the best explanation that were constructed earlier (pp. 467-68). It may well be the case that it will be this last section of Licona's work, in particular, that receives the lion's share of the scholarly attention, though only time will be able to determine this.[13]

Licona very kindly asserts that, in determining the historical bedrock, "To an extent, we will 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" (p. 302). Yet, throughout this masterful treatment, Licona unmistakably makes many of his own additions, including both "tweaks" along with other more detailed clarifications and delinea-

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Wright in Dialogue (edited by Robert B. Stewart; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 78-92, 199-204; "The Late Twentieth-Century Resurgence of Naturalistic Responses to Jesus' Resurrection," 179-96.

[12] For two other excellent research works on historiography as applied to the broader study of the historical Jesus, see: N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God Volume 1; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), Part II: 29-144; Ben F. Meyer, *Critical Realism and the New Testament* (Princeton Theological Monograph Series; San Jose: Pickwick, 1989).

[13] At least a strong "second place" designation may be allotted to the superb historiographical work mentioned above.

tions. Throughout the process, he is singularly rigorous in his pursuit of the final goal.

In keeping with the theme of this essay, Licona's treatment of these matters surrounding the establishing and explicating of the Minimal Facts will most occupy us here. Very early in his discussion of historiography, Licona addresses the absolutely vital matter of the scholar's horizons (chapter 1.2.2), the glasses that everyone wears when we view the world around us, and which can color severely and restrict our conclusions. And the more central the issues at hand, the more our prejudices and other views may rear their heads. To use Licona's very helpful example, whether or not the runner was safe at second base depends largely on whether our son is the one stealing the base or the one who tagged him (p. 38)!

Next, he provides six hints as to how we might manage and perhaps even minimize our horizons (chapter 1.2.3). One of these suggestions is to, "*Account for the relevant historical bedrock*."[14] Licona makes an assertion here that he repeats elsewhere, that, "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" (p. 56, cf. 277-278). This is a way to keep a constant check on the construction of our explanatory narratives (pp. 56-8). Similarly the last of the six hints is to detach ourselves from the bias that we discover (pp. 58-60).

Before moving on, I'll just note briefly that it seems apparent that even many professionals appear to be unaware that we all wear blinders of one sort or another, including political, cultural, moral, and/or religious glasses. Our supposed "neutrality" seems to arise a startling number of times during dialogues, lectureships, and other venues. So even to recognize, be aware of, and to understand these parameters is exceptionally essential. But by going the next mile in proposing several potential ways to actually manage, and perhaps even to take some steps toward minimizing our horizons, Licona has done us all a big favor.

Following these concerns in the very next section (1.2.4), Licona addresses the role played when we have a scholarly consensus on the relevant data. His negative examples include those who have opposed the wide majority of contemporary scholars across a broad spectrum of beliefs and still insist on denying that Jesus ever existed, that the Holocaust occurred, or that Muslims were largely responsible for the events of 9/11 (pp. 62-6).

One sub-point should be mentioned here briefly. When establishing a consensus of views, it is important to show that such a near-unanimity is "composed of scholars from all interested camps" (p. 64). We are not guessing about where researchers stand, and neither are we basing the case on a small, sectarian element within the academic community. Rather, the schol-

[14] This is Licona's emphasis (56).

ars should hold a variety of religious and philosophical positions (p. 65). Later, Licona reported that:

> 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 (p. 280).

Licona makes an insightful comment here regarding guarding against our own horizons. We must beware of our own imported biases, as well. When discussing the Minimal Facts, I have always purposely included notes at each juncture that list representative numbers of skeptics of various stripes who still affirm the data in question. This is a significant methodological procedure that serves more than one purpose. Among others, it assures the readers that they are not being asked to accept something that only conservatives believe, or that is only recognized by those who believe in the veracity of the New Testament text, and so on. After all, this sort of widespread recognition and approval is the very thing that our stated method requires.

Licona begins by listing my three chief Minimal Facts regarding Jesus' fate: (1) Jesus died due to the process of crucifixion. (2) Very soon afterwards, Jesus' disciples had experiences that they believed were appearances of the resurrected Jesus. (3) Just a few years later, Saul of Tarsus also experienced what he thought was a post-resurrection appearance of the risen Jesus (pp. 302-3).

Licona then conducts a lengthy investigation of these three facts (pp. 303-440), providing many details, including responses to a number of central issues. In the latter category, he includes very valuable treatments of the following "hot-button" questions: details both for and against Jesus having predicted his death as well as his vindication/resurrection (pp. 284-301); reasons for recognizing Jesus' death by crucifixion (pp. 303-18), which may grow increasingly important as Christian scholars interact with Muslim scholars; the motif of three days as the time of the initial resurrection appearances (pp. 324-9); the nature of the appearances (pp. 329-33); whether Paul was aware of the empty tomb traditions (pp. 333-9); the appearances as authority-legitimizing formulas (pp. 339-43); the importance of female eyewitness testimony (pp. 349-55); the fates of the apostles (pp. 366-71); a comparison of the Acts accounts of Paul's resurrection appearance to the apostles' own writings (pp. 382-400); and Paul's notion of the nature of the body in which Jesus appeared (pp. 400-40).

This last topic deserves special mention. Licona's research on any number of issues is excellent and especially insightful, to be sure. But he excels in none of these to a greater extent than when he treats Paul's notion of the resurrection body. Up until Licona's work, the related scholarly treatment that often receives the most attention, and with good reason, is Robert

Gundry's superb text *Sōma in Biblical Theology: With Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology*.[15] Though Gundry's treatment covers far more ground related to the larger question, it is also especially good when treating "The *sōma* in death and resurrection."[16] His conclusions come substantially close to Licona's on several key occasions. But in my opinion, Licona's substantially longer analysis of Paul's notion of the nature of the resurrection body has not been bettered.

What, then, is the nature of the actual historical bedrock at which Licona arrives during his investigation? Does he affirm my initial three historical facts surrounding Jesus' fate, with which he begins? Licona indeed concludes that these three facts deserve the designation of historical bedrock, having many reasons each in their favor without viable refutations and being accepted as historical by the vast majority of critical scholars, across a wide spectrum of theological positions (pp. 463-464, p. 617).

He also investigates two other facts as to whether they similarly deserve the designation of bedrock events: the conversion of James, the skeptical brother of Jesus, due to what he also thought was a special resurrection appearance of Jesus to him in 1 Cor. 15:7 (pp. 440-61), and the empty tomb (pp. 461-63). Licona finds significant evidence to conclude that James and his brothers were skeptics during Jesus' ministry and even taunted him, and were apparently absent at the crucifixion. However, they were present in the "upper room" a short time after the resurrection, at least some of them became Christian believers, and James became a prominent apostle and the leader of the Jerusalem church. Licona agrees with the majority scholarly view that James' conversion was most likely due to his experience with the risen Jesus (pp. 460-1). Further, concerning the scholarly popularity of such elements, "There is significant heterogeneity within this group that includes atheists, agnostics, cynics, revisionists, moderates and conservatives" (p. 461).

Yet, while the majority scholarly view is clear at these points, Licona judges that, "the number who comment on the material is small." In other words, while there a great deal of agreement among the wide spectrum of scholars who have weighed in, the total numbers who have commented on these issues still remains too few. For this reason, he is "reluctant to include the appearance to James in the historical bedrock" (p. 461).

Concerning the empty tomb, Licona actually says comparatively little. He cites my studies indicating that between two-thirds and three-quarters of the critical scholars who comment on this matter favor the tomb being empty for other than natural reasons. Further, Licona also mentions that my research specifies 23 reasons that favor the historicity of the empty tomb along

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[15] First published by Cambridge University Press in 1976, this volume was later released by Zondervan's Academic Books in 1987.

[16] This is the title of Chapter 13 (159-83).

with 14 reasons against it, as found in the scholarly literature (pp. 461-2). But having said this, it becomes immediately obvious that even the pretty strong scholarly agreement in favor of this event does not approach the much higher, nearly unanimous requirement in order to be considered as a Minimal Fact. Accordingly and not surprisingly, Licona rejects the empty tomb as part of the historical bedrock (pp. 462-3).

In conclusion, Licona counts only three historical facts as part of the historical bedrock: Jesus' death by crucifixion, the disciples' experiences that they believed to be appearances of the risen Jesus, and Paul's experience that convinced him similarly (p. 468). As Licona states, "These facts form the historical bedrock, facts past doubting, on which all hypotheses should be built" (p. 617).

But Licona also thinks that there are four additional facts which, while they are not part of the historical bedrock, are still close enough that they should be considered as "second-order facts." Two of these have just been mentioned: the conversion of James, the brother of Jesus, which was probably due to an experience that he also considered as a resurrection appearance of Jesus, and, slightly less likely, the empty tomb. The other two second-order facts include Jesus' predictions of his violent, imminent death as well as his resurrection afterwards, and that the earliest apostles held that Jesus appeared in a bodily form, both also mentioned briefly above (pp. 468-9).

Still, it should be noted carefully that Licona proposes that only the three bedrock historical facts be considered when weighing the critical hypotheses. The other four "second-order facts" would only be utilized in cases where "no clear winner emerges" among two or more competing views. This leads directly to his examination of the five naturalistic hypotheses that occupy the remainder of the book (p. 469).

Licona also addresses potential objections to the Minimal Facts argument. One is particularly intriguing and deserves mention: could we, in a sense, be "doctoring" the bedrock historical facts by, perhaps even subconsciously, not including some events which could also meet our criteria and be in our list, because they might upset our approach, or because these facts might somehow militate against our own preferred view? But as Licona correctly notes, many critical scholars might be highly motivated to find precisely such additional data, "and yet do not identify other facts for which a nearly unanimous majority approval exists" (p. 280).

Why is this so? It is simply the case that no other facts which would fulfill our criteria but somehow oppose the overall conclusion of historicity appear to be on offer. Think of it this way: Licona is being very strict when James' experience does not make the grade, even though it *is* held virtually unanimously among scholars, and for several good reasons, but it is still relegated to the second tier of data simply because not enough scholars address the subject!

Licona concludes with a lengthy discussion (chapter 5) where he works carefully through each of the critical hypotheses and then compares them to the historical case favoring the resurrection. In the end, he determines that Jesus having risen from the dead is a far superior historical thesis than the agnostic or natural suggestions that he also investigated (pp. 606-10, including chart). This treatment is one of the many places where countless gems are to be found throughout.

For example, I would like to single out very briefly one of Licona's chief responses to a major skeptical comeback. Perhaps more commonly than any other retort, we often hear that, since the resurrection thesis requires a supernatural cause, it is thus a lesser view than natural hypotheses, or a variation of a similar rejoinder. As a result, any natural response is superior.

Among other comments, Licona replies that this is one reason why, in this volume, so much attention was focused on bracketing our worldviews when participating in particular historical studies (p. 602). Metaphysical naturalism is "no less a philosophical construct than supernaturalism and theism" (p. 604). Basically, when previous conceptions of reality are thus bracketed, the resurrection thesis is superior (p. 602-5). There is much more to be said here than I have singled out, to be sure, but it is still helpful to indicate the general direction of Licona's response on this particular issue.

A Few Caveats

I will now venture a few additional comments. Licona and I are very close in our configurations. Rather incredibly, we have probably discussed research on the resurrection of Jesus for literally thousands of hours! Yet, as among many great friends, we do have some slight variations from one another. However, on each of the following points, I am raising methodological questions for myself at least as much as I am proposing them regarding Licona's approach, which should be obvious as we move through them. I am still thinking out loud through each of these areas.

To name a few caveats of one sort or another, first, when counting the Minimal Facts over the years, I began by almost always conflating the disciples' experiences along with the *early date* at which these experiences were proclaimed. But nearly from the very beginning of my resurrection studies, I also began treating the time factor separately, demarcating the incredibly early period to which the proclamation of the resurrection message can be traced.[17] Then more recently, I added the time element as an additional consideration, counting it as a separate Minimal Fact.[18]

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[17] Habermas, *Ancient Evidence*, 124-7. Ever since this volume first appeared in 1984, I have devoted a chapter section to this topic.

[18] Gary R. Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 28, cf. 17-19; "Experiences of the Risen Jesus," 289-90.

My reasons for this move were straightforward: there was no question that there were many well-established data in favor of this very early date, not the least of which are drawn from the famous and much-studied text in 1 Cor. 15:3-8. Further, that the disciples had post-crucifixion experiences does not by itself insure that these were proclaimed at an early date. It could of course have been the case that the declaration of these experiences did not occur or at least could not be established for decades afterwards. So I concluded that these elements should not be conflated, as I had done for years. Additionally, very few conclusions are better-accepted by scholars across a very wide and diverse academic spectrum.

Second, a few times I also separated the notion that the proclamation of the resurrection was the *central* Christian proclamation, and also a Minimal Fact.[19] After all, the resurrection could have been proclaimed by the early Christians as one of many important doctrines, or even as a lesser add-on to more crucial messages, but this was not the case. As such, it was a helpful counter to several natural hypotheses. And although I was aware of a few critical scholars who questioned the centrality of the resurrection message, it is still very widely acknowledged, even by quite skeptical researchers. Yet, I also recognized that the case here was not quite as strong as that for the early date of the resurrection teaching.

Third, I go back and forth on whether to count the testimony of James the brother of Jesus among the Minimal Facts. I have included it more than once as a Minimal Fact,[20] and so do Licona and I in our co-authored volume on the resurrection.[21] There are several arguments in favor of accepting it, too, as both of us have pointed out, and few dissenters among critical scholars. It is true that fewer scholars address this event than with the other three historical facts in the list, but this is not the fault of the report; it simply seems to get less attention, perhaps because it occupies the fewest texts in the New Testament. Still, I will not belabor this point. As I say, I fluctuate on this one.

Lastly, I want to make a brief comment about the current research on the empty tomb. Licona's comments might be misunderstood as saying that, in deciding against including the empty tomb among the Minimal Facts (pp. 461-4, p. 618), that he somehow differs from my own assessment on this. But I have never counted the empty tomb as a Minimal Fact; it is very obvi-

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[19] Gary R. Habermas and J.P. Moreland, *Immortality: The Other Side of Death* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 70; Habermas and Moreland, *Beyond Death: Exploring the Evidence for Immortality* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998), 133-5; Gary R. Habermas, "Evidential Apologetics," in *Five Views on Apologetics* (ed. Steven B. Cowan Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 115.

[20] Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope*, 28; "Evidential Apologetics," 115.

[21] Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2004), 67-9.

ous that it does not enjoy the near-unanimity of scholarship. From the very beginning of my research, I have been very clear about this.[22] Of course, Licona knows this,[23] so the comment is not being directed to him, but rather is made for the sake of clarification.

I mention these caveats for more than one reason. There are certain benefits if the list of Minimal Facts were legitimately lengthened, though I will not pursue that at present. Of course, if that were to occur, it still would have to be because the criteria were fulfilled strictly. Whether that can and should be done in these cases will have to be decided elsewhere, however.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have attempted to provide some elucidation of the Minimal Facts approach as a methodology for studying the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus. This included unpacking several of the relevant aspects, as well as interacting with Michael Licona's lengthy and rewarding treatment of this approach. His volume is truly a treat to read and study, incorporating so many excellent clarifications. I ended with the consideration of a few caveats that may be useful for future study.

I would like to make one last observation in closing. This entire exercise is about constructing a viable methodology that is capable of establishing the historicity of the resurrection even when utilizing the particular methods, tools, and conclusions of the critical community of scholars. Many times, legitimate and worthwhile insights have been added to our own studies as a result. Chiefly, these can indicate that, even by skeptical approaches, the resurrection can be established historically.

But it should always be remembered that this is an apologetic strategy. Thus, it is not a prescription for how a given text should be approached in the original languages and translated, or how a systematic theology is developed, or how a sermon is written. So it should never be concluded that the use of such methods in an apologetic context indicate a lack of trust in Scripture as a whole, or, say, the Gospels in particular. Nor should it cause others to question or doubt their beliefs. Thus, it should only be understood and utilized in its proper context.

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[22] For examples, see *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 25; *Ancient Evidence for the Life of Jesus*, 127; with Antony Flew, *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?*, 19; *The Historical Jesus*, 158.

[23] For example, we write, "The empty tomb of Jesus does not meet our two criteria of being a 'minimal fact' because it is not accepted by nearly every scholar who studies the subject" (Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 69-70).

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Inference, Method, and History

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Introduction

The publication of Mike Licona's book *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* provides a welcome opportunity for reflection on the goals and methods of historical inquiry and the implications of various methodological commitments for the study of the historical Jesus and the resurrection. Indeed, the sheer number of interesting and important topics that Licona has drawn together makes it impossible to discuss more than a small fraction of the book in a single article. I will therefore bypass with little or no comment many sections that are as fascinating as they are valuable, such as the magisterial and convincing discussion of Paul's conception of the resurrection body that spans pp. 400-437, and focus on a cluster of issues involving inference, method, and the New Testament evidence.

History and Truth

Early in the book, Licona endorses the definition of "history" as "past events that are the object of study" (p. 30), and he makes it clear that the goal of history, as far as he is concerned, is *truth*— getting it right about those past events. Neither the definition nor the goal is uncontested, and Licona takes the reader through a substantial selection of widely diverging opinions on bias and the historian's horizon, the role (and paucity) of consensus among historians, the prospects for the possibility of historical objectivity, and the burden of proof.

The cacophany of conflicting voices is deafening; and were it not for their influence, some of those voices might safely be ignored. In an irenic moment, Licona acquiesces in the idea that the postmodern critique has been valuable for the discipline of history (p. 87). This is faint praise, but I would begrudge them even this much. Scholars of the stature of J. B. Lightfoot do not need the nattering of would-be literary critics infected with bad epistemology to teach them to be judicious. We may all lament the loss of a large part of a generation who, had they received sound training, might have produced work of genuine intellectual merit. But they did not, and except as

textbook examples of ἐνέργειαν πλάνης[1] they deserve all the neglect we can give them.

Even among the saner participants in the discussion, however, there are significant points of disagreement among the scholars Licona cites. Who, if anyone, bears the burden of proof in historical discussions? Should historians approach ancient texts with an attitude of acceptance, skepticism, or neutrality? How should a reasonable historian address reported miracles? Is there a role for the application of mathematical probability in historical reasoning? And what level of confidence should a reasonable, well-informed historian have that the Gospels give us a substantially trustworthy account of the events surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection?

The Burden of Proof and Methodological Neutrality

After canvassing a wide range of opinions on the topic of the proper approach to the study of the historical Jesus and the resurrection, Licona settles on a viewpoint which he christens "methodological neutrality." The core of this idea is that the one making the claim bears the burden of proof (p. 96). Someone who asserts that Jesus rose bodily from the dead bears the burden of proof for his claim; someone who asserts that the disciples were victims of hallucinations bears the burden of proof for his claim; and all positive assertions, from all quarters, are "assumed to be false until sufficient evidence is provided to the contrary" (p. 97).

There is something very attractive about the idea of methodological neutrality. We all want to avoid excessive optimism or pessimism as we come to the examination of any piece of evidence, whatever the issue. But I am not sure that this methodological position, thus described, is as useful as Licona seems to think. It is rare indeed that we come to any interesting inquiry in the entire absence of relevant information, and that information often conditions how we should accept assertions from different quarters. In some cases, preliminary agnosticism is quite unreasonable—I should wish, for example, that everyone who possesses a modest amount of information would approach Benny Hinn's antics and assertions with a healthy dose of skepticism. And sometimes the mere fact that someone of ordinary credibility has made a claim suffices to discharge whatever burden of proof there might be. If my wife tells me that there are apples in the refrigerator, I will not approach the matter with the assumption that her claim is false until I check for myself. If a perfect stranger tells me that there has just been a serious accident on the nearby interstate, then in the absence of further evidence, I will probably accept his assertion. If Josephus informs me that Herod the Great had his fa-

[1] [Editor: "A deluding influence" from the Greek; see 2 Thess. 2:11].

vorite wife murdered, I will accept his testimony. Equal opportunity skepticism, if employed without a view to what we already know, is unreasonable.

The difficulty, of course, is that everyone seems to come to the study of the resurrection with a significant set of assumptions in place. It is difficult to see how it could be otherwise. Theist? Atheist? Agnostic but open to the possibility of something beyond naturalism? One's worldview will inevitably affect the assessment of the evidence. And it should. Does this leave us at an impasse?

Not necessarily, for three reasons. First, relevance is a two-way street, and the evidence should also impact one's worldview—a point to which I will return when considering the relevance of Bayesian methods to historical studies. Second, not all assumptions are equally reasonable. However much it may offend disciplinary pride, this is one place where philosophers and historians need one another. Dogmatic naturalism requires, for a full exposure of its bankruptcy, a philosophically informed critique. And philosophy, uninformed by history, is unable to advance a step in any direction in the evaluation of the empirical claims that lie at the heart of Christianity. Third, in our age of increasing specialization, we cannot take it for granted that everyone who comes to the discussion is well informed even about the facts that are considered uncontroversial by experts in their respective areas of specialization. The problem is not simply one of limited information; there is a depressing amount of positive disinformation disseminated by parties whose talent for propaganda exceeds their love of truth. False facts, as Darwin noted long ago, are highly injurious, for they often endure long.

Hume on Miracles

Hume's famous attack on the credibility of miracle reports has exerted a powerful effect on biblical studies from at least the time of Strauss's *Leben Jesu* (1835) onward. Licona deals with the challenge in a straightforward manner, and though I think the response could be strengthened by consideration of the rejoinders offered by Hume's contemporaries like William Adams, John Leland, George Campbell, and John Douglas and sharpened by reflection on some of the contemporary analyses of Hume, I find myself in substantial agreement with Licona's response to Hume. But I cannot say as much for some of those he quotes. Consider J. D. G. Dunn's comment, which Licona quotes (on p. 138), and which I will give a little more fully than he does:

> As David Hume had earlier pointed out, it is more probable that the account of a miracle is an untrue account than that the miracle recounted

> actually took place. That was precisely why the claim to miracle became more problem than proof.[2]

And Dunn adds in a footnote:

> One need only consider the typical reaction by most today, including most Christians, to claims of miraculous healings by 'televangelists' or miraculous phenomena linked to statues of the Virgin Mary or of Hindu gods, to see the force of Hume's argument.[3]

This is partly right and partly wrong. The right part is that in the absence of more particular evidence, claims of miraculous intervention should be held to a higher standard than claims about ordinary events; this follows, not because they are miraculous, but because—at least for most of us—they are rarer than ordinary events. But what is wrong is that Dunn leaves out of sight the question of the specific nature of the testimonial evidence. It may well be the case that the testimony of some randomly selected individual who has, so far as we know, nothing to lose by making up a tall tale will fabricate a miracle story. But not all testimony fits this description. Human nature, like physical nature, has its laws and its limitations. Even Voltaire granted that, although the majority of our beliefs are at most only probable, things admitted as true by those most clearly interested to deny them may form an exception.[4]

This concession goes to the heart of the problem with Troeltsch's "principle of analogy." Granting for the sake of the argument that visible miracles are unknown today,[5] it follows that a reported miracle in an ancient text is an event that bears no analogy to our time. But the principle cuts both ways. It is equally unknown in our day for a group of people in a hostile environment voluntarily to endure a lifetime of labors, dangers, and sufferings, and to submit to new rules of conduct, in attestation of a claim they must know full well to be false, without conceiving themselves to be deriving any earthly benefit from the pretense. The evidence of Christianity presents the Troeltschian with a dilemma: something disanalogous to the present has happened no matter which way he turns. The question, as the Oxford logician Richard Whately observed in a similar context, is not whether there are difficulties in accepting the resurrection, but whether the difficulties on the side of denying it are even greater.[6]

In *The Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection*, first published in 1728, Thomas Sherlock anticipates Hume by giving his protagonist the opportunity

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[2] James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) , 103-104.

[3] Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 104 note 10.

[4] Voltaire, *Oeuvres completes de Voltaire* (volume 5 ; Paris, 1869), 609.

[5] But see: Craig Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts* (2 volumes; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

[6] Richard Whately, *Elements of Logic* (9th edition; London: Longmans, Green, Reader, & Dyer, 1870), 144-45.

to address the charge that the resurrection is, by its very nature, beyond the reach of evidence. The response is intriguing:

> Suppose a man should tell you that he was come from the dead, you would be apt to suspect his evidence. But what would you suspect? That he was not alive when you heard him, saw him, felt him, and conversed with him? You could not suspect this, without giving up all your senses, and acting in this case as you act in no other. Here then you would question whether the man had ever been dead. But would you say, that it is incapable of being made plain by human testimony that this or that man died a year ago? It cannot be said. Evidence in this case is admitted in all courts perpetually.
>
> Consider it the other way. Suppose you saw a man publicly executed, his body afterwards wounded by the executioner, and carried and laid in the grave; that after this you should be told that the man was come to life again; what would you suspect in this case? Not that the man had never been dead, for that you saw yourself; but you would suspect whether he was now alive. But would you say this case excluded all human testimony, and that men could not possible discern whether one with whom they conversed familiarly was alive or no? On what ground could you say this? A man rising from the grave is an object of sense, and can give the same evidence of his being alive, as any other man in the world can give. So that a resurrection considered only as a fact to be proved by evidence, is a plain case; it requires no greater ability in the witnesses, than that they be able to distinguish between a man dead and a man alive, a point in which I believe every man living thinks himself a judge.
>
> I do allow that this case, and others of like nature, require more evidence to give them credit than ordinary cases do. You may therefore require more evidence in these than in other cases; but it is absurd to say that such cases admit no evidence, when the things in question are quite manifestly objects of sense.[7]

I submit that Sherlock is right. A resurrection from the dead is an event out of the ordinary course of nature, and *in the absence of more specific information*, we should all be somewhat doubtful about it—more doubtful than about the assertion that the speaker is mistaken or lying. That is the grain of truth at the heart of Hume's rhetorical pearl. But it is quite possible for the evidence of our senses to overcome even a very substantial antecedent burden of proof. Some atheists are wont to display the strength of their conviction by suggesting that anyone who thinks he has viewed a miracle should turn himself in for psychiatric treatment. A good dose of Sherlock should clear that up.

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[7] Thomas Sherlock, *The Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection* (Boston: John Eliot, 1809 [1728]), 64-5.

Here is one point where I think an appreciation of Bayesian methods would strengthen Licona's case. But since he is skeptical about those methods, the subject requires some exploration in its own right.

Bayesian Probability and Historical Reasoning

Historians are generally wary of the introduction of probabilistic methods into their discipline, and the ham-handed forays of well-intentioned mathematicians and philosophers into their discipline gives them some reason for apprehension. Licona quotes several skeptical statements on the applicability of probability to history, none of them positive, and I am conscious that this consensus places me at a disadvantage as I attempt to make the case, not for every such application that has ever been made (who would want to do that?), but for at least the relevance of probabilistic methods to historical study.

Historians and New Testament scholars should be warned that in discussing this issue they are wandering into a war zone where two entrenched schools of thought—the Bayesians and the Frequentists—are constantly lobbing rhetorical grenades at one another. They should therefore take sweeping dismissive statements on both sides with an appropriate ration of salt.

Licona rightly points out that the problem of acquiring prior probabilities is a major issue for Bayesian approaches to uncertain inference, and he repeatedly describes them as "inscrutable." However, the situation is not so bleak as Licona seems to think. Four points deserve consideration here. First, under certain circumstances, symmetries in our data underwrite symmetrical epistemic attitudes toward hypotheses. If you know that one red, one green, and one blue marble have been drawn (with replacement each time) from a bag of marbles, and you know nothing else, then it would seem reasonable that you should take the same epistemic attitude toward the prediction of a red marble on the next draw as toward the prediction of a blue or a green one. The difficulties arise in finding and exploiting such symmetries in much more complex sets of data. But I am not persuaded that the Bayesian project is, as Bartholomew categorically states, "essentially subjective" (p. 117). There are more forms of Bayesianism than the subjectivism of de Finetti and Jeffrey.[8]

Second, there is no obvious reason why Bayesian conditionalization on former probability distributions must be seen as the only reasonable method of obtaining initial probabilities. It is difficult, as Licona notes (p. 116), to arrive at a reasonable probability for the existence of God in the absence of *all* evidence whatsoever. But if there is a reasonable stance to take on the probability of God's existence on the basis of some body of evidence—say, as an explanation for the origin of the universe, the origin of life, the origin of

[8] See Timothy McGrew, "Toward a Rational Reconstruction of Design Inferences," *Philosophia Christi* 7 (2005): 253-98 (288).

embodied consciousness, and the existence of objective moral values—then there is no obvious reason that one may not *start there* in considering the impact of further evidence. Bayesian methods can be put to work whenever the relevant probabilities are defined; they do not require that those probabilities have been arrived at themselves by conditionalization, and so on back to some Ur-distribution in which all propositions take well-defined values relative to tautological background information. If something other than bare priors and conditionalization is needed to set the probabilistic machinery in motion, so be it.

And this consideration touches on Licona's worry that a prior probability for the resurrection may be inscrutable. As William Paley pointed out over two centuries ago, the probability of a visible miracle may be reasonably estimated (at least for a lower bound) by the joint probability of two claims: that there is a God who has intended a future state of existence for his creation, and that he should desire to acquaint them with it in some fashion that could not reasonably be dismissed as the operation of nature or the result of mere human sagacity. For there is no other way for God to stamp his endorsement on a communication than for him to sign it with the one act that distinguishes him from all of his creation, the act of sovereignty.

Some recent writers have criticized this view of the miraculous. On pp. 143-44, Licona quotes N. T. Wright in a statement that combines some sound insights with an unfortunate lapse:

> The natural/supernatural distinction itself, and the near equation of "supernatural" with "superstition," are scarecrows that Enlightenment thought has erected in its fields to frighten away anyone following the historical argument wherever it leads. It is high time the birds learned to take no notice.[9]

I applaud Wright's insistence on following the argument wherever it leads, and his comment about the term "superstition" strikes the center of the mark. But the distinction between the natural and the supernatural cannot be so easily dismissed; it is the foundation of Nicodemus's recognition that no man could do the works that Jesus did unless God was with him (John 3:2). I hesitate to suggest that Wright has been influenced by postmodernism here, but the wholesale castigation of the Enlightenment has a depressingly familiar sound. It is not a safe rule of inference to deny something merely because it is the sort of thing that an Enlightenment thinker would say.

Third, there is more to Bayesian reasoning than a calculation of a posterior probability from priors and likelihoods. When prior probabilities are difficult to obtain, we may focus on the likelihoods, asking, in effect, "How strongly should we expect these data, supposing that the hypothesis were true; and how strongly should we expect them, supposing that it were false?" It is

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[9] N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 707

true that we cannot, from the ratio of these two items alone, calculate a posterior probability. But if the ratio favors the hypothesis heavily, as it sometimes does, that fact may serve to shift the burden of proof. The mounting weight of favorable evidence can lay a burden on the doubter to explain just why and how long we should remain agnostic. This is the approach taken in some recent work on ramified natural theology.[10]

Fourth, a probabilistic analysis affords the most perspicuous way of illustrating the flaws in Hume's reasoning. Recent work on the probabilistic analysis of testimony and Hume's argument has clarified the assumptions behind the use of testimony and illuminated the flaws in Hume's reasoning in a way that even the best of the earlier work could not.[11] That is not to say that none of the points can be stated informally; Licona sometimes does so himself (see p. 141, note 24, for example). But the mathematical treatment brings a cutting edge to the analysis that permits the decisive resolution of problems that have baffled even good thinkers when they are merely stated verbally.

To take just one example, J. L. Mackie argues that

> the intrinsic improbability of a genuine miracle, as defined above, is very great, and one or other of the alternative explanations in our fork will always be much more likely—that is, either that the alleged event is not miraculous, or that it did not occur, that the testimony is faulty in some way.
>
> This entails that it is pretty well impossible that reported miracles should provide a worthwhile argument for theism addressed to those who are initially inclined to atheism or even to agnosticism. . . . Not only are such reports unable to carry any rational conviction on their own, but also they are unable even to contribute independently to the kind of accumulation or battery of arguments referred to in the Introduction.[12]

Pace tanti viri,[13] Mackie is mistaken here; the formal analyses by Rodney Holder and John Earman, following the pioneering work of Charles Babbage, have decisively refuted this claim. The accumulation of a sufficient number of independent testimonies, each with a likelihood ratio that exceeds unity by at

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[10] See Timothy McGrew and Lydia McGrew, "The Argument from Miracles," in William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 593-662.

[11] Rodney Holder, "Hume on Miracles: Bayesian Interpretation, Multiple Testimony, and the Existence of God," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 49 (1998): 49-65.

John Earman, *Hume's Abject Failure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Timothy McGrew and Lydia McGrew, "The Reliability of Witnesses and Testimony to the Miraculous," in Jake Chandler and Victoria Harrison (eds.), *Probability in the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 46-63; Timothy McGrew, "Miracles," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta, ed., URL = http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/miracles/.

[12] J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 27.

[13] [Editor: "With due respect to him" from the Latin].

least some given finite amount, however small, will swamp *any* finite antecedent presumption against an event. It follows that it is simply incorrect to say, as a number of well-respected Christian scholars[14] have said, that one *must* believe in the existence of God before reported miracles can play *any* role in one's evidence for the existence of God.

Historical Bedrock and the Historical Reliability of the Gospels

The heart of Licona's project is the examination of the resurrection in the light of certain pieces of data that he calls "the historical bedrock." The concept is an important one for his project, and he gives us several different descriptions of it. The bedrock consists of "historical facts that are regarded as virtually indisputable" (p. 278); they are "so strongly evidenced that they are virtually indisputable," and "the historian can fairly regard them as historical facts" (p. 56); and "the majority of scholars regard them as historical facts."

I must confess here my profound unease with any method of proceeding that leaves the data hostage to the current consensus in biblical studies. In part, this unease arises from an historical induction. Few scholars now remember the jubilant confidence with which the results of German scholarship were received by the more progressive Victorians, so it may be of some value to recall the breezy summary of John Fiske:

> The times and places at which our three synoptic gospels were written have been, through the labours of the Tübingen critics, determined almost to a certainty. Of the three, "Mark" is unquestionably the latest; with the exception of about twenty verses, it is entirely made up from "Matthew" and "Luke," the diverse Petrine and Pauline tendencies of which it strives to neutralize in conformity to the conciliatory disposition of the Church at Rome, at the epoch at which this gospel was written, about A.D. 130.[15]

Alas for the assured results of "criticism"! Today few scholars even of the more liberal stripe would accept either the second century date or the thesis about the direction of dependency between Matthew and Mark. Yet on the whole, members of the guild are still prone to pass over the community's more embarrassing blunders (such as falling for Morton Smith's forgery of

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[14] Norman Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 95-6, 147; R.C.Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 146-7, 276; Willard, Dallas, "Language, Being, God, and the Three Stages of Theistic Evidence," in J. P. Moreland and Kai Nielsen (eds.), *Does God Exist?* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 197-217, 213-15.

[15] John Fiske, *The Unseen World and Other* Essays (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1904), 108.

Secret Mark)[16] and to exempt certainly currently fashionable ideas (such as Q, with or without redactional layers) from dispassionate scrutiny. It is very hard for someone immersed in the field to resist the suggestion that this time, it's different.

I do not wish for a moment to suggest that it is impossible to arrive at historical truth on the basis of evidence; I believe, in fact, that the goal is often achievable in New Testament studies. My quarrel is not with the evidence but with certain elements in the guild. And the point that I wish to stress is that the consensus of the scholarly community is at best a contingent marker for the weight of the evidence. It should never be substituted for the evidence itself.

Licona is well aware of the spotty track record of an appeal to the majority, and he says explicitly that "the majority of scholars have been mistaken on numerous occasions in the past" (p. 57). However, the individual scholar decides which facts belong in the bedrock not only by looking at the current consensus but also by judging that the consensus itself is well founded: these are the facts that *ought* to be taken for granted in any historical reconstruction. And here we encounter a problem: what should the responsible scholar do when, in his best judgment, there are facts that the community *ought* to take for granted but does not? Should he include those (with appropriate argumentation on their behalf) among the facts he seeks to explain? Or should he take the more minimal approach, arguing only from the facts that are both well supported and (nearly) universally accepted by the current scholarly community?

Licona chooses the latter path. The advantage of working only with such "minimal facts" is obvious: it reduces one's exposure to scholarly disagreement, as little or nothing in one's premises will arouse the skepticism of one's peers. But the tradeoff for this advantage is that one's basis is not so rich as it might have been and perhaps should be. This drawback of a minimalist method shows up in Licona's unfortunate concession that "whether the resurrection narratives in the canonical Gospels reflect independent apostolic tradition" is merely "*possible*" (p. 208). I agree with him that the letters of Paul contain valuable material that may fairly be regarded as almost certainly reflecting apostolic tradition. And there is certainly room for a book, like this one, that explores the question of how much one can legitimately infer regarding the resurrection without making use of the Gospels. But that case can be, I think, materially strengthened by the use of the resurrection narratives, which are after all our most detailed sources for the event.

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[16] See: Morton Smith, *The Secret Gospel: The Discovery and Interpretation of the Secret Gospel According to Mark* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973); *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973); see also Stephen C. Carlson, *The Gospel Hoax: Morton Smith's Invention of Secret Mark* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005).

I suspect that Licona's fairly negative rating of the resurrection narratives in the Gospels reflects not so much his personal judgment regarding their historical value as his awareness of the magnitude of the task that confronts anyone who wants to answer, in detail, the wide array of arguments against the substantial historicity of the resurrection narratives. *That* project could fill many substantial volumes, and this one is already long enough. But if this was his reason for trying to see how much could be done without making use of those narratives, then I wish that he had indicated his intentions in some other, less deprecatory fashion.

Another reason for my unease regarding the current consensus arises from considerations of methodology. I have more to say on this subject than can reasonably be said in one short essay, so I will confine myself to illustrating two types of bad methodology with which much recent New Testament scholarship is infected. First, the argument from silence, which is used so widely in negative criticism, is deeply problematic. Instances in the Gospels are thick on the ground. Did Herod the Great murder some Jewish male children in Bethlehem as we read in Matthew 2? If so, why is the event not mentioned by any other evangelist or by Josephus? Did Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead as reported in John 11? If so, how could the other evangelists omit the event? And John himself omits many things found in the Synoptics—if they had really happened, how could he have failed to mention them? Such questions are asked rhetorically. The unspoken inference is usually one of two kinds: first, that if the events had actually occurred, we would find corroborating reports of them, and since we do not, the events did not occur; or second, that if the author really knew whereof he spoke, he would have mentioned such events, and since he does not mention them, he does not have firsthand knowledge.

Such arguments are generally extremely weak, and I think they would be made less frequently in biblical studies if scholars took more notice of the nonsense they would make of secular history. Licona mentions one case: Josephus does not mention Claudius's expulsion of the Jews from Rome in or around AD 49, an event mentioned in passing in Acts 18:2 and explained, albeit briefly and unsatisfactorily, by Suetonius (*Life of Claudius* 25.4). Such cases can be multiplied many times over; I will simply list a dozen striking illustrations here. The principal historians of ancient Greece, Herodotus and Thucydides, make no mention of Rome or the Romans, nor do any of their contemporaries whose writings have survived—a curious omission noted by Josephus in his work *Against Apion* 1.12. Thucydides' *History* makes no mention of Socrates, whom we would now be inclined to view as one of the most important and interesting characters in Athens in the twenty years covered in that work. The works of Thucydides themselves go unmentioned in the surviving works of Aristotle and Xenophon; we must, in fact, wait two and a half centuries, until Polybius, to find a historian who takes notice of Thucydides. In two long letters to the historian Tacitus, Pliny the Younger gives a

detailed account of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius—yet strange to relate, the governor of Bithynia never mentions the destruction either of the wealthy town of Herculaneum or of the more heavily populated Pompeii. Hadrian's secretary Suetonius also discusses the eruption of Vesuvius; but he, too, neglects to tell of the destruction of these towns. They are first named about a century after Pliny by Dio Cassius (*Roman History* 66), who not only could not have been an eyewitness but in all probability never spoke to one. Yet modern archaeology places their destruction beyond doubt. Eusebius wrote an official biography of Constantine that makes no mention of the death of his son Crispus or his wife Fausta. Marco Polo traveled across China in the late 13th century and wrote a massive travelogue, but he never mentions the Great Wall of China. Grafton's *Chronicles*, comprising the reign of King John, make no mention of *Magna Carta*. The archives at Barcelona reportedly contain no firsthand report of Christopher Columbus's return from his circumnavigation of the globe. Francis Bacon and William Shakespeare were nearly exact contemporaries, each with a large literary output, yet neither mentions the other. Similarly, John Milton and Jeremy Taylor fail to take notice of each other. Ulysses Grant published two volumes of his memoirs of the Civil War,[17] yet he never mentions the Emancipation Proclamation.

Such examples suggest that the possible causes for an author's omitting something that we now find interesting are more varied and more common than the causes for including something. An honest author will include an account of an event or a mention of a monument because he wishes to convey the truth to the reader; a dishonest author may invent it because he wishes to lead his readers into falsehood. But an event may be omitted for any number of reasons. Perhaps the author was inadvertent. Perhaps it slipped his mind while he was writing. Perhaps he had mentioned it already in some other work now lost to us and was disinclined to repeat himself. Perhaps he felt no desire to go back over ground already covered well by others in extant works. Perhaps he judged its significance for his purposes to be less than we should judge them. Perhaps he suppressed it out of delicacy or out of a desire to give certain individuals then alive protective anonymity.

Second, the practice of erecting elaborate theories on slight literary parallels has an alarming grip on the New Testament studies community. Consider, for example, Andrew T. Lincoln's reiteration of Benjamin W. Bacon's thesis that the account of the resurrection of Lazarus in John 11 is a literary reworking of materials from Luke:

> [T]he present form of John's story, with its particular figures and their characterization, its other literary features and its clearly Johannine theological themes in the dialogue, appears to be a skilful composition on the

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[17] Ulysses Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant* (2 volumes; New York: Charles L. Webster & Co., 1885).

> part of the evangelist, in which the named characters Martha, Mary and Lazarus have been taken over from Luke's Gospel (Luke 10.38-42; 16.19-31). John's narrative could well be a very extensive literary elaboration based on the general tradition that Jesus raised the dead or on one particular tradition of the raising of a dead man, which he has set in Bethany and associated with a family said to be close to Jesus, and whose miraculous character he has heightened by having the dead man already in the tomb for four days.[18]

Speaking as an outsider to the guild of New Testament scholars, I submit that this fantastic hypothesis of literary dependence, ungrounded in any independent evidence of such cobbling construction on John's part, would provoke open ridicule in any other philological discipline. Sadly, it would not be difficult to create a long list of commentators who take seriously the notion that the story of Lazarus in John 11 is in some sense based on the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16. It is true, and a welcome development, that Tal Ilan's name lists have helped to dispel some of the fog by demonstrating that Eleazar/Lazarus was quite a common name in Palestine in the first century.[19] But it should not have been necessary to wait for this sort of evidence, which we were not guaranteed of being able to recover in any event. It should have been enough to point out that with such methods one might undertake to "show" that a randomly selected chapter from *The House at Pooh Corner* is a reworking of Matthew—or *vice versa*.

For all these reasons, I look forward to a renaissance of solid historical exploration of the Gospels in which dubious methodology is replaced by sound canons of historical investigation and hyperbolic doubts about their historical worth are displaced by a full appreciation of their value. There are promising works that move in this direction already.[20] It would please me greatly if Licona should in the near future feel led to contribute to their number.

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[18] Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to St. John* (BNTC; London: Continuum, 2005), 42.

[19] Richard Bauckham, "The Bethany Family in John 11-12: History or Fiction?" in Paul N. Anderson, Felix Just, and Tom Thatcher (eds.), *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 2: Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel* (Symposium; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 185-201.

[20] Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (second edition; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007); *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011); Craig Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

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The Resurrection of Jesus: Explanation or Interpretation?

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Introduction

Licona's book, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, is, in effect, one very long elaborate argument. The argument has clearly defined stages. The first is that, given available documents that mention Jesus' resurrection, it is possible to infer what he calls "bedrock" facts:

(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.[1]

In addition Licona draws attention to what he calls "second-order facts" namely that Jesus appeared to his brother James (as reported in 1 Cor. 15:7), and that on Easter Day the tomb in which Jesus had been interred was empty.[2] These are second-order facts because they are not accepted by all scholars, only by a majority.

The second stage of Licona's argument is that the best explanation of the experiences of the risen Jesus by the disciples, Paul and perhaps James and others is that Jesus himself had appeared to them. He is sometimes reluctant to say that Jesus appeared in physical form, though he allows this as a possibility. The other possibility is that he appeared to them in "an objective vision," i.e. not as a product of their own minds. Licona states his theory thus:

> Following a supernatural event of an indeterminate nature and cause, Jesus appeared to a number of people, in individual and group settings and to friends and foes, in no less than an objective vision and perhaps within ordinary vision in his bodily raised corpse.[3]

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[1] Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 463.

[2] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 463.

[3] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 583.

Eventually, however, he comes down in favour of a physical resurrection as "in accord with the plain sense of the resurrection narratives in the canonical Gospels and with Paul's concept of the resurrection body," and because the vision hypothesis cannot explain why the tomb was empty.[4]

The third and final stage of Licona's argument is that the best explanation of Jesus' resurrection is that it was an act of God. He admits that this claim "is incapable of verification," which is why he writes instead of "a supernatural event of an indeterminate nature and cause."[5] But the claim that God raised Jesus from the dead plays a much more important part in Licona's argument than he is sometimes ready to admit. To put it briefly, if we do not say that God raised Jesus, Licona says, then we must claim that his resurrection was a natural event. But in nature such events never happen, so the claim that Jesus rose unassisted is wildly implausible. For the hypothesis that Jesus rose from the dead to be plausible, therefore, we must assume that God raised him.[6] If one believes in God, or even if one is agnostic and merely allows the possibility that God exists, there is no reason for denying that this is possible. And if one accepts that Jesus really did rise from the dead, what other explanation is there?

In this paper I intend to do three things. First, I will point out some difficulties with Licona's argument. In particular, it is not clear that the Jesus whom the disciples experienced had a physical body; and to explain Jesus' resurrection as an act of God is quite *ad hoc* and so unconvincing. Second, I will suggest that a theological account of the disciples' experiences of the risen Jesus is better understood as an interpretation, not an explanation, of those experiences. And finally I will point out that although faith in God's having raised Jesus from the dead is not entirely justified on epistemic grounds, as a persuasive explanation of the evidence, such faith is supported for pragmatic reasons, by the benefits that flow from it.

Some Problems with Licona's Argument

The first problem is with Licona's final conclusion that the risen Jesus probably had a physical body. He considers two alternative theories: first, that people's experiences of the risen Jesus were some kind of hallucination with a psychological and cultural origin (proposed by Michael Goulder, Gerd Lüdemann, John Dominic Crossan and Pieter Craffert); and second, that they were "an objective vision" of Jesus who appeared as some sort of disembodied ghost or angel (Geza Vermes' hypothesis).[7] The thesis he prefers is a third, that they were normal perceptions of a physical person. Licona is not happy

[4] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 601.
[5] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 583.
[6] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 145.
[7] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 470-9; 479-580.

with the first two theories for several reasons. Most reports of the risen Jesus suggest that he had a physical body, one that doubting Thomas could touch, one that could break bread in Emmaus, and one that could eat fish with his disciples. Also the first two theories cannot account for the empty tomb, so their explanatory scope is more limited than that of the hypothesis that the risen Jesus indeed had a physical body. And finally, Licona says that although individuals may have had hallucinations and visions, these have never been experienced by a group of people at the same time.

There are other possible reasons for thinking that the risen Jesus had a physical body. Some Jews believed that one day the dead would be raised for judgement (Dan. 12:2), with some to inhabit the New Jerusalem (Isaiah 52). Apparently some of the Jews in Jesus' day believed the souls of the dead would be reunited with their bodies on Judgement Day. Licona points out that Jews did not expect the Last Judgement to occur before the end of history, and they would not have expected Jesus to return so soon. Even so, when he did return I think they expected him to have a physical body to establish his kingdom on earth.

If Jesus was going to return to judge people on earth, he was expected to do so in a physical body. Saint Paul told the Thessalonians to expect Jesus to "come down from heaven" to raise the dead for judgement (1 Thes.4:13-17). Accounts of Jesus' ascension are in simple physical terms: e.g. Acts 1:9, which states that "he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight." If he ascended into heaven in a physical body, he could be expected to return in a physical body.

Precisely what kind of physical body does Licona think the risen Jesus had? Licona is clearly impressed by Saint Paul's account of how believers will be raised on the Last Day. According to Paul, he says, "[T]here is a continuity between the believer's present body […] and the resurrection body. What dies and goes down in burial comes up in resurrection, having been made alive and transformed."[8] He adds that the corpse "will be clothed with immortality and imperishability," that it will have "spiritual appetites and qualities," and that it will be "composed of a heavenly substance that is given life by Christ.[9] He insists that Paul imagines that people's natural bodies will be altered, and not exchanged for a spiritual body.[10] I think that Licona imagines that Jesus' resurrection body was as Paul described it, physical but transformed, so not simply physical. N.T. Wright suggests we call Jesus' resurrection body "transphysical," meaning physical but incapable of dying or decay-

[8] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 404-5.
[9] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 406, 410, 416.
[10] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 422.

ing. He admits that "As historians we may have difficulty imagining such a thing."[11]

One objection to the idea that the risen Jesus had a physical body is that the Gospels report him passing through locked doors (John 20:26), and mysteriously disappearing from sight (Luke 24:31). But more worrying, I think, is the suggestion that the risen Jesus ascended bodily into heaven, that is, rose up into the sky and became hidden behind a cloud. Do we really think he is still hovering up there waiting to return to earth to judge the quick and the dead? William P. Alston has drawn attention to this problem and comments: "I think we have to say that there is no satisfactory answer to this question in the New Testament."[12] He adds in a footnote:

> To be sure, this problem disappears if we take the embodiment to be an illusion perpetrated by Jesus for the sake of a more personal encounter with the disciples. He really existed in some way, but he made it appear, for the moment, that he was in a quasi-humanly embodied form.[13]

The trouble is that the New Testament reports repeatedly emphasise the physical reality of the risen Jesus.[14]

N.T. Wright simply dismisses the suggestion that Jesus rose physically into the sky by saying, "the language of 'heaven' and 'earth', though it could be used to denote sky on the one hand and terra firma on the other, was regularly employed in a sophisticated theological manner, to denote the parallel and interlocking universes inhabited by the creator god on the one hand and humans on the other."[15] However, there is no mention of "parallel and interlocking universes" in any biblical descriptions of Jesus' ascension. And if Wright wants to avoid the suggestion that Jesus is "physically situated a few thousand feet above the surface of the earth,"[16] he must introduce a second transformation of the risen Jesus, from "transphysical" to immaterial (unless his other universe is physical too)!

I cannot solve the problem of the nature of the risen Jesus. Neither the ghost theory nor the physical theory is entirely satisfactory, given the available evidence. I think most Christians think of the risen Jesus as they do of his heavenly father. Jesus talked about God as a Spirit with personal properties,

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[11] N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (London: SPCK, 2003), 477-8.

[12] William P. Alston, "Biblical Criticism and the Resurrection," in *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus* (eds. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 148-83 (169).

[13] Alston, "Biblical Criticism," 169-70.

[14] Stephen T. Davis rejects the "objective vision" hypothesis chiefly because of "the massive physical detail of the appearance stories" in his article "'Seeing' the Risen Jesus," in *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus* (eds. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 126-147 (141).

[15] Wright, *The Resurrection*, 655.

[16] Wright, *The Resurrection*, 655.

as one who has knowledge, will and creative power. He addressed him as a person, "my father," and Christians pray to him as "our father" too. It is natural to think of the risen Jesus in the same way, as a Spirit with personal properties, who is with us whether we can see him or not. The disciples evidently saw him, or in the case of Saint Paul, heard him, as evidence of his continuing reality. And some of his followers hear his voice today. If we cannot tell how Jesus appeared to his disciples, it seems wisest to leave the method unexplained. It is enough to say just that he did appear to them, in order to convince them of his continuing existence. Several had difficulty deciding who he was, but he was able to convince them that he was the Jesus they had known.[17]

The second problem with Licona's argument has to do with his claim that the best explanation of Jesus' resurrection is that it was an act of God. Licona is reluctant to say much about God's role in the resurrection, because we know so little about it. But he is forced to say that God raised Jesus in order to counter the argument that in the natural course of events, dead men do not rise. Once a person has died, their bodies start to decay and after three days they could not possibly live again. So if one is going to say that the risen Jesus had a physical body, one has to explain how such a thing was possible. Otherwise the claim is utterly implausible. However, if God intervened in a natural process and reconstituted Jesus' body, then the laws of nature are not effective and so the objection that the resurrection could not have occurred can be set aside.

Licona makes the same point in these words:

> What if a god exists who wanted to raise Jesus from the dead? That would be a game changer. In that case, a miracle such as Jesus' resurrection may actually be the most probable explanation [of his appearances]. The challenge for historians, of course, is that they cannot know ahead of time whether such a god exists.[18]

He adds in a footnote: "Even if one is persuaded by any number of arguments for God's existence, they do nothing to indicate that such a god would desire to raise up Jesus."[19] Licona makes it quite clear that the two hypotheses under consideration are, first, "that Jesus was raised *naturally* from the dead," and second, "that Jesus was raised *supernaturally* (i.e. by God) from the dead."

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[17] Sarah Coakley has considered several occasions on which people failed to recognize the risen Jesus, and suggests "a crucial role for deepened and *transformed* epistemic function." See her response to William P. Alston in Sarah Coakley, "Response," in *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus* (eds. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 184-90 (188-9).

[18] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 175.

[19] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 175, note 133.

He adds, "If God desired to raise Jesus, then his resurrection may be regarded as very probable."[20]

Licona, William Lane Craig and others defend the hypothesis that God wanted both to raise Jesus from the dead and to enable him to appear to various individuals, and that God could by definition do so. I agree with them that that hypothesis, if it were true, would make probable the resurrection of Jesus in some form, and also make probable the empty tomb and the appearances of the risen Jesus recorded in the Bible. The problem that remains is whether this hypothesis is rationally credible. It would be if, in addition to making the data probable, the hypothesis was plausible and not *ad hoc*. A hypothesis is plausible if it is implied by some accepted truths and contradicted by very few. And it is *ad hoc* if there are no reasons for thinking it true besides the fact that it would explain the available data.[21] The hypothesis that God exists and cared about Jesus is of questionable plausibility; the hypothesis that he wanted to raise Jesus from the dead and reveal him to the disciples and others is almost entirely *ad hoc*.

To appreciate the importance of these conditions, consider the evidence that Santa Claus provides children's presents at Christmas time. Children awake on Christmas morning to find presents for them arranged beside the fireplace in their sitting room. Their parents say that the presents have been made by Santa and his elves at the North Pole during the year, to give as a reward to children who have been good. Since the children have been quite good, Santa put them in a sleigh pulled by reindeer, alighted on their roof, climbed down the chimney and left the presents for the children. If this story were true, it would provide an excellent explanation of the arrival of the presents. It certainly implies their probable existence. But no-one has ever seen Santa, his elves, his sleigh or his flying reindeer. The Santa explanation is implausible because there are no other facts that imply its truth, and it is entirely *ad hoc* for the same reason. When kids grow up they suspect their parents left their presents.

Richard Swinburne is aware that to explain the empty tomb and the various appearances of the risen Jesus satisfactorily, one needs to justify belief in God and have evidence of his desire to raise Jesus. He refers to this as "background evidence" for the resurrection.[22] He writes: "we need that sort of background theory well supported by evidence if our evidence overall is to give a significant overall probability to the resurrection."[23] Elsewhere, Swinburne uses this "background theory" to help provide a Bayesian justification

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[20] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 176; c.f. 602.

[21] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 110.

[22] Richard Swinburne, "Evidence for the Resurrection", in *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus* (eds. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 191-212 (202).

[23] Swinburne, "Evidence," 206.

of faith in the resurrection.[24] And in his essay, Swinburne offers a list of facts that point to the existence of an intelligent, powerful creator whom we name as God, though he does not say that God is benevolent.[25] Perhaps that is so that he does not have to confront the problem of evil, which is a strong reason for doubting that God, if he exists, is benevolent. If God is just and loving, how could he let so many of his faithful disciples suffer such dreadful deaths? If God's benevolence forms part of Licona's hypothesis, then its plausibility is questionable.

The fact that God cannot be seen is not in itself a reason for doubting his influence. As William Lane Craig argued in his discussion of the resurrection, scientists posit invisible entities to explain observable events.[26] Think of the force of gravity to explain why things fall to the ground, or magnetic force to explain the movement of a compass needle. What distinguishes these from God, however, is that they are said to have regular functions: things almost always fall to the ground, and compass needles nearly always point north. The acts of God, on the other hand, are by no means predictable. That is why an appeal to God as the cause of the resurrection of Jesus is implausible. It is not simply that he is invisible and so difficult to investigate, it is that we know too little about him to predict what he will do.

Swinburne goes on to suggest reasons why God might want to intervene in human history. One is "to make available an atonement for human sin."[27] In raising Jesus from the dead he shows that he has accepted his sacrifice, says Swinburne.[28] Another reason is "to vindicate the life and teaching of a human whose outer life was holy, and forward the teaching of a church which teaches that the incarnate one was God."[29]

The hypothesis that a benevolent God exists is scarcely plausible. The hypothesis that he wanted to raise Jesus from the dead is almost entirely *ad hoc*. I say "almost," because if you believe that God is benevolent, then you might infer that he would want to raise Jesus who obeyed him even unto death. But that is a very speculative idea, for which there is no direct evidence.

Licona is aware of the need to find reasons for thinking that God raised Jesus from the dead. Like Swinburne and Licona,[30] Craig thinks that God might have wanted to raise Jesus to "vindicate" his claim to have been the promised Messiah. In support of this theory, Craig quotes Acts 2:36, where

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[24] Richard Swinburne, *The Resurrection of God Incarnate* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 2003).

[25] Swinburne, "Evidence," 202.

[26] William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (third edition; Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), p.352.

[27] Swinburne, "Evidence," 203.

[28] Swinburne, "Evidence," 204.

[29] Swinburne, "Evidence," 205.

[30] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 284.

Peter, having said that God raised Jesus to life, went on to say, "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ".[31] I am also impressed by the frequency with which Jesus is said to have referred to himself as "the Son of Man," who is described in Dan. 7:13-14 as being "given authority, glory and sovereign power" and the promise that "his dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away" (NIV). The Son of Man could not remain dead if this description of him were true.[32]

A second, related, reason for God wanting to raise Jesus from the dead is that he wanted Jesus to fulfil his mission of establishing God's kingdom on earth. Licona notes that "Jesus thought of himself as having a special relationship with God, who had chosen him to bring about his eschatological kingdom." This, he went on, is "a context in which we might expect a god to act."[33]

But there is no evidence that God acted for these reasons. They are entirely speculative. Saint Paul viewed the resurrection as evidence that the power of sin and death has been overcome for those who are "in Christ" (1 Cor. 15:12-20, 54-57). He took it to be a source of hope for Christians who suffered for their faith, as he did, that they too might be raised to be with Christ (e.g., Phil. 3:7-14). Each of these suggestions of why God might have wanted to raise Jesus from the dead is really an interpretation of the significance of the resurrection. What God had in mind in raising Jesus, if he did, we can only guess.

Without good evidence of God's intentions, we have no good reason for thinking that he might have raised Jesus from the dead. If we assume that Jesus physical body was raised, against the laws of nature, we might ask who or what could have brought this about except God? But this begs the question against the alternative possibility, that the experiences of the disciples were not of the risen body of Jesus but were of a spiritual being or were a hallucination of some kind.

At one point Licona is aware of the weakness of his assumption that God raised Jesus, and says instead that some supernatural power must have done it. He writes:

> Since the claim that it was *God* who raised Jesus is incapable of verification, we will not make any claims pertaining to the cause of the event other than it must have been supernatural. Accordingly I herein define the resurrection hypothesis as follows: *Following a supernatural event of an indeterminate nature and cause, Jesus appeared*…[34]

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[31] Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 388.
[32] See Licona, *The Resurrection*, 606.
[33] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 301.
[34] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 583.

What does he mean by "supernatural?" He does not mean that the resurrection was just unnatural, because then we would have excellent reason to doubt its occurrence. He must mean that Jesus was raised by a supernatural agent, and the only one on hand is God. You will recall that elsewhere Licona writes, "the hypothesis is that Jesus was raised *supernaturally* (i.e. by God) from the dead. If God desired to raise Jesus, then his resurrection may be regarded as very probable."[35] The appeal to a supernatural agent does not rescue Licona's argument. We may believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, but we have no good evidence that he did so.

So while the hypothesis that God raised Jesus from the dead would imply that he was able to appear to his disciples, that hypothesis is weakened by the fact that it is entirely *ad hoc*.

The Resurrection as an Interpretation of History

When there are more than one equally valid descriptions of a subject, each one can be called an interpretation of that subject. For instance, when an English cricket team beats an Australian team one can say that it was a victory for the English, and one can say that it was a defeat for the Australians. They are equally true, though one seems to praise the English and the other to blame the Australians. Each is an equally valid interpretation of the same event. The same can be said of buying flowers for one's wife. It can be called a generous expression of love, or an extravagant indulgence.

The same is true of explanations. The war in Afghanistan can be seen as a fight against international terrorists or as the foreign occupation of a sovereign state. Usually the alternative descriptions are equally valid. But sometimes they are incompatible, and are expressions of prior assumptions. When your friend gives you a gift, you might think his chief motive is kindly, or that he has done so chiefly in order to elicit a favour. If you have suspected the latter, you might be pleasantly surprised when no favour is requested.

Some people view the design and regularities of nature as evidence of an intelligent and benevolent creator, but others think they are a matter of chance, given the great number of planets in the universe. One cannot prove the matter one way or another, so both are equally valid though incompatible interpretations of the origin of the laws of nature. If one could prove that one explanation was true and the other false, then rather than have two interpretations we would have two possible explanations, one true and the other false. When there are two or more explanations of certain events and one cannot prove any of them true or false, then one may call them interpretations of why those events occurred. Those who say that people who saw the risen

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[35] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 176.

Jesus saw his physical body, or had a subjective or objective vision of him are all offering an interpretation of why Jesus appeared as he did.

There are constraints on the acceptability of interpretations. They must not be internally inconsistent, for then they would be unintelligible, and they must not be clearly inconsistent with accepted facts about the world. That is why people find it difficult to believe that there is a God who is both forgiving and just, as these seem to be inconsistent; and why people who believe that God created the universe doubt that he created the earth with its animals and humans in seven days, as the Bible states, given the evidence of the evolution of species over millennia.

We can view the Bible as providing a theological interpretation of natural and historical events from beginning to end. The gospels not only describe what Jesus said and did on earth, they declare him to have been the divine Son of God. The story of his virgin birth expresses the conviction of his divine sonship, and the miracles he performed are said to display his divine power and benevolence. His post-mortem appearances to his followers are presented as evidence of God having raised him from the dead. One cannot prove any of these theological assertions true. They are interpretations of what happened that we may or may not believe.

I think we should regard the biblical statements that God raised Jesus from the dead as part of the theological interpretation of worldly events that we find in the Bible. This interpretation cannot be proved true, but it may be worthy of belief. When James D.G. Dunn considered the resurrection, he noted that the so-called facts of the empty tomb and Jesus' appearances to the disciples are interpretations of the available texts, and he said that the explanation that God had raised Jesus from the dead was a further interpretation, of those facts. "The resurrection of Jesus, in other words, is […] an interpretation of an interpretation."[36]

Pragmatic Justification for Religious Belief

Licona explains that his great effort to prove the truth of the resurrection is motivated by a desire to justify his belief that Jesus is risen indeed.[37] Given the difficulty of providing such a proof, he might like to consider pragmatic grounds for faith.

Scientists insist upon adequate evidence for the truth of their observations and theories. But in everyday life we often accept as true statements for which we have very little evidence, so long as we have no reason for thinking them false. Indeed, strictly speaking we cannot prove any description of the world necessarily true, true beyond the possibility of error. Our faith in many descriptions of the world far exceeds our capacity to prove them true.

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[36] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 184.

[37] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 130-31.

Does that mean we are generally irrational? Well it would if the only reasons that could justify belief in descriptions of the world were evidential, what philosophers call epistemic. Thanks to our reverence for the accuracy and achievements of science, most people think that their beliefs about the world should be confined to those for which they have good evidence. But in everyday contexts we often have to accept descriptions of the world for which we have little evidence, and for practical reasons we do so. If doctors tell us that a medicine will cure us, then, because we want to be cured, we believe them and take it. We know them to be qualified, so we have some epistemic reason for believing them, but we have a practical reason as well. We want to enjoy the consequences that are likely to follow if the belief is indeed true.

The pragmatic justification of religious beliefs has been discussed at length elsewhere.[38] Because the idea suggests foolish wishful thinking, let me draw attention to some important constraints to avoid that. Then, to demonstrate the power of a pragmatic justification I would like to present examples of traditional Christian beliefs and show how they can be justified pragmatically, before turning to the case of Jesus' resurrection.

First, it is not rational to hold religious beliefs that are clearly inconsistent with what we already know to be true. For then we have a strong epistemic reason for denying their truth. For instance, William James argued that the claim that God is just and loving is contradicted by "the moral complexion of the world."[39] So that was a description of God he could not accept.

Second, there must be some evidence for the truth of a belief which is not outweighed by evidence that it is false. In a religious context I suggest that the following beliefs in the Christian tradition are worth considering:

> (1) that a powerful, intelligent being has created and sustained the universe so that humankind could evolve and live within it; (2) that this God revealed his will for humankind to and through Moses and the prophets, and above all in Jesus, each revelation being appropriate to the people to whom it was given; (3) that God provides a spirit of truth and love, the spirit that characterised Jesus, to those who are willing to submit to it.[40]

These propositions are not necessarily true.

> For instance, the extraordinary appropriateness of the fundamental constants of the cosmos might be a matter of chance; the Mosaic law and the commands of Jesus might be said to be good because Moses and Jesus were wise and good men, not because they were divinely inspired; and the

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[38] See C. Behan McCullagh, "Can Religious Beliefs be Justified Pragmatically?" *Sophia* 46(2007): 21-34.

[39] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: Fontana Books / Collins, 1960), 427.

[40] McCullagh, "Can Religious," 28.

> changes in character found among believers could come simply from their determination to imitate Jesus, not from any mysterious spirit at all.[41]

Third, it would be wrong to hold beliefs for which there is only slight evidence in order to justify bad behaviour. Some believe other individuals to be wicked on very little evidence to justify attacking them.

Fourth, there must be clear good consequences from holding these beliefs. The value of holding the three beliefs just mentioned is well known. I have summarized them as follows:

> (1) If the cosmos and the world were made for people to live in, that gives their lives an extraordinary value […] (2) If the commands given by Moses and Jesus were the word of God, then they deserve unqualified respect […] (3) Finally, if God's Holy Spirit of wisdom and love is available to those intent on obeying God's commands, it would enable people to overcome their wayward and wicked natures and live as they ought and as they desire […] Those who are convinced of the truth of these propositions will treat all people, including themselves, as of ultimate value; they will act as justly and lovingly as they can; and they will seek the support of God's Holy Spirit to enable them to lead a holy life.[42]

People's faith in the three traditional Christian beliefs is strengthened if they know and endorse the value of the way of life they both cause and justify.

Now can faith in the resurrection of Jesus be justified on pragmatic grounds? Let's assume that the explanatory scope and power of this thesis compensates for its implausibility and ad hoc character. After all, if God did indeed raise Jesus from the dead in physical form, then he could have appeared to his disciples as reported in the Bible. Although the hypothesis that God raised Jesus is quite *ad hoc*, there are some facts that support its credibility. But the evidence is far from overwhelming, so why do so many people affirm Jesus' resurrection so confidently? I suggest it is because they want to enjoy the comfort of its implications. It is good to see that God has power over death and will raise all those who love and obey him to a new eternal life. And it is a comfort for faithful Christians to think that they might be raised sometime after they die as well.

I have always been impressed by the faith of African American slaves whose passionate spirituals express a longing for heaven as a merciful alternative to the suffering they experienced on plantations. If ever faith in life after death had a practical justification it was here, providing a hope that sustained them.

But faith in the risen Jesus is not simply grounds for hope in life hereafter. It is also the condition of one's daily walk with a personal God, whose Spirit is willing to guide and encourage one in the service of his heavenly fa-

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[41] McCullagh, "Can Religious," 29.

[42] McCullagh, "Can Religious," 29-30.

ther. It is thus absolutely essential to a Christian way life. And if that is of absolute value, as I believe it is, then faith in the risen Jesus is essential.

So although the hypothesis that God raised Jesus from the dead cannot be proved true, as an interpretation of the experience of the disciples and others it is worth believing, both as a reason for hoping in life after death, but even more importantly, as an essential condition of a Christian way of life.

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In Reply to Habermas, McGrew, and McCullagh

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Introduction

I would like to express my gratitude to Heath Thomas and *Southeastern Theological Review* for featuring my book *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (ROJ) in this issue. I would also like to thank Gary Habermas, Timothy McGrew, and Behan McCullagh for their remarks. For ROJ to receive this sort of scholarly attention at an early stage is quite exciting and encouraging.

Reply to Gary Habermas

Since I regard Gary Habermas as the world's leading expert on the topic of the historicity of Jesus' resurrection, it is a great honor to have him contribute an essay on ROJ. Because of the immense work on Jesus' resurrection he has conducted over several decades, I was able to stand on his shoulders when I wrote chapter four of ROJ and know which facts to examine pertaining to the historical bedrock relevant to the resurrection of Jesus. In personal conversations with Habermas, I never cease to be amazed at the breadth and depth of his knowledge on the subject. There are no forthcoming books for which I have greater anticipation to read than a multi-volume magnum opus on Jesus' resurrection by Habermas.

Habermas' comments over the years have always been and continue to be of immense value to me. I was surprised that he offered no criticisms. During my doctoral research, we had many discussions pertaining to whether historians are within their professional rights to investigate miracle claims. At that time, he seemed to side with the majority on the negative. Since this is a live discussion among professional historians and biblical scholars—as further evidenced by McCullagh's critical essay, I would have liked for Habermas to have commented on the matter to learn where he now stands, given my arguments in chapter two of ROJ.

Habermas offered a few caveats to the "minimal facts" approach that I think helpful for future discussion. One such caveat noted by Habermas is how much historical weight one should place on the appearance to James and the empty tomb. I am satisfied that I did not use either in the historical method employed in ROJ, since neither may be regarded as historical bedrock. However, I believe there is a place for going beyond strictly controlled

method and contending for matters one believes are strongly evidenced but do not enjoy a widespread heterogeneous consensus. In fact, I have taken this route since the publication of ROJ. In my lectures and debates during the past two and a half years, I have been contending that Jesus' disciples proclaimed they had experienced what they perceived was (a) the *bodily/physically* raised Jesus and (b) had done so in group settings. Although I had argued for both of these in ROJ, I did not include them in my relevant historical bedrock. Thus, they did not factor in my final analysis. However, I now have been contending for these in public debates and do not believe they have received any strong replies to date. In the future, I may add the appearance to James, the empty tomb, and Jesus' predictions pertaining to his Passion and resurrection to my historical case for Jesus' resurrection. However, a benefit of not using data outside of the relevant historical bedrock is that one hands far less to resurrection skeptics to contend against and forces them to answer the strongest arguments at hand.

Reply to Timothy McGrew

I first met Tim McGrew and his wife Lydia in November 2009 in New Orleans during the annual meeting of the Evangelical Philosophical Society. I had been preparing for a February debate with an atheist who was claiming to have a "rock solid Bayesian argument" against Jesus' resurrection. I had been searching for help from an expert on Bayes's Theorem (BT). However, my efforts had turned up empty except hearing that the McGrews had written multiple articles and essays on BT but rarely came to these annual meetings. I began praying, asking God to lead me to someone who could assist me.

While still in New Orleans, I was having lunch with a few colleagues in a restaurant when a couple came through the door and stopped in front of our table. When I had the impression they were looking at me, I looked up and the gentleman politely asked if I was Mike Licona. When I said "Yes," he introduced himself as Tim McGrew and his wife Lydia and continued by saying they were very excited about the work I was doing and that they wanted for me to know they would be happy to assist me in any way should I ever need them. I had not met the McGrews prior to that day and they did not know I was searching for an expert on BT. My faith that God answers prayer certainly increased that day! I ended up flying to the McGrews' home the following month and receiving a personal crash course from Tim on BT.

In his review essay, Tim McGrew offered three major criticisms: (a) the possibility of methodological neutrality, (b) the possibility of employing BT in historical inquiry, and (c) my use of the Gospels (or lack thereof) in my historical investigation of Jesus' resurrection.

On the Possibility of Methodological Neutrality

McGrew acknowledges that the idea of methodological neutrality (MN) is "very attractive," but questions that it is as useful as I imagine.

> It is rare indeed that we come to any interesting inquiry in the entire absence of relevant information, and that information often conditions how we should accept assertions from different quarters.
>
> [S]ometimes the mere fact that someone of ordinary credibility has made a claim suffices to discharge whatever burden of proof there might be. If my wife tells me that there are apples in the refrigerator, I will not approach the matter with the assumption that her claim is false until I check for myself.

McGrew makes some fine points. However, I think he misses what I meant by neutrality. I am not suggesting one must ignore relevant information when coming into an investigation and, thus, be neutral as though with no opinions. I am suggesting by neutrality that no one gets a free pass on shouldering burden of proof. This means, for example, that conservative Christian historians should not approach the Gospels as being historically reliable until proven otherwise (methodological credulity) and that skeptical historians should not approach the Gospels as being historically unreliable until proven otherwise (methodological skepticism, hereafter). In MN, it is the responsibility of the historian to argue for the historical reliability or unreliability of the Gospels.

McGrew, however, has exposed a flaw in my approach. Contrary to what I wrote in ROJ, I see no reason why a claim must be assumed to be false until sufficient evidence is provided to the contrary.[1] To make such an assumption is methodological skepticism rather than neutrality. There is much reported by ancient historians and biographers that may be correct but for which no corroborating data is available. Historians regard such reports as unverified rather than false.

McGrew is likewise correct that when someone of ordinary credibility makes a claim of an ordinary nature, such as Mrs. McGrew's informing him of the presence of apples in the refrigerator, the burden of proof is sufficiently discharged. However, when historians approach the Gospels, it is not so clear that their authors are of ordinary credibility since we do not know them. And they provide many reports that are far from an ordinary nature. McGrew is correct when saying, "If a perfect stranger tells me that there has just been a serious accident on the nearby interstate, then in the absence of further evidence, I will probably accept his assertion." However, if a stranger tells him that a spaceship has just landed on the nearby interstate, would McGrew accept his assertion in the absence of further evidence?

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[1] Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 97.

McGrew may reply with agreement but note that I was not taking into account the nature of the report when defining MN and only treated miracle claims and burden of proof in a later section.[2] Granted. However, it is often the case that even ordinary events reported by historians of ordinary credibility are problematic. Plutarch informs his readers there are three conflicting accounts pertaining to the death of Scipio Africanus, the famous Roman general who defeated Hannibal.[3] Historians cannot a priori assume any one of the three are correct.

When approaching the biblical literature in general and the Gospels in particular, the matter of genre is of immense importance. The genre of the Gospels differs from any we have today and scholars continue in their attempts to understand it in a fuller sense. This should motivate historians to be even more careful to apply MN to the Gospels and even to how they may interpret them.

On the Possibility of Employing Bayes's Theorem (BT) in Historical Inquiry

Since McGrew is unquestionably an expert on BT and because my knowledge of BT comes largely from him, I realize I am treading on uncertain ground when assessing his arguments on the matter. McGrew regards as mistaken my contention that the prior probability of Jesus' resurrection is inscrutable. He argues that if one can take a reasonable stance on God's existence on the basis of natural theology, "then there is no obvious reason that one may not *start there* in considering the impact of further evidence." He continues,

> As William Paley pointed out over two centuries ago, the probability of a visible miracle may be reasonably estimated (at least for a lower bound) by the joint probability of two claims: that there is a God who has intended a future state of existence for his creation, and that he should desire to acquaint them with it in some fashion that could not reasonably be dismissed as the operation of nature or the result of mere human sagacity. For there is no other way for God to stamp his endorsement on a communication than for him to sign it with the one act that distinguishes him from all of his creation, the act of sovereignty.

I have no hesitations toward including evidence for God's existence within the background knowledge to be taken into consideration for assessing the prior probability (prior). But McGrew appears to make a leap when appealing to Paley. It is one thing to appeal to evidence for the existence of God. It is entirely another to claim God "has intended a future state of existence for his creation" and that he desires "to acquaint them with it." One may accept the

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[2] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 192-7.

[3] Plutarch, *Romulus* 27.4-5.

biblical testimony and believe these things. However, I do not see how one could demonstrate them with evidence to justify including them in our background knowledge.

With that said, I have continued to wrestle over this issue during the past two years since completing the final manuscript for ROJ. We might say that the prior is similar to the initial plausibility of a hypothesis, which is one of the five criteria historians typically employ for assessing hypotheses. I'm presently leaning toward including (a) the arguments of natural theology with (b) the historical evidence for Jesus' claims to being God's chosen agent to usher in his kingdom, (c) that he performed deeds that astonished crowds and that both he and his followers regarded as divine miracles and exorcisms, and (d) that he predicted his imminent and violent death would be followed shortly thereafter by his resurrection. These four items create a context in which we might expect a god to act. They give an initial plausibility to the resurrection hypothesis or a prior that may be assessed as being quite high, at least by those of us who grant the validity of (a) through (d). The challenge of this is that two of the four items I have just mentioned (a and d) belong to the relevant historical bedrock. Thus, had I included them in my historical investigation of Jesus' resurrection I would have violated my own precautionary actions for minimizing the impact of my horizon on my investigation, a component that involves a bit of subjectivity.[4] More specifically, the method I proposed in ROJ requires including only the relevant historical bedrock, at least initially. Should the historical investigation then end with two or more hypotheses being nearly equal in fulfilling the criteria for the best explanation, additional data may then be brought in and the exercise repeated.

That said, I do not think the move suggested by McGrew to assess the prior for the resurrection hypothesis is an illegitimate one. However, there are more ways than one to skin a cat. Mine is to employ strictly controlled historical method and I remain unconvinced that I could assess the prior of the Resurrection Hypothesis (RH) fairly while staying within the parameters of the historical method proposed in ROJ.

McGrew then suggests that when priors are difficult to assess, one can table the prior and focus on the likelihoods, "asking, in effect, 'How strongly should we expect these data, supposing that the hypothesis were true; and how strongly should we expect them, supposing that it were false?'" I agree. But asking how strongly we would expect our data given the truth of a hypothesis is, in essence, to assess its explanatory power, which is only one of the five criteria employed when assessing hypotheses by inference to the best explanation. Thus, historical method may benefit from the use of BT in determining the explanatory power of a hypothesis. However, its value may be

[4] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 56-8; 466-9.

limited to that unless the prior probability of that hypothesis' being true can be determined.

On Historical Bedrock and the Historical Reliability of the Gospels

McGrew confesses feeling uneasy with my method that places much weight upon the historical bedrock, since this leaves data "hostage to the current consensus in biblical studies. . . . And the point that I wish to stress is that the consensus of the scholarly community is at best a contingent marker for the weight of the evidence. It should never be substituted for the evidence itself."

Here I am in strong agreement with McGrew. It is the responsibility of scholars to argue for their views, which may often lie outside of the relevant historical bedrock. I have done so in ROJ related to several topics, such as the historicity of Jesus' predictions pertaining to his imminent Passion and resurrection and that the proclamation of Jesus' physical resurrection was part of the apostolic proclamation.[5] I am persuaded that the historical evidence renders these conclusions as virtually assured, not to mention the appearance to James and the empty tomb. However, since none of these belong to the relevant historical bedrock, I did not include them in my first run of weighing hypotheses. Had two or more ended in a near tie, it would then be proper to introduce other strongly evidenced facts that do not enjoy agreement by the strong consensus of scholarship. In this manner, I have made an honest effort to keep a check on my personal biases throughout my investigation while not placing myself in a position where I am held hostage by the present consensus opinions.

It is difficult for a historian to be too careful in recognizing the presence of personal biases resulting from one's horizon. Biases are the single most serious challenge to the integrity of historical investigation. And if that is true of investigations of ordinary matters, it is even truer of those involving extraordinary ones. Christians carry biases as much as skeptics. So, Christian historians who are interested in discovering truth, even when the possibility is present that it may challenge rather than reinforce a cherished position, need to keep this in mind.

McGrew is correct that "the tradeoff . . . is that one's basis is not so rich as it might have been and perhaps should be." I want to be clear that I think one can argue for the historicity of Jesus' resurrection in a number of ways and that one way is to create a comprehensive case that includes the historical reliability of the Passion and resurrection narratives in the canonical Gospels as McGrew would have it. In one sense, such a case would be stronger than the one I presented. Yet, in another, it would be weaker, since it includes

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[5] Against the majority opinion, I have argued in chapter 2 of ROJ that historians are within their professional rights to investigate miracle claims.

conclusions that are less historically certain. If one can answer the question pertaining to the historicity of Jesus' resurrection using only the relevant historical bedrock, why must one feel compelled to continue to pile on additional data?

I suppose it is a matter of preference. Let us suppose I have just built a moderate sized house with building materials of the highest quality. Sometime later I am faced with a decision: (a) Leave the house as is, comprised entirely of materials of the highest quality or (b) Increase the size using building materials that are of a good but lesser quality then those used in the original house. The average person driving by may not notice a difference, although builders with a keen eye driving by certainly will. I do not fault McGrew for the path he prefers (b). But I do not think I should be faulted for preferring a different path (a). It is a path that was paved by Habermas and has proven over time to be quite sound and effective.

McGrew writes,

> I suspect that Licona's fairly negative rating of the resurrection narratives in the Gospels reflects not so much his personal judgment regarding their historical value as his awareness of the magnitude of the task that confronts anyone who wants to answer, in detail, the wide array of arguments against the substantial historicity of the resurrection narratives. *That* project could fill many substantial volumes, and this one is already long enough. But if this was his reason for trying to see how much could be done without making use of those narratives, then I wish that he had indicated his intentions in some other, less deprecatory fashion.

McGrew is entirely correct. There is much good literature supporting the historical reliability of the Gospels and I can think of none better than those works McGrew mentioned by Craig Blomberg and Craig Keener. Admittedly, it has only been within the past three and a half years that I have become a more intensive student of the Gospels in terms of their historical reliability. So, when I wrote ROJ I recognized that broaching the topic of the historical reliability of the Gospels would be far too much for the project at hand. Moreover, as with the empty tomb, I knew up front there would be only a limited amount mined from the Gospels that could be counted as historical bedrock relevant to Jesus' resurrection. Accordingly, I assessed that it would be a distraction to myself and to my readers to devote too much time to the subject.

McGrew is correct that my assessment of the Gospels as "possible" in terms of preserving apostolic testimony pertaining to Jesus' death and resurrection was not so much my personal judgment as it was a reflection of my awareness of the massive task of dealing with the issue in depth and providing a sort of neutral answer in order to avoid getting hung up on a topic that would require far more work than I could devote at that time.

McGrew makes a few valuable observations pertaining to some of the methodology currently employed by many of those in the guild of biblical

scholarship. His provision of a dozen historical examples provides a powerful critique of the argument from silence and his suggestions for possible causes for the omissions should cause all serious historians to hesitate in the future before appealing to silence in ancient reports.

He is likewise perceptive when observing the "elaborate theories on slight literary parallels [that] has an alarming grip on the New Testament studies community." I have often been amused by skeptical scholars who accuse believers of being credulous for being open to the supernatural while the same skeptical scholars simultaneously offer counter proposals that border on unbridled fantasy and with pathetically little to no supporting data. There is hypocrisy in such an approach. And it needs to be pointed out often and with specifics. I attempted to do that in ROJ when assessing several of the hypotheses in chapter five.

Reply to Behan McCullagh

I was thrilled when informed that Behan McCullagh had accepted the invitation to write an essay for this volume. Of all the philosophers of history I read during my research, none impressed me more than McCullagh. His books *Justifying Historical Descriptions* and *The Logic of History* are marvelous history primers and *The Truth of History* is a powerful challenge to postmodernist approaches to history that Richard Evans of Cambridge University has called "the most cogent and comprehensive critique" of extreme postmodernist positions.[6] Similar to what we read in McCullagh's books, his numerous articles that have appeared in *History and Theory* are written with great clarity. I have learned much from him.

Therefore, it was with hesitation and great caution that I offered criticisms in ROJ of his view that Jesus' resurrection cannot be verified by historians.[7] I have been looking forward to interacting with this great philosopher of history on the matter and, with continuing hesitation, great caution and enduring admiration of him, offer the following remarks in reply.

McCullagh offers three major criticisms of my historical case for the resurrection of Jesus then provides his own approach. His first major criticism pertains to the nature of Jesus' resurrection body. He contends that my conclusion that the risen Jesus probably had a physical resurrection body is problematic and unconvincing. For (a) the Gospels report the risen Jesus doing things difficult for a physical body, such as passing through locked doors, vanishing at will (John 20:26; Luke 24:31) and (b) ascending bodily into heaven is problematic (Acts 1:9). McCullagh asks, "Do we really think he is still hovering up there waiting to return to earth to judge the quick and the

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[6] Richard Evans, *In Defense of History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 263.

[7] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 153-60.

dead?"[8] He concludes, "If we cannot tell how Jesus appeared to his disciples, it seems wisest to leave the method unexplained. It is enough to say just that he did appear to them, in order to convince them of his continuing existence."[9]

In ROJ, I define the Resurrection Hypothesis (RH) as follows: "*Following a supernatural event of an indeterminate nature and cause, Jesus appeared to a number of people, in individual and group settings and to friends and foes, in no less than an objective vision and perhaps within ordinary vision in his bodily raised corpse* [ital. in original]."[10] In order to avoid ambiguity, which impacts the explanatory power of a hypothesis, there are places where I assess both RH as seeing Jesus within an objective vision (RH-V) and seeing Jesus within ordinary vision (RH-B).[11] However, when I assess RH against other hypotheses, it is usually RH and not the more precisely defined RH-B that I am proposing.[12] Thus, McCullagh's first objection is problematic from the start, since RH states that Jesus actually rose from the dead and appeared to others without specifically defining the nature of Jesus' resurrection body. In other words, I am not guilty of his charge.

The two reasons McCullagh offers for his conclusion are also problematic. He appears to agree with my conclusion that Paul imagines resurrection to be an event that involves natural bodies being altered.[13] Yet, he regards reports of Jesus passing through locked doors, disappearing at will, and His ascension into heaven to be in tension with Paul's view. I fail to see the tension. If Jesus' corpse was raised and altered to include supernatural elements, why could it not be able to do these things? Quantum theory allows for the disappearance of subatomic particles and their simultaneous reappearance at another location. Is it difficult to believe that a supernatural body could at least keep up with Quantum mechanics? Moreover, McCullagh suggests that I came to the view that Jesus had been raised bodily from the Gospels/Acts and Paul's letters.[14] While it is true that Paul's letters led me to that conclusion. I did not use the Gospels/Acts, which were all probably written later

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[8] See: McCullagh's essay in the present volume.

[9] He also writes, "It is not clear that the Jesus whom the disciples experienced had a physical body; and to explain Jesus' resurrection as an act of God is quite *ad hoc* and so unconvincing." McCullagh never explains how the hypothesis that Jesus was raised bodily is *ad hoc*.

[10] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 583.

[11] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 584.

[12] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 600-9; 623-41. Although I have argued extensively that Jesus' disciples and Paul taught that Jesus had been raised physically (Licona, *The Resurrection*, 400-37), this conclusion does not enjoy consensus agreement among scholars. Accordingly, I did not include it among the relevant historical bedrock (Licona, *The Resurrection*, 464).

[13] See: McCullagh's essay in the present volume.

[14] See: McCullagh's essay in the present volume.

than Paul's letters.[15] Accordingly, even if the Gospels/Acts were problematic to Paul—and I do not believe they are[16]—it would have no impact on the historical case I made for the first Christian leaders' belief that Jesus had been raised bodily.

Is Jesus' present existence *always* in physical form? I do not know and have not contended the matter for one way or the other. The point to grasp here is that something happened on that first Easter that convinced Jesus' disciples that his corpse had been raised and transformed into something special.

McCullagh's second major criticism concerns my "claim that the best explanation of Jesus' resurrection is that it was an act of God."[17] He contends that the hypothesis "God raised Jesus" is of questionable plausibility and is *ad hoc*.

> A hypothesis is plausible if it is implied by some accepted truths and contradicted by very few. And it is *ad hoc* if there are no reasons for thinking it true besides the fact that it would explain the available data. The hypothesis that God exists and cared about Jesus is of questionable plausibility; the hypothesis that he wanted to raise Jesus from the dead and reveal him to the disciples and others is almost entirely *ad hoc*.[18]

In reply, I want to note primarily that this objection is a straw man. ROJ concerns historical inquiry into the question of Jesus' resurrection. I did not contend that historical inquiry can verify that Jesus' resurrection was an act of God. In fact, I wrote in ROJ,

> Since the claim that it was *God* who raised Jesus is incapable of verification, we will not make *any* claims pertaining to the cause of the event other than it must have been supernatural. Accordingly I herein define the resurrection hypothesis as follows: *Following a supernatural event of an indeterminate nature and cause, Jesus appeared to a number of people, in individual and*

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[15] For Paul's views on Jesus' resurrection body, see Licona, *The Resurrection*, 400-37. For my use of the canonical Gospels in my investigation, see Licona, *The Resurrection*, 201-08. I address the concerns of some that Acts presents a view of Jesus' resurrection that differs from Paul's in Licona, *The Resurrection*, 382-97.

[16] See Licona, *The Resurrection*, 400-37 (436).

[17] See: McCullagh's essay in the present volume.

[18] Later McCullagh likewise writes, "Without good evidence of God's intentions, we have no good reason for thinking that he might have raised Jesus from the dead. If we assume that Jesus physical body was raised, against the laws of nature, we might ask who or what could have brought this about except God? But this begs the question against the alternative possibility, that the experiences of the disciples were not of the risen body of Jesus but were of a spiritual being or were a hallucination of some kind […] So while the hypothesis that God raised Jesus from the dead would imply that he was able to appear to his disciples, that hypothesis is weakened by the fact that it is entirely *ad hoc*."

> *group settings and to friends and foes, in no less than an objective vision and perhaps within ordinary vision in his bodily raised corpse* [italics in original].[19]

I also contended in ROJ that there are two ways of approaching the issue of the cause of Jesus' resurrection: One leaves the cause undetermined, a common practice in historical inquiry, or posit a theoretical entity.[20] In ROJ, I opt for the former but regard the latter as a live option.[21] McCullagh did not reply to the former. Pertaining to the latter, McCullagh objects to appealing to the practice in science of employing theoretical entities, since theoretical entities are predictable whereas God is not. Thus, "an appeal to God as the cause of the resurrection of Jesus is implausible," since "we know too little about him to predict what he will do."[22]

The difference noted by McCullagh is clear. Whether it is germane to the topic at hand is not. Theoretical entities in science are predictable because they are impersonal. Personal beings, which are almost always the subject of historical inquiry, often act in ways that surprise us and are, therefore, often unpredictable. Moreover, black holes were not predicted. They were posited by cosmologists after they observed new phenomena. In other words, scientists observe certain phenomena and posit theoretical entities (e.g., black holes) in order to account for them.

Something similar may be said of the hypothetical "Q" source in Gospel studies. Q was not predicted. There are no manuscripts resembling Q and there are no known ancient sources mentioning a Gospel resembling Q. Many New Testament scholars observe the phenomenon of material common to Matthew and Luke but absent from Mark and posit a hypothetical source called Q in order to account for these. In a similar manner, historians observe certain phenomena (e.g., reports, artifacts, states of affairs) and posit hypothetical pasts in order to account for them. Theoretical entities, hypothetical sources and hypothetical pasts are all unobservable. None are predictable. And none may be said to rely on non-evidenced assumptions but are instead based on the observation of data. Accordingly, I do not see an *ad hoc* component present in RH, at least, as I understand the term *ad hoc*.

I would also like to assess McCullagh's criticisms on his own grounds. Is the hypothesis "God raised Jesus from the dead" implausible and *ad hoc* as he defines them? The hypothesis "The corpse of Abraham Lincoln has decomposed" is plausible because it is suggested by the accepted truths of science

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[19] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 583. McCullagh (Essay) cites me writing "the hypothesis is that Jesus was raised *supernaturally* (i.e., by God) from the dead" (Licona, *The Resurrection*, 176). I admit the presence of some ambiguity at this point in ROJ that is probably responsible for a misunderstanding on McCullagh's part. I am reiterating Craig's reply to Ehrman at that point rather than providing my own argument.

[20] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 168-70, 177-8.

[21] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 168-70; cf. 102-4.

[22] See: McCullagh's essay in the present volume.

pertaining to what happens to bodies after death and because there is no reason to contradict it. The hypothesis "The corpse of Abraham Lincoln has been resurrected," is implausible because it is not suggested by the accepted truths of science pertaining to what happens to bodies after death and because there is much to contradict it (e.g., the location of Lincoln's grave is known and others have viewed his corpse).

Why then do I regard differently the hypothesis "The corpse of Jesus has been resurrected"? Since the accepted truths of science pertaining to what happens to bodies after death apply to Jesus as much as they do to Lincoln, RH is likewise implausible. Right? We would answer in the affirmative if we were to understand RH as "The corpse of Jesus has been resurrected *unassisted,*" that is, by natural causes. To illustrate this important nuance, let us consider the plausibility of the statement "Ralph walked on water *unassisted*" (WU). It is not suggested by the accepted truths of science and there is little outside of these truths to contradict it. But let us say the hypothesis is "Ralph walked on water *assisted*" (WA) and that Ralph is a three-year-old, that his dad has held Ralph's hands above his head supporting his weight over a swimming pool allowing him to walk on water. This changes our scenario significantly and places Ralph in an entirely different category than those unable to walk on water unassisted. In the same manner, the implausibility of rising from the dead unassisted (i.e., by a natural cause) tells us nothing pertaining to the plausibility/implausibility of rising from the dead assisted (i.e., by a supernatural cause). And Jesus' resurrection would be in the latter category: assisted. There are no accepted truths of science suggesting that a supernatural being such as God could not raise Jesus from the dead if he desired. Outside, the accepted truths of science, there is little to contradict the hypothesis "The corpse of Jesus has been resurrected by a supernatural being." Accordingly, RH is not implausible.

But is RH plausible? Are there any accepted truths of philosophy or history that suggest Jesus' supernatural return to life? Perhaps a cumulative case can be made. I previously mentioned in my reply to McGrew that one might appeal to arguments for God's existence from natural theology and consider the context in which the evidence for Jesus' resurrection occurred. Virtually all historians of Jesus are confident that he claimed to have a special and intimate relationship with God who had chosen him to usher in his kingdom and that he performed astonishing acts that both he and others regarded as divine miracles and exorcisms.[23] Accordingly, if these are authentic, we have a

[23] See: Licona, *The Resurrection*, 281-4.

context in which we might expect a god to act.[24] This would furnish RH with plausibility.[25]

Of course, we should not presuppose the truth and authenticity of these particular claims and actions of Jesus. However, neither should we *a priori* exclude them. When I speak of these claims as belonging to the accepted truths, I am referring to our ability to confirm the historical Jesus made such claims and performed such deeds. One need not demonstrate that Jesus actually had such a relationship with God, that he had truly been selected by God to usher in his kingdom, and that the nature of his astonishing acts were divine. It is sufficient to observe that the context of these accepted truths about the historical Jesus fit hand in glove with his resurrection. Thus, RH can be said to possess a degree of plausibility. Notwithstanding, I hesitated in ROJ to go this far, since conclusions provided by the arguments from natural theology do not belong to historical bedrock. Accordingly, in keeping with my method, I was content to conclude that the plausibility of RH is inscrutable.

McCullagh also objects that RH is *ad hoc*, since there is no evidence that God would want to raise Jesus. The purpose of the *ad hoc* criterion is to avoid hypotheses containing non-evidenced assumptions. For example, the hypothesis "An alien from the planet Vulcan raised Jesus who deceived his disciples into believing he had a special relationship with God" is equal to RH in its explanatory scope, explanatory power, and is not implausible in terms of the accepted truths of science.[26] However, it is *ad hoc*, since there are no reasons for thinking it true besides the fact that it would explain the available data. After all, there have been no credible claims that Jesus was an alien. On the other hand, the earliest proclamation from the Christians was "God raised Jesus." RH was not created to account for the data. It was present from the very beginning. Moreover, as articulated above, the data pertaining to Jesus' resurrection appear in a strong historical context in which we might expect a god to act. Accordingly, RH is not *ad hoc*.

In the end, McCullagh's second major criticism is a straw man. However, even if it were not, I have provided reasons for holding that his assessment of RH as both implausible and *ad hoc* is mistaken.

McCullagh's third major criticism is that Jesus' resurrection is an interpretation of an event rather than a historically verifiable fact. "When there are more than one equally valid descriptions of a subject, each one can be called an interpretation of that subject."[27] A few paragraphs later he writes,

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[24] The context is even stronger if Jesus predicted his imminent death and resurrection as I have contended in Licona, *The Resurrection*, 284-301.

[25] Licona, *The Resurrection*, 602-03.

[26] Those scientists who argue against the likelihood of complex life existing anywhere outside of Earth would regard this hypothesis as implausible.

[27] See: McCullagh's essay in the present volume.

> If one could prove that one explanation was true and the other false, then rather than have two interpretations we would have two possible explanations, one true and the other false. When there are two or more explanations of certain events and one cannot prove any of them true or false, then one may call them interpretations of why those events occurred. Those who say that people who saw the risen Jesus saw his physical body, or had a subjective or objective vision of him are all offering an interpretation of why Jesus appeared as he did.[28]

I agree with McCullagh that when two or more historical descriptions exist and none of them can be proven or disconfirmed they should be referred to as interpretations rather than a verified historical description. However, I do not think this is the state of affairs in our investigation of Jesus' resurrection. In ROJ I argued in detail why RH decisively surpasses several leading alternatives, such as the subjective vision hypothesis (i.e., hallucination), and is quite clearly the best explanation of the relevant historical bedrock.[29] The alternatives are not "equally valid."

Moreover, when McCullagh speaks of proving a hypothesis as being true or false, he must be speaking of conclusions reached via arguments of inference to the best explanation, which are, of course, not absolute. For, elsewhere he has written that at the end of the day we must take on faith that inductive inferences regularly lead us to truths about the world.[30]

McCullaugh concludes his essay with an alternative to historical evidence as a ground for faith. He writes that Jesus' resurrection as "an interpretation of the experience of the disciples and others" is worth believing, because it provides hope for life after death and is "an essential condition of a Christian way of life."[31]

But one might ask whether the Christian way of life is worth living if Jesus was not actually raised. After all, the apostle Paul wrote, "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless. You are still in your sins. Therefore, also those who have died as Christians have been forever lost" (1 Cor. 15:17; cf. 15:14-15, 32). If Jesus was not actually raised, any hope for life after death held by Christians may be tragically misplaced.

Most Christians do not require a ground for their faith. And that is fine, in my opinion. But some Christians, like me, have a personality that prompts us to examine our faith and ask whether it is true in light of the many objections advanced by skeptics and the existence of competing worldviews. If the apostolic preaching in Acts is genuine, the apostles proclaimed that the gos-

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[28] See: McCullagh's essay in the present volume.

[29] For my assessment of these, see Licona, *The Resurrection*, 479-519, 600-6. The hypothesis that the resurrected Jesus appeared to others in an objective vision is included within RH and is abbreviated as RH-V.

[30] McCullagh, *The Truth of History* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 33.

[31] See: McCullagh's essay in the present volume.

pel could be believed because of the evidence before them of Jesus' miracles and resurrection (Acts 2:22; 17:30-31). I agree that the disciples' interpretation of their experiences as appearances of the resurrected Jesus is worth believing given the resulting benefits; but only if Jesus was actually raised. We may accept Jesus' resurrection purely on faith as most Christians do. For me, I have wanted to know if Jesus' resurrection could be confirmed by a historical investigation employing strictly controlled method. Having concluded such an investigation, I remain persuaded that it can. Despite my disagreements with McCullagh on the matter of whether historians can investigate miracle claims in general and Jesus' resurrection in particular, he remains at the top of my list when it comes to philosophers of history.

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A Roundtable Discussion with Michael Licona on The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach

Danny Akin, Craig Blomberg, Paul Copan, Michael Kruger, Michael Licona, and Charles Quarles

Southeastern Theological Review, Moderator

STR: Dr. Licona, thank you for joining Southeastern Theological Review in this roundtable discussion. Your work has been praised by a number of scholars from a variety of quarters: evangelical to atheist and agnostic. But it remains to ask a really simple question: why did you write The Resurrection of Jesus? And secondly, for whom did you write it?

Licona: By nature, I'm a second-guesser. I don't like it but that's the way I'm wired. I question everything from whether I should have purchased a different bottle of cologne, bought a different car, married a different woman, or chosen a different worldview. Of course, the last is most important because if I make a mistake on that option, it may cost me eternity. This book is my journey. It's an investigation of the data as honestly as I was able in order to determine whether the historical evidence for Jesus' resurrection is actually strong enough to conclude that it occurred using the same method properly employed by many professional historians outside the community of biblical scholars. I wanted to investigate the subject of Jesus' resurrection this way because I realized that in previous books I had made my case in order to prove the truth of Christianity rather than engage in an authentic examination of the data. I do not at all regard the former as inappropriate. But, as a second-guesser, it did not help me to know that was my motive for writing previous books. I embarked on my journey with the hopes of satisfying my questions and doubts. The book is a slightly revised version of my doctoral research and took a little over six years of research. I wrote it primarily for myself. I published it in order to strengthen the faith of believers, challenge non-believers to take an honest look at the data, and challenge the prevailing paradigm in the academy that miracle claims are beyond the purview of historical investigation.

STR: In your book, you demonstrate the plausibility of the resurrection of Jesus by virtue of a unique historiographical approach. Why did you do this, and what benefits emerge from this method?

Licona: I was unaware of any scholar who had subjected their hypothesis to a careful comparison with competing hypotheses using controlled historical method. Such a practice is foreign to the disciplines of biblical studies and theology and scholars in those disciplines rarely receive any training in this area. Just check the course catalogues of any university or seminary in their department of religion and count the number of courses offered students pertaining to the philosophy of history and historical method. It's very rare to find any. Yet, many graduates from these departments will refer to themselves as historians of Jesus without having engaged in any serious study in this area.

This can have tragic consequences. Imagine building a skyscraper without blueprints or running a water treatment facility without quality control procedures in place and you'll get an idea of what it's like to practice history without the use of a strictly controlled method. The historian J. H. Hexter wrote in his history primer, "Partly because writing bad history is pretty easy, writing very good history is rare."

When conducting authentic historical investigation, one cannot presuppose that the sources with which they are working are inerrant or divinely inspired. Otherwise, we would simply conclude everything reported in those sources is true and wrap up the investigation. A theologian can do that when studying Jesus. A historian does not have that luxury. Theology and history are different disciplines with different objectives and approaches. Now, I believe that everything in the Bible is true. But that's a statement of faith and has to be argued by reasons of a different sort. My objective in the book was to see what I could prove concerning Jesus' resurrection with reasonable and adequate historical certainty and apart from any faith commitment. This was extremely important to me as a second-guesser. The benefit to the Church is that this approach provides yet another tool for demonstrating the truth of the gospel, which Paul said is contingent on the historicity of Jesus' resurrection (1 Cor. 15:17)

STR: How does your book reinforce the reliability of the resurrection accounts in the Gospels?

Licona: Two ways immediately come to mind. First, since Jesus actually rose from the dead, we can know that He was far more than just a remarkable person. Therefore, we would expect that those who had walked with Him would continue to promote His teachings. As they began to die and to suspect that Jesus was probably not returning within their lifetimes, it is natural that they would desire to preserve His teachings in writing. A number of sources present themselves as candidates. But the canonical Gospels by far have the most respectable pedigree. Accordingly, the historicity of Jesus' resurrection is a fair starting point for showing, at minimum, that the canonical Gospels are probably trustworthy sources on Jesus. Gospel studies from experts such as Prof.

Blomberg make the case even stronger. His book *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* is a must read.

Second, I have based much of my historical case on the earliest knowable teachings on the subject: the teachings of Paul and the earlier *kerygma* preserved primarily in his undisputed letters. Over the years, many scholars have contended that Paul had a different view of the nature of Jesus' resurrection than the one presented by the Evangelists; that he believed Jesus was raised as an immaterial spirit whereas the Gospels report a bodily resurrection. If this hypothesis is true, then it could be that the resurrection narratives in the Gospels are creative products of the Evangelists as many skeptics have claimed. In my book, I addressed all of the major arguments offered to that end and demonstrate with historical certitude that Paul and the Jerusalem apostles understood the nature of Jesus' resurrection in a physical/bodily sense. This means that the earliest proclamation of Jesus' resurrection is completely compatible with the core components in the resurrection narratives. I believe this latter finding is one of the most important contributions of the book and gives us additional confidence in the historical reliability of the Gospels.

STR: Dr. Copan, you are a noted philosopher and apologist. In your view, has Dr. Licona argued his case well, and what is the apologetic value of this book?

Copan: Some of the book's endorsers have praised this landmark accomplishment as "the most thorough treatment on the resurrection and historiography to date" (Craig Keener), "an astonishing achievement" (Behan McCullagh), "a tour de force" (Daniel Wallace), "a necessary book" (Gerd Theissen)—to whose plaudits I add only "Yea" and "Amen." Licona's singular contribution to the literature on Jesus' resurrection is in his extensive engagement with professional historians, building his case for Jesus' death and resurrection using the very criteria to which they routinely appeal. Licona does not restrict his interaction to biblical scholars writing about biblical history—scholars who are often far more skeptical than professional historians and who, unlike most professional historians, are enamored of postmodern historical methodology. Licona writes with an eye to historical methodology and philosophy ("historiography"). In doing so, he is in a better position to assess the literature surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection by working with the solid historical bedrock of facts related to these events.

STR: Dr. Licona, in recent months, you have been challenged by other scholars – particularly Dr. Norman Geisler and Dr. Albert Mohler – on

your interpretation of Matthew 27:52-53, the passage referring to the raised saints.[1] What is your interpretation of this passage?

Licona: As I broadened my reading in the Greco-Roman and Jewish literature of the period, I began to observe numerous reports containing phenomena similar to what we find reported by Matthew at Jesus' death. The frequent mention of darkness, apparitions of the dead, the earth shaking, and celestial phenomena peaked my interest. I wondered whether these things reported by Virgil, Dio Cassius, and Josephus were all intended to be understood as events that had occurred in space-time. Or were they an ancient literary device—"special effects"—meant to accentuate an event of cosmic, even divine significance?[2] So, it appears that this ancient practice continues in some locations to this day.

Then I observed similar phenomena in Acts 2 when Peter addressed the crowd, saying the speaking in tongues they were witnessing was in fulfillment of Joel 2. He goes on to list other phenomena mentioned by Joel, including *wonders* in the sky involving the sun going dark, the moon turning to blood, and *signs* on the earth such as blood, fire, and smoke. Joel concludes by saying that in that day everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Peter then testifies how Jesus performed *wonders* and *signs* while among them. He rose from the dead and now they should call upon His name for salvation. Similar phenomenal language appears in Jesus' Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 where the sun and moon will go dark and the stars will fall out of the sky.

Many evangelical scholars interpret the celestial phenomena in Acts 2 and Matthew 24 as apocalyptic symbols with no corresponding literal events involving those celestial bodies. I became persuaded that the raised saints in Matthew 27 belonged to the same genre.

Since my book was published, I have found additional ancient reports that confirm this interpretation and others that cast doubt on it.[3] Accordingly, I am presently undecided pertaining to how Matthew intended his readers to understand the saints raised at Jesus' death. More research needs to be conducted. It's a tough passage

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[1] See the posts of Dr. Norman Geisler at: http://www.normgeisler.com/articles/Licona/default.htm . The post of Dr. Albert Mohler is found at: http://www.albertmohler.com/2011/09/14/the-devil-is-in-the-details-biblical-inerrancy-and-the-licona-controversy.

[2] It is of interest that when North Korea's leader Kim Jung-il recently died that a number of phenomena are reported to have occurred: A snowstorm hit as Kim died. Ice cracked on the volcanic Chon lake near his reported birthplace at Mount Paektu. When the snowstorm ended at dawn, a message carved in rock glowed brightly until sunset saying, "Mount Paektu, holy mountain of revolution. Kim Jong-il." Finally, on the day after his death, a Manchurian crane also adopted a posture of grief at a statue of Kim's father in the city of Hamhung (http://www.bbc.co.uk /news/world-asia-16297811 [accessed December 22, 2011]).

[3] Note my paper read at the 2011 annual meeting of the Evangelical Philosophical Society in San Francisco. A pdf and mp3 of this paper are available at www.risenjesus.com.

STR: Dr. Licona, is it not better to understand the description in Matt. 27:52-53 simply as a historical description of what happened at the moment of Jesus' death?

Licona: Not necessarily. The "better" way to understand Matthew's description of the raised saints is the way Matthew intended for them to be understood. If they are an apocalyptic symbol or poetic device, interpreting them in a literal-historical sense, that is, to "historicize" them, could lead one to misinterpret what Matthew was actually saying.

Literal interpretations can sometimes lead to tragic consequences. Did Jesus teach that His followers should actually pluck out their eyes if they're struggling with lust? The answer may seem clear to us now. However, there was a time in the early Church when its leaders had to speak against maiming oneself, since a number of believers had taken Jesus' words literally. Even the Church father Origen castrated himself as a result of his literal understanding of Matt. 19:12. Hermeneutical blunders can have tragic consequences!

Just three chapters prior to his mentioning of the raised saints, Matthew reports Jesus' teaching that the sun and moon will go dark and the stars will fall out of the sky when He returns. Are these meant to be understood as describing literal events or is Jesus using apocalyptic symbols to communicate that the coming events will have divine significance? Scholars differ in their opinions.

The bottom line is that most scholars who have spent an appreciable amount of time with Matt. 27:52-53 recognize that it's a difficult text. Since there are decent reasons for interpreting the raised saints as apocalyptic symbols, we ought to be slow to demand that one interpret them in a particular sense. The key question here pertains to how Matthew intended his readers to understand the raised saints. This must be thoroughly addressed prior to any charge that I have, or anyone holding a similar position has, "dehistoricized" them. For that charge presupposes that Matthew intended for them to be understood in a literal-historical sense

STR: Dr. Quarles, you in particular have addressed Licona's monograph in an extensive review in a recent edition of the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society.[4] What are your reasons for disagreeing with Dr. Licona's interpretation of Matt. 27:52-53?

Quarles: The context of the passage suggests that Matthew intended his readers to understand these words as descriptions of actual occurrences. First, the phenomenon of the darkness mentioned in Matt. 27:45 seems

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[4] Charles L. Quarles, "Review of Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010)," *JETS* 54 (2011): 839-44.

intended to be interpreted literally. Dr. Licona acknowledged that the secular historian Thallus apparently confirmed the darkness. Furthermore, the author stated the hour that the darkness fell and the hour that the darkness lifted. The temporal indicators do not appear to be symbolic and give the impression that Matthew is describing an historical event.

Second, the rending of the veil is not Matthew's creation, but (assuming Markan priority) was derived from his written source, Mark. Although the descriptions of the other three phenomena in Matthew may allude to OT texts, no OT parallels to the rending of the veil exist and the only extrabiblical references to the rending of the veil (Gospel of Peter and Testament of Levi) postdate the Gospels. This makes it unlikely that the rending of the veil was a special effect inspired by OT references or current Jewish expectations and suggests that Matthew intended to portray the phenomenon as an historical event.

The literal nature of these portents prepares the reader to interpret the other portents literally as well. In the Greek text, vv. 51-53 form a single sentence in which the description of each portent is connected to the description of the previous portent by the Greek conjunction *kai*. Thus, the "special effects" interpretation requires a shift in genre from historical narrative to apocalyptic in the middle of a single sentence, then back to historical narrative in the next sentence. If a writer flows so quickly and freely from historical narrative to apocalyptic, one could hardly ever know the author's intention.

Third, although Matthew alludes to OT texts in his description, his last clause in the sentence, "and they appeared to many," has no OT parallel and strongly implies resurrected saints were actually seen by eyewitnesses. The closest parallel to this statement is the claim of Paul that many eyewitnesses saw Jesus after his resurrection (1 Cor. 15:5-6).

Fourth, the statement in v. 54 confirms that the Roman centurion and other bystanders saw the earthquake and at least some of the other phenomena. It is difficult to see how the previously mentioned portents could be mere special effects without Matthew's claim that "they appeared to many" and "they saw the earthquake and the things that happened" turning into a deception. These evidences strongly imply that Matthew intended to communicate that the portents actually occurred.

STR: Dr. Blomberg, some evangelical NT scholars have held similar interpretations on Matthew 27:52-53 as does Licona, although many do not. In your view, is Dr. Licona's interpretation implausible, in terms of the intention of the Matthew?

Blomberg: First it's important to remember that Dr. Licona has clarified his position by stating that he is at least as convinced by the historical interpretation as by the one that takes it as an apocalyptic symbol. But I don't find the latter option at all implausible. That's not to say

that I'm confident it's the correct one, just that no one should excoriate a scholar who suggests it.

Authorial intent is tied closely to literary form. It is widely understood that one does not interpret a parable the way one interprets a historical narrative, or a proverb like an extended sermon, or apocalyptic the same as pure prophecy. As Dr. Licona has already highlighted in his book and in his on-line postings, there are numerous passages in Old Testament apocalyptic literature alone, to say nothing of later Second Temple Jewish literature, that bear certain striking similarities to the cosmic upheavals of Matt. 27:51-54. This does not prove that any or all of these verses are, in fact, apocalyptic symbols, but it certainly means scholars should have the academic freedom to explore the possibility without fear of losing their jobs or their reputations.

Dr. Geisler has argued on-line that he would be more open to the proposal if it involved a book that was not historical in genre overall (presumably, like Revelation). But apocalyptic is not just a genre, it is a literary form that is often interspersed within larger works of different genres. Daniel and Zechariah are prophetic overall but contain significant segments of apocalyptic. Matthew only a couple of chapters earlier included his account (the longest in any of the Gospels) of Jesus' apocalyptic discourse (chapters 24-25). So we should not at all be surprised if another, shorter apocalyptic section were to appear elsewhere in his book.

STR: Dr. Quarles, some have suggested that Dr. Licona's interpretation de-historicizes the account of the resurrection, which at best threatens or at worst invalidates the doctrine of inerrancy – a crucial evangelical tenet of faith. In your judgment, has Dr. Licona diverged from historicity of the account of the resurrection and diverged from the Chicago Statement and inerrancy? Why or why not?

Quarles: This is a difficult question to answer. The difficulty arises in part because it seems that Dr. Licona's position is evolving. Although the debate now seems to center on the legitimacy of the use of apocalyptic symbolism by Matthew, I do not recall him specifically stating that the text contained apocalyptic symbolism in *The Resurrection of Jesus*. Dr. Licona's original discussion involved discussions of "legend," "story embellishment," "special effects," and portrayal of the phenomena as "poetic devices." Some elements of the original discussion were alarming and, I fear, did have the potential to undermine a high view of Scripture. I am grateful that Dr. Licona had the humility to listen to the concerns of fellow inerrantists and to more carefully state his position.

I am confident that it is not Dr. Licona's intent to "dehistoricize" the account. His goal is to interpret this text responsibly in light of its literary form and author's purpose. I also suspect that his experience as a Christian apologist has confirmed that this text is a bit of a stumbling

block to many skeptics and that he desires to remove unnecessary barriers to acceptance of Jesus' resurrection. If he is mistaken about the form and purpose, and in this case I think that he is, he has proven his personal errancy, but not invalidated biblical inerrancy.

The most relevant section of the Chicago Statement regarding these issues is Article XVIII: "We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture." (See also Articles 13-15 of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics) If Matt. 27:52-53 uses a literary form or device that is non-historical, interpreting it as historical would constitute a hermeneutical error contrary to the prescription of the Chicago Statement. If, on the other hand, the text uses a literary form or device that is intentionally historical, non-historical interpretation would constitute a hermeneutical error contrary to the prescription of the Chicago Statement.

Although I am confident that it is not Dr. Licona's *intent* to dehistoricize the account that would be the unintended *effect* of his interpretation, *if* his interpretation is incorrect. Dr. Licona seemed to acknowledge this earlier in the discussion here:

> The key question here pertains to how Matthew intended his readers to understand the raised saints. This must be thoroughly addressed prior to any charge that I or anyone holding a similar position have "dehistoricized" them. For that charge presupposes that Matthew intended for them to be understood in a literal-historical sense.

Raymond Brown argued that interpreting this text literally involved "too facilely historicizing the symbolism."[5] On the other hand, if Matthew intended this text to be interpreted as literal history, any interpretation that denies the text is literal history necessarily dehistoricizes the Scripture. This is not to cast stones, it is simply to admit that, as Dr. Licona pointed out earlier "hermeneutic blunders can have tragic consequences." The misinterpretation of a text as important as the Bible can have rather grave consequences, even if it is not a direct denial of a carefully nuanced statement on biblical inerrancy.

STR: Dr. Licona, you have suggested that the objections of Drs. Mohler and Geisler really center upon a question of interpretation rather than inerrancy. Why do you say this?

Licona: There are two issues for consideration: Is the interpretation of Matthew's raised saints as apocalyptic symbols incompatible with the doctrine of biblical inerrancy and is the interpretation correct? These are separate issues and should not be confused. J. I. Packer was one of the

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[5] Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah, Volume 2* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1139.

framers of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, the Statement appealed to by Drs. Mohler and Geisler. Prof. Packer has opined that Gen. 1:1-2:4 is "prose poem" and a "quasi-liturgical celebration of the fact of creation […] and certainly not a kind of naïve observational account of what we would have seen if we could have traveled back in time and hovered above the chaos and watched how things got sorted out during a hundred and forty-four hours of our time."[6] He adds that stories such as Eve's being created from Adam's side, of her encounter with the serpent, and of the tree of life are symbols and may not at all have been what we would have seen had we been there as observers.[7] Many evangelicals will have problems with Prof. Packer's interpretation of Genesis. But that's a disagreement with his hermeneutics. It would be difficult to charge him with denying biblical inerrancy, since he was one of those who wrote the definition. Commenting on his symbolic interpretation of Genesis, Prof. Packer says, "What I'm trying to do as a theologian is to read my Bible in a way which receives the message that it intended to give me."[8]

I took a similar approach when proposing that Matthew intended for his readers to understand the raised saints as apocalyptic symbols. I'm still open to interpreting the raised saints in a literal-historical sense and I'm hard-pressed to choose between the two at the moment. But I would only be denying the inerrancy of the text if I knew that Matthew meant for his readers to understand the raised saints in a literal-historical sense but was interpreting them as an apocalyptic symbol anyway. So, this is a matter of hermeneutics rather than inerrancy.

STR: Dr. Copan, how do you understand the issue? Does Dr. Licona's interpretation of the raised saints in Matt. 27:52-53 violate the doctrine of inerrancy? Why or why not?

Copan: This debate is one of hermeneutics rather than inerrancy; I consider Licona's apocalyptic view *consistent* with inerrancy. I'm glad, though, he dropped the term "legend," which understandably raises red flags. That said, a good deal of confusion has been created because some of the "damning" quotations attributed to Licona by Geisler are actually citations from non-evangelical critics such as John Dominic Crossan.[9]

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[6] See http://risenjesus.com/images/stories/mp3s/creation_evolution_problems%201.mp3. Packer's comment that it is a "prose poem" begins 28:10 into the presentation. His other comment begins at 24:53.

[7] Ibid., 40:30—49:24.

[8] Ibid., 36:14.

[9] See Max Andrews, "In Promptu Ponere—A Response to Norm Geisler's Petition Against Mike Licona: "http://sententias.org/2011/11/17/in-promptu-ponere-a-response-to-norm-geislers-petition-against-mike-licona/.

And when Geisler disapproves of Licona's use of the word "strange" for this text, why should this be a criticism? There are plenty of odd passages in Scripture.

I would take the *historical* interpretation on this passage. However, the passage does contain stock apocalyptic images—earthquake, tomb-opening, veil (the latter representing the heavenly firmament in Second Temple Judaism and Qumran). One reason for at least a *partly* apocalyptic reading is the well-recognized theological awkwardness created by tombs opening with saints being raised *before* Jesus—who is the resurrection's "first fruits" (1 Cor. 15:20). True, the saints enter Jerusalem *after* Jesus' resurrection, but the rapid succession of dramatic scenes on Good Friday suggests they are all triggered at the crucifixion event.

Given this theological awkwardness, various evangelical interpreters have deemed plausible the apocalyptic interpretation as highlighting the crucifixion's cosmic significance. Consider the words of the evangelical stalwart Michael Green:

> Does Matthew mean us to take this literally? … It is possible but unlikely … After all, he says that these bodies of the saints went into the holy city *after* Jesus' resurrection. By that phrase he is guarding the primacy of the resurrection of Jesus, "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep"; yet he presents us with these resuscitated bodies at the cross itself, long before the resurrection.[10] If Matthew meant us to think of these people from a bygone age walking into Jerusalem that Friday evening, how would that accord with his plain insistence (especially [vv.] 40-50) that no compelling proofs of Jesus' deity were given at this time of his death any more than they were during his life? No, Matthew seems to be giving a profound meditation on what the crucifixion of Jesus means for the destiny of humankind. His death is an eschatological event; it is a foretaste of the age to come that has broken into this age.[11]

We could likewise add other noted evangelical New Testament scholars who take such a view, including Ben Witherington,[12] Donald Hagner,[13] and R.T. France.[14]

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[10] Leon Morris also acknowledges resurrection at the time of the crucifixion, not after Jesus' resurrection. See: Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 724-6.

[11] Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew* (BST; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 302-3. Note that this series was edited by the late John Stott, a strong defender of the complete trustworthiness of the Scriptures.

[12] Ben Witherington III, *Matthew* (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary; Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2006), 522. In personal correspondence (email), Witherington says that, if historical, it's hard to see the point of this passage (October 19, 2011).

[13] Donald A. Hagner says that this passage makes "little historical sense." See *Matthew 14-28* (WBC 33b; Nashville: Nelson, 2003), 850-52.

[14] R.T. France states that Matthew tells for its "symbolic significance." *The Gospel According to Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 1082.

Moreover, apocalyptic symbolism is in fact connected to historical events elsewhere in Matthew (chapter 24). We witness a string of *historical* predictions leading up to Jerusalem's AD 70 destruction—famines, earthquakes, wars, the gospel's proclamation throughout the Roman Empire, messianic pretenders, persecution. Then, *bam*!—we have the clearly *apocalyptic* symbolism of the sun and moon going dark. Such stock apocalyptic imagery in the Old Testament denotes earth-shattering national disasters of "cosmic" proportions for Edom, Egypt, Babylon, and other nations. The sun wasn't *literally* darkened when these ancient Near Eastern nations were destroyed—nor with Jerusalem's later demise in AD 70.

Licona's measured work has been unfairly compared to Robert Gundry's. Ironically, the careful New Testament scholar Douglas Moo both strongly disagreed with Gundry in dialogue in the *Journal for the Evangelical Theological Society* and considers Licona's view consistent with inerrancy. Former ETS president and—carefully note—*historian* Edwin Yamauchi as well as other CSBI signatories with whom I've interacted don't see Licona's view to be in conflict with inerrancy. And I wonder why other prominent evangelicals holding Licona's earlier-held apocalyptic view haven't been so targeted.

In closing, I cite another ICBI signatory, the New Testament scholar Eckhard Schnabel:

> This is a notoriously difficult passage: Matthew appears to be narrating an historical event, but clearly does not address the (equally historical!) issues that result from such an interpretation. This is certainly not a matter of orthodoxy—a commitment which should not be tied to the interpretation of difficult passages but, fundamentally, to Jesus' death and resurrection.[15]

STR: Dr. Blomberg, in your view, does Dr. Licona's interpretation of the raised saints in Matt. 27:52-53 violate the doctrine of inerrancy? Why or why not?

Blomberg: It most certainly does not violate the doctrine of inerrancy, at least not as conceived by the widely used Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy. Article XIII of that document explicitly declares, "We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose." If a scholar makes a proposal that a certain text of Scripture falls into a certain literary form or genre, understands the truth claims made by that genre, and believes and fully submits himself or herself to those truths, inerrancy is being upheld.

For example, although virtually every scholar I've ever read agrees that Luke 16:19-31 is a parable, I can count on students or laypeople

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[15] Personal correspondence (email), October 8, 2011.

everywhere I teach asking me, "What about the view that sees this as a real story about a beggar named Lazarus and a rich man?" There is absolutely nothing in the text that calls this passage a parable or conclusively proves that it is one. But no one accuses me of violating inerrancy, and I explain why even conservative evangelical scholarship is virtually unanimous that it is a parable, and that there are important theological lessons to be learned from the text, whether or not these two characters ever existed.

If people are unpersuaded by the case for Matt. 27:52-53 as an apocalyptic symbol, let them demonstrate *exegetically* why they would exclude this option and then let others judge as to who has made the better case. Those who bypass this process make it *appear* as if they know they cannot make a better case, but because they disapprove of the conclusion they simply want to censor it. Meanwhile, *they* are the ones who are violating the Chicago Statement, not those like Dr. Licona

STR: Dr. Quarles, what are some objections to the responses offered up to this point?

Quarles: In the Round Table discussion thus far, scholars have referred to Matt. 27:52-53 both as containing apocalyptic imagery and as "special effects" as if the two were equivalent. I think that the two are quite distinct. In the context of this discussion, "special effects" appears to refer to an ancient literary device in which an author described portents accompanying the death of an important individual which he did not intend to be understood as events that occurred in space-time. No compelling case for the existence of this "ancient practice" has yet been made. Although the present discussion appeals to descriptions of portents in the writings of Josephus as a possible example, *The Resurrection of Jesus* admitted that "Josephus reports that even the strangest of these actually happened" (p. 550). Josephus' testimony is corroborated by Tacitus. That Josephus intended to portray the portents as actual historical events seems clear from his statement: "a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared: I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those who saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals" (Jewish War 6:297-298).

The *Resurrection of Jesus* mentioned Lucian's imaginative creation of portents accompanying the death of Proteus. However, this is clearly not an example of an ancient practice in which writers described phenomena but did not intend them to be understood as actual historical events. Lucian's embellishments were designed to deceive "dullards" to give him a laugh at their gullibility. When speaking to "men of taste," who might have had the sophistication to recognize a literary device such as "special effects" if such a device existed, Lucian told the facts "without embellishment."

The appeal to claims of portents at the time of the death of Kim Jung-Il is not really helpful either. The BBC article made no suggestion that the portents were widely recognized by the people of North Korea as a mere literary device. On the contrary, the article implies that the reports were generated by the state-run news agency as propaganda supporting veneration of the leader and noted that "an elaborate personality cult, involving multiple stories of alleged miracles or astonishing deeds, has been built up around him."

An argument for classifying the portents of Matt. 27:52-53 as "special effects" is premature until one first demonstrates that writers who described such portents 1) did not intend to portray the portents as actual historical events observed by eyewitnesses (unlike Josephus) and 2) had no intention to deceive their audiences (unlike Lucian, and apparently, the North Korean News agency).

STR: Dr. Kruger, do you read the entirety of Matthew 27 as a historical description, including the passage on the raised saints? If so, then why do you do so?

Kruger: Let me begin by saying, along with the other scholars here, that I very much appreciate Mike Licona's new book on the resurrection. It will no doubt prove to be a fundamental resource for defending the historicity of that event from the challenges of critical scholars. However, we do have a disagreement when it comes to how to understand the descriptions of Matt. 27:52-53. I take this portion of the text as straightforward historical narrative. There are many reasons I am not persuaded that these verses are non-historical apocalyptic symbolism, but let me just focus on a primary one: *all of these events described at the death of Jesus were seen (or could be seen) visually by eyewitnesses.*

The earthquake is a key example. In the above discussion, Licona appeals to how earthquakes are used in Greco-Roman literature to provide "special effects" around important events (even though they didn't really happen). The problem, however, is that Matt. 27:54 plainly states, "The centurion […] *saw the earthquake and what took place.*" Unless we want to suggest the centurion is himself symbolic, then we must regard the earthquake as something that really happened. No doubt the darkness in the sky was also something witnessed by bystanders because Matthew tells us the actual hours it lasted (from the sixth to the ninth). And certainly we have good reasons to think the temple veil was actually torn in two. This account is included in all three Synoptics and we are told specifically that the veil was torn "from top to bottom" (although scholars debate whether the tearing was seen the moment it happened, depending on the location of the crucifixion).

If so, then the only remaining event that could possibly qualify as apocalyptic symbolism is the raising of the saints. But, if all the surrounding events, which are also supposedly apocalyptic symbolism, ac-

tually happened, then why would we think differently of this one? If the other "cosmic" events really took place, then what grounds do we have for taking this single event as symbolic? I would suggest we would need a very compelling exegetical reason to do so. However, not only does the text provide no such reason, it actually provides reasons to think it is historical. First, just like the other events, the raising of these saints is something observed by eyewitnesses: "they went into the holy city and appeared to many." Indeed, authors often appeal to eyewitnesses for the very purpose of proving that the events they are describing *actually happened* (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:6). The implications of this verse, therefore, run in the opposite direction of the symbolic view—it implies that people in Jerusalem really saw these saints.[16] Second, scholars have argued that Matthew likely presents the earthquake as the *cause* for the temple veil being torn, the rocks being split, and the tombs being opened.[17] Thus, if the earthquake really happened, then these other events must have really happened.

Even though Licona says he is "undecided" about which direction to take this passage, he defends the possibility of the symbolic view by drawing comparisons between Matt. 27:51-54 and the apocalyptic imagery in Matthew 24. However, the nature of these two passages is very different. Most notably, Matthew 24 is the *teaching of Jesus about the future*, whereas Matthew 27 is the *description of the narrator/author about the past*. If apocalyptic portions were to be inserted into a book that is primarily historical narrative (which certainly can happen), we would expect it to be done more often in the former manner and less often in the latter.

STR: Dr. Kruger, in your view, does Dr. Licona's interpretation of the raised saints in Matt. 27:52-53 violate the doctrine of inerrancy? Why or why not?

Kruger: No, I do not think that Licona's view would constitute a violation of inerrancy. In essence, the doctrine of inerrancy teaches that *whatever Scripture affirms* is true. But, this doctrine, in and of itself, does not answer the question of what Scripture affirms. Does Genesis affirm six 24-hour days? Some say yes, others say no. But, this is an interpretive issue; not an inerrancy issue. Inerrancy is violated if a person acknowledges that Scripture affirms something, and then also acknowledges that the thing it affirms is false. And Licona has not done this. However, when we evaluate a certain position, we should do more than answer the

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[16] As a side note, there is no indication that these saints had experienced the final resurrection and received new, imperishable bodies. Rather, these raisings were probably very similar to that of Lazarus (who would eventually die again).

[17] E.g., R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eeerdmans, 2007), 1083.

narrow question of whether it violates inerrancy. Inerrancy is not the only critical issue we should consider. A view can have other problems—or could lead to other problems—even if it is not a violation of this important doctrine. My concern about Licona's position falls into this camp. Personally, I think the evidence for taking Matt. 27:52-53 as non-historical and symbolic is pretty thin. And when the basis for a certain interpretation is that thin, it raises concerns about whether the same hermeneutical method could possibly be employed when we are faced with other passages that prove to be problematic or embarrassing. In fact, I think this is probably the main issue that has been driving this whole controversy (even though some have tried to make it about inerrancy). Of course, I am not suggesting Licona is trying to avoid difficult passages or that he is motivated by such things. Rather I am simply trying to put my finger what I believe is the real issue for myself and for many others.

STR: Dr. Licona, in light of Dr. Quarles' and Dr. Kruger's objections and analysis offered here, is it not apparent that your approach to the question the raised saints de-historicizes the account of Matthew?

Licona: I don't believe so. Drs. Quarles and Kruger provide two primary reasons for holding that Matthew intended for his readers to interpret the raised saints in a historical sense. Their first reason is that this text forms one long sentence in Greek and that what I proposed requires a shift in genre twice within the same sentence. I agree. But this is precisely what we may observe going on elsewhere. Acts 2:17-21 forms one long sentence and includes details that are both historical and apocalyptic.[18] Peter suggests in vv. 22-24 that the signs and wonders described in 19 as blood, fire and smoke had already taken place among them in Jesus' miracles, exorcisms, and resurrection. The sun going dark and moon turning into blood may also refer to the same events, since Peter says whoever calls on the name of the Lord in that day will be saved. In vv. 22-39, Peter encourages his audience members to do just that, suggesting he believed that day had come.

Although not in a single sentence, we see a possible shift in genre twice within Jesus' Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:4-31). Kruger answers that Matthew 24 and 27 are different, since the former speaks of the future whereas the latter about the past. However, he has not shown how this difference is important. And the same cannot be said of the phenomena in Acts 2 that Peter speaks of as having occurred in that time.

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[18] Quarles notes that the Greek conjunction *kai* appears six consecutive times in one long sentence in Matt. 27:51-52. In Acts 2:17-21, *kai* appears eight consecutive times in one long sentence.

In Matt. 5:28, Jesus teaches about lust and adultery. In the very next verse, he teaches that if your eye causes you to sin (i.e., to lust), pluck it out. For it is better to lose a body part than for your entire body to be cast into hell. Everything in the immediate context of v. 29 is understood literally. And there is no indication in the text itself that leads us to believe Jesus meant for His readers to understand v. 29 in anything other than a literal sense. Yet, there are no reports of Jesus' disciples gouging out their eyes. The appearance of a similar statement by Seneca informs us this was a figure of speech.[19]

The Greco-Roman literature contains numerous examples of historical and non-historical details being comingled.[20] One example is found in reports concerning the death of Julius Caesar in which as many as sixteen phenomena are reported to have occurred, including a comet and an eclipse of the sun.[21] We know that a comet appeared a few months after Caesar's assassination because we have corroborating reports from the Chinese.[22] It also appears very likely that Mt. Etna erupted around that time and may have been responsible for the darkness, although a year is unlikely. However, we also know that no visible eclipses were viewable from within the Roman Empire in 44 BC.[23]

The second reason offered by Quarles and Kruger that Matthew's intent was to communicate historical details when reporting the raised saints is the presence of two elements that suggest eyewitness testimony: the statement "and they appeared to many"[24] and Matthew's statement that the Roman centurion and other bystanders saw the earthquake and at least some of the other phenomena. However, similar statements of appearances exist in the Greco-Roman literature of the period that we should probably regard as poetic or 'special effects.' When reporting the assassination of Julius Caesar, Plutarch writes that a phantom *appeared* to one of Caesar's assassins (Caesar 69.4) while Virgil reports that pale phantoms *were seen* at dusk (*The Georgics*, Georgic 1.466ff.). When report-

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[19] Sen. *Ep. Lucil.* 51.13.

[20] For a number of these, see my paper read at the 2011 annual conference of the Evangelical Philosophical Society, "When the Saints Go Marching In." A pdf and mp3 of this paper are available at www.risenjesus.com. See also Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2010), 548-50.

[21] Pliny the Elder reports an unusually long eclipse of the sun (*Natural History*, 2.30). Josephus, Plutarch, and Virgil report that the sun faded, turned away its light, and prolonged darkness. They do not describe this specifically as an eclipse and the darkness could have resulted from the eruption of Mt. Etna if that actually occurred.

[22] See John T. Ramsey, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Greco-Roman Comets from 500 B.C. to A.D. 400* (Syllecta Classica, XVII; Iowa City, Iowa: The University of Iowa, 2006), 106-24.

[23] See the NASA eclipse web site: http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/SEcat5/SE-0099-0000.html

[24] Quarles adds there are no OT parallels. However, see Ezek. 37:12-14; Isa. 26:19.

ing Caesar's enslavement of Egypt, Dio Cassius reports that apparitions *were seen* (R*oman History* 51.17.4-5) while Lukan says spirits walked the earth (*Civil War* 1.523-2.1). An appearance of spirits is only one of several phenomena reported to have occurred during these events.

The phenomena witnessed by the centurion and bystanders may only have been the darkness, the earthquake, the rocks splitting and the tombs opening. They would not have seen the temple veil tear in two. And they may not have seen the raised saints, since they did not walk in Jerusalem and appear to others until after Jesus' resurrection.

In the end, even if we understand the darkness, earthquake, and the tearing of the temple veil as historical, there is nothing to prevent Matthew from mixing non-historical details with historical ones. That we observe this practice occurring in both biblical and Greco-Roman literature of his time ought to leave us open to the possibility that Matthew is doing that here

STR: Dr. Akin, in your view, what is at stake in this discussion?

Akin: All of the other contributors have taken what I would call a "ground level" view of things. Let me move up and give a "bird's eye" perspective that also takes into account the responsibilities of a college and seminary president, as well as someone who is concerned about how evangelicals handle matters like this.

First, I am grieved at how all of this unfolded with Drs. Geisler and Licona. This issue, concern, debate or whatever we call it could have been handled better by all parties involved. This is unfortunate as participants have dug in their heels and talked at one another more than with one another. Christian brothers should be better than this.

Second, I am saddened that a superb work, in so many ways, on the resurrection is now tainted and the stain may never be removed. *The Resurrection of Jesus* should have been received as a landmark defense of the empty tomb and the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Unfortunately, I doubt that will now be the case.

Third, though I agree this is first a matter of hermeneutics, I also believe it is more than just a matter of hermeneutics. Though the issues of biblical inspiration and biblical hermeneutics are separate categories, they are clearly related. The tragic fact is one can become so adept at "hermeneutical gymnastics" that they can wittingly or unwittingly compromise a high view of the Bible's inspiration. Do I think Dr. Licona intended to do that with his interpretation of Matt. 27:51-54? No, I do not. Do I think he runs a very real risk of doing so anyway with his view of the text as "special effects," "legend," "story embellishment," and "poetic devices?" Yes I do. Why? First, these literary categories are foreign to the Scriptures. Second, there is nothing in the text that would lead us to de-historicize it. Particularly important is the near proximity of the resurrection passage in Matthew 28! In my judgment this is a death-knell

to Dr. Licona's position and raises the stakes to a crucially high level. If you de-historicize one resurrection what keeps you from de-historicizing the other?!

STR: Dr. Copan, in your view, what is at stake in this discussion?

Copan: In terms of how we engage over these disagreements, one thing at stake is the gospel's reputation. James 1:19 exhorts us to be "quick to listen" and "slow to speak." Unfortunately, some evangelicals have the reputation of being "quick to speak" and "slow to listen"! These have a tendency to swiftly condemn, censure, and bully; they bypass gracious, patient engagement, and this results in division, hurt, and damage to the cause of Christ. Former Evangelical Theological Society president Darrell Bock has rightly urged evangelicals to do better in this regard, and this present forum exemplifies the kind of gracious exchange he exhorts us to pursue.[25]

Another matter at stake is the question of historicity, and Licona's shift away from "legend" language in favor of "apocalyptic," "symbolic" and "figurative" is a welcome change. The fact that we are having this discussion highlights the importance of the Bible's historicity, which is foundational to our faith (1 Cor. 15:17)—a point Licona takes very seriously in his defense of Jesus' resurrection. Clearly, Licona does not deny the historicity of an event in Scripture if he thinks the biblical author affirms it.

Yet discerning what is historical and what is figurative can get tricky in certain places. Genre issues do present a challenge here and there, and we should acknowledge that at certain points there will be honest disagreements between evangelicals equally committed to the Bible's historicity. So, for instance, when it comes to the Genesis "days" controversy, I think it unfair that certain young-earth creationists, insisting on a "literal" or "historical" understanding of Genesis 1, accuse old-earth evangelicals of denying inerrancy or being hermeneutically inconsistent.

In the case of Matt. 27:52-53, as I have noted above, a good case can be made for a mix of history and apocalyptic, though I lean toward the historical. It is precisely because of a certain theological inelegance and a seeming conflict with other relevant biblical texts (e.g., Christ being "the first fruits of those who are asleep" [1 Cor. 15:20]) that has led some prominent evangelical interpreters to offer an apocalyptic rendering of the raised saints.

Perhaps another parallel would help. In light of my book *Is God a Moral Monster?* (Baker), some (thankfully friendly!) evangelicals have

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[25] Darrell Bock, *Purpose-Directed Theology: Getting Our Priorities Right in Evangelical Controversies* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

raised the question about my views of "literal history" in certain Old Testament narratives. I, along with other evangelical scholars like Christopher Wright, Kenneth Kitchen, and Tremper Longman, have interpreted as hyperbolic Canaanite "annihilation" passages ("utterly destroy," "leave alive nothing that breathes," "no survivor was left")—a common feature in ancient Near Eastern war texts.[26] Yet one important factor leading me to this conclusion of hyperbole is that the Scriptures *elsewhere* (e.g., Josh. 23:12; Judges 1-2; et al.) affirm there were many Canaanite survivors. We have here, not the *apocalyptic*, but the *hyperbolic* incorporated into historical narrative. We're told by the biblical authors that both (a) no survivors and (b) survivors are found in these historical narratives—which is an excellent reason not to interpret both statements literally![27] Furthermore, historical texts that refer to "driving out" or "dispossessing" the Canaanites would be in conflict with purported "obliteration" texts, if the latter be taken literally.[28]

So some ask, "Well then, what's the precise line between the literal/historical and the hyperbolic in Scripture?" I urge them, "Let's keep reading and comparing the relevant biblical texts—along with vital background information—in order to more accurately interpret and discern what is going on in these texts."

STR: Dr. Quarles, in your view, what is at stake in this discussion?

Quarles: I fear that more is at stake than we would like to admit. Of course I agree with Dr. Blomberg that Scripture must be interpreted according to its genre and that disputes about the genre of a particular passage do not necessarily threaten biblical inerrancy. On the other hand, certain classifications of the genre of biblical texts are precluded *a priori* by those who affirm biblical inerrancy. For example, Dr. Licona entertained the possibility that the resurrection narratives "could possibly be mixed with legend" and listed Matt. 27:51-54 as a potential example of such legend. Had he concluded that the NT contained legend, I would adamantly object to that classification and regard it as a serious denial of biblical inerrancy. Dr. Copan acknowledged that this discussion "raised red flags."

Some scholars on both sides of this debate have compared the current controversy to the controversy over midrash criticism in the ETS in the 1980's. Whether this comparison is fair depends on whether the cur-

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[26] For examples, see Kenneth Kitchen's *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 173-4.

[27] Thus, Joshua's carrying out "all that Moses commanded" should not be interpreted that he literally left "alive nothing that breathes." Also, we have indications that "utterly destroy/utter destruction" need not be understood literally (cp. Isa. 43:28; Jer. 25:11).

[28] Adam and Eve as well as Cain were "driven out" by God, and David was "driven out" by King Saul—and they survived!

rent debate focuses on the possible presence of apocalyptic imagery or categories such as legend and "special effects." Biblical inerrancy *was* at stake in the debate over midrash criticism. The midrash critics incorrectly defined "midrash" as a "theological tale" in which authors invented complete narratives about Jesus by weaving together motifs from the OT. Various scholars labeled large sections of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as midrash and raised serious challenges to nearly the entire historical foundation of the Christian faith. Although some argued and continue to argue that the debate was merely over hermeneutics, I strongly disagree. "Midrash," as it was defined by the midrash critics, was the equivalent of "Jewish myth."[29] The apostle Paul spoke rather clearly about how the church was to treat works of this genre: "So, rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith and *may not pay attention to Jewish myths* and the commandments of men who reject the truth" (Titus 1:13-14).

Certainly one must interpret Scripture according to its genre and form. However, this does not mean that biblical inerrantists may classify Scripture as belonging to any and every genre. If someone were to posit that a biblical text belonged to a genre labeled "yarn spinning" defined as "deception within bounds generally acceptable and considered humorous in the first-century Mediterranean world," most readers would recognize that such a classification was unacceptable given biblical standards for honesty and integrity. Similarly since clear statements of Scripture urge Christians to reject certain genres like myth (1 Tim. 4:7), classification of Holy Scripture or portions of it as "myth," "legend," "midrash" (as improperly defined by midrash critics) and the like is unacceptable.

On the other hand, "apocalyptic" is a genre widely recognized by conservative scholars much like poem or parable. Thus, I do not regard classification of a particular text as apocalyptic as an automatic and direct denial of biblical inerrancy. However, given the fact that scholars have redefined seeming harmless terms like "midrash" as the equivalent of Jewish myth, we must be alert to the dangers posed by appeals to particular genres that are not clearly defined and indicated by objective textual features. Just as our Lord taught us to beware of wolves in sheep's clothing, the history of biblical interpretation warns us to beware of legend in apocalyptic clothing.

STR: Dr. Licona, in your view, what is at stake in this discussion?

Licona: In short, our academic integrity and our testimony to everyone outside the Southern Baptist Convention. I've been very disappointed to

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[29] C.L. Quarles, "Midrash as Creative Historiography: The Portrait of a Misnomer," *JETS* 39 (1996): 457-64.

see the actions of some evangelicals since this ordeal began last August. My leaving the North American Mission Board and Southern Evangelical Seminary were both on very amicable terms and yet the rumors circulated and were defended that I was fired from both, which are simply not true. In addition, calls were made behind the scenes to prevent me from earning an income elsewhere. Some SBC professors were harassed for taking the position that interpreting Matthew's raised saints in a non-historical manner is compatible with the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. Others were uninvited from established speaking engagements to being dismissed from their teaching position. And all of this occurred prior to any academic discussion on the subject. This communicates that academic discussion is not valued in some corners of the evangelical world and the Southern Baptist Convention. And it communicates to emerging evangelical scholars that they must "toe the line" proposed by a few influential leaders or you will be marginalized. This will thwart some future advances in evangelical scholarship, since scholars will fear proposing anything that may rock the boat. The SBC is a fine denomination. I hope that it will learn and grow from this controversy.

I don't agree with Dr. Akin that if you dehistoricize the resurrection of Matthew's saints there is nothing to keep you from dehistoricizing Jesus' resurrection. On pp. 553 and 400-37 of my book I have provided several reasons why dehistoricizing one on the basis of the other is an illegitimate move. Moreover, there is very strong historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus.

STR: Dr. Akin, what is necessary to move this discussion forward constructively?

Akin: How do we move forward? I believe forums like this is one avenue. It has allowed for gracious and respectful dialogue between brothers in Christ who love the Lord Jesus, the Word of God and the gospel. This is a model for how issues like this should be addressed.

Having said this, it is my earnest and sincere prayer that in the days ahead Dr. Licona will go back and seriously revisit his position of Matthew 27. I would hope that he would come to see that the text should be interpreted *historically* as Dr. Quarles excellent analysis has demonstrated.

Personally, I have found Dr. Quarles critique to be devastating to Dr. Licona's position. Dr. Licona's historiographic approach is to be applauded. The same cannot be said for his exegesis of the text in the context of 2nd Temple Judaism and the Jewish Scriptures which shaped and formed Israel's worldview and thinking.

Then, I would like to see Dr. Licona publicly acknowledge the change in his position, and to correct his view in future editions of *The Resurrection of Jesus*. Such a move will not be easy on his part I am sure. It will require grace and humility, two Christian character traits often ab-

sent in the academic world. However, it has the potential for great fruitfulness and blessing to the Church of the Lord Jesus.

STR: Dr. Licona, what is necessary to move this discussion forward constructively?

Licona: I think what *STR* has done in hosting this roundtable discussion is precisely what needed to be done. The participants in this discussion have demonstrated that Christian brothers can disagree and still live in community. That's biblical and refreshing.

But, outside of this roundtable discussion, this controversy has revealed an ugly side to the evangelical world. Publishing a barrage of Open Letters on the Internet, intentionally misrepresenting the views of another, circulating petitions and working behind the scenes to intimidate and marginalize those with whom one disagrees while refusing to engage in academic discussions on the disputed matter is both unprofessional and unchristian behavior. Others are watching us and this has hurt the cause of Christ where love and unity in the Body of Christ should always take precedence over theological differences in the nonessentials, such as whether Matthew even intended for the raised saints to be understood literally. Because evangelicals have deep theological convictions, we need to come up with a standard protocol for dealing with theological disagreements. Matthew 18 does not apply, since it is not a sin to have a different interpretation of the text. Standard protocol would include classroom discussions, academic roundtable discussions, papers read at academic conferences, and critical dialogue occurring in peer-reviewed journals. Hopefully, the next time interpretive disagreements arise, requiring established protocol to be followed will result in curbing and perhaps even avoiding the sort of missteps we have witnessed during this controversy.

STR: Dr. Blomberg, what is necessary to move this discussion forward constructively?

Blomberg: First, Drs. Geisler and Mohler need to apologize in the same public forums in which they censured Dr. Licona, for having been inappropriately harsh and unnecessarily simplistic in their analyses. Second, all the Christian leaders who worked behind the scenes to get Dr. Licona removed from various positions, including already extended speaking invitations, likewise need to publicly seek Dr. Licona's forgiveness. Then, if he wishes to remain within the SBC, a courageous SBC institution of at least comparable prestige to those that let him go needs to hire him.

Second, forums precisely like this one need to continue, so that scholars can weigh the "point and counterpoint" and arguments at some length before coming to conclusions, especially those they will promote dogmatically.

Third, interested parties should read Robert Gundry's preface and theological postscript to the second edition of his Matthew commentary to learn how he argued that his view was compatible with inerrancy and then read D.A. Carson's review article of Gundry in *Trinity Journal* to see why Carson *agreed* even while remaining profoundly unconvinced by Gundry's exegesis.[30] My own views match Carson's. The vote to ask Gundry to resign from the ETS might well not have carried had Dr. Geisler not orchestrated a campaign to bring in large numbers of like-minded members simply for the business meeting who had not otherwise been present at the conference.

Finally, the conversation really needs to take inerrancy off the table. Dr. Licona has never suggested that Matthew employed an intentionally deceptive genre in Matt. 27:51-53. Apart from this one qualifier, all genres remain open in principle, *including* myth and legend.[31] Fictitious stories *can* teach theological truth. Not one of the five New Testament texts that uses μῦθος says anything about the entirety of Scripture.

STR: Dr. Kruger, what is necessary to move this discussion forward constructively?

Kruger: In order for the discussion to move forward, three things must happen: (a) Our thinking about scriptural authority needs to be bigger than the doctrine of inerrancy. The doctrine of inerrancy is a critical piece of the puzzle and should be vigorously defended and affirmed. But, it cannot protect us from every sort of scriptural problem. A person's view of Scripture is not necessarily healthy just because they affirm this doctrine—they can still have other serious issues. If we forget this, we will find ourselves guarding only the front door while intruders continue to slip in easily through the back. (b) At the same time, we probably need to develop more clarity about different ways in which the doctrine of inerrancy can be violated. When does an appeal to genre protect someone from charges of violating inerrancy, and when does it not? Clearly there are some instances where the Scriptures so plainly teach that an event occurred that if someone denies the occurrence of that event, regardless of an appeal to genre, they would still be violating inerrancy. But how do we determine which passages these are? (c) We need to do more work on the question of how historical books (like the Gospels) employ apocalyptic/symbolic elements. We know it happens (e.g., Matthew 24) but more work is needed on the pattern and frequency of its occurrence. What features have to be present for us to realize this is

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[30] Robert Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on his Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution* (second edition; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994); D. A. Carson, "Gundry on Matthew: A Critical Review,"*Trinity Journal* 3(1982): 71-91.

[31] For details see: C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (London: Fount, 1974).

happening? And how objective are these features? Thus, the issue is not just about genre; but specifically about how genres are *mixed together*.

STR: Dr. Quarles, what is necessary to move this discussion forward constructively?

Quarles: The entire debate hinges on Matthew's purpose. I think that the internal evidence of Matthew's Gospel points to a historical purpose for these verses. My concerns about Dr. Licona's position at this point mainly relate to methodology and the potential consequences of others applying his methodology. We need much more discussion about the nature of apocalyptic elements and objective features of texts that help one identify them as apocalyptic. Without a clear method for identifying apocalyptic features that has appropriate safeguards, many important historical texts could be dehistoricized, including accounts of critical events of Jesus' life and ministry.

If terms like "special effects" continue to be used, scholars must clearly define the term. "Special effects" could be defined in a number of different ways and some definitions would be incompatible with biblical inerrancy. For example, "special effects" can refer to cinematographic techniques used to create the illusion that a phenomenon which was only imaginary actually occurred. One could foresee the possibility that accounts of Jesus' miracles in the Gospels might be classified as "special effects."

Once a clear definition of "special effects" is offered, scholars must identify clear examples of this literary device in ancient literature, preferably Jewish literature of the Second Temple period. Scholars must also determine if current assumptions about the non-historical intent of ancient writers who described portents involve imposing a 21st century Western worldview on these writers.

STR: At this time, it is appropriate to provide space for concluding thoughts. To each of the contributors on the panel, STR would like to thank you for your participation on this important and stimulating roundtable devoted to Dr. Licona's work. In conclusion, how would each of you characterize what needs to be heard in this discussion?

Quarles: Although I have explored other interpretive options with an open mind, I remain convinced that Matt. 27:52-53 is historical narrative. Although the interaction in this forum has been extensive, I find myself wishing for more. I hope that discussion will continue for months to come.

I would like to thank Mike Licona for his friendship. Even before this forum, he privately invited my critique and continued to relate to me graciously and respectfully even when I disagreed with his interpretation of the raising of the saints. Due to the purpose of this forum, I have not enumerated the many contributions that Dr. Licona's work has

made. I urge readers to consult my review in *JETS* for my general assessment of his book.

I would like to express appreciation to Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary for the invitation to interact with other respected scholars on a matter of such importance. I would also like to thank my brothers for their obvious desire to speak candidly but kindly. The same God-breathed Word that contains Matt. 27:52-53 also contains 2 Tim. 2:24: "The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness." I pray we will all strive for this ideal. Surely, this ideal challenges all of us to pursue greater conformity to the character of Christ and to crave a greater measure of his grace.

Copan: First, this kind of gracious, constructive discussion between evangelical scholars is how things ought to be done. I'm grateful to the *STR* editor for encouraging it. Second, I commend Mike Licona for his humility and graciousness throughout this controversy, even adjusting his view in light of persuasive reasons presented. Third, evangelical institutions should be careful not to prematurely circle their theological wagons on this and similar issues, censuring any who disagree. I've spoken to faculty at such institutions about this raised-saints controversy, and, because they fear for their jobs, they are cowed into silence, and scholarly discussion and research are stifled. Finally, this conversation has been helpful to me personally. Though I myself have taken an historical approach to Mat. 27:52-53, I have come to see that a strong argument can be made for including some apocalyptic aspects into an overall historical narrative—a perspective justified by the theological awkwardness presented by a strictly historical view in light of 1 Cor. 15:20.

Kruger: In sum, Licona has given us a wonderful book on the resurrection, and, in my opinion, has not violated the doctrine of inerrancy in his view of Matt. 27:52-53. As discussed above, this proves to be more of a debate over the *intent* of Matthew's gospel rather than the *truth* of Matthew's gospel.

However, I think there are still concerns about Licona's approach to this passage. Given that this passage occurs within a book that is undoubtedly historical narrative, there should be clear and substantial reasons to take it as symbolic and figurative. We have such reasons in Matthew 24. But, I think they are lacking in Matthew 27. It is one thing to find apocalyptic elements on the lips of Jesus when he is speaking about the future, it is another to find them coming from the narrator/author when he is describing the past. To suggest a passage is symbolic without sufficient reasons is to run the risk of setting a hermeneutical precedent that may lead to other problems in the future. It is my hope that this roundtable discussion will generate further reflection on these important

issues so we will know how to address them more fruitfully when they come up again.

Blomberg: I am active in a young urban congregation that attracts a lot of people, including unbelievers and former believers, who have been deeply wounded by Christians. One of several recurring themes in their stories is the censorship they received from very conservative churches and schools when they proposed beliefs or behaviors they thought consonant with Scripture but others in positions of power did not. I wrote an article ten years ago for *JETS* during the open theism debate highlighting how the NT depicts Jesus and the apostles consistently bending over backwards to keep and attract those who are further "left-wing" than they, while reserving the harshest condemnation for the religious teachers who were too "right-wing." Unfortunately, in many circles today we have precisely inverted this pattern.

The slippery slope argument was often applied in the ETS debate over Gundry. But look at the rest of his scholarly career—a detailed commentary on Mark with ringing endorsement of historicity, continued updates of a standard NT survey, and a collection of essays on how older Christian interpretations are often better than newer, revisionist ones. And none of this was done to placate his critics who had disowned him.

The pages in Dr. Licona's book that have been debated are miniscule in number. The strengths of his apologetic so far outweigh the weaknesses that it is tragic to realize that his career could wind up being marked by this one controversy that was so unnecessary. Debate exegetical details in the standard scholarly outlets by all means, but please, Drs. Geisler and Mohler, stop ruining people's lives. The world *is* watching and many of them are rejecting Christianity precisely because too many of us act like this too often.

Having said all that, I do think *this* forum has helped solidify my interpretation of the raising of the saints as historical.

Akin: Let me speak as clearly and plainly as I can as a former Academic Vice President and Dean of the School of Theology, and now the President of a "Great Commission" evangelical seminary. My perspective will be criticized by some and well received by others. I have learned this reality goes with the assignment the Lord Jesus has placed upon me.

Given his current understanding of Matthew 27 and what he thinks are acceptable literary genres that may be applied to the Bible, would I consider inviting Dr. Licona, as has been done in the past, to speak on the campus of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary? The answer is *yes*, I would. I do not have to be in lock step agreement with someone to have them come to our campus and speak to our students. I have often said that were he alive I would gladly invite C. S. Lewis to come to our campus and "stay awhile!" I do not agree with all that Lewis believed, but I know my students would be blessed and edified by expo-

sure to this man. When it comes to Dr. Licona, my critique of and opposition to his position is well known and is a matter of public record. I would have little fear that anyone would think that I endorse his position of Matthew 27. And, I believe he still could address well things of importance to our students. His defense of the empty tomb and bodily resurrection of Jesus certainly comes to mind.

But, I need to raise and answer a second question. Would I extend to Dr. Licona an invitation to join the faculty of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary? The unequivocal answer is *no*, I would not. There is too much at stake when it comes to "rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). The apostle Peter makes it clear that "we did not follow cleverly devised myths" (2 Pet. 1:16). Dr. Licona's view of Matt. 27:51-54 opens a theological Pandora 's Box that does not rightly interpret the text, nor does it encourage confidence in the historical veracity and accuracy of the Word of God. Dr. Licona may remain "presently undecided pertaining to how Matthew intended his readers to understand the saints raised at Jesus' death." I have no such ambiguity when it comes to the faculty that will teach at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Finally, let me say I regret Dr. Blomberg's rhetoric concerning Al Mohler. His singular written response to Dr. Licona's book was respectful and measured. Nothing he said could fairly be construed as attempting to ruin Mike's career. Why Dr. Blomberg believes this, or that Al owes Mike an apology, mystifies me. I strongly disagree with him on both of these points

Licona: I would like for readers to hear that I have not called into question a historical interpretation of Matthew's raised saints because I have an aversion to the supernatural. My book argues for the historicity of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. So, it should be clear that I have no such aversion. My objective is to understand what the text is actually saying and then bow to its authority. I don't take Jesus' command literally to sever one of my body parts if it causes me to sin (Matt. 18:8-9), although there's nothing in the immediate text and context that suggests to our eyes that it's to be taken in any other manner. Just the opposite, in fact. Jesus speaks of one going to heaven maimed! I also don't understand in a literal manner the celestial phenomena in Jesus' Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24. Are the raised saints in Matthew 27 to be understood literally? It's hard to say. Other evangelical scholars like N. T. Wright, Craig Blomberg, William Lane Craig, Leon Morris and Michael Bird are either undecided on the matter or hold that Matthew's raised saints are not to be understood in a historical sense. Could we be mistaken? Certainly. Could those who interpret the raised saints in a historical manner be mistaken? Certainly. But none of us is denying the inerrancy of the text. It's precisely because we respect the text as God's Word that we are

seeking to understand what the author was trying to communicate. For the Lord will hold those of us who teach His Word to a higher standard (James 3:1). And I take that very seriously.

STR: Again, STR extends thanks to each of you for participating in this roundtable.

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Book Reviews

Michael Lieb, Emma Mason, and Jonathan Roberts, editors. *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. xv + 725 pp. Hardback. ISBN 9780199204540. N. p.

The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible is presented in form of 44 chapters in two parts. Part I includes 12 chapters on the reception history of the biblical material (contributors' names in parentheses): Genesis (Rachel Havrelock), Job (John F. A. Sawyer), Psalms (Katharine J. Dell), Isaiah (John F. A. Sawyer), Ezekiel (Paul M. Joyce), Daniel (John J. Collins), Judges (David M. Gunn), the Gospel of John (Catrin H. Williams), Romans (Guy J. Williams), 1 Corinthians (Judith L. Kovacs), Galatians (John Riches), and Revelation (Christopher Rowland, who also served as consultant editor of the volume). Part II features the remaining chapters on a variety of topics, such as: The Bible and Iconography (Albert C. Labriola), Linguistic and Cultural Influences on Interpretation in Translations of the Bible (David J. Clark), Memory, Imagination, and the Interpretation of Scripture in the Middle Ages (Mary Carruthers), The Bible and Anti-Semitism (Tobias Nicklas), Dante and the Bible (Piero Boitani), George Friedric Handel and *The Messiah* (John Butt), Elisabeth Cady Stanton's *The Woman's Bible* (Ann Loader), Bob Dylan's Bible (Michael J. Gilmour), and From John's Gospel to Dan Brown: The Magdalene Code (Robin Griffith-Jones).

In recent years, reception history has grown to be an increasingly popular topic. Rather than focusing on the interpretation of the biblical material by way of exegesis, reception history focuses on the history of interpretation of a given biblical book or passage. This new handbook helpfully introduces and illustrates this important discipline by discussing the reception history of 12 key biblical books (though one laments the non-inclusion of the remaining books in the biblical canon) and a series of specially commissioned representative case studies. On the whole, the essays are competently written and informative. Since a comprehensive review of the contents of this volume is beyond the scope of a short review, my brief remarks will focus on an area of special research interest of mine addressed in the volume: John's Gospel. Catrin Williams, who previously published a monograph on "I Am Sayings" in Jewish and early Christian literature, contributed the 12-page chapter on John's Gospel (plus works cited and further reading, from which references to standard evangelical commentators such as Carson, Keener, Morris, and this writer are conspicuously absent).

After a brief introduction, Williams discusses the shape of John's narrative (essentially a very concise content survey) and then treats the Gospel's

theology under four major headings: Jesus' Mission in the World: Contrasts and Conflict," "Symbols, Signs, and Jesus' Offer of Life," "Jesus, the Heavenly Emissary and Son of God," and "The Spirit and 'The Remembering Community." Little in Williams' treatment rises above what is widely known in Johannine studies. It does not appear that the vantage point of the present volume (i.e. reception history) has shaped Williams' presentation to any significant extent. Apart from an opening tipping of the hat to Clement of Alexandria's designation of John's Gospel as the "spiritual Gospel," there is no discussion of the patristic reception of John's Gospel, nor is there any treatment of the use of John's Gospel by the major church councils. The same glaring omission can be detected with regard to medieval and Reformation scholarship on John's Gospel. Tellingly, the oldest works cited by Williams are Raymond Brown's 1966 commentary, J. L. Martyn's *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (1968), and P. Borgen's essay "God's Agent in the Fourth Gospel."

As a result, those interested in the history of interpretation of John's Gospel will need to turn to works such as A. Volfing, *John the Evangelist in Medieval German Writing* (2001), T. E. Pollard, *Johannine Christology and the Early Church* (1970), F.-M. Braun, *Jean le théologien* (1959), A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* (1975), J. N. Sanders, *The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (1943), and Sean Kealy, *John's Gospel and the History of Biblical Interpretation* (2002), to name but a few. Nevertheless, while the various essays in the volume are somewhat uneven and at times rather brief, there is something for everyone in this volume, including those who are fascinated by the use of the Bible in contemporary culture, whether in Bob Dylan's music or Dan Brown's novels. Where else can you find a treatment of Post-Holocaust Jewish Interpretations of Job, or on Uchimura and the Bible in Japan? With all its flaws and generally critical-leaning tendencies, *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible* shows why reception history is such an intriguing and fascinating field of study in our day.

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C.E. Hill, *Who Chose the Gospels? Probing the Great Gospel Conspiracy.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. 246 pages + appendix, endnotes and index.

One of the pressing needs regarding Canon studies is to readdress the modern assessment of the early church fathers because the records we have are not likely to be supplemented any time soon with new ground-breaking discoveries. Considering the great span of time, the political and religious upheavals, we are fortunate to have what we do have. Unfortunately, instead of seriously studying Irenaeus and the other second century fathers, modern scholarship prefers to denigrate their work or simply refer to them as the

winners in the war of competing Christianities. Under the template of the Bauer thesis, Irenaeus and his contemporaries are said to have conspired to select the canon of the NT, eliminating now lost gospels and overcoming sects of Christianity now considered heretical. C. E. Hill, in *who chose the gospels*, challenges many of these axiomatic rubrics popular among Canon scholars today.

Hill, professor of NT at Reformed Seminary in Orlando, FL presents evidence for a fourfold Gospel Canon that is about 100 years earlier than usually presented and will suggest how it came to be. In doing so, Hill challenges the popular belief among evangelicals and non-evangelicals alike that around AD 200 the NT Canon had just about been recognized and all that was left was some "mopping up" around the edges of the Canon. This was achieved by the fourth century councils. The Gospels are usually considered "ratified" in the mid-to late second century (particularly under Irenaeus' influence).

Hill begins in the garbage dumps of Egypt, specifically the Oxyrhynchus finds. The claims that other gospels were as popular in the 2nd century as the four canonical Gospels are simply not the case. To date, pre-website, including non-Oxyrhynchus finds they have only discovered three fragments of non-canonical gospels and seven to thirteen canonical Gospel fragments.

In recent news, Oxford University uploaded 200,000 segments of Oxyrhynchus papyri to the website www.ancientlives.org to get laymen to help transcribe them in hope of finding more lost gospels. Given that the ratio is overwhelming in favor of the canonical Gospels, the "lost gospels" have a lot of ground to make up. It is unlikely that this search-Sarah-Palin's-e-mails approach will do so. Furthermore, one of the gospels they have found (P.Egerton 2) is likely dependent on the canonical Gospels (especially John). This suggests that in spite of the recent efforts, Hill will remain correct. The papyrus finds "do not show that non-canonical Gospels were 'about as popular' as the canonical ones" (32). He then turns to other kinds of evidence, the literary evidence from the church fathers.

Irenaeus and the modern interpretation of him is handled in two parts. The first is "Silencing the Bishop, Part I: The Lonely Irenaeus." The picture of Irenaeus choosing the Gospels and giving his lonely opinion to the church is refuted by 1) reading his work; and 2) showing those around him were also of the same conclusion. Hill notes, "The problem with Irenaeus is that he simply wrecks the popular paradigm. His views about the emerging New Testament Canon, and about the four Gospels in particular, are simply too well-developed, too mature, to fit the scheme that many have invested themselves in today" (41). The other problem moderns have with Irenaeus is that his rhetoric is unpleasant and intolerant. To expect him to be so is an anachronism that obscures the facts. It turns out he was neither alone in his opinion and that's what really matters.

Next, Hill looks at Irenaeus' co-conspirators: Clement of Alexandria; Serapion, Bishop of Antioch; and the Muratorian canon (a teacher, a preacher, and a canon-list maker). Clement of Alexandria did not cite non-canonical gospels on an equal plane with the canonical ones (contra Lee McDonald). Serapion of Antioch was not advocating the gospel of Peter to be read in the churches as Scripture (it is unthinkable that a bishop would allow a book to be read such without reading it himself!). Instead the books 'handed down to us' from the apostles are to be received (i.e., the Canon). Hill also devastates the mistaken idea that the Muratorian canon belongs to the fourth century. It is more likely to be from the second century.

In Chapter 5, Hill handles the packaging of the Gospels. This deals with the phenomena of why there are only four in the diatessaron, Ammonius' synopsis, and in Gospel codices. Of note in this chapter is the refutation that Tatian used more than four Gospels in his diatessaron. What he does use is the four with a few phrases, most likely composed by himself, to stitch the narratives together.

In subsequent chapters, the same sort of precision is given to Justin Martyr who probably had a complete four-Gospel codex. Chapter 7 shows that the unbelievers show knowledge of the church's Gospel Canon. Chapter 8 describes three works from before AD 150 that show knowledge of the four Gospels. For example, the *Apocryphon of James* and the *Epistula Apostolorum* draw heavily on the four Gospels one wants to add to them, the other wants to supersede them. Both are dependent on their existence and popularity. The same is true of Marcion's canon. These and more show that in the first half of the second century there was a "normative influence already being exercised buy the four canonical Gospels both inside and outside the mainstream church" (182).

Chapter 9 is Hill's discussion of the Apostolic Fathers (the successors of the apostles). Hill concludes that, "all hold to the belief that the saving gospel of Jesus Christ had been authoritatively delivered to Jesus' apostles, whose responsibility it was to teach and hand down that Gospel to the continuing church. The mechanism for receiving those Gospels which were received was in place" (204). Hill contends that mechanism came from the apostles themselves.

Chapters 10 and 11 pull together the drawstring of Hill's theory. Papias is noted to be the earliest witness to the fourfold Gospel Canon (around AD 120 at the latest). Yet he is still dependent on an earlier source, the elder, around the turn of the second-century. Still earlier, (Hill seems to reject that these were the same person) John the apostle is said to have consented the truth of the canonical Gospels. Hill, here, steps off the train and concludes that the fourfold Gospel codex comes at this period, around AD 100, but we cannot tell if someone chose them. His view is fleshed out in Chapter 11 where he suggests that the Gospels imposed themselves as the witness of the apostles. The early church simply did not believe they had a choice in the

matter (231). These Gospels show evidence of God's Spirit but nobody had the right to choose, these were handed down from the apostles (246).

At the conclusion I really only have two complaints. The first regards the transmission of the Gospels: much more regarding the empirical evidence needs to be said. The fourfold Gospel Canon is a published book from the early 2nd century late first century. Virtually all our manuscripts are descendants of this codex. This kind of reception must have had some religious gravitas behind it. At the time it surfaces, there is no ecclesiastical machinery or structure that could have done so. It apparently is the responsibility of an individual or group of individuals that had great respect. It is unlikely to be Polycarp (as Trobisch suggests) for he apparently did not have that kind of religious power. He was unsuccessful in getting the western church to celebrate Easter at Passover, yet imposed his fourfold Canon on the church? not very likely. Hill addresses when the codex was produced (early 100s at the latest) but does not address who produced it and why it was the runaway bestseller of the century. That Hill did not touch Trobisch's theory pro or con is a disappointment.

I am also disappointed that Hill does not address the Sundberg thesis more than he does. Sundberg places the canonization into the fourth century and bends the knee to the church councils (including accepting an expanded OT Canon). Sundberg is the foundation for much of canonical understanding today and is the major influence on McDonald. Hill's work can and should be used to address the thesis. That he doesn't directly is disappointing.

Nevertheless, Hill's treatment of the literary and documentary evidence is impressive and, in my mind, devastating to the contrary theses current today. This work, like his *Johannine Corpus in the Early Church*, is a scholarly and gracious shot across the bow to modern Canon scholarship (represented by Lee McDonald and Albert Sundberg). His command of the pre-AD 200 literature is astounding and refreshing. I, for one, am exhausted by misquotes and poor reading of the church fathers being forever recycled like extra-biblical prooftexts. Hill's work addresses many of these head on. I would highly endorse the present work. All those investigating the Canon of Scripture must read this book for not only the conclusion that it reaches but also for a reasoned and well-read approach to the Early Church Fathers.

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D. A. Carson. *Collected Writings on Scripture*. Compiled by Andrew David Naselli. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010. 335 pages. $27.99, hardback.

Periodically, North American evangelicals experience doubts concerning the full authority and/or truthfulness of Scripture. In the early twentieth century, modernists influenced by a Darwinist appropriation of the historical-critical method gradually departed from the evangelical fold as they re-

jected the supernatural elements of Scripture. This led in part to the fundamentalist-modernist controversies of the 1920s and 1930s. A generation later, many evangelicals became convinced that, though the Bible was infallible in respect to its spiritual message, it contained historical and scientific errors. This resulted in the battles for the Bible in the 1970s and 1980s. In the past five years, a small but vocal cadre of evangelicals have either rejected the doctrine of inerrancy or advocated positions that seem to many to be incompatible with biblical inerrancy. As in the previous eras, these recent errantist eruptions have resulted in forced terminations, strained friendships, and scholarly polemics.

In the past generation, few evangelical scholars have been as sure a guide in the debates over the doctrine of Scripture as D.A. Carson, Research Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Over the years, Carson has penned a number of significant essays related to the inspiration, authority, and interpretation of the Bible. Some of these articles have been scholarly salvos aimed at evangelical revisionists. Others have been substantive reference articles written for students and clergy. Still others have been piercing reviews of important works written by various scholars. With the assistance of his research assistant Andy Naselli, an excellent younger scholar in his own right. Carson has assembled many of his most important essays in his *Collected Writings on Scripture*. In light of the current evangelical fracases over Scripture, this book has appeared at just the right time.

Though the essays included in *Collected Writings on Scripture* were originally penned over a thirty-year period, Carson has born witness to a remarkably consistent doctrine of Scripture. Several themes emerge throughout the volume. First, Scripture is the written word of God, authored by men under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, fully trustworthy in all matters to which it speaks and sufficient for all matters related to life and godliness. Second, the Bible can be properly interpreted by Spirit-led individuals, using the best tools available, within the context of the community of faith, in submission to the Lord who reveals himself through his word. Third, interpretive strategies that venture too far afield from the biblical text itself are ultimately unsatisfactory. Fourth, clever and not-so-clever attempts to revise the doctrine of Scripture are logically fallacious, historically suspect, and biblical unsustainable.

One's context will largely determine which chapters are most beneficial to which readers. Students will benefit from the slightly dated, but still imminently helpful essay dedicated to recent scholarly developments among theologians and biblical scholars and the judicious chapter on the usefulness of redaction criticism. Pastors and other Bible teachers will resonate with Carson's brief introduction to the doctrine of Scripture and his excellent treatment of Scripture's clarity. (I found this material very helpful as I was preparing lectures on the doctrine of Scripture for an adult Sunday School class in

my local church.) Scholars will find his insightful book review essays very helpful, especially his critiques of important works published in the last decade. Any reader interested in the ongoing debates over evangelical hermeneutics and theological method will find much to appreciate in Carson's essay on unity and diversity within the New Testament and its ramifications for systematic theology. Even those who have read some of this material before (I had previously read about a third of the essays) will profit from a fresh perusal of Carson's thoughts on Scripture.

The book's overall coherence allows for it to be easily read through as a helpful evangelical introduction to the doctrine of Scripture. This, in itself, seems quite remarkable for a collection of essays—even essays written by a single author. Yet, this book's true genesis was in the various essays themselves, which were published in numerous books, dictionaries, journals, and *festschriften*. Because of the unique provenance of each chapter, *Collected Writings on Scripture* can also be read in bits and pieces with great profit. Carson's book deserves widespread adoption in college and seminary classes and universal inclusion in pastoral and even local church libraries. It is that good. Whether read in its totality or spot-read along and along, *Collected Writings on Scripture* is that rare volume that is essential to any minister's bookshelf. I give it my highest recommendation.

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Peter J. Leithart. *Athanasius. Foundations of Theological Exegesis and Christian Spirituality*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. xviii + 206 pp. Paperback. ISBN 9780801039423. $27.99 Paperback.

Christ is the center of all things metaphysical and Scriptural. So argues Peter Leithart in *Athanasius*, the first volume in the Foundations of Theological Exegesis and Christian Spirituality series. This series intends to "explore the patristic witness to our common Nicene faith" by examining "how biblical exegesis, dogmatic theology, and participatory metaphysics relate in the thought of a particular church father" (ix). Leithart's contribution in this first volume focuses on Athanasius' unwavering conviction that Christ unites Scripture and all things, including creation, history, and metaphysics (xvii).

Leithart begins to demonstrate this thesis in chapter one by giving an overview of the Arian controversy. Leithart's purpose here is not so much to argue over historical detail as it is to show that Athanasius' primary argument with Arius and his followers lay in his belief that his own position was derived from Scripture and honored God in Christ, while Arius' and his followers' position(s) was derived from Hellenistic philosophy and dishonored God the Father by separating him from his Son.

In chapter two, Leithart shows how Athanasius fundamentally disagreed not only with Arius' and his followers' arguments, but also more foundation-

ally with their exegesis of Scripture. Leithart contends that Athanasius believed his method of interpretation placed the scriptural text, read through Christological lenses, as primary, while Arius' method placed Hellenistic metaphysics at the forefront. Leithart then argues that Athanasius' basic method of interpretationconsisted of three major tools: the *skopos* of Scripture (akin to the *regula fidei*)and the "tripartite rule" (attending to the person, time, and circumstance of a passage); *paradeigmata* (recognizing major or privileged biblical images and Christ as Paradigm); and the use of theologically proper words that convey the distinction between Creator and creature. These tools allowed Athanasius to consistently see Christ as "both the substance of Scripture and the criterion of right interpretation" (53), something he believed Arius failed to do or understand.

Chapters three, four, and five deal with the metaphysical questions of the nature of the Trinity, the relationship of God with creation, and the incarnation respectively. Leithart here strives to demonstrate Athanasius' metaphysical convictions, such as the fact that God the Son is co-eternal with God the Father, that creation is distinct from God as Creator, that God is impassible even in the passible event of Christ swallowing death in his death and resurrection, and that the Incarnate Christ was fully God and fully man. In each of these and in other areas Leithart shows where Athanasius disagrees with Arius. But Leithart's more fundamental point is that Athanasius' metaphysical convictions are consistently and always Christological. This serves as both an example for current theologians in doing theology and also as an explanation for why Athanasius so fundamentally disagreed with Arius. Arius' problem, and perhaps implicitly contemporary theology's problem, is that Patrology and the Doctrine of Creation have been divorced from Christology.

In the final chapter Leithart deals with Athanasius' views on sanctification. His essential point is that Athanasius saw sanctification as deification through participation in Christ. Leithart ends the book with a prayerful epilogue, praying that both he and his readers would recognize the centrality of Christ in all things.

Athanasius is a stimulating read, both intellectually and spiritually. Leithart's reputation as an engaging writer is only bolstered by this work. He is able to explain the issues, positions, and doctrinal convictions of Athanasius and his opponents, as well as of present day theologians, with a potent combination of detailed accuracy and simplicity. He is also able to do so while promoting spirituality, worship, and Christological focus throughout the book. For biblical and theological scholars working in an ecclesial context, there can be no higher goal than academic integrity wedded with spiritual vitality, and Leithart meets that goal with ease.

Also worth noting is Leithart's continual use of lengthy quotations from Athanasius, and occasionally others, to support his points. It is clear from these quotes that Leithart is looking to primary sources but also taking the

material he uses from these sources in their original context. There can be no charge of prooftexting here. Leithart also engages the theological issues of the day through Athanasius' work, including the social Trinitarian movement and the "nature vs. grace" issue. Finally and perhaps most importantly, Leithart consistently proves his thesis throughout the book.

Occasionally, Leithart does seem a bit repetitive, but this is due more to the fact that he is so consistent in arguing for his thesis than it is to poor writing. This critique, though, is very minor in comparison to the erudition he shows as both a churchman and a scholar in *Athanasius*.

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Michael J. Quicke. *Preaching as Worship: An Integrative Approach to Formation in Your Church.* Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011. 279 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8010-9226-8. $17.99 Paperback.

Michael Quicke has been a leading homiletician for several years, giving us terrific material such as *360-Degree Preaching*. *Preaching as Worship* is yet another valuable resource for the church in general and pastors in particular. As the title suggests, this book focuses on the relationship between preaching and worship. Quicke's aim is to "open preachers' eyes afresh to glorious big picture worship" (20). He says, "I plead for a shift of worldview. Instead of claiming the supremacy of preaching as all-important, I dare claim the supremacy of worship, which includes preaching and much else" (21). He transparently and humbly weaves his personal discovery throughout this book, providing theological and practical insight along with personal testimony and experience.

Quicke says that preachers can become "myopic" (39), missing important details of life and leadership. He says often these preachers view the church as their own "preaching dome" (37). He argues that preachers have a bigger role than delivering sermons, and should see themselves as worship leaders.

In chapter 2, he provides several reasons why preachers are sometimes "not interested" in worship: (1) worship is considered less important, (2) worship is viewed as burdensome, (3) worship is seen as a specialist subject, (4) worship is deemed controversial, (5) worship is reckoned an enthusiasm, (6) worship causes personal pain, (7) worship is dismissed as boring, and (8) worship is just not understood. He encourages preachers to elevate their concept of worship saying, "Worship embraces vision, mission, and everything else, for nothing is more important than living together for God's glory" (37).

He says that "myopic preaching" is marked by several characteristics, each showing a serious indicator that preachers have separated their task from worship. These indicators include: faulty definitions of worship (such

as "music only" or "Sunday only"); a thin theology of worship; a non-directive use of Scripture (not using Scripture to direct the entire corporate worship service), "liturgical amnesia" (having low regard for 2,000 years of worship); feeble community formation (seeing corporate worship as something for individuals only); naïveté about culture; ambivalence about music; not living in God's narrative (not showing people how they fit within God's grand story); isolated preparation (preparing sermons separate from others, including musical worship leaders); and "worshipless sermons" (chapter 3).

Quicke then moves toward a fuller definition of worship. He points out that worship is bigger than preaching, is bigger than music, needs liturgy, needs some pragmatism, embraces mission, and is bigger than Sunday services (chapter 4). He proposes that true worship is God-empowered, all-inclusive, continuous, and Trinitarian (70-76).

Building on this theology, Quicke describes what "big picture preaching" looks like. He says that preachers should see themselves as worshipers, see preaching as an act of worship, and see how worship itself is proclamation. He adds that preachers should help the listeners learn how they belong to "God's unfolding story." He also states that "worshipful preachers" will actively seek "community transformation," and most of all, big picture preaching means that preachers will no longer see their task apart from worship.

After setting out these foundational points and chapters, Quicke takes individual chapters to tease out his thoughts and the implications for preachers. Throughout the book, he also provides a "Question Toolbox" that summarizes his thought and serves as a tool for corporate worship preparation. The questions are:

(1) Gift: Are we thankfully receiving this gift from the Triune God of grace?
(2) Magnification: Are we expressing its richness toward God?
(3) Scripture: Are we allowing Scripture to direct?
(4) Audiences: Are we addressing two audiences? (God and people)
(5) Community: Are we community by story?
(6) Mission: Are we enabling community to scatter?

As a homiletics professor, I plan on using *Preaching as Worship* because this is one of the only recent homiletics books to deal with this vital relationship between worship and preaching. I fear that many students may leave preaching classes thinking that if they can preach good sermons, then everything else will just sort of happen in the church. They certainly can become "myopic." While I am committed to sending out expository preachers, I also want to send out "worship-leader preachers." That means students need to think about how to incorporate the public reading of Scripture in gathered worship, select songs, how to work with the musical worship leader, do public prayer, create biblical community, celebrate the ordinances, and lead the mission of the church from the pulpit.

As a pastor, I plan on working through this book with our elders and pastoral interns. I was personally challenged, motivated and instructed by Quicke on this important topic.

Tony Merida,
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Christian Smith. *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism Is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture.* Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011. xiv + 220 pp. Hardback, ISBN 9781587433030. $22.99 Hardback.

Christian Smith writes *The Bible Made Impossible* to accomplish three things: 1) to demonstrate why the popular "biblicist" approach is impossible to maintain consistently, 2) to show some corollary problems with the general biblicist interpretative strategy, and 3) to offer an alternative, more truly evangelical approach to reading the Bible.

Smith begins with a definition of biblicism that consists of a constellation of ten assumptions or beliefs that, when generally held, form biblicism (4–5). He then explains what he sees as the death blow to biblicism: pervasive interpretative pluralism (PIP). Smith describes PIP as, "The very same Bible—which biblicists insist is perspicuous and harmonious—gives rise to divergent understandings among intelligent, sincere, committed readers about what it says about most topics of interest" (17). In other words, if the Bible really is perspicuous and harmonious, then surely it would be clear enough on the most important issues to minimize the variety of interpretations produced by faithful readers. There is, however, a great variety of interpretations; ergo at least some of the ten foundational biblicist claims must be reconsidered.

Pervasive interpretative pluralism, Smith argues, cannot be easily minimized or explained away, and he spends the rest of chapter 1 and all of chapter 2 shoring up his case for PIP by giving numerous examples and arguing that attempts to dismiss the destructive impact of PIP on a biblicist hermeneutic fall short. Smith then tries to get at the root of PIP and concludes that the Bible is multivocal and polysemic. In Smith's words, "The Bible can and does speak to different listeners in different voices that appear to say different things" making at least some of the Scripture "somewhat semantically indeterminate" (47–8).

After spending some time in chapter 3 discussing the historic and psychological origins of biblicism, the former of which Smith lays squarely at the feet of Charles Hodge and Benjamin Warfield, Smith moves on in chapter 4 to a discussion of some of biblicism's corollary problems. Smith identifies nine distinct difficulties for evangelicals that grow out of biblicism. Among these are blatantly ignored teachings, arbitrary determinations of cultural relativism, and the lack of support for biblicism in the Bible itself.

In part two of his work, chapters 5–7, Smith offers his own non-biblicist, yet "truly evangelical" reading of the Bible (93). He begins by suggesting a "Christocentric" alternative hermeneutic that is at its core Barthian. For Smith, "Barth offers a very powerful, sophisticated, biblically grounded, antiliberal, evangelical vindication of historically orthodox Christianity" (121). To Smith's mind biblicism, in focusing on the text with a reverence approaching worship, at least partially misses the reality about which the text testifies, namely Jesus Christ. Smith then argues that if biblicism must be rejected at least in part and replaced with a Christocentric hermeneutic, then evangelicals will have to live with a good deal of ambiguity and uncertainty about what the Bible teaches. Evangelicals will also, he argues, have to reject an ultimately modern, scientific approach to reading Scripture that seeks excessive perspicuity and Cartesian certainty. Smith offers a kind of speech-act language model as a preferable replacement.

There is much to admire about Smith's work. Thoughtful evangelicals, when they see the interpretative patterns described by Smith happening in their own contexts, tend to disapprove of them (eisegesis, proof-texting, etc.). Smith's contention, however, is that *all* of evangelical biblicism is guilty of these errors and, in fact, *must* be guilty given what biblicists claim about the nature of Scripture. This is where most evangelical scholars will disagree with Smith. Despite his attempts to demonstrate the contrary, it appears that Smith, while clearly accurate at times, does actually overstate the problem.

Smith also falls prey to his own brand of biblicism. He calls biblicists to the carpet for claiming certainty and unanimity of interpretation where there is none, and yet throughout his work, when seeking to promote his own positions, Smith manages to find great clarity from the Bible in places where there certainly is no historical unanimity of interpretation (e.g. the trinity, issues of wealth and poverty, slavery, etc.). Additionally, though Smith rightly criticizes evangelical biblicism for often making arbitrary determinations of cultural relativism without any systematic criteria, he may be guilty of the same when he suggests that Evangelicals must learn to live with ambiguity. "Let the ambiguous remain ambiguous," he says, but without giving any helpful criteria for what marks a text as ambiguous (142), though he does quite confidently identify many ambiguous and non-ambiguous texts throughout his essay when he needs them to make his case. It appears that the Bible isn't quite so "impossible" after all.

Smith concludes with the reassurance "that nothing of the gospel of Jesus Christ needs to be lost in the rejection of biblicism" (176). It is doubtful that most academically-minded evangelicals who read Smith will agree. Some will certainly conclude that Smith's attack on biblicism is misguided and that his solution to the problem of PIP undermines the Scripture in a way that makes articulating and defending the gospel of Christ impossible. Even so, every serious-minded evangelical should read Smith's often *uncomfortably* insightful work.

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Michael Bergmann, Michael Murray, and Michael Rea. *Divine Evil: The Moral Character of the God of Abraham.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.vi + 337 pp. Hardback. ISBN 9780199576739. $125.00 Hardback.

This is a collection of essays examining God's moral character in the Old Testament. Overall, the essays are well-written. One of the book's unique strengths is the depth with which it explores God's commands to the Israelites to practice *herem*, the devoting of human beings, livestock, and other things to Him for whole-sale destruction.

The book is divided into three sections. Part one crystallizes problems Christians face in light of God's portrayal in the Old Testament. Louise Antony, Edwin Curley, and Evan Fales contribute chapters, with responses from Eleonore Stump, Peter van Inwagen, and Alvin Plantinga. Antony contends God is not a loving father, and, in fact, He is a terrible and abusive parent. For support she looks at a number of passages. These include God's command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, His ordering the destruction of populations such as the Amalekites, and His imposition of over-the-top punishments such as not allowing Moses to enter the Promised Land after he strikes a rock. Curley and Fales argue that portions of the Old Testament cannot be divinely inspired, since they teach morally erroneous truths. These include Numbers 31 where God commands the destruction of the Midianites, the excessive punishments in Leviticus that require the death of homosexuals, adulterers, and witches, and Exodus 21 where God permits the Israelites to sell their daughters into slavery.

Part two offers up responses to some of the philosophical problems Christians face regarding God's character in the Old Testament. Many of these chapters focus on the practice of *herem* with regard to the Amalekites, Canaanites, and the Jerichoites, and they are concerned with the philosophical question of whether, assuming God actually commanded such an exercise, it is plausible to view Him as a perfect being. John Hare, Mark Murphy, Eleonore Stump, Richard Swinburne, and Nicholas Wolterstorff contribute chapters, with responses from James Crenshaw, Wes Morriston, Paul Draper, and Louise Antony. The contributors make a number of points in this section. For example, as for the Amalekites, Stump suggests that perhaps God foresaw that they were going to continue to morally degenerate as a people to the point where they would commit atrocities akin to the ones that Heinrick Himmler committed in killing thousands of Jews. If so, then just as it would have been better for Himmler to have died before committing these crimes, so, too, God would have been justified in ordering the Israelites to kill the Amalekites. With regard to the Canaanites, Swinburne urges that

insofar as God is the author of life, He has the right to withdraw it from any person at any time. In turn, there is nothing morally wrong with Him commanding the Israelites to kill the Canaanites. As for the Jerichoites, at first, reading in Joshua 6 that with regard to this people group the Israelites "struck down all the inhabitants with the edge of the sword" may suggest that they did kill all of them. However, Wolterstorff points out that this particular phrase is repeated throughout the book of Joshua the way a refrain is repeated in a poem. As such, there is reason to interpret it non-literally as meaning "scored a decisive victory over the people of Jericho." In turn, if the Israelites did not slaughter all of the Jerichoites, Wolterstorff argues it is reasonable to think that God never actually commanded them to do so.

Part three of the book continues to offer up responses to some of the problems Christians face regarding God's character in the Old Testament, but this section approaches the topic from the perspective of theology. Again, many of these chapters are focused on *herem*. Gary Anderson and Christopher Seitz contribute chapters, with responses from Nicholas Wolterstorff and Evan Fales. Anderson notes modern scholars suggest that one reason the Old Testament contains stories pertaining to *herem* is not to encourage people to engage in genocide but rather to teach a spiritual lesson. Just as the Israelites had a lot of zeal in eliminating any sign of idolatry that stood in the way of worshipping God, so, too, people should have the same energy in removing any idolatry in their lives. Seitz urges that when it comes to understanding God's moral character, one passage of the Old Testament should not be focused on to the exclusion of others. Passages involving *herem* reveal God's concern to punish wrongdoers, but other passages reveal His mercy. For instance, while God orders the destruction of the Jerichoites for their wickedness, nonetheless, Scripture also records that He spares Rahab the prostitute.

The editors have done an excellent job bringing together a first-rate group of philosophers and theologians. Scholars will want to use this book as a starting point for further discussion on these issues, and Christian laity will find it profitable as well.

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G. Sujin Pak, *The Judaizing Calvin: Sixteenth-Century Debates over the Messianic Psalms*. OSHT. Oxford: OUP, 2010. Viii + 216 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0195371925. $65.00 (Hardback).

Debates on the nature of 'Christian' readings of the Old Testament litter the history of exegesis, from the early church to the present. Pak takes the reader into one moment of those disputes as they swirled around Calvin's rereading of eight messianic psalms (2, 8, 16, 22, 45, 72, 110, and 118).

Pak begins (ch.1) with the medieval period and offers the general exegetical context for the debate. Scanning a variety of key interpreters (and the *Glossa*) the author argues that the interpretations of these psalms quite explicitly were concerned with their "fulfillment" in Christ. They key point here is that this was understood to be the meaning *ad litteram*, rather than by type or allegory. Indeed, Pak quotes Denis the Carthusian: "No Christian interpretation to explain the literal sense of this psalm [Ps 2] is suitable or allowed unless it is interpreted concerning Christ."

Martin Luther is then treated (ch.2) primarily for his role upholding traditional "orthodox" readings, and regarding Jewish readings. Luther famously had no appreciation and even a seeming hatred of Jewish readings. In this light the "clarity" of the psalms teaching the work of Christ (again, *ad litteram*) stands out to him. David stands as a prophetic mouthpiece and exemplar of faith. And, though Pak points to some shift in Luther he remains a figure for the contrast that will come.

Pak spends significant time on Martin Bucer's reading (ch.3) as a bridge into a Reformed approach. Bucer, contrary to Luther, makes extended and positive use of rabbinic readings. But Pak maintains that Bucer uses those readings to bolster the traditional manner of seeing Christ as the primary (or sole) fulfillment of the messianic psalms.

Finally turning to Calvin (ch.4) we see the shift now patiently spelled out come somewhat into focus. In direct contrast to Denis (above), Calvin is very happy to limit or emphasize the literal sense as more strictly concerning David as teacher and example rather than as a prophetic spokesman. Pak finds three principles that govern when Calvin speaks of the psalm as applying to Christ: (1) by typology through the literal application to David; (2) when Christ utters the words of the Psalm directly (e.g. 22:1); and (3) when the application is in keeping with the "simple and natural" sense of the passage. The third, naturally, shows the issue far more often is a matter of exegetical choice than some systematic decision of Calvin to de-christologize readings. But Pak wants to bring out the significance of the shift. For Calvin, you are not guided by a kind of christological lens to read the Psalms. Calvin is content to remain in the world of the Psalms as they stand on their own merits, rather than reading them through their use by the fathers or even the apostles.

But the climax of the book's argument (ch.5) comes in the late-16th century debate between Aegidius Hunnius, a Lutheran theologian who authored a work entitled *The Judaizing Calvin*, and David Paraeus who defended Calvin against Hunnius. Here we see the shift through the eyes of Hunnius, for whom Calvin read the Old Testament "like a Jew." Pak walks through the fascinating debate with the criticisms of Hunnius and the responses of Paraeus, giving this reader at least a new way to see some of the early confessional divisions. Though showing Paraeus to defend Calvin ably from most of the criticisms, Pak agrees with Hunnius that Calvin has done something

different, placing the historical concerns in a different location than much of the previous tradition: seeing the Psalm as it stands in its own literary-canonical context, and regarding David first, rather than by necessity interpreting as though the text entirely concerned the future work of Christ.

Pak's study is a fascinating look at a key moment in the narrative of exegesis in the West. For what it undertakes the book is insightful. The great difficulty is the scope. Choosing but eight psalms is far too small a sample to draw any conclusions of any of the authors. It may be that her general thesis can hold up (and certainly the debate with Hunnius gives some sharpness to it). But this work cannot be said to prove the point in any way. Further, as is clear in Paraeus' defense (via Pak), Calvin was by no means the only one in the church's tradition or among his contemporaries to offer the readings he gives. But such could undercut a central part of the book: arguing that *Calvin* represented a kind of watershed in the history of exegesis. Notwithstanding, the book is interesting, helpful, and provocative. And it ought to gain a good reading among Calvin scholars and those interested in the historical side of theological exegesis.

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John Polkinghorne. ***Testing Scripture: A Scientist Explores the Bible.*** Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011. xii + 106 pp. Paperback. ISBN 9781587433139. $17.99 Paperback.

After an impressive career as a theoretical physicist, in 1979 John Polkinghorne resigned his post at Cambridge to enter into the Anglican priesthood. This positioned him well to write about the relationship between faith and science, which he has done in over twenty-five books. In addition, he has written five books that deal strictly with scientific subjects. Polkinghorne displays a gift for presenting difficult concepts in brief, clear prose. Take, for example, his book *Quantum Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. In that work—only 128 pages long—he explains quantum physics in a way that the average non-scientist can understand. This is no small feat. He attempts a similar task with *Testing Scripture*, which Polkinghorne presents as a brief work, written from the perspective of a scientist but intended for non-specialists. A noble goal, but with mixed results.

As a scientist, Polkinghorne attempts to do a theology of Scripture from below, or as he puts it, as "a bottom up thinker" (9). But he writes as a believing scientist, which he admits up front. In fact, he employs a presuppositionalist approach as much as the inductive method. Polkinghorne's central thesis is that in order to understand the Bible correctly, one must discern Scripture's lasting authoritative truth from its time-bound cultural context (3). The great dilemma facing any student of Scripture is the difficulty of discerning between the time-bound and the permanent. As for theological method,

Polkinghorne presents a version of the Wesleyan quadrilateral: Scripture, worshipping experience, tradition, and reason. The book argues for a trajectory theology. That is, we cannot simply take what the Bible says at any given point, but we must also look to where it is headed. In addition, Polkinghorne argues for a personal rather than a propositional understanding of the nature of revelation (19). The Bible should be viewed not as an "ultimate textbook" but rather as a "laboratory notebook." As such it is not an inerrant record given by divine inspiration, but a devout, human record of divine acts in persons and events. Unfortunately, due to the constraints of the book's brevity, Polkinghorne simply presents his theological method and his arguments with very little explanation or defense. Readers will probably find themselves wishing that he had provided more discussion for these assertions.

The structure of the book is curious. The first two chapters give Polkinghorne's view of revelation, inspiration, and theological development within Scripture. By recognizing the development in Israel's understanding of the nature and character of God, this allows one to deal with the crudities and atrocities of early Scripture without rejecting the spiritual value of the Bible (13), and it allows one to deal with its contradictions (14).

In the middle portion of the book—chapters 5 through 9 (less than forty-five pages)—Polkinghorne provides a survey of the whole Bible. He makes a valiant effort at a herculean task. For example, chapter 5 covers the entire Old Testament in just eleven pages. The result is a description so brief that it is impressionistic. Moving to the Gospels, Polkinghorne argues that, though the authors used the Old Testament in ways that are "strange and illegitimate"—they give a faithful presentation of Jesus Christ. The witness of the Gospels to the virgin and the bodily resurrection should be accepted at face value.

The remaining chapters (3, 4, and 10) deal with selected topics—the Bible's presentation of Creation and the Fall, the Bible's ambiguity, and its profundity. Polkinghorne argues that the traditional understanding of the Fall is no longer available to us. But this is not a problem, since "Scripture is not a dead deposit of unchanging meaning, the repository of assertions that have to be accepted at face value without question, but a living spring from which new truths and insight can be expected to continue to flow" (31). His discussion on the Bible's ambiguity is itself ambiguous (chapter 4). It ends abruptly, raising the issue, but offers little insight or resolution. The book ends with observations about the Bible's profundity (chapter 10). This chapter is perhaps the most fruitful, in terms of a scientist exploring the claims of Scripture.

One wishes that Polkinghorne had discussed a number of topics that are often addressed in works of this type: the Bible's sufficiency, self-attestation, and perspicuity come to mind. Most conspicuous is the absence of any discussion on biblical authority. Unfortunately, he equates inerrancy

with the dictation view of inspiration, and he dismisses the notion of an inerrant text as "inappropriately idolatrous" (9).

The title, *Testing Scripture*, is unfortunate. One expects a closer, more apologetic examination of the nature of the Bible. The title to the British version, *Encountering Scripture*, misleads less. Indeed, the book reads much better as the pastoral observations of an Anglican divine. Polkinghorne has provided us with an interesting and intriguing book. He gives many profitable insights for a layman attempting to understand the Bible—particularly in the matter of the proper method of interpretation. In the end, however, the book presents a view of inspiration that does not do justice to the Sacred Text. And, perhaps because of *Testing Scripture*'s brevity, its argument seems disjointed. Polkinghorne managed to explain quantum physics in a little over a hundred pages. Maybe in his explanation of the nature of the Bible he should have devoted more pages.

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Frances M. Young. *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to Its Literature and Background,* 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010. x + 406 pp. Paperback. ISBN 9780801039157. $39.99 Paperback.

In the second edition of *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, Frances Young endeavors to update the prior material to include recent research on various aspects of the 3rd and 4th century church. According to Young, there have been tremendous gains in the areas of the Arian controversy, the hermeneutical differences between Antioch and Alexandria, the biographies of the Cappadocians, asceticism and monastic politics, and Byzantine and Syriac studies. She attempts to cover these gains through adding profiles on Marcellus of Ancyra, Evagrius Ponticus, Pseudo-Macarius, and Ephrem the Syrian. There are no other significant changes to the first edition.

In this updated collection, Young's goal remains the same as the first: "to be a companion to standard textbooks, providing background material, an introduction to the characters involved in the disputes, to the literary sources and the critical questions they pose" (vii). Like the purpose, Young's outline remains the same. She begins with an overview of the early church historians in chapter one, moves on to Athanasius and the Arian controversy in chapter two, and then introduces the desert fathers and their literature in chapter three. The Cappadocians are the subject of chapter four, while chapter five introduces the reader to important people, controversies, and events of the late fourth century. Young concludes with a chapter on the main Christological controversies, including the Apollinarian and Nestorian debates.

Because of the widespread reading Young garnered with the first edition, this review will not attempt to summarize each chapter's argument but

will instead focus on the effect of the additions in their respective chapters. She first adds material on Marcellus of Ancyra, a bishop and at one point a mentor and friend to Athanasius. Marcellus appears to have argued for God ultimately as Monad, with the Trinity functioning as a temporary solution to man's fallen condition. Athanasius, in his controversy with Arius, could not associate with such a position and so his relationship with Marcellus faded, both historically and in writing. Young uses this section to provide the reader with background into both Athanasius' influences and his relational struggles. It also demonstrates for the reader how the theological controversies of the time were usually a result of a mix of exegetical, philosophical, political, and relational impetuses.

Young next includes material in chapter three on two important aspects of the study of the desert literature, the person of Evagrius Ponticus and the 'Macarian' Homilies of Pseudo-Macarius. Both of these provide historical detail about the desert literature that rounds out her other sections in this chapter. Evagrius gives insight into both the life of the desert monks through his panegyric histories and also into the typical exegesis of those men and women through his reflections on Scripture. The 'Macarian' homilies, on the other hand, provide the link between the spirituality of the monks of the East and the focus on the mind in the tradition of the monks of the West. Finally, Young includes a section on Ephrem the Syrian in chapter five and portrays him primarily as the exemplar of the link between Syrian and Western Christianity. Young demonstrates that Ephrem, through his immersion in Eastern culture and church life but also in Western ideas, was a living link between the Eastern and Western parts of the Church and the Empire.

Young inserts her additions into these chapters seamlessly, and her old and new material is cogent and insightful. She is able to give an overview of the people, events, and literature of the time with both intrigue and precision. Her ability to combine the narratives of the time with primary sources gives the reader the sense that careful scholarship has gone into every part of the book. Even though the book is billed as a guide or overview, Young is able to accomplish that purpose and also provide the reader with some critical evaluation of other scholarship in the area. She helps the reader not only understand the historical material but also engage it critically. Finally, the additions Young makes in the second edition provide a new flavor to the entire work, making it even more thorough than the first. This is a must read for students of the early church, theological method, or hermeneutics, even if they are familiar with Young's first edition.

Matthew Y. Emerson
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Nicholas Perrin. ***Jesus the Temple.*** Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010. xvi + 223 pp. Paperback. ISBN 9780801045387. $29.99 Paperback.

In his latest book, Perrin convincingly shows that a counter-temple agenda was central to Jesus' earthly ministry. More, he argues that "Jesus of Nazareth saw himself and his movement as nothing less than the embodiment of Yahweh's eschatological temple" (p. 12). Without being new, this idea has received relatively little attention from New Testament scholars. Perrin's book is therefore a welcomed addition to historical Jesus' studies, one that will set the stage for further analysis of this important theme.

The book is composed of five chapters. In the first (pp. 17–45), Perrin summarizes the agendas of two Jewish counter-temple movements, the community behind the *Psalms of Solomon* and the Qumran sect, followed by John the Baptist's proclamation as it relates to the temple. In doing so, the ground is laid to place Jesus' own concern for and critique of the temple in their first century historical context. If Jesus brings something new to the table, his call to be the temple has many points of contact with these movements: together with them, Jesus was highly critical of temple authorities, saw the temple as defiled, and considered his movement as carrying certain temple functions.

Passing over the Gospel's biographical accounts of Jesus' life and ministry, Perrin studies in his second chapter how the primitive church viewed itself in relation to the temple (pp. 46-79). Reviewing writings of the second century (the *Didache*, the *Epistle of Barnabas*) and of the New Testament, the idea is now put forth that the early church was itself a counter-temple movement with strong similarities with the earlier forms studied in chapter 1 (p. 77–78). Indeed, the writings of the early church are replete with evidences that it co-identified Christ *and* itself with the temple. The church community saw itself as "the community in which the eschatological temple was taking shape" (p. 47), convinced that "the heavenly temple, the great hope of Judaism, had broken forth in preliminary fashion in the resurrection of Jesus-Christ" (pp. 48, 75).

Now, if counter-temple movements existed at the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, and if the church was a counter-temple movement understanding itself as the new temple, Perrin argues that the historical plausibility that Jesus (and not simply the early church in its theological reflection) saw himself as taking an active part in the establishment of the eschatological temple is reinforced. This is argued at length in chapter 3 (pp. 80-113) in considering how the 'cleansing of the temple' episode climactically expresses Jesus' concerns for the temple, both as a criticism of the temple leadership and as an announcement of the implementation of a new temple in his own person and work.

Having established the multidimensional (ethical, political, religious) aspects of this action, in the final two chapters (pp. 114-48; 149-82) Perrin focuses on neglected aspects of Jesus' concerns for the temple: his interest for the poor, together with his common practices of healing, exorcisms, and table fellowship. For Perrin, Jesus' poverty ethics is indicative of his conviction

that God was at work in dealing with the temple's failures, not least that of its leadership. In feeding the poor and through almsgiving, the Jesus countermovement practiced jubilee and set itself up as a new priesthood. Likewise, his healings, exorcisms and meals he shared with people indicated that "he had reconstituted time, space, and a people around himself, the new convergence of heaven and earth, the new temple" (p. 179).

Jesus the Temple is saturated with surprising and thought provoking insights. For instance, *pace* recent interpreters, Perrin understand *lestes,* in the expression "den of robbers" not as revolutionaries (brigands), but as pointing to the greed of and evil economic oppression perpetrated by the temple authorities during Jesus' lifetime (pp. 92-99). In a similar vein, Perrin illuminates Jesus and the rich man's conversation in Mark 10:17-22, arguing that the phrase "treasure in heaven" (v. 21) operates not simply as an exhortation to almsgiving in its link to soteriological merit (*cf.* Sir. 29:9-12), but more fundamentally as a disapproval of the present temple practices. Jesus did not want his interlocutor to store up treasures in the soon to be destroyed temple, but rather encouraged him to participate fully in his own eschatological movement, offering a better temple, and with it, a better temple treasure (p. 125).

All in all, Perrin's book demonstrates that Evangelical scholars are indeed able to propose solid and balanced historical Jesus studies. In a well-written and quite entertaining style, Perrin does not shy away from difficult historical questions, exhibiting control of both primary and secondary sources, yet humbly admitting that clear answers are not always possible. As such, *Jesus the Temple* is a very valuable and creative contribution to the field.

Nicolas Farelly
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David S. Dockery (ed.) *Southern Baptists, Evangelicals, and the Future of Denominationalism.* B & H Academic, 2011. Paperback. 978-1-4336-7120-3. $24.99. Paperback

In October 2009 Union University in Jackson, Tennessee, hosted a conference commemorating the 400th anniversary of the modern Baptist movement. David S. Dockery, Ray Van Neste, and Jerry Tidwell edited the conference's proceedings into a single volume, *Southern Baptists, Evangelicals, and the Future of Denominationalism* that explores the complex relationship between Southern Baptists and the broader evangelical community. It is a welcome addition to an ongoing discussion.

It has not always been fashionable to label Southern Baptists as "evangelical." In 1983 three Southern Baptist seminary professors publically reflected on the subject under the title, *Are Southern Baptists "Evangelical"*? Perhaps not surprisingly, one said no, one said yes, and one said maybe, depending largely on how one defined evangelical. Obviously, much has changed

since 1983. Recent scholarship in the field, particularly Barry Hankins' *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservatives and American Culture*, suggests that Southern Baptists have come to be more self-consciously identified as "evangelical" and increasingly less tied to historical denominational moorings.

While none of the contributors to *Southern Baptists, Evangelicals, and the Future of Denominationalism* would deny that Southern Baptists are evangelical, a number of questions remain open for discussion. For instance, can denominations still function in the twenty-first century? This work is divided into three sections and Section One, "Denominationalism: Historical Trends, Future Challenges" contains four essays that consider denominational viability for contemporary churches. Nearly everyone concedes that mainline American denominations declined in the twentieth century's waning decades. Nonetheless, each author agrees that denominationalism remains a legitimate, arguably necessary, way of coordinating cooperative ventures between churches. David Dockery's essay, "So Many Denominations: the Rise, Decline, and Future of Denominationalism" is especially instructive. As he sees it, denominations remain helpful, especially in maintaining theologically orthodoxy.

If denominations are here to stay, what impact might they have on churches? Section Two, ""Evangelicals and Southern Baptists: Identity, Beliefs, and Ministry," contains five essays that explore the contours of contemporary church life. Here, Ray Van Neste's "The Care for Souls: Reconsidering Pastoral Ministry in Southern Baptist and Evangelical Contexts," and Harry L. Poe's "Recovering the Gospel for the Twenty-first Century" merit special consideration. Van Neste maintains that pastoral care transcends both evangelicalism and denominationalism. He taps a variety of sources ranging from John Chrysostom to W. A. Criswell to challenge ministers to be biblical shepherds to their flocks. As for personal evangelism, Poe raises an important issue, namely, how does one present the gospel in a culture that frequently redefines sin along non-biblical lines or refuses to acknowledge its existence altogether? His essay may well be the most provocative of the lot.

Section Three, "Southern Baptists: Understanding the Past in Order to Explore the Future," contains four essays that reflect on denominationalism's future. In this case, each writer projects a guarded optimism. James Patterson notes that Baptists have a legacy of controversy and they survive as an identifiable group because of their theology. Nathan Finn contends that Southern Baptists have a future and it likely includes evangelicals, but much will depend on the changing contours of evangelicalism.

Assessing a collection of essays, especially conference proceedings can be tricky. Usually, one finds an essay or two that deserve close attention while the others are helpful to varying degrees. Happily, this is not the case with *Southern Baptists, Evangelicals, and the Future of Denominationalism.* Readers should be pleased with the uniform quality of these essays. They are all in-

formative, intelligent, and well-written. Moreover, those wanting more information on specific topics with find a wealth of information in the essay's footnotes and/or bibliographies. Together these essays raise some interesting questions. For example, precisely *how* does one draw appropriate lines of orthodoxy that both define who Southern Baptists are, but also allow for dialog and cooperation with the broader evangelical community? What role does culture play in shaping corporate structure and identity? A collection of the caliber would have been even stronger had it included one final essay tying the others together while offering some sort of analytical framework delineating the parameters for Southern Baptist/evangelical cooperation.

So, do Southern Baptists have a denominational future and are evangelicals in that picture? The contributors to the collection would offer a cautious, qualified, "Yes." As long as churches create organizations beyond local churches there will likely be denominationalism in some form. All things considered, the real future of how Southern Baptists relate to evangelicals may depend more on changes within evangelicalism than changes within the Southern Baptist Convention.

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Leslie C. Allen. *A Liturgy of Grief: A Pastoral Commentary on Lamentations*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. xi+195 pp. Paperback. ISBN 9780801039607. $21.99 Paperback.

Leslie Allen's pastoral commentary on Lamentations is a thoughtful meld of reflection on his years as a hospital chaplain and sound biblical scholarship. His twin focus on both biblical and pastoral insight is evident throughout, with discussions of the text peppered with examples from his own practice.

Allen reads Lamentations as "grief literature" operating from the perspective of the sufferer, as "grief work"; and from the perspective of pastoral care, exemplifying caregiving (p. ix). His thesis is that Lamentations is "best understood as the script of a liturgy intended as a therapeutic ritual" (p. 8). The goal of this liturgy, Allen argues, is to draw the community to prayer (p. 10), which is modeled by both Zion and a "pastoral mentor" (p. 11). The finale of the book is thus Lamentations 5, where the community takes up lament before YHWH (p. 12, 22-23).

Allen's commentary is both contemporary and attentive to the particular situation of grief with which Lamentations is concerned. He provides a brief overview of the historical context, multiple genres, content, and voicing of Lamentations (pp. 4-15) and identifies three trajectories in Lamentations – grief, guilt, and grievance (pp. 15-22). This threefold typology helpfully elucidates the seemingly contradictory elements of pure pain, penitence, and protest that appear in Lamentations.

Allen reads Lamentations 1 in keeping with the prophetic tradition (pp. 52-56), with the reporter and Zion providing a liturgy for accepting culpability and processing grief. Zion thus "leads the way for the congregation to turn to God" (p. 59). Lamentations 2 is, for Allen, an intensification of the emotion and sentiment expressed in Lamentations 1 (p. 64). The goal of the chapter is, as for Lamentations 1, to express guilt, accept culpability, and set an example to the congregation to "induce them to articulate their sorrow and return to God" (p. 82).

In Lamentations 3, Allen suggests, the speaker who reported Zion's pain in Lamentations 1 and 2 now becomes a "wounded healer," sharing his own experience in order to recruit the congregation's empathy (pp. 85-88). He is thus able to gain their trust (p. 90) and deliver a sermon on the appropriateness of waiting for YHWH (pp. 102-11), once more urging the listening community to prayer (p. 115).

In Allen's framework, the urge to prayer should culminate in a communal lament in Lamentations 4 (p. 121). This, however, is not the case, with Lamentations 4 returning to dwell on the themes of reversal and deprivation introduced in Lamentations 1 and 2. Allen explains the unexpected interlude as a necessary step in the grief process, demonstrating the need for patience and time to reflect upon past trauma (pp. 121-24).

The goal is reached, however, in Lamentations 5, as the congregation turns to prayer (p. 145). This is not the ultimate goal, however, but a "lesser, but necessary intermediate goal" (p. 146), that of connecting with YHWH to pave the way for restoration. The prayer of Lamentations 5 is thus evidence of a turning point in the transition back to YHWH (p. 147).

Allen's work is clearly informed by current critical scholarship, but without unwieldy footnotes and references, making it particularly accessible to students and pastors. His endorsement of continuing to read and use Lamentations and lament and complaint psalms in the church is especially valuable. While rightly noting that expressing such strongly worded complaints might "run counter to Christian norms of prayer" (p. 158), Allen explains how grief literature can appropriately address YHWH from "within the circle of faith" (p. 167).

If I were to hazard a couple of criticisms, I would venture that Allen's ongoing analogy between Lamentations and Alcoholics Anonymous is somewhat jarring. Further, while he draws on *some* scholarly studies of grief and loss, most of his pastoral reflections are autobiographical and biographical in nature. While helpful, then, they do not always have the weight of the discipline of psychology proper behind them. One final concern is that Allen's translations have sometimes carried out the interpretive work perhaps better left to the reader. For example, he yields Lamentations 3:21 as: "(But) this is what I recollected, waiting hopefully as a consequence" (p. 94), explaining the sparse Hebrew more decisively than is perhaps warranted. This,

however, may simply be my preference for literal rather than dynamic translations.

A Liturgy of Grief is an accessible and engaging reading of Lamentations interspersed with practical insights and personal anecdotes. Soaked in the pain of myriad griefs, the book promises to be a profoundly helpful primer for students and pastors seeking resources with which to engage people's present pain.

Miriam Bier
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Michael J. Anthony and Michelle D. Anthony. *A Theology for Family Ministries*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011. viii + 265 pp. Hardcover. ISBN 978-0-8054-6421-4. $34.99. Hardcover.

Michael J. Anthony is Research Professor of Christian Education at Talbot School of Theology. Michelle D. Anthony is Director of Family Ministries at Rock Harbor Church in Costa Mesa, and is the Family Ministry Architect for David C. Cook Publishing. Together the Anthonys have a long publishing and ministry record and are well qualified to write a book on family ministry.

The goal of *A Theology for Family Ministries* is to provide the church, especially church leaders, with a resource to enable biblically and theologically-responsible ministry to twenty-first century families. The specific focus of this text is ministry to non-traditional families, including ministry within the contexts of fragmented families, single-parent families, gay-partner families, blended families, and the like.

A Theology for Family Ministries is actually an edited volume with contributions from fourteen different authors across the evangelical spectrum. The Anthonys authored or contributed to three of the twelve chapters that make up this book. By way of structure, *A Theology for Family Ministries* contains three sections (or units, as they are labeled). The first unit looks at the changing face of the North American family. Section two, which constitutes the bulk of this text, focuses upon forming a biblical theology of the family. The final unit of the book is a bit more practical in nature as it looks at family ministry in the local church. The topics that are addressed in *A Theology for Family Ministries* are wide-ranging, and include Old Testament teachings on the family, New Testament teachings on the family, a theology of marriage, spiritual markers in the life of a child, a theology of grandparenting, equipping parents to be spiritual leaders, and youth ministry from a family perspective, among many other issues.

Edited volumes are notoriously difficult to review, as factors such as writing style, quality of research, and biblical perspective inevitably vary between authors. *A Theology for Family Ministries* is certainly no different in this regard; however, the editors and publisher are to be commended for produc-

ing a remarkably homogeneous text given the number of contributors. This book is also aided, as its title communicates, in that it is designed as a theology "for" family ministry, not a theology "of" family ministry. As such, each chapter can be read and understood in isolation, as each chapter is merely a separate part of a whole. Readers could even skip over chapters that are not of interest and the book can still serve its purpose of providing theology for family ministry. The publisher is also to be applauded for giving three thorough indices: a name index, a subject index, and a Scripture index. Such indices are especially valuable in edited volumes like *A Theology for Family Ministries*.

It is difficult to find many drawbacks to *A Theology for Family Ministries*. Certainly, one could quibble with style changes between chapters, as well as a few minor typographical and form errors. Additionally, while all of the contributors to the volume are evangelical, implicit and explicit theological differences between the authors arise. Moreover, the prospective reader ought to be aware that this book is aimed primarily at students and ministry leaders. Thus it has a textbook feel to it, as it is heavily footnoted and has fairly small type. These minor issues aside, *A Theology for Family Ministries* is a fine book that ought to find its way onto the bookshelf of pastors and other ministry leaders who have interest or occasion to engage in family ministry.

David W. Jones
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Kenneth E. Bailey. *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011. 560 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8308-3934-6. $30.00 Paperback.

Given the innumerable studies and commentaries on biblical books like 1 Corinthians, one might wonder whether new insights and discoveries are really possible. It seems that all that can be said has been said. However, Kenneth Bailey's new volume, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes*, is a refreshing reminder that for those willing to mine more deeply into the biblical text, precious gems can really be found. Bailey offers an impressive, and genuinely original, contribution to the study of 1 Corinthians that both New Testament scholars and pastors will appreciate.

Although Bailey studies Paul's letter in chronological order, like a standard commentary, his volume breaks out of the standard commentary genre in a number of important ways. First, as the title suggests, Bailey writes as one with vast personal experience in Middle-Eastern and Mediterranean cultures. He has taught biblical studies for over forty years in places like Egypt, Lebanon, Jerusalem, and Cyprus. This background shapes and illumines his exegesis at a number of points. For example, in his discussion of 1Cor 1:12, he notes the depth and difficulty of Middle-Eastern ethnic conflicts and why Paul would have been so keen to address them (p.69-70). Also, he brings the

Middle-Eastern perspective to bear upon the issue of head-coverings/propriety in worship in 1 Cor 11:17-34 (p.300-310), and also upon the issue of women speaking in worship in 1 Cor 14:33-40 (p.413-417).

Second, Bailey employs a much-neglected resource for New Testament studies, namely the versions of the New Testament in Syriac, Arabic, and Hebrew. He has gathered twenty-three representative samples of such commentaries on 1 Corinthians from various time periods in the history of the church. His purpose in using these sources is to answer the question, "How did Middle Eastern Christians across the centuries understand this text?" (p.16). These ancient commentaries illumine Bailey's exegesis at a number of important junctures throughout his study. For instance, in his discussion of 1 Cor 4:17-21, Bailey discovers that this passage has not been understood by most ancient commentators as the conclusion of the preceding section on Christian unity (1 Cor 3:1-4:16). Instead, it has been understood (for over a thousand years!) as the introduction to the next section on sexual purity (1 Cor 5:1-6:8). Modern readers of (and commentators on) 1 Corinthians often miss this connection due to the fact that modern chapter headings suggest a new section begins at 1 Cor 5:1. Once this connection is understood, then the reader recognizes that Paul is beginning his discussion on sexual purity with an appeal to apostolic tradition (1 Cor 4:17), something he does at the beginning of each of the major sections (p.158-159).

The third contribution of Bailey's work is arguably the most significant. He spends substantial time analyzing the rhetorical style of Paul's writing and demonstrates that it is very intentionally patterned after Old Testament prophetic literature, particularly the book of Isaiah. Bailey explains, "Our concern here is to see how Paul has arranged *collections of Hebrew parallelisms* into larger patterns that are important to identify for a deeper understanding of his intent" (p.22, emphasis his). Throughout the study, Bailey uncovers seemingly endless sub-structures within Paul's thought, exposing how intricate and well-crafted this letter actually is. The payoff of all these observations is that one begins to realize that Paul's letter is not as "occasional" as scholars often suppose—as if it were just a disjointed list of responses to the queries (or problems) of the Corinthian church. On the contrary, the Hebrew structure used by Paul reveals that he has composed "five carefully constructed essays" on a number of key topics (p.26). Thus, "the Corinthians' questions (oral and written) are worked into *Paul's outline*, instead of the other way around. *He* sets the agenda, not the Corinthians" (26, emphasis his). The letter of 1 Corinthians, then, has more of a universal intent than has typically been acknowledged. Although Paul is writing to a particular congregation, and is certainly aware of their issues, this letter presents Paul's authoritative apostolic teaching on some very critical subjects that he intends for all Christians everywhere.

In the midst of these many positives, one area of concern is Bailey's treatment of the topic of men and women in worship in 1 Cor 11:2-16.

While making a number of helpful observations about the complexities and nuances of this passage, Bailey struggles to offer a fair presentation of what he calls the "traditional" view. Instead, his description of this view proves to be a bit of a caricature. According to Bailey, those with a traditional view think women were "created to serve men" (297), regard "men as more important than women" (303), and believe that women are created for men's "bed and board" (310). However, I know of no advocates of the "traditional" view that would hold any of these beliefs or describe themselves in this fashion (and Bailey provides no documentation that they do). Bailey is, of course, free to argue for the exegetical position he finds most compelling. But, his argument would be strengthened if he presented the strongest version of his opponent's position, rather than the weakest.

This issue aside, Bailey has produced a tremendous piece of scholarship that is intriguing, illuminating, and distinctive. Scholars and pastors alike will enjoy the new discoveries available on every page.

Michael J. Kruger
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Prosper Grech, *An Outline of New Testament Spirituality.* (Grand Rapids, Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2011). Xi + 140 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8028-6560-1. $18.00. Paperback.

In this outline, Grech discusses "the essential themes for meditation by all those – lay people, religious, and priests of whatever confession – who seek to live their Christian faith in its fullness", further noting: "I have tried to let the texts speak for themselves without complicating them with notes or long explanations. … The main purpose of this book is to help the reader to respond to God's gift in Christ with love and discernment rather than to lecture him or her" (from the preface, p. vi). Grech serves as professor at the Patristic Institute in Rome and as a member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission. He understands spirituality to be the Christian's total response of faith, made effective through love and vivified by the Holy Spirit, to God's self-manifestation in Christ (p. vii). Spiritual theology "penetrates deeply into the mystery of our redemption, and inquires about the completeness of our response of loving faith to God's gift in Christ" (p. vii). He stresses that the "distinguishing feature of Christian spirituality is its relatedness to the Word's incarnation, which distinguishes it even from Jewish piety. Such spirituality describes and fosters the believer's total donation of self in response to God's total self-giving" (p. viii).

Grech starts out with a study or the human existential situation: "Deliverance: From What? For Whom?" (pp. 1–11). In "Response to the Old Testament Covenant" (pp. 13–28), Grech provides a survey of the spirituality which the church inherited from Israel, which is rightly understood as an integral part of the Christian's response to God's saving initiatives of old and

in Jesus Christ. For good reasons some editions of the New Testament have also included the Book of Psalms, although the significance of the Old Testament goes far beyond this observation. In this context a chapter on the spirituality of early Judaism might have been added, as early Judaism drew on the Old Testament but also had its own distinctive emphases (deriving from a variety of sources) which left their imprint on Jesus, early Christianity and various strands of Christian spirituality. While Grech rightly points to Christ's incarnation and salvific work which distinguishes Christian spirituality from Jewish piety, the points of contact (the call to respond to God's saving acts for his people in worship and a life of obedience and the specific manifestations of this response) must not be underestimated.

The life and teaching of Jesus according to Matthew, Mark and Luke are foundational for all Christian spirituality and discussed in the longest chapter of the book, entitled "Response to the Gift of the Kingdom: Jesus" (pp. 29-77). In "Response to the Paschal Mystery: The Pauline Tradition" (pp. 79-101), Grech outlines the believers' participation and incorporation into the redeeming death and resurrection of Christ. "Response to the Light: John" (pp. 103-124) covers faith and love in the Gospel and letters of John. In the final chapter, "Response to Christ's Presence in History: Acts and Revelation" (pp. 125-138), Grech assesses the Christians' place within history and their hope of final redemption.

In the "Conclusion" (pp. 139f), Grech returns to the definition of spirituality as "the believers' full response to God's offer of salvation in Christ" (p. 139) and argues:

This means that we cannot relegate spirituality to a mere moral response. *Metanoia* means a complete change of mentality, a new outlook on life based on the Christ-event, and that changed outlook will reflect the degree to which our faith has transformed our worldview. Apart from the observance of God's commandments, dynamic and yet contemplative spirituality also involves prayer, good works, an apostolic conscience, and social action, all prompted and animated by the love the Holy Spirit gives us. In short, it means making the first three requests of the Our Father – Hallowed by thy name, they kingdom come, and thy will be done – the principal purpose of our existence. Spirituality requires that prayerful meditation which will personalize our faith and make it part of our personality (pp. 139f).

Under the title *An Outline of New Testament Spirituality* one might have expected a study of prayer, or spiritual experience, of spiritual gifts, of discipleship or similar themes in the New Testament. Grech does not offer that. However, he does offer a succinct outline of the message of the New Testament and of the response which it elicits and is to elicit in believers under the guidance of the Spirit. It is very welcome that this is done with an emphasis on the spirituality inherited from the Old Testament and in a broad salvation-historical perspective, including all parts of the New Testament canon. The author is to be thanked for this summary of the distinct features of

Christian spirituality (including frequently neglected aspects) which are often almost forgotten or blurred in the discussion of practice of spirituality. Although some aspects of New Testament theology are described in distinct Catholic terminology (e.g. paschal mystery), the volume will be an inspiration for personal meditation and a resource for ministry for all Christians.

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Bergneustadt, Germany

Richard R. Pervo, *The Making of Paul: Constructions of the Apostle in Early Christianity.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010). Xv + 376 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8006-9659-7. Paperback.

The popular perception and scholarly portrayal of Paul have changed significantly over time. As with the figure of Jesus, it seems that each generation paints and perhaps needs to paint its own portrait of Paul. In the present textbook, Pervo, a senior North American New Testament scholar and author of the recent *Hermeneia* commentary on Acts, argues that such constructions of Paul happened from the very beginning. In this study, he intends to describe and evaluate this process of "constructing" Paul:

The thrust of the following pages is toward defining profiles of Paul and Paulinism in terms of the needs, questions, and values of the persons, groups, or movements represented in various texts. Specifically, I wish to describe how Paul becomes a, even *the*, pillar and founder of catholic Christianity, by which I mean the emerging "great church" of the period from 150-250 CE, and later. In order to accomplish this great task, Paul (not unlike Jesus) had to die (xii).

Pervo further notes that Paul's letters were not discovered, like thousands of ancient letters, through the labours of modern archaeologists, nor "were they preserved for the benefit of future historians or theologians. They were edited and copied to meet the needs of early Christians. This is an obvious but very important point: the Pauline letters that have come down to us represent Paul as some early believers wished him to be received and understood" (2).

An introductory chapter offers a survey of research on the Pauline legacy, a reconstruction of the development after Paul's death and a survey of Paul the apostle, the evangelist of the entire world, as a redeemed sinner and as a teacher, and on the close link between suffering and the proclamation of salvation. Pervo also describes the similarities between the formation and proliferation of traditions about Jesus and Paul: "In both cases, followers set out to preserve his heritage by producing texts from oral and written traditions. The process included the amalgamation of different genres, the editing of multiple texts into one, experiments with different sorts of editions and the production of 'apocrypha'" (19). In his approach, Pervo concentrates

upon a number of entire books rather than piecemeal examination of a broad range of texts, as he notes in the introduction (1).

Chapter one sketches how "Paul became a book" (23-61). It addresses the genre of letters, collections of letters in the ancient world, the collection of Paul's letters, partition theories, interpolations and glosses, possible deletions and the formation of the Pauline corpus. Throughout, Pervo challenges the literary integrity of Paul's letters and revives positions that have ceased (for good reasons) to dominate the discussion (many of the recent rhetorical studies of Paul's letter have understood them to be careful compositions and have questioned partition theories or the presumed omission of sections).

In chapter two, Pervo examines – without distinction between canonical letters and letters outside of the New Testament canon – letters that were attributed to Paul between the late first and mid-fourth century (63-118; Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 3 Corinthians, Laodiceans, Alexandrians and the correspondence between Paul and Seneca). Pervo argues that the most important fact communicated by the existence of pseudo-Pauline letters is that the apostle continued to have authority (63). Pervo suggests that a trend can be seen to make Paul more conservative in matters of ethics. These letters also shift from Paul as essentially the *only* apostle to Paul as *one* of the apostles, all of whom stick to the same story (117). "All the Deutero-Paulines look back upon the authentic letters, and all make use of one or more of them. These latter epistles testify both to the success of Paul's chosen form and to the requirement to keep him up-to-date" (117). The cohesive picture and development of Paul presented here becomes less convincing when one does not share Pervo's positions on the authorship and dating of the letters of the *Corpus Paulinum* (and other New Testament books). A number of recent studies have provided good reasons to do so.

A third chapter is devoted to Paul and the epistolary tradition in early Christianity (119-148). Pervo proposes the hypothesis that the success of Paul's practice of writing letters is responsible for much of the epistolary tradition in early Christian literature. Even letters that engage Paul critically or modify his views bear negative testimony to the value of Paul's method. Pervo examines – again without any distinction – Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 1 Clement, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, 2 Peter and Dionysius of Corinth. He concludes for this literature: "Liked or not, Paul was always there, a basis of power, a target to attack, a literary model to imitate" (148). Pervo does not discuss the significance of early Jewish letters to communities which may have shaped Paul and the other letter writers in the New Testament; cf. I. Taatz, *Frühjüdische Briefe: Die paulinischen Briefe im Rahmen der offiziellen Briefe des Frühjudentums*, NTOA 16 (Freiburg, CH. Universitätsverlag, 1991).

Chapter four sketches portraits of Paul in narrative genre (149-185). It surveys the Acts of the Apostles (149-157; "In summary, the heroization of Paul in Acts is not highly restrained. Paul has it all and does it all. His story

and accomplishments rival that of Jesus in some important respects", 156), the Acts of Paul, the *Epistula Apostolorum*, the Acts of Peter, the Acts of Barnabas, the Acts of Titus, the Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena, the Apocalypse of Paul and the so-called Pseudo-Clementines. Pervo notes the considerable variation from Paul the hero portrayed in the canonical Acts to the villain of the Pseudo-Clementines. As common features, Paul is portrayed as the subordinate of Jerusalem who ran his own mission; he is integrated into the apostolic circle and granted his own sphere of labour. In addition, there is emphasis on the congruity between Paul's teaching and that of the other apostles. "Another noteworthy component of the narrative tradition is the representation of Paul as a saviour figure in his own right" (185).

Pervo then turns to other representatives of what is considered to be a recognisable "anti-Paulinism" (187-198), seeking to explain the silence regarding Paul in Matthew, Hegesippus and other sources. In a chapter covering the period between Marcion and Irenaeus (199-228), Pervo sketches how Paul and his writings have become objects of interpretation. Discussion includes Marcion of Sinope, Paul among the "Gnostics" and Paul in Irenaeus of Lyons. During this period, Paul became a theologian in a formal sense: "Irenaeus, utilizing various intellectual and rhetorical methods, shaped the portrait of Paul as an orthodox theologian within the framework of emerging Christian Bible, creed and methodology" (228).

In the "Conclusion" (229-239), Pervo writes that the post-Pauline texts confront readers with the frail nature of the Pauline inheritance and the problems its transmission to subsequent generations raised. Paul had not attempted to present an immutable gospel carved upon stone tablets. His writings were occasional, models for dealing theologically with pastoral problems rather than catchall solutions. These letters were often obscure, especially to those who were not part of the generating discussion (229f).

He further summarises the developments which he sketched. The volume closes with an annotated Pauline "family tree" (241-244), bibliography, detailed notes (283-358) and an index of primary sources and of modern authors.

Pervo offers a good survey of current critical scholarship on the person and theology of Paul as it was received and developed in early Christianity, and adds his own insights and emphases. The framework is that of a (proto-) orthodoxy emerging from earlier varieties in early Christianity whose members were engaged in conflict and in pursuit of varied goals. While there are good reasons to challenge Pervo's interpretation of the canonical sources on a number of issues (thus changing his sketch of *Wirkungsgeschichte*), his interpretation of other early Christian and patristic sources is helpful. Pervo overemphasizes the differences between the letters of the *Corpus Paulinum* and also those between the Paul of the epistles and of the Acts of the Apostles. Several recent studies have pointed to more nuanced positions; see for example, T. E. Philips, *Paul, His Letters and Acts*, Library of Pauline Studies

(Peabody: Hendrickson, 2009; for a critical assessment see S. A. Adams in *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 1, 2011, 229-236) and S. E. Porter, *The Paul of Acts*, WUNT 115 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999; see my review in *ThLZ* 125, 2000, 1021-1024).

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Dozeman, Thomas B. *Exodus*. Eerdmans Critical Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. xix + 868 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8028-2617-6. $55 Paperback.

Dozeman sifts a vast amount of critical material to bring us this "Eerdmans Critical Commentary," contributing an almost 900-page work to a series which advertises itself as "accessible to serious general readers and scholars alike," and as opening up areas of the book's "background, its interpretation, and its application." I might suggest that it is stronger on the first two of these three, and that I can think of few general readers, no matter how serious, who would be likely to follow a lot of the discussion. But for scholars this is a treasure-trove of digested analysis concerning many aspects of the troubled state of Pentateuchal criticism at the present time. Which leads one, perhaps, to a dual judgment on the book: while in some respects Dozeman delivers a model critical commentary on Exodus, I wonder whether this equates in other ways to being a commentary on Exodus criticism. I suspect that those whose interest is the latter will find this work to be of real value, while those looking for more in the way of interpretation and application of the text may need to go elsewhere.

An elegant 50-page introduction sets the scene, beginning with a helpful if brief discussion of genre(s) and history. Exodus is seen as neither ancient nor modern history writing; it is not uncritical of mythical traditions; but it still maintains a focus on divine causality.

Then comes discussion of various forms of the documentary hypothesis, and this requires careful reading in order to understand what follows. Dozeman's key proposal is that there are two basic traditions: a post-exilic "P History," aware of and dependent upon a prior, possibly exilic, "Non-P History," each of which contain within them various traditions and layers while remaining broadly discernible as coherent wholes. We are occupied here with authors capable of creative development of their traditions, rather than editors of written sources. Hence the "Non-P" nomenclature avoids confusion with the old source-critical "Yahwist" (J), even if in practice Non-P seems to *function* a little like a JE-combination. My guess is that Dozeman views this approach as a somewhat over-simplifying attempt to make progress through the tangled debates currently occupying Pentateuchal critics. But since it leads him to spend considerable energy in the following 700+ pages of commentary on disentangling two sets of traditions and tracking

redactional significance in the changes between them, I do wonder if the average reader of Exodus may feel that the complexity still risks outweighing the putative interpretive insights. In some ways it seems like a very helpful framework to talk of Non-P and P, and of course all the old conundrums which once drove scholars to source-critical approaches get a form of resolution too. But I confess to not always finding the hard labor of demarcation all that illuminating, and on occasion, such as finding (surely rightly) a resonance between non-P's *ki-tob hu* of the baby Moses in 2:2 and the repeated refrain of Gen 1, Dozeman ends up saying "when read in the larger context of the P History in the present context of the Hebrew Bible, links with Genesis 1 are forged" (p. 80), by which point one wonders if the interpretive framework is really proving to be a help or a hindrance.

A third introductory topic outlines the shape of the book: chapters 1–15:21 on "The Power of Yahweh in Egypt," and 15:22 to the end on "The Presence of Yahweh in the Wilderness." Dozeman has a lot to say, helpfully, on key themes like power, holiness, revelation, and divine presence. The way in which he says it involves introducing each main section (six in all) with a discussion of main themes (sometimes sub-divided into sections), authors (marking out P and non-P), and literary structure (usually a demarcation of the commentary's interpretive units). Lengthier units then get their own introductions in terms of themes and composition history. Finally, for each unit a fresh translation is offered, with relatively brief clarifying notes, and then the commentary. Although there is logic to this approach, it can make it hard to locate all the comment on any particular verse.

Dozeman is willing to engage with the history of interpretation, although only once – on "law" – does this merit a whole sub-section. It is usually focused on traditional Jewish and modern critical reception. A one-off citation of John Wesley on witchcraft with respect to 22:18 rather highlights the lack of similar engagement elsewhere.

The commentary proper recapitulates the strengths and weaknesses of the whole: excellent attention to inner-biblical resonance under the guise of mapping alternate traditions, and real clarity with regard to the structure of each section of text. And yet, many important questions which surely rightly detain the reader of Exodus are barely touched on. To cite one example, a rather brief paragraph on 20:13 will not help the reader grasp what is at stake in translating this text as "do not murder," while the preceding commandment is discussed at length, but mainly in terms of Sabbath traditions, rather than what the Sabbath might really signify.

Reviewers must always be careful not to criticize a book for not being the book they would have written themselves, but at the same time there are a lot of serious readers of Exodus for whom this commentary may not be quite what they need. Nevertheless, on Dozeman's own terms, and with respect to any readers wanting to get to grips with what it looks like to read a

Pentateuchal text in the midst of current critical reconfigurations, this will remain a valuable study.

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Craig Ott and Stephen J. Strauss with Timothy C. Tennent. *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments and Contemporary Issues.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010. 432 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-8010-2662-1. $29.99. Paperback.

Encountering Theology of Mission (ETM) is the fifth in Baker Academic's "Encountering Mission" textbook series. Previous volumes include: *Introducing World Missions, The Changing Face of World Missions, Encountering Missionary Life and Work, and Christianity Encountering World Religions.* In this latest addition to the series Ott, Strauss, and Tennent have collaborated to provide a current, insightful overview of an oft-neglected subject. ETM has accomplished something that most previous theologies of mission have failed to do – namely, this book is organized as a fairly comprehensive and accessible textbook.

To that end, the authors assert that a theology of mission must endeavor to "provide clear biblical direction for the task of mission," "accompany and scrutinize the foundations and practice of mission," and "hold forth the missionary dimension of the gospel to Church and Academy" (p xiii). Therefore, the text is organized into three parts, each corresponding sequentially to these goals. Part 1 seeks to establish the "Biblical Foundations of Mission" containing chapters on "God and the Nations" in both the Old and New Testaments, *Missio Dei* as the justification of mission, the purpose and nature of mission and various aspects of the task of missions. Part 2 attempts to convey the "Motives and Means for Mission" with chapters on motivation, the Church's role, the missionary's vocation, and spiritual dynamics. Part 3 addresses "Mission in Local and Global Context" with chapters on contextualization, world religions, and final implications, each of which is related to the necessity of mission: 1) the exclusivity of Christ 2) the reality of hell, and 3) the destiny of the unevangelized. Figures, lists, call out boxes and chapter summaries complement most chapters, providing the ability to quickly access pertinent information.

Possibly the most helpful aspect of ETM precedes the aforementioned parts in the form of an introduction. The authors engage in a rigorous research-laden effort to define and distinguish between commonly confused terms. For example, following sections defining "missiology" and "missional theology", the authors explain how the convergence of the two form the discipline of "theology of mission" (p xx). Next the authors highlight the various sources which inform one's theology of mission: the bible, history, social sciences, and the global church (p xxii). The Introduction concludes

with a historical overview of the developments in theology of mission in each major era of Church history with an emphasis on developments from the Reformation to the present. By naming the "major players" and summarizing their contributions that helped to shape the discipline from the outset, the authors of ETM have made clear how their own thinking has been shaped as well as set their own forthcoming contribution into its historical context.

Others have provided biblical theologies of mission in the past (see George Peters' *A Biblical Theology of Mission* first published in 1972 and more recently Andreas Kostenberger and P.T. O'Brien's *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth* published in 2001, and Christopher J.H. Wright's *The Mission of God* from 2006), but ETM does a good job of boiling the vast Mission of God documented in the expanse of the biblical grand-narrative down into three foundational chapters. Careful and relatively comprehensive research emerges as one of the great strengths in these first chapters in that they draw from the well of many who have plumbed these depths before. By pulling together and summarizing insights from other biblical scholars and missiologists, the authors have served their readers well and exposed them to varied points of view. For example, in Part 1 both Walter Kaiser and Christopher J.H. Wright are referenced, making arguments for the centrifugal and centripetal emphases of Old Testament Israel respectively. Perhaps it would have been more helpful to have utilized the common plot movements of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration to organize these first several chapters to situation their work squarely among the recent trend that biblical theologians seem to have established. In Part 2 the authors distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate motivations for mission, giving examples of representative literature. This reader particularly appreciated the discussion in the chapter entitled, "The Church and Mission," which addresses how churches and agencies must cooperate rather than compete. Also appreciated was the author's intentional emphasis on the necessity of the global church both for theologizing and for engaging in mission together. Such an approach is paramount because every culture has its blind spots. This is precisely why this reviewer studied under an Asian missiologist who taught that any theology of mission must be biblically based, theologically sound, theoretically coherent, trans-culturally relevant and practically applicable. I believe that ETM has in large part accomplished just that.

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Andrew David Naselli and Collin Hansen, eds. *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011. Paperback. 222 pp. $16.99. Paperback.

Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism is the latest entry in Zondervan's widely acclaimed Counterpoints series. Each volume in the series puts a group of scholars in dialog about a doctrine or issue that is contested among evangelicals. How fitting that this latest offering brings together interlocutors who debate the very nature of the evangelical movement itself. Editors Andy Naselli and Collin Hansen offer introductory and concluding chapters, respectively, but the heart of the book includes lengthy chapters from four evangelical theologians. Following the format of early Counterpoint volumes, each contributor briefly responds to the other chapters. Each contributor was asked to weigh in on three debated topics: evangelical-Catholic cooperation, movement boundaries in relation to views like open theism, and the importance of penal substitutionary atonement.

Kevin Bauder of Central Baptist Theological Seminary argues for fundamentalism, which occupies the space on the right of the evangelical spectrum. Bauder contends for an essentially theological identity, tying fundamentalist doctrine to the gospel message. Penal substitutionary atonement resides at the core of the gospel. Cooperation is multilayered, with the degree of cooperation contingent upon the degree of doctrinal affinity. Catholics and open theists are out of bounds for fundamentalists, though for different reasons. Bauder spends considerable space criticizing what he considers fundamentalist excesses, though many observers will argue Bauder is a revisionist who is criticizing mainstream fundamentalism. Bauder could be described as a "moderate" or even "progressive" fundamentalist who shows greater sympathy for some non-fundamentalist evangelicals than many of his fellow fundamentalists.

Albert Mohler of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary argues for confessional evangelicalism, which in keeping with the spectrum analogy is a step toward the center and away from fundamentalism. Or so goes the theory. Yet, Mohler's confessional evangelicalism sounds remarkably similar to Bauder's moderate fundamentalism, even if the two men run in different circles. Like Bauder, Mohler argues for a self-consciously theological identity. He advocates "theological triage" as a model for fostering faithful cooperation, strongly affirms penal substitution, rejects open theism, and expresses hesitancy toward Catholic-evangelical ecumenism. A looming question for Mohler's model relates to his understanding of confessionalism; simply put, in what sense is evangelicalism confessional? There is no commonly held evangelical confession for faith. At best, there are a handful of evangelical identity markers, though even here there is considerable debate, which is why a market exists for this book! On the whole, Mohler's model seems more applicable to individual churches, institutions, and denominations than the broader evangelical movement.

John Stackhouse of Regent College argues for generic evangelicalism, which at the end of the day focuses more on description than prescription. Stackhouse offers a very theological understanding of evangelicalism, and he

clearly affirms penal substitution, but he allows for more fluid boundaries and appreciates greater latitude in terms of Christian cooperation. On the whole, Stackhouse would prefer to focus on who are more or less faithful/healthy/ balanced in their evangelical identity rather than quickly write folks he disagrees with (like open theists) out of the movement entirely. As a historian, I appreciate Stackhouse's understanding of evangelicalism, which seems based at least as much on habits and alliances as it is doctrines. Furthermore, his focus on faithfulness rather than theological precision, particularly in the most debated matters, seems both wise and helpful. His generic (centrist?) posture seems less helpful in confessionally minded churches, institutions, and denominations; here, Mohler's paradigm seems more applicable. Many evangelical groups could be considered confessional branches of a generically evangelical family tree.

Roger Olson of Truett Theological Seminary argues for post-conservative evangelicalism, advocating fluid boundaries in part because the movement has included diverse—perhaps even incompatible—sub-traditions from its inception. At their core, evangelicals affirm a shared experience of the new birth more than they share common doctrines. Olson rejects making penal substitution a hallmark of evangelicalism and opposes breaking fellowship with open theists; doctrine is important, of course, but since different evangelicals interpret Scripture in different ways, who adjudicates the various interpretations? Interestingly, he remains less than sanguine about evangelical and Catholic ecumenical endeavors, which sounds curiously like drawing boundaries. Catholics notwithstanding, Olson's evangelical tent seems big enough to include at least some folks who are so far removed from the center of the evangelical spectrum that they would have no interest in camping with us.

Several key themes emerge throughout the book, especially the difference between *describing* who evangelicals are and *defining* who they ought to be. While all the contributors affirm some amount of both prescription and description, in terms of emphasis Bauder and Mohler lean toward the former while Stackhouse and Olson tilt toward the latter. All of the contributors work off of David Bebbington's famous evangelical "quadrilateral" of biblicism, conversionism, crucicentrism, and activism, and most of them engage Paul Hiebert's discussion of the difference between movements that are "centered set" versus those that are "bounded set." Naselli's closing chapter does a fine job of summarizing these and other themes. *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism* is a helpful book that deserves a wide reading, particularly alongside the more intentionally descriptive works of historians such as Bebbington, George Marsden, and Barry Hankins.

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Billings, J. Todd. *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church.* Baker Academic, 2011. 192 pp. Paperback. ISBN 9780801039348. Paperback.

While theologians and biblical scholars seem to be increasingly interested in union with Christ, the pastoral and practical dimensions of this doctrine are often relatively unexplored. This excellent text by Todd Billings contributes to the closing of that gap as he puts his theological expertise in this area to use (see his acclaimed dissertation on Calvin and union, published as *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: the Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* [Oxford University Press, 2007]).

Billings' goal is to use biblical and reformational ressourcement (a.k.a., theological retrieval) to speak to the church today about God's "amazing…action in uniting believers to Christ" (2). Union is at the heart of the gospel and the Christian message, a theological concept with "astonishing implications" (173) for every sphere of life. Billings targets contemporary practices and mindsets that union and its implications could recalibrate, refine, overturn, and replace. His aims for his five chapters are concise and clearly stated in the introduction, the conclusion, and each chapter.

Chapter One ("Salvation as Adoption in Christ: An Antidote to Today's Distant yet Convenient Deity") surveys the miracle of adoption, Calvin on union, and the common North American approach to God. Billings raises the specter of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, showing that the God of the Bible has more to offer than the cheap god toyed with by many Americans. In particular Calvin's stress on the "double gift" (justification *and* sanctification) in union is highlighted. When God unites us by the Spirit to his Son, it is not merely justification and forgiveness (a new status) but sanctification, a new identity and new power that are given to God's people, so that a full-orbed new life in the Messiah is ours. The God of adoption is not deistic and distant, but comes close and even empowers us to "live into" a new identity. Billings is heavy on the Bible and heavy on Calvin, to good effect.

The second chapter ("Total Depravity in Sin, Total Communion in Christ: How the Bondage of the Will Mirrors a Theology of Salvation as Communion") articulates a rhetorically savvy (and biblically faithful) approach to total depravity, which in Billings' view is not simply a negative statement, but a positive assertion about the value of humanity, since we are only truly human when we are fully in communion with God.

These opening chapters provide an invigorating introduction to union, which should prove particularly fresh and bracing for many Young Reformed pastors, their detractors, and evangelicals writ large. We are reminded that TULIP is not the heart of Calvin and the reformed tradition. Billings' emphases undermine under-developed ideas sometimes found in the Young Reformed camp. The emphasis on sharing or participating in the Spirit's work addresses the difficulty many seem to have in coordinating divine and

human agency in sanctification and mission (also appearing later in the book, i.e., ch. 5, p. 155). The focus on union as God's means of providing us with new power for Christian life and mission stands over and against a narrow emphasis on mere "sanctification by justification" or "sanctification by gospel." And the fuller dimensions of the gospel revealed when we emphasize union could improve justification-centered approaches to the gospel. Later chapters also portray the dignity we have in the participation in God's mission, the building of God's church and witnessing to the Messiah. Such emphases undercut the passivity on offer in some versions of the Christian life, mission and sanctification.

In the third chapter ("Encountering a Mystery in Union with Christ: On Communion with the Incomprehensible God"), Billings covers more technical terrain, addressing the transcendence of God and its significance for the ongoing role of Christ as mediator in union. Divine accommodation in Calvin's thought is put to good use here. Billings draws on Bavinck's development of Calvin and earlier thinkers to explore Christ's role as mediator of the beatific vision in the final state. Some readers who would benefit from the opening chapters will struggle with language and concepts in this chapter (i.e., the distinction between archetypal and ectypal knowledge).

Chapter four ("The Gospel and Justice: Union with Christ, the Law of Love, and the Lord's Supper") focuses on the sacraments and union. One might suspect that Baptist readers of this journal would find room to quibble here. But Billings focuses not on ontological details like Calvin's approach to "real presence," but on practical implications of Eucharist on which evangelicals should agree. He explores the Belhar Confession from South Africa, adopted in 1986 in response to apartheid. The emphasis on action in response to our union is faithful to a number of themes. Justice, love and other actions flow from Union (justification and sanctification are the result of Spirit's new creation work uniting us to Christ, leading to justice) and from Eucharist (see especially *Institutes* 4.17.40, John's Gospel, and 1 Cor 11). The gospel includes forgiveness and a new life through participation in Christ by the Spirit, and that new life leads to justice. The supper—as segregated churches in the American South and South Africa knew full well—is not merely a vertical affair. As it displays the gospel and unites to Christ, it implicates believers' involvement in a wider body and in service to neighbors.

In the fifth chapter ("Ministry in Union with Christ: A Constructive Critique of Incarnational Ministry"), Billing affirms much that gets labeled "incarnational mission" in our contemporary efforts. But he critiques this label and misguided efforts fostered by such rhetoric, for "the incarnation is not an 'ongoing process' to be repeated or a 'model' to be copied in Christian ministry" (124). He proposes instead an emphasis on participation in the work of the Spirit, bearing witness to Christ and creating a new humanity in him.

A biblical scholar (like the present reviewer) might have a different portrait, even if he or she attended to practical aspects of ministry as Billings does. But Billings provides a helpful entry into an important arena. This text is more appropriate and commendable for systematic or historical theology courses, although individual chapters could be profitably employed to augment courses on Paul, John, missiology, and the sacraments.

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Guthrie, Steven R. ***Creator Spirit: The Holy Spirit and the Art of Becoming Human***. Baker Academic, 2011. 222 pages. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8010-2921-9. Paperback.

Philosophical aesthetics is a white-hot area of interest for Christian thinkers interested in being culturally relevant to our post-literate era. From the visual arts to music, literature and theater, a significant wave of interest in how to think about the creative arts has begun to produce serious works that span the gap between rigorous theology and legitimate arts.

Steven Guthrie's *Creator Spirit* steps into this interest with an exhaustive pneumatology of creative endeavors. Carefully researched (and footnoted) and cautiously developed, he moves from foundational issues to lofty ideals for creating Gospel-laden art.

Guthrie rightly reminds us that the creative arts counterbalance the hyper-rational tendencies of academic theology. Guthrie works carefully within three traditional suspicions of the fine arts that have haunted traditional theology: a Socratic skepticism about art's value, a Patristic cynicism about art's morality, and an Enlightenment distaste for art's passions. The void created by these suspicions sometimes results in a dour, curmudgeonly view of the arts as a whole.

On the other hand, Guthrie pulls no punches in addressing the artistic community's theological deficiencies. From theosophy to postmodernism, the philosophical and ideological underpinnings of contemporary art are detailed and scrutinized in the light of sound theology. While careful to identify the sources of these shortcomings, Guthrie mines these very sources for theological gold in ways that are reminiscent of Augustine's famous "gold of Egypt" trope.

Augustine, however, is less important than Athanasius for *Creator Spirit*, as that Father undergirds the bulk of the book's argument. Guthrie views *Letters to Serapion* as crucial to understanding how Christians might think about creativity in the context of pneumatology, especially in the Athanasian emphasis on the Spirit's ministry of restoring the fullness of humanity's *imago dei*. Guthrie's thesis may be distilled as exploring how "one of the principal works of the Holy Spirit is to make and remake our humanity. In creation,

incarnation, and redemption, the Holy Spirit is *the humanizing Spirit* [author's emphasis]" (page xvi.).

Guthrie begins with the uneasy relationship between Christian thought and the mushy spirituality that so easily dominates the fine arts, moving quickly into foundational questions about what it means to be human. The chapter on the importance of community to the arts is especially strong and counters the elitism and subjectivity that too frequently poses as aesthetic criticism today. Discussions of non-Christian and Christian notions of artistic inspiration are likewise very helpful, demonstrating the stark contrasts between the two. The arts allow us to gain glimpses of the redemptive consummation of this world, both in the physical realm, where salvation is effected, and in transcendent glimpses of the next world, where restoration will be fully realized.

The challenge of bridging disparate academic subjects is that their presuppositional questions and, indeed, their technical languages can differ in complicated ways. There are times when *Creator Spirit* borders on overwhelming the aesthetician with theological technicalities, even as the theologian may find some of the examples from the arts to be befuddling. In general, however, Guthrie navigates these difficulties gently, though digesting the sheer breadth of his sources does require patience and a bit of humility.

Perhaps the greatest strength of *Creator Sprit* is its relentless combination of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. For theologians, the book calls for the application of pneumatology, viewing creative pursuits as a worthwhile arena for living out one's theological convictions. For artists, the book presents a bracing view of the importance of theological soundness, particularly from a biblical perspective. The index of scriptural citations is extensive and is not merely decorative; Guthrie emphasizes a hermeneutic authority not often found among philosophical aestheticians.

Secular critic Camille Paglia observed in *Arion* (2007) that the loss of religious fervor in Western art has resulted in vapid traditions. Guthrie's helpful aesthetic theology will provide grist for artists of all media to think carefully about the Gospel-burden of their crafts. Perhaps a new renaissance of high-quality art rooted in the Christian faith will be able to trace its roots to *Creator Spirit*. If we are fortunate, a new generation of theologians will likewise engage the artistic community with a passion for creative works that incarnate the Truth of the Gospel.

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Dennis Jowers, Paul Kjoss Helseth, William Lane Craig, Ron Highfield, and Gregory A. Boyd. *Four Views on Divine Providence.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011. 264 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-310-32512-3. $19.99. Paperback.

The doctrine of divine providence—of God's reign over his creation for his glory and the benefit of his people—is one of the most comforting and perplexing in the Christian faith. Knowing that "God causes all things to work together for good" for His people (Romans 8:28) brings comfort to our hearts. Yet the same doctrine raises many deep and knotty questions as well. Christians in every generation have struggled with how God's will and sovereign power relate to evil in general and to human decisions, good or evil, in particular. In this volume, another in Zondervan's Counterpoints Series, readers listen in on a robust debate by four ardent proponents of contrasting views. Each contributor presents his own view, and then withstands a brief rebuttal by the others. The authors summarized their views as follows:

Helseth: "God causes all things."

Craig: "God directs all things."

Highland: "God controls by liberating."

Boyd: "God limits his control."

Helseth begins the debate with a carefully-worded presentation from the confessional Reformed position, supporting his view with many familiar passages of Scripture. In effect, Helseth argues that God is "omnicausal," having determined everything before the foundation of the world according to his eternal plan, yet "in such a way" that God is not crushing human freedom or is the author of evil. Helseth ultimately rests in the "inscrutability" and "mystery" of this harmonization. Such a view is deeply unsatisfying to Craig and Boyd, considering the recourse to "inscrutability" as a cop-out, unworthy of the very effort before them in this volume. Boyd specifically rejected Helseth's use of the "mysterious 'in such a way' clause" that Reformed thinkers tend to resort to, saying it proves the unintelligibility of the determinist position.

Craig argues from the Molinist position, which asserts that God rules the universe relying on his omniscience, having planned the world factoring in all the actions/decisions of free creatures utilizing "middle knowledge," God's exhaustive understanding of "counterfactuals": "what might have been if…" Craig's article was well written, passionate, and densely argued serving as a good introduction to those who are unfamiliar with the Molinist position. But while he succeeds in showing that God does know "counterfactuals," giving many examples (e.g. Jesus before Pilate, "If my Kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight …." John 18:36), he fails to show Scriptural support for his very premise: God rules *by means of* this middle knowledge. Craig acknowledges that his primary arguments for his view are theological, not exegetical. By rebuttal, Helseth pushes Craig even on whether his arguments are more likely philosophical, not theological.

In Highfield's article, he asserts that "God controls by liberating, and liberates by controlling." By this, he means that God frees humanity from the enslavement that Satan and sin have worked on the human personality

and enables free choice to flow in the direction it should travel, along the lines of God's will. Highfield rightly clarifies the whole issue in one question: "Does God accomplish his will in all things?" This is the great divide: the view of theologians who answer "yes" has lately been called the "no risk" view, and that of those who answer "no" the "risk" view. Highfield says the analogy of faith shows God to be sovereign, working out his plan by his wisdom and power. According to the rebuttals, one of the more controversial aspects of Highfield's essay is that he seems to toy with the idea that nothing is really evil, that evil has no real, lasting being.

Boyd presents the "open theism" view, asserting that God limits his control in order to achieve free love in the hearts of his people. He rejects the possibility that God could act like a mad scientist who implants a chip in the brains of people forcing them to love the scientist. According to Boyd, true love can only be given by those who are truly free, and freedom must be absolute. God actually does not control anything, but is constantly responding to free human decisions with astonishing resources of power, wisdom, and love. God's infinite intelligence allows him to respond to every human decision and "win" in the end by bringing good out of evil. Boyd thus "solves" the riddle of harmonizing divine sovereignty and human freedom by effectively denying the former to celebrate the latter. Boyd's presentation will delight those who celebrate libertarian freedom, but frustrate those who seek to address all the relevant texts on the mystery of divine providence.

In summation, this volume will serve as the starting place for many who are seeking to work out at a deeper level the questions of divine sovereignty and human freedom. The format does an excellent job of enabling readers to see how such divergent answers to these questions can be framed and asserted.

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James W. Thompson. *Moral Formation according to Paul: The Context and Coherence of Pauline Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011. 213 pp. Paperback. ISBN 9780801039027. $ 24.99 Paperback.

The goal of this book is to "grasp the specific shape and inner logic of Paul's moral instructions" (ix). Thompson's distinct contribution in this endeavor is his interpretation of Paul's ethics in light of the moral tradition of Hellenistic Judaism (e.g., Tobit, 4 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*). This tradition rooted ethics in the Mosaic law, even though the law was rarely cited. Some authors also drew from the Greek philosophical tradition—e.g., Philo, 4 Maccabees, and Wisdom speak of obedience to the law in terms of Plato's four cardinal virtues.

Turning to discuss Paul, Thompson first demonstrates how "Paul shapes the moral consciousness of his gentile converts by instructing them

with the vocabulary of ancient Israel" (62). They are God's "holy" people who are to maintain boundaries, his "elect" who were chosen by God, and the people who are to "walk" worthily of God. He then goes through Paul's lists of vices and virtues which draw less from the philosophical tradition than Hellenistic Jewish tradition did—e.g., Paul never lists the four cardinal virtues. Instead, he draws extensively from the law, and like other Hellenistic Jews he focused on the sexual ethics of the Holiness Code and the love command. Regarding obstacles for obedience, the Greek and Jewish tradition often focused on passions which prevented right conduct or obedience to the law. Paul's contribution here is unique, for his anthropological pessimism is "without parallel in antiquity" (155), and yet he maintains a distinct optimism for the ethical conduct of his Christian communities. The final chapter addresses the disputed letters of Paul without delving into question of authorship. These letters address new problems and show both continuity and discontinuity with the letters written before Romans.

The most important contribution of this book, in my view, is Thompson's repeated point that Paul's ethics are rooted in the Mosaic law, even though Paul rarely cites from it in the context of his moral instruction (e.g., 74, 76, 99, 116, 126, 188). Especially important here are Paul's comments about the importance of Scripture for the moral instruction of Christian converts (1 Cor 9:10; 10:11; Rom 15:4) (114).

I have only one point of criticism of the book, but it is important—in my view, Thompson fails to explain how Paul's theology is the foundation of his ethics, specifically his theology of the law and his theology of the cross. Thompson's chapter on the law (chap. 5) has only a two-page discussion of freedom from the law in Paul, and he concludes that Paul's negative comments about the law are "only in debates about terms of admission for the Gentiles…. Thus Paul is not making sweeping statements about the place of the law as a source of ethical reflection, but is focusing on the place of the gentiles within the family of God" (113). This conclusion, however, fails to give full weight to Paul's negative view of the law, which is perhaps spelled out most clearly in Romans 5–8. There Paul does not reflect on Gentile inclusion but on the law's role in human history. He argues that the law entered "in order that the transgression may increase" (Rom 5:20–21), and that sin used the law to bring about death (Rom 7:7–25). In Paul's view, then, to be under the reign of the law is to be under the reign of sin (Rom 6:14). Christians have been severed from the reign of law through their death with Christ (Rom 7:4), and do not serve in the "oldness of the letter," but in "the newness of the Spirit" (7:6). One must understand this to understand how a Christian is to live according to Paul.

Second, Thompson fails to explain how Paul's theology of the cross is the foundation of his ethics. Thompson certainly believes that the cross is central in Paul's thought, for he observes that the center of the new symbolic universe for Christians is "the Christ event—the descent, death, and resur-

rection of Christ" (44). And in some cases he briefly comes back to this point (e.g., 109, 149, 151, 155, 164). But overall I do not think the book adequately develops Paul's view of the cross and Christian ethics (see, e.g., Rom 6:1–23). Here I appeal to V. P. Furnish's classic comment: "The study of the Pauline ethic… is not the study of his ethical theory, for he had none, nor of his code for Christian living, for he gave none. It is a study, first of all, of the theological convictions which underlie Paul's concrete exhortations and instructions, and secondly, of the way those convictions shape his responses to practical questions of conduct" (*Theology and Ethics in Paul*, 211–12).

With this said, I think that pastors will find the book to be a helpful introduction to Paul's ethics and to the broader ethical discussion, a needed introduction for modern people who rarely think about such things. Pastors will also benefit from Thompson's emphasis on the communal nature of Paul's ethics, a good reminder to churches in America which tend toward rugged individualism. Finally, scholars will benefit from Thompson's immersion in the German literature on Pauline ethics, a discussion which may not be accessible to them outside of a book like this one.

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David J. Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer. *MissionShift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium.* Nashville: B & H Academic, 2010. 312 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8054-4537-4. $26.99. Paperback.

The list of the contributors to *MissionShift* (hereafter MS) is a "who's who" in contemporary missiological thinking. The book is structured in three sections, each of which is anchored by a significant essay from leading missiologists: Charles Van Engen, Paul Hiebert, and Ralph Winter. Current missions thinkers and missiologists interact with what is set forth in these three essays. MS takes on even greater significance in knowing that the contributions by Hiebert and Winter are some of their last before going home.

In section one, Charles Van Engen begins the discussion of mission's past by providing a historical overview of the Church's definitional understanding of mission. According to Van Engen, Evangelical missions is in need of a "new, appropriate, creative, and motivating" definition of mission (p. 22). Although Van Engen's definition (p. 27) is complex, his overall point is well-taken. Good definition, or right thinking, directly impacts good practice. In the words of Lewis Carroll's Cheshire Cat, "If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there."

In section two, Paul Hiebert helps frame mission's present.In light of the constantquestion of how to relate to people from other cultures, Hiebert writes, "We need to learn how to live in a multicontext world, to build bridges of understanding and relationship between different contexts, and to judge between them" (p. 83).Since all humans "live in particular contexts" (p. 82),

contextualization has been, is, and will continue to be a critical issue in missions. Hiebert capably deals with issues of culture and communication as he pushes for what he terms, critical contextualization. This approach allows missionaries to interact with different societies while at once guarding the fidelity of the biblical message and showing appropriate sensitivity to these differing cultures with the goal of gospel transformation on both the micro and macro levels (pp. 98-100).

In section three, Ralph Winter pushes the reader to consider mission's future.This essay, "The Future of Evangelicals in Mission," is a showcase for the unique yet provocative missiological mind of Ralph Winter, and it elicits the best group of responses in the book. In addressing the future of missions, he inserts a historical look at Evangelicalism while never fully addressing what the future holds for missions. Winter advocates a recovery of what he terms First-Inheritance Evangelicalism (FIE) which was characterized by "both spiritual and social concern" (p. 164), as opposed to Second-Inheritance Evangelicalism (SIE) which is concerned primarily with ministering to spiritual concerns throughevangelism (p. 164). As Winter sees it, SIE has a stranglehold on Evangelicalism today. Winter is a keen observer, a prophet, or both, when he writes, "My prediction in this chapter is that in the twenty-first century the mainstream of Evangelicalism in the USA, and of Evangelical missions in particular, will recover a broader perspective, moving from what has been dominantly SIE to a rediscovery of the earlier full spectrum of the FIE tradition" (p. 168). Today there is certainly a movement toward recovering a fuller spectrum of evangelicalism that emphasizes both spiritual and social concern. For a delineation of some future missions challenges, Scott Moreau's response in chapter 15 and J. Mark Terry's response in chapter 18 are helpful.

In addition to the aforementioned essays, the value of MS lies in the charitable interaction by the respondents. Of particular interest is the summary response by Ed Stetzer at the end of each section—see chapters 7, 13, and 19—as well as David Hesselgrave's concluding chapter, "A Scientific Postscript—Grist for the Missiological Mills of the Future." In MS, the display of academic rigor alongside charitable interaction is both refreshing and a good model for scholars. This scholarly yet charitable interaction continues outside of these chapters in Hesselgrave's apology for his presumptive characterization of Ralph Winter's theology (p. 290). Hesselgrave's apology for these comments is on display at edstetzer.com on February 16, 2011 entitled "Open Letters on Open Theism."

In his chapter, Hesselgrave summarizes an unhealthy tendency among mission thinkers and missionaries, "[L]eft to their own devices, Evangelical mission thinkers and practitioners tend to become overly creative and unduly adventurous" (p. 278). Adventuresome and "loners" are apt descriptions of missionaries, so the need for continued charitable conversation within the evangelical community is of utmost importance in order to stay on task for

the glory of God. Whether one considers himself a novice or an expert in all things missions, this book is a worthy read.

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Stanley Porter, Cynthia Long Westfall (ed). *Christian Mission: Old Testament Foundations and New Testament Developments.* Pickwick Publications, 2010.xii + 259 pp. Paperback. ISBN 9781608996551. $24.00 Paperback.

Christian Mission is a series of nine articles originally presented as papers at the 2006 H.H. Bingham Colloquium in the New Testament at McMaster Divinity College. The lectures/articles were written by seven biblical studies experts and one missiologist: Mark J. Boda (McMaster Divinity), Brian P. Irwin (Knox College), Michael P Knowles (McMaster Divinity), Craig A. Evans (Acadia College), Stanley E Porter (McMaster Divinity), Cynthia L Westfall (McMaster Divinity), Ekhard J. Schnabel (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School), and Michael Goheen (Trinity Western University). These scholars were challenged to explore the missionary implications of key biblical themes in an effort to answer the conference question, "How did a first-generation Jewish messianic movement develop the momentum to become a dominant religious force in the Western world?"

This volume is an attempt to demonstrate dialogue between biblical scholarship and missiology. Each of these contributors argues that the missionary mandate and the global expansion of the faith is an important theme running throughout the Old and New Testaments. It is true that this idea is presented in more popular works like John Piper's *Let the Nations be Glad* and Christopher Wright's *The Mission of God*; however, the present work provides a helpful perspective as it brings together the field of biblical studies and missiology. It is an attempt to correct an issue that was first raised by David Bosch when he noted that biblical scholars, because of their desire to emphasize the original meaning of the text, "frequently fail to show whether, and, if so, how, the Bible can be of significance to the church-in-mission and how, if at all, a connection between the biblical evidence and the contemporary missionary scene can be made." (David Bosch, "Mission in Biblical Perspective," 532. Quoted in this book, p. 221). As Michael Goheen notes, "This book is part of a growing recognition of the need to return to Scripture afresh to bring our thinking and practice of mission under the authority of God's Word" (p. 210).

The chapter by Mark J Boda, "Declare His Glory among the Nations: the Psalter as Missional Collection," most clearly demonstrates this dialogue. In the article he argues that the missionary nature of the people of God is demonstrated in both dominant themes as well as the structural arrangement of the Psalter. His exploration of the different uses of "the nations" as a key

theme in the Psalms is helpful, though not entirely original. However, his argument about the missional purpose of God's people being revealed in the rhetorical structure is quite unique. He argues that the editorial decisions which resulted in the final structure of the Psalter are intended to show how the nations should respond to God. In the beginning of Book 1, the nations are shown rebelling against the Lord and his Son. Then, "As one moves through the Psalter at regular intervals, there is the reminder that everlasting praise to Yahweh is the *telos* of this book… this praise is to involve every nation and all creation" (p.31). From this careful thematic and structural analysis, he concludes with seven missiological implications applied to the contemporary church and her mission.

The most important article in this book is Michael Goheen's "Bible and Mission: Missiology and Biblical Scholarship in Dialogue." Goheen's chapter concludes this volume effectively as he summarizes and connects the arguments of the other contributors. He then develops a strong appeal for missiologists and biblical scholars to engage in meaningful dialogue with each other in order to strengthen both fields. He concludes, "For the sake of faithfulness to our call to participate in God's mission in a changing time, I hope that at least something of that dialogue between biblical studies and missiology has taken place in this volume" (232).

This book is helpful for those interested in biblical scholarship and missiology. Some readers unfamiliar with Biblical Studies might find some the arguments a bit too technical. However for those willing to work through the nuances, the book should prove to be a breath of fresh air. For anyone tired of the individualism and the "stove-pipe" nature of academia, this book serves as a good example of biblical scholarship aimed at supporting the current needs of the people of God.

D. Scott Hildreth
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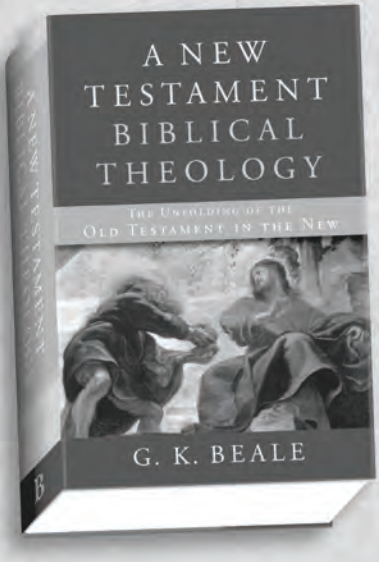

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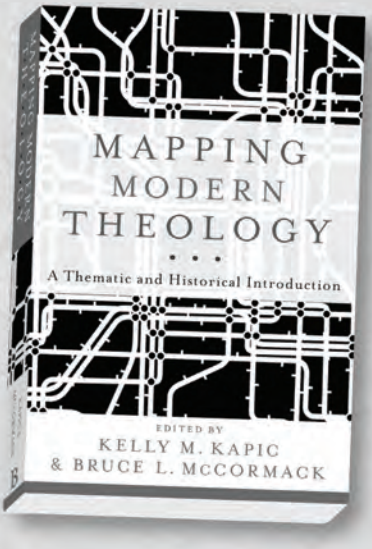

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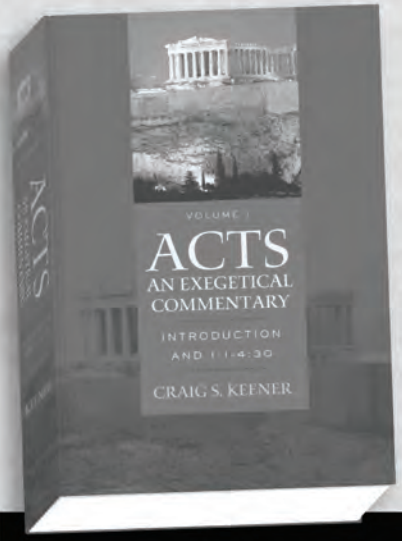

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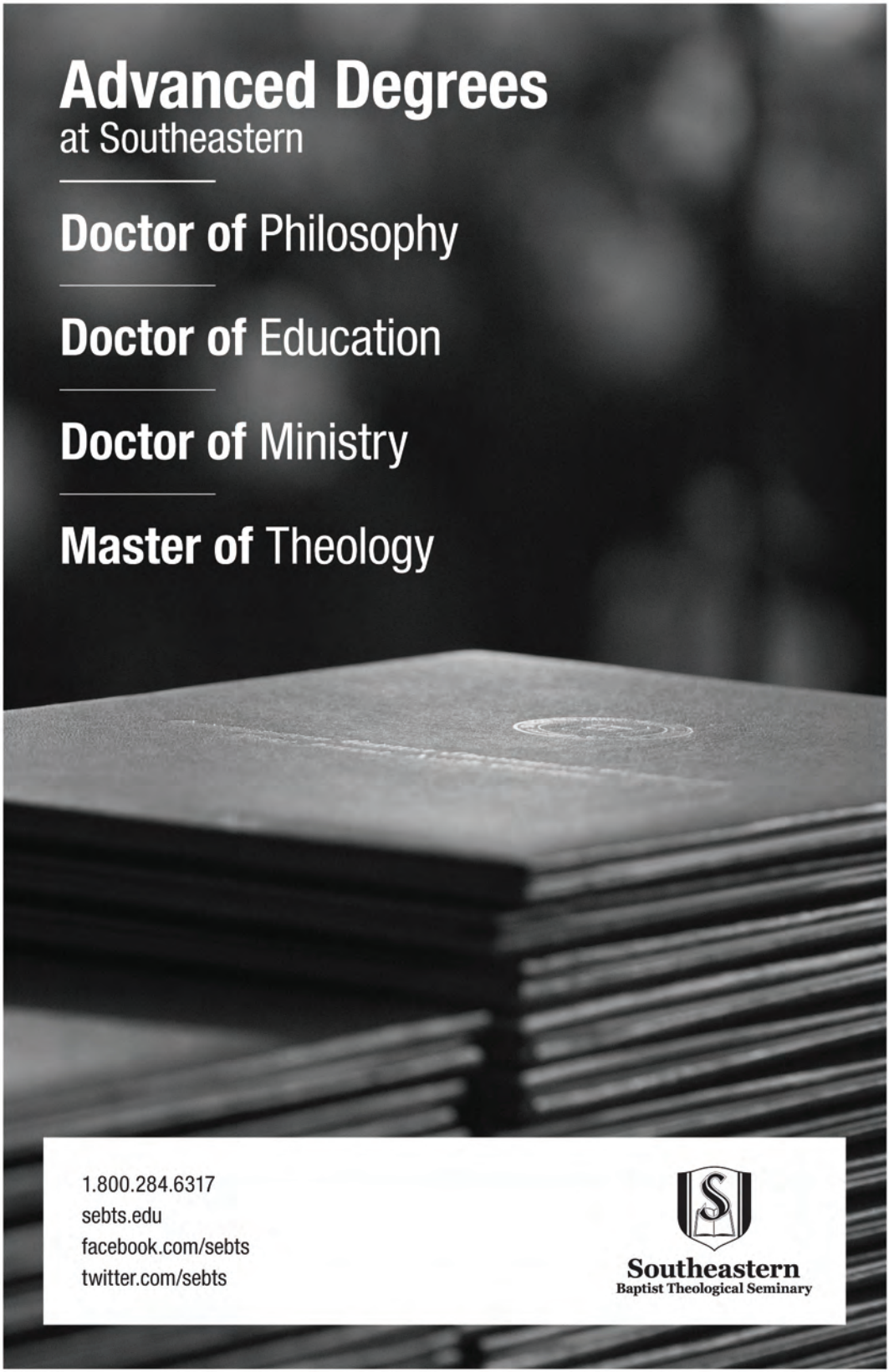
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