

The Historicity of the Empty Tomb of Jesus

William Lane Craig

SUMMARY

An examination of both Pauline and gospel material leads to eight lines of evidence in support of the conclusion that Jesus's tomb was discovered empty: (1) Paul's testimony implies the historicity of the empty tomb, (2) the presence of the empty tomb pericope in the pre-Markan passion story supports its historicity, (3) the use of 'on the first day of the week' instead of 'on the third day' points to the primitiveness of the tradition, (4) the narrative is theologically unadorned and non-apologetic, (5) the discovery of the tomb by women is highly probable, (6) the investigation of the empty tomb by the disciples is historically probable, (7) it would have been impossible for the disciples to proclaim the resurrection in Jerusalem had the tomb not been empty, (8) the Jewish polemic presupposes the empty tomb.

THE HISTORICITY OF THE EMPTY TOMB OF JESUS

Until recently the empty tomb has been widely regarded as both an offense to modern intelligence and an embarrassment for Christian faith; an offense because it implies a nature miracle akin to the resuscitation of a corpse and an embarrassment because it is nevertheless almost inextricably bound up with Jesus' resurrection, which lies at the very heart of the Christian faith. But in the last several years, a remarkable change seems to have taken place, and the scepticism that so characterized earlier treatments of this problem appears to be fast receding. [1] Though some theologians still insist with Bultmann that the resurrection is not a historical event, [2] this incident is certainly presented in the gospels as a historical event, one of the manifestations of which was that the tomb of Jesus was reputedly found empty on the first day of the week by several of his women followers; this fact, at least, is therefore in principle historically verifiable. But how credible is the evidence for the historicity of Jesus' empty tomb?

In order to answer this question, we need to look first at one of the oldest traditions contained in the New Testament concerning the resurrection. In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (AD 56-57) he cites what is apparently an old Christian formula (1 Cor 15. 3b-5), as is evident from the non-Pauline and Semitic characteristics it contains. [3] The fact that the formula recounts, according to Paul, the content of the earliest apostolic preaching (1 Cor 15. 11), a fact confirmed by its concordance with the sermons reproduced by Luke in Acts, [4] strongly suggests that the formula originated in the Jerusalem church. We know from Paul's own hand that three years after his conversion (AD 33-35) at Damascus, he visited Jerusalem, where he met personally Peter and James (Gal 1. 18-19). He probably received the formula in Damascus, perhaps in Christian

catechesis; it is doubtful that he received it later than his Jerusalem visit, for it is improbable that he should have replaced with a formula personal information from the lips of Peter and James themselves. [5] The formula is therefore probably quite old, reaching back to within the first five years after Jesus' crucifixion. It reads:

*. . . hoti Christos apethanen huper ton hamartion hemon kata tas graphas,
kai hoti etaphe,
kai hoti egegetai te hemera te trite kata tas graphas,
kai hoti ophthe Kepha, eita tois dodeka.*

Does this formula bear witness to the fact of Jesus' empty tomb? Several questions here need to be kept carefully distinct. First we must decide: (1) does Paul *accept* the empty tomb, and (2) does Paul *mention* the empty tomb? It is clear that (1) does not imply (2), but (2) would imply (1). In other words, just because Paul may not mention the empty tomb, that does not mean he does not accept the empty tomb. Too many New Testament scholars have fallen prey to Bultmann's fallacy: '*Legenden sind die Geschichten vom leeren Grab, von dem Paulus noch nicht weiss.*' [6] Paul's citation of Jesus' words at the Last Supper (I Cor 11: 23-26) shows that he knew the context of the traditions he delivered; but had the Corinthians not been abusing the eucharist this knowledge would have remained lost to us. So one must not too rashly conclude from silence that Paul 'knows nothing' of the empty tomb. Next, if Paul does imply the empty tomb, then we must ask: (1) does Paul *believe* Jesus' tomb was empty, and (2) does Paul *know* Jesus' tomb was empty? Again, as Grass is quick to point out, (1) does not imply (2); [7] but (2) would imply (1). In other words, does Paul simply assume the empty tomb as a matter of course or does he have actual historical knowledge that the tomb of Jesus was empty? Thus, even if it could be proved that Paul believed in a physical resurrection of the body, that does not necessarily imply that he knew the empty tomb for a fact.

Some exegetes have maintained that the statement of the formula 'he was buried' implies, standing as it does between the death and the resurrection, that the tomb was empty. [8] But many critics deny this, holding that the burial does not stand in relation to the resurrection, but to the death, and as such serves to underline and confirm the reality of the death. [9] The close *Zusammenhang* of the death and burial is said to be evident in Rom 6, where to be baptized into Christ's death is to be baptized into his burial. Grass maintains that for the burial to imply a physical resurrection the sentence would have to read *apethanen ... kai hoti egegetai ek tou taphou.* As it is the burial does not therefore imply that the grave was empty. Grass also points out that

Paul fails to mention the empty tomb in the second half of I Cor 15, an instructive omission since the empty tomb would have been a knock-down argument against those who denied the bodily resurrection. [10] It is also often urged that the empty tomb was no part of the early *kerygma* and is therefore not implied in the burial.

Now while I should not want to assert that the 'he was buried' was included in the formula in order to prove the empty tomb, it seems to me that the empty tomb is implied in the sequence of events related in the formula. For in saying that Jesus died -- was buried -- was raised -- appeared, one automatically implies that the empty grave has been left behind. The four-fold *hoti* and the chronological series of events weighs against subordinating the burial to the death. [11] In baptism the burial looks *forward* with confidence to the rising again (Rom 6. 4; Col. 2. 13). [12] And even if one denied the evidence of the four-fold *hoti* and the chronological sequence, the very fact that a dead-and-buried man was raised itself implies an empty grave. Grass's assertion that the formula should read *egegertai ek tou taphou* is not so obvious when we reflect on the fact that in I Cor 15. 12 Paul does write *ek nekron egegertai* (cf. I Thess 1. 10; Rom 10. 9; Gal 1. 1; Mt. 27. 64; 28. 7). [13] In being raised from the dead, Christ is raised from the grave. In fact the very verbs *egegertai* and *anistanai* imply that the grave is left empty. [14] The notion of resurrection is unintelligible with regard to the spirit or soul alone. The very words imply resurrection of the body. It is the dead man in the tomb who awakens and is physically raised up to live anew. Thus the grave must be empty. [15] And really, even today were we to be told that a man who died and was buried rose from the dead and appeared to his friends, only a theologian would think to ask, 'But was his body still in the grave?' How much more is this true of first century Jews, who shared a much more physical conception of resurrection than we do! [16] Grass's argument that had Paul believed in the empty tomb, then he would have mentioned it in the second half of I Cor 15 turns back upon Grass; for if Paul did not believe in the empty tomb, as Grass contends, then why did he not mention the purely spiritual appearance of Christ to him alluded to I Cor 15. 8 as a knock-down argument for the immateriality of Christ's resurrection body? Grass can only reply that Paul did not appeal to his vision of Jesus to prove that the resurrection body would be heavenly and glorious because the meeting 'eluded all description'. [17] Not at all; Paul could have said he saw a heavenly light and heard a voice (Acts 22. 6-7; 26. 13-14). In fact the very ineffability of the experience would be a positive argument for immateriality, since a physical body is not beyond all description. Grass misunderstands Paul's intention in discussing the resurrection body in I Cor 15. 35-56. Paul does not want to prove that it is physical, for that was presupposed by everyone and

was perhaps what the Corinthians protested at. He wants to prove that the body is in some sense spiritual, and thus the Corinthians ought not to dissent. Hence, the mention of the empty tomb is wholly beside the point. There is thus no reason to mention the empty tomb, but good reason to appeal to Paul's vision, which he does not do. Could it be that in the appearance to him Paul did not see a determinative answer to the nature of the resurrection body? Finally as to the absence of the empty tomb in the kerygma, the statement 'he was buried' followed by the proclamation of the resurrection indicates that the empty tomb was implied in the kerygma. The formula is a summary statement, [18] and it could very well be that Paul was familiar with the historical context of the simple statement in the formula, which would imply that he not only accepted the empty tomb, but knew of it as well. The tomb is certainly alluded to in the preaching in Acts 2. 24-32. [19] The empty tomb is also implicit in Paul's speech in Antioch of Pisisidia, which follows point for point the outline of the formula in 1 Cor. 15. 3-5: ' . . . they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead; and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem.' (Acts 13. 29-31). No first century Jew or pagan would be so cerebral as to wonder if the tomb was empty or not. That the empty tomb is not more explicitly mentioned may be simply because it was regarded as *selbstverständlich*, given the resurrection and appearances of Jesus. Or again, it may be that the evidence of the appearances so overwhelmed the testimony of legally unqualified women to the empty grave that the latter was not used as evidence. But the gospel of Mark shows that the empty tomb was important to the early church, even if it was not appealed to as evidence in evangelistic preaching. So I think it quite apparent that the formula and Paul at least *accept* the empty tomb, even if it is not explicitly *mentioned*. [20]

A second possible reference to the empty tomb is the phrase 'on the third day.' Since no one actually saw the resurrection of Jesus, how could it be dated on the third day? Some critics argue that it was on this day that the women found the tomb empty, so the resurrection came to be dated on that day. [21] Thus, the phrase 'on the third day' not only presupposes that a resurrection leaves an empty grave behind, but is a definite reference to the historical fact of Jesus' empty tomb. But of course there are many other ways to interpret this phrase: (1) The third day dates the first appearance of Jesus. (2) Because Christians assembled for worship on the first day of the week, the resurrection was assigned to this day. (3) Parallels in the history of religions influenced the dating of the resurrections on the third day. (4) The dating of the third day is lifted from Old Testament scriptures. (5) The third day is a theological interpretation indicating God's salvation,

deliverance, and manifestation. Each of these needs to be examined in turn.

1. *The third day dates the first appearance of Jesus.* [22] In favor of this view is the proximity of the statement 'raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures' with 'he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve'. Because Jesus appeared on the third day, the resurrection itself was naturally dated on that day. The phrase 'according to the scriptures' could indicate that the Christians, having believed Christ rose on the third day, sought out appropriate proof texts. This understanding has certain plausibility, for whether the disciples remained in Jerusalem or fled to Galilee, they could have seen Jesus on the third day after his death. If it can be proved, however, that the disciples returned slowly to Galilee and saw Christ only some time later, then this view would have to be rejected. A discussion of this question must be deferred until later. Against this understanding of the third day it is sometimes urged that the Easter reports do not use the expression 'on the third day' but prefer to speak of 'the first day of the week' (Mk 16. 2; Mt. 28. 1; Lk 24. 1; Jn 20. 1, 19). [23] All the 'third day' references are in the Easter kerygma, not the Easter reports. This is said to show not only the independence of the Easter reports from the kerygma, but also that neither the empty tomb nor the appearances of Christ can be the *direct* cause of the 'third day' motif. [24]

But why could they not be the root cause? All that has been proved by the above is that the Easter reports and the Easter preaching are literarily distinct, but that cannot prove that they are not twin offshoots of an original event. The event could produce the report on the one hand; on the other hand it would set the believers a-searching in the Old Testament for fulfilled scriptures. In this search they could find and adopt the language of the third day because, according to Jewish reckoning, the first day of the week was in fact the third day after Jesus' death. [25] Scriptures in hand, they could thus proclaim 'he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures'. This language could then be used by the evangelists outside the Easter reports or actually interwoven with them, as by Luke. Thus the same root event could produce two different descriptions of the day of the resurrection. But was that event the first appearance of Jesus? Here one cannot exclude the empty tomb from playing a role, for the time reference 'the first day of the week' (= 'on the third day') refers primarily to it. If the appearances first occurred on the same day as the discovery of the empty tomb, then these two events together would naturally date the resurrection, and the 'third day' language could reflect the LXX formulation, which is found in I Cor 15. 4 and was worked into the traditions underlying the gospels. So I think it unlikely that the date 'on the third day' refers to the day of the first appearance alone.

2. *Because Christians assembled on the first day of the week, the resurrection was assigned to this day.* [26] Although this hypothesis once enjoyed adherents, it is now completely abandoned. Rordorf's study *Der Sonntag* has demonstrated to the satisfaction of New Testament critics that the expression 'raised on the third day' has nothing to do with Christian Sunday worship. [27] More likely would be that because the resurrection was on the third day, Christians worshipped on that day. But even though the question of how Sunday came to be the Christian special day of worship is still debated, no theory is today propounded which would date the resurrection as a result of Sunday as a worship day.

3. *Parallels in the history of religions influenced the dating of the resurrection on the third day.* [28] In the hey-day of the history of religions school, all sorts of parallels in the history of other religions were adduced in order to explain the resurrection on the third day; but today critics are more sceptical concerning such alleged parallels. The myths of dying and rising gods in pagan religions are merely symbols for processes of nature and have no connection with a real historical individual like Jesus of Nazareth. [29] The three-day motif is found only in the Osiris and perhaps Adonis cults, and, in Grass's words, it is 'completely unthinkable' that the early Christian community from which the formula stems could be influenced by such myths. [30] In fact there is hardly any trace of cults of dying and rising gods at all in first century Palestine. It has also been suggested that the three day motif reflects the Jewish belief that the soul did not depart decisively from the body until after three days. [31] But the belief was actually that the soul departed irrevocably on the fourth day, not the third; in which case the analogy with the resurrection is weaker. But the decisive count against this view is that the resurrection would not then be God's act of power and deliverance from death, for the soul had not yet decisively left the body, but merely re-entered and resuscitated it. This would thus discredit the resurrection of Jesus. If this Jewish notion were in mind, the expression would have been 'raised on the fourth day' after the soul had forever abandoned the body and all hope was gone (cf. the raising of Lazarus). Some critics have thought that the third day reference is meant only to indicate, in Hebrew reckoning, 'a short time' or 'a while'. [32] But when one considers the emphasis laid on this motif not only in the formula but especially in the gospels, then so indefinite a reference would not have the obvious significance which the early Christians assigned to this phrase.

4. *The dating of the third day is lifted from Old Testament scriptures.* [33] Because the formula reads 'on the third day *in accordance with the scriptures*' many authors believe that the third day motif is drawn from the Old Testament, especially Hos 6. 2, which in the LXX reads *te hemera te*

trite. [34] Although Metzger has asserted, with appeal to I Maccabees 7. 16-17 that the 'according to the scriptures' may refer to the resurrection, not the third day, [35] this view is difficult to maintain in light, not only of the parallel in I Cor 15. 3, but especially of Lk 24. 45 where the third day seems definitely in mind. Against taking the 'on the third day' to refer to Hos 6. 2 it has been urged that no explicit quotation of the text is found in the New Testament, or indeed anywhere until Tertullian (*Adversus Judaeos* 13). [36] New Testament quotations of the Old Testament usually mention the prophet's name and are of the nature of promise-fulfillment. But nowhere do we find this for Hos 6. 2. Grass retorts that there is indirect evidence for Christian use of Hos 6. 2 in the Targum Hosea's dropping the reference to the number of days; the passage had to be altered because Christians had preempted the verse. Moreover, Jesus' own 'predictions', written back into the gospel story by believers after the event, obviated the need to cite a scripture reference. [37] But Grass's first point is not only speculative, but actually contradicted by the fact that later Rabbis saw no difficulty in retaining the third day reference in Hosea. [38] No conclusion can be drawn from Targum Hosea's change in wording, for the distinctive characteristic of this Targum *is* its free haggadic handling of the text. And this still says nothing about New Testament practice of citing the prophet's name. As for the second point, Matthew's citation of Jonah (Mt. 12. 40) makes this rather dubious. According to Bode, Matthew's citation is the decisive argument against Hos 6. 2, since it shows the latter was not the passage which Christians had in mind with regard to the three day motif. [39] But to my mind the greatest difficulty with the Hos 6. 2 understanding of 'on the third day' is that it necessitates that the disciples without the instigation of any historically corresponding event would find and adopt such a scripture reference. For this understanding requires that no appearances occurred and no discovery of the empty tomb was made on the third day/ first day of the week. Otherwise these events would be the basis for the date of the resurrection, not Hos 6. 2 alone. But if there were no such events, then it is very unlikely that the disciples should land upon Hos 6. 2 and apply it to Jesus's resurrection. It is much more likely that such events should prompt them to search the scriptures for appropriate texts, which could then be interpreted in light of the resurrection (Jn 2. 22; 12, 16; 20. 8-9). [40] And insofar as the empty tomb tradition or appearance traditions prove accurate the understanding in question is undermined. For if the empty tomb was discovered on the first day of the week or Peter saw Jesus on the third day, then the view that 'the third day' was derived solely from scripture is untenable. At most one could say that the language of the LXX was applied to these events. The falsity of the gospel traditions concerning both the discovery of the empty tomb and the day of the first appearance is thus a *sine qua non* for the Hos

6. 2 understanding, and hence should either of these traditions prove accurate, the appeal to Hos 6. 2 as the *basis* (as opposed to the *language*) for the date of the resurrection must be rejected.

5. *The third day is a theological interpretation indicating God's salvation, deliverance, and manifestation.* [41] This understanding is, I think, the only serious alternative to regarding the third day motif as based on the historical events of the resurrection, and it has been eloquently expounded by Lehmann and supported by Bode and McArthur as well. To begin with, there are nearly 30 passages in the LXX that use the phrase *te hemera te trite* to describe events that happened on the third day. [42] On the third day Abraham offered Isaac (Gen. 22. 4; cf. Gen. 34. 25; 40. 20). On the third day Joseph released his brothers from prison (Gen. 42. 18). After three days God made a covenant with his people and gave the law (Ex 19. 11, 16; cf. Lev 8. 18; Num. 7. 24; 19. 12, 19; Judg 19. 8; 20. 30). On the third day David came to Ziklag to fight the Amalekites (1 Sam 30. 1) and on the third day thereafter heard the news of Saul and Jonathan's death (2 Sam 1, 2). On the third day the kingdom was divided (1 Kings 12. 24; cf. 2 Chron 10. 12). On the third day King Hezekiah went to the House of the Lord after which he was miraculously healed (2 Kings 20. 5, 8). On the third day Esther began her plan to save her people (Esther 5. 1; cf. 2 Mace II. 18). The only passage in the prophets mentioning the third day is Hos 6. 2. Thus, the third day is a theologically determined time at which God acts to bring about the new and the better, a time of life, salvation, and victory. On the third day comes resolution of a difficulty through God's act.

A second step is to consider the interpretation given to such passages in Jewish Midrash (Midrash Rabbah, Genesis [Mikketz] 91. 7; Midrash Rabbah, Esther 9. 2; Midrash Rabbah, Deuteronomy [Ki Thabo] 7. 6; Midrash on Psalms 22. 5). [43] From Jewish Midrash it is evident that the third day was the day when God delivered the righteous from distress or when events reached their climax. It is also evident that Hos 6. 2 was interpreted in terms of resurrection, albeit at the end of history. The mention of the offering of Isaac on the third day is thought to have had a special influence on Christian thought, as we shall see.

A third step in the argument is comparison of other Rabbinical literature concerning the third day with regard to the resurrection (Targum Hosea 6. 2; B. Sanhedrin 97a; B. Rosh Hashanah 3 la; P. Berakoth S. 2; P. Sanhedrin 11. 6; Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer 51. 73b-74a; Tanna de-be Ehyahu, p. 29). [44] These passages make it evident that the rabbis were interpreting Hos 6. 2 in the sense of an eschatological resurrection.

Now according to Lehmann, when one brings together the testimonies of the Midrash Rabbah, the

rabbinic writings, and the passages from the LXX, then it becomes highly probable that I Cor 15. 4 can be illuminated by these texts and their theology. Of particular importance here is the sacrifice of Isaac, which grew to have a great meaning for Jewish theology. [45] In pre-Christian Judaism the sacrifice of Isaac was already brought into connection with the Passover. He became a symbol of submission and self-sacrifice to God. The offering of Isaac was conceived to have salvific worth. In the blood of the sacrifices, God saw and remembered the sacrifice of Isaac and so continued His blessing of Israel. This exegesis of Gen. 22 leaves traces in Rom 4. 17, 25; 8. 32 and Heb 11. 17-19. This last text particularly relates the resurrection of Jesus to the sacrifice of Isaac. When we consider the formula in I Cor 15, with its Semitic background, then it is much more probable that the expression 'on the third day' reflects the influence of Jewish traditions that later came to be written in the Talmud and Midrash than that it refers to Hos 6. 2 alone as a proof text. Thus, 'on the third day' does not mark the discovery of the empty tomb or the first appearance, nor is it indeed any time indicator at all, but rather it is the day of God's deliverance and victory. It tells us that God did not leave the Righteous One in distress, but raised him up and so ushered in a new eon.

Lehmann's case is well-documented and very persuasive; but doubt begins to arise when we consider the *dates* of the citations from Talmud and Midrash. [46] For all of them are hundreds of years later than the New Testament period. Midrash Rabbah, which forms the backbone of Lehmann's case, is a collection from the fourth to the sixth centuries. Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer is a collection from the outgoing eighth century. The Midrash on Psalm 22 contains the opinions of the Amoraim, rabbinical teachers of the third to the fifth centuries. The Babylonian Talmud and the so-called Jerusalem Talmud are the fruit of the discussions and elaborations of these Amoraim on the Mishnah, which was redacted, arranged, and revised by Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi about the beginning of the third century. The Mishnah itself, despite its length, never once quotes Hos 6. 2; Gen. 22. 4; 42. 17; Jonah 2. 1; or any other of the passages in question which mention the third day. The Targum on Hosea, says McArthur, is associated with Jonathan b. Uzziel of the first century; but this ascription is quite uncertain and in any case tells us nothing concerning Hos 6. 2 in particular, since the Targum as a whole involves a confluence of early and late material. Thus all the citations concerning the significance of the third day and interpreting Hos 6. 2 in terms of an eschatological resurrection may well stem from literature centuries removed from the New Testament period, Lehmann believes that these citations embody traditions that go back orally prior to the Christian era. But if that is the case then should not we expect to confront these motifs in Jewish literature contemporaneous with the New Testament times, namely, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha?

One would especially expect to confront the third day motif in the apocalyptic works. In fact, it is conspicuously absent. The book of I Enoch, which is quoted in Jude, had more influence on the New Testament writers than any other apocryphal or pseudepigraphic work and is a valuable source of information concerning Judaism from 200 BC to AD 100. In this work the eschatological resurrection is associated with the number seven, not three (91. 15-16; 93). Similarly in 4 Ezra, a first century compilation, the eschatological resurrection takes place after seven days (7. 26-44). A related work from the second half of the first century and a good representative of Jewish thought contemporaneous with the New Testament, 2 Baruch gives no indication of the day of the resurrection at history's end (50-5 1). Neither does 2 Macc 7. 9- 42; 12. 43-45 or the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs (Judah) 25. 1, 4; (Zebulun) 10. 2; (Benjamin) 10. 6-18. All these works, which stem from intertestamental or New Testament times, have a doctrine of eschatological resurrection, but not one of them knows of the third day motif. Evidently the number seven was thought to have greater divine import than the number three (cf. Rev 1. 20; 6. 1; 8. 2; 15. 1, 7). In 2 Macc 5. 14; 11. 18 we find 'three days' and 'third day' mentioned in another context, but their meaning is wholly non-theological, indicating only 'a short time' or 'the day after tomorrow'. Lehmann's case would be on firmer ground if he were able to find passages in Jewish literature contemporary with the New Testament which employ the third day motif or associate the resurrection with the third day. It appears that this interpretation is a peculiarity of later rabbinical exegesis of the Talmudic period.

Moreover, there is no indication that the New Testament writers were aware of such exegesis. Lehmann states that the conception of the offering of Isaac as a salvific event is characteristic of the New Testament. But this is not the question; the issue is whether the interpretation of the offering of Isaac *on the third day* plays a role in the New Testament. Here the evidence is precisely to the contrary: Rom 4. 17, 25 not only have nothing to do with the offering of Isaac (it is to Gen. 15, not 22 that Paul turns for his doctrine of justification by faith), but refer to Jesus's resurrection without mentioning the third day; Rom 8. 32 makes no explicit mention of Isaac and no mention, implicit or explicit, of the resurrection, not to speak of the third day; Heb 11. 17-19 does not in fact explicitly use Isaac as a type of Christ, but more importantly does not in any way mention the third day. This latter passage seems to be crucial, for in this passage, of all places, one would expect the mention of the third day theme in connection with the resurrection. But it does not appear. This suggests that the connection of the sacrifice of Isaac with a third day motif was not yet known. In the other passage in which the offering of Isaac is employed (Jas 2. 21-23), there is also no

mention of the third day motif. (And James even goes on to use the illustration of Rahab the harlot and the spies, again without mentioning the three day theme, as did later Rabbinic exegesis.)

Hence, the appeal to the offering of Isaac as evidence that the New Testament knows of the rabbinic exegesis concerning the theological significance of the third day is counter-productive.

Finally, Lehmann's interpretation labors under the same difficulty as did the appeal to Hos 6. 2 alone; namely, in order for this interpretation to be true, the traditions of the discovery of the empty tomb and of the time of the first appearances *must* be false. For if these events did occur on the third day/first day of the week, this would undoubtedly have affected the early believers' dating of those events. But then the dating cannot be wholly ascribed to theological motifs. If we say that the traditions are false, the question then becomes whether the disciples would have adopted the language of the third day. For suppose the first appearance of Christ was to Peter, say, a week later as he was fishing in Galilee. Would the believers then say that Jesus was raised on the third day rather than the seventh? Lehmann says yes; for the 'third day' is not meant in any sense as a time indicator, but is a purely theological concept. But were the disciples so speculative? Certainly Luke understands the third day as a time indicator, for he writes 'But on the first day of the week ... That very day ... it is now the third day ... the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead' (Lk 24. 1, 13, 21, 46). Lehmann and Bode's response is that Luke as a Gentile did not understand the theological significance of the third day, which would have been clear to his Jewish contemporaries, and so mistook it as a time indicator. [47] This cannot but make one feel rather uneasy about Lehmann's hypothesis, for it involves isolating Luke from all his Jewish contemporaries. And I suspect that this dichotomy between historical understanding and theological significance is an import from the twentieth century. The Rabbis cited in the Talmud and Midrash no doubt believed both that the events in question really happened on the third day and that they were theologically significant, for they include in their lists of events that occurred on the third day not only events in which the third day was important theologically (as in the giving of the law) but also events in which the third day was not charged with theological significance (as in Rahab and the spies). There is no reason to think that the New Testament writers did not think Jesus actually rose on the third day; John, for example, certainly seems to take the three day figure as a time indicator by contrasting it with the 46 years it took to build the temple (Jn 2. 20). But in this case, it is doubtful that they would have adopted the language of the third day unless the Easter events really did take place on the third day. This suggests that while the LXX may have provided the *language* for the dating of the resurrection, the historical events of Easter provided the

basis for dating the resurrection. The events of Easter happened on 'the first day of the week', but the language of 'the third day' was adopted because (1) the first day of the week was in fact the third day subsequent to the crucifixion, and (2) the third day in the LXX was a day of climax and of God's deliverance.

I think this is the most likely account of the matter. This means that the phrase 'on the third day' in the formula of I Cor 15 is a time indicator for the events of Easter, including the empty tomb, employing the language of the Old Testament concerning God's acts of deliverance and victory on the third day, perhaps with texts like Jonah 2. 11 and Hos 6. 2 especially in mind. The phrase is, in Liechtenstein's words, a fusion of historical facts plus theological tradition. [48]

There can be little doubt, therefore, that Paul accepted the idea of an empty tomb as a matter of course. But did he know the empty tomb of Jesus? Here we must go outside the confines of I Cor 15 and take a larger view of the historical context in which Paul moved. We know from Paul's own letters that Paul was in Jerusalem three years after his conversion, and that he stayed with Peter two weeks and also spoke with James (Gal 1. 18-19). We know that fourteen years later he was again in Jerusalem and that he ministered with Barnabas in Antioch (Gal 2. 1, I 1). We know that he again was later traveling to Jerusalem with financial relief for the brethren there (Rom 15. 25; 1 Cor 16. 3; 2 Cor 8-9). Furthermore, his letters testify to his correspondence with his various churches, and his personal references make it clear that he had a team of fellow workers like Titus, Timothy, Silas, Aristarchus, Justus, and others who kept him well-informed on the situation in the churches; he also received personal reports from other believers, such as Chloe's people (I Cor 1. 11). Paul knew well not only the aberrations of the churches (Gal; I Cor 15. 29), but also the context of the traditions he delivered (I Cor 11. 23-26). Therefore, if the gospel accounts of the empty tomb embody old traditions concerning its discovery, it is unthinkable that Paul would not know of it. If Mark's narrative contains an old tradition coming out of the Jerusalem community, then Paul would have had to be a recluse not to know of it. This point seems so elementary, but it is somehow usually overlooked by even those who hold that Mark embodies old traditions. If the tradition of the empty tomb is old then *somebody* would have told Paul about it. But even apart from the Markan tradition, Paul must have known the empty tomb. Paul certainly *believed* that the grave was empty. Therefore Peter, with whom Paul spoke during those two weeks in Jerusalem, must also have believed the tomb was empty. A Jew could not think otherwise. Therefore, the Christian community also, of which Peter was the leader, must have believed in the empty tomb. But that can only mean that the tomb was empty. For not only would the disciples not believe in a

resurrection if the corpse were still in the grave, but they could never have proclaimed the resurrection either under such circumstances. But if the tomb was empty, then it is unthinkable that Paul, being in the city for two weeks six years later and after that often in contact with the Christian community there, should never hear a thing about the empty tomb. Indeed, is it too much to imagine that during his two week stay Paul would want to visit the place where the Lord lay? Ordinary human feelings would suggest such a thing. [49] So I think that it is highly probable that Paul not only accepted the empty tomb, but that he also knew that the actual grave of Jesus was empty.

With this conclusion in hand, we may now proceed to the gospel accounts of the discovery of the empty tomb to see if they supply us with any additional reliable information. Found in all four gospels, the empty tomb narrative shows sure evidence of traditional material in the agreement between the Synoptics and John. It is certain that traditions included that on the first day of the week women, at least Mary Magdalene, came to the tomb early and found the stone taken away; that they saw an angelic appearance; that they informed the disciples, at least Peter, who went, found the tomb empty with the grave clothes lying still in the grave, and returned home puzzled; that the women saw a physical appearance of Jesus shortly thereafter; and that Jesus gave them certain instructions for the disciples. Not all the Synoptics record all these traditions; but John does, and at least one Synoptic confirms each incident; thus, given John's independence from the Synoptics, these incidents are traditional. That is not to say they are historical.

The story of the discovery of the empty tomb was in all likelihood the conclusion or at least part of the pre-Markan passion story. [50] About the only argument against this is the juxtaposition of the lists in Mk 15. 47 and 16. 1, which really affords no grounds for such a conclusion at all. [51] At the very most, this could only force one to explain one or the other as an editorial addition; it would not serve to break off the empty tomb story from the passion narrative. [52] The most telling argument in favor of 16. 1-8's belonging to the passion story is that it is unthinkable that the passion story could end in defeat and death with no mention of the empty tomb or resurrection. As Wilckens has urged, the passion story is incomplete without victory at the end. [53] Confirmation of the inclusion of 16. 1-8 in the pre-Markan passion story is the remarkable correspondence to the course of events described in I Cor 15: died -- was buried -- rose -- appeared; all these elements appear in the pre-Markan passion story, including Christ's appearance (v. 7). Thus, there are strong reasons for taking the empty tomb account as part of the pre-Markan passion story.

Like the burial story, the account of the discovery of the empty tomb is remarkably restrained.

Bultmann states, ' . . . Mark's presentation is extremely reserved, in so far as the resurrection and the appearance of the risen Lord are not recounted.' [54] Nauck observes that many theological motifs that might be expected are lacking in the story: (1) the proof from prophecy, (2) the in-breaking of the new eon, (3) the ascension of Jesus' Spirit or his descent into hell, (4) the nature of the risen body, and (5) the use of Christological titles. [55] Although kerygmatic speech appears in the mouth of the angel, the fact of the discovery of the empty tomb is not kerygmatically colored. All these factors point to a very old tradition concerning the discovery of the empty tomb.

Mark begins the story by relating that when the Sabbath was past (Saturday night), the women bought spices to anoint the body. The next morning they went to the tomb. The women's intention to anoint the body has caused no end of controversy. It is often assumed that the women were coming to finish the rushed job done by Joseph on Friday evening; John, who has a thorough burial, mentions no intention of anointing. It is often said that the 'Eastern climate' would make it impossible to anoint a corpse after three days. And it would not have violated Sabbath law to anoint a body on the Sabbath, instead of waiting until Sunday (Mishnah Shabbat 23. 5). Besides, the body had been already anointed in advance (Mk 14. 8). And why do the women think of the stone over the entrance only after they are underway? They should have realized the venture was futile.

But what in fact were the women about? There is no indication that they were going to complete a task poorly done. Mark gives no hint of hurry or incompleteness in the burial. That Luke says the women saw 'how' the body was laid (Lk 29. 55) does not imply that the women saw a lack which they wished to remedy; it could mean merely they saw that it was laid in a tomb, not buried, thus making possible a visit to anoint the body. The fact that John does not mention the intention of anointing proves little, since Matthew does not mention it either. So there seems to be no indication that the women were going to complete Jesus' burial. In fact what the women were probably doing is precisely that described in the Mishnah, namely the use of aromatic oils and perfumes that could be rubbed on or simply poured over the body. [56] Even if the corpse had begun to decay, that would not prevent this simple act of devotion by these women. This same devotion could have induced them to go together to open the tomb, despite the stone. (That Mark only mentions the stone here does not mean they had not thought of it before; it serves a literary purpose here to prepare for v. 4). The opening of tombs to allow late visitors to view the body or to check against apparent death was Jewish practice, [57] so the women's intention was not extraordinary. It is true that anointing could be done on the Sabbath, but this was only for a person

lying on the death bed in his home, not for a body already wrapped and entombed in a sealed grave outside the city. Blinzler points out that, odd as it may seem, it would have been against the Jewish law even to carry the *aromata* to the grave site, for this was 'work' (Jer 17. 21-22; Shabbath 8. 1)! [58] Thus, Luke's comment that the women rested on the Sabbath would probably be a correct description. Sometimes it is asserted that Matthew leaves out the anointing motif because he realized one could not anoint a corpse after three days in that climate. But Mark himself, who lived in the [59] Mediterranean climate, would surely also realize this fact, if indeed it be true. Actually, Jerusalem, being 700 metres above sea level, can be quite cool in April; interesting is the entirely incidental detail mentioned by John that at night in Jerusalem at that time it was cold, so much so that the servants and officers of the Jews had made a fire and were standing around it warming themselves (Jn 18. 18). Add to this the facts that the body, interred Friday evening, had been in the tomb only a night, a day, and a night when the women came to anoint it early Sunday morning, that a rock-hewn tomb in a cliff side would stay naturally cool, and that the body may have already been packed around with aromatic spices, and one can see that the intention to anoint the body cannot in any way be ruled out. [60] The argument that it had been anointed in advance is actually a point in favor of the historicity of this intention, for after 14. 8 Mark would never invent such a superfluous and almost contradictory intention for the women.

The gospels all agree that around dawn the women visited the tomb. Which women? Mark says the two Maries and Salome; Matthew mentions only the two Maries; Luke says the two Maries, Joanna, and other women; John mentions only Mary Magdalene. There seems to be no difficulty in imagining a handful of women going to the tomb. Even John records Mary's words as 'we do not know where they have laid him'(Jn 20. 2). It is true that Semitic usage could permit the first person plural to mean simply 'I' (cf. Jn 3. 11, 32), but not only does this seem rather artificial in this context, but then we would expect the plural as well in v. 13. [61] In any case, this ignores the Synoptic tradition and makes only an isolated grammatical point. When we have independent traditions that women visited the tomb, then the weight of probability falls decisively in favor of Mary's 'we' being the remnant of a tradition of more than one woman. John has perhaps focused on her for dramatic effect.

Arriving at the tomb the women find the stone rolled away. According to the Synoptics the women actually enter the tomb and see an angelic vision. John, however, says Mary Magdalene runs to find Peter and the Beloved Disciple, and only after they come and go from the tomb does she see the angels. Mark's young man is clearly intended to be an angel, as is evident from his white robe

and the women's reaction. [62] Although some critics want to regard the angel as a Markan redaction, the exclusion of the angelophany from the pre-Markan passion story is arbitrary, since the earliest Christians certainly believed in the reality of angels and demons and would not hesitate to relate such an account as embodied in vs. 5- 8. [63] And John confirms that there was a tradition of the women's seeing angels at the tomb, especially in light of the fact that he keeps the angels in his account even though their role is oddly superfluous. [64]

Many scholars wish to see v. 7 as a Markan interpolation into the pre-Markan tradition. [65] But the evidence for this seems remarkably weak, in my opinion. [66] The fundamental reason for taking 16. 7 as an insertion is the belief that 14. 28 is an insertion, to which 16. 7 refers. But what is the evidence that 14. 28 is an interpolation? The basic argument is that vs. 27 and 29 read smoothly without it. [67] This, however, is the weakest of reasons for suspecting an insertion (especially since the verses read just as smoothly when v. 28 is left in!), for the fact that a sentence can be dropped out of a context without destroying its flow may be entirely coincidental and no indication that the sentence was not originally part of that context. In fact there are positive reasons for believing 14. 28 is not an insertion. [68] It is futile to object that in 14. 29 Peter only takes offense at v. 27, not v. 28, for of course he objects only to Jesus' telling him they will all fall away, and not to Jesus' promise to go before them (cf. the same pattern in 8. 31-32). On this logic one would have to leave out not only the prediction of the resurrection, but also the striking of the shepherd, since Peter jumps over that as well. There thus seem to be no good reasons to regard 14. 28 as a redactional insertion and positive reasons to see it as firmly welded in place. [69] This means that 16. 7 is also in place in the pre-Markan tradition of the passion story. The content of the verse reveals the knowledge of a resurrection appearance of Christ to the disciples and Peter in Galilee.

Mk 16. 8 has caused a great deal of consternation, not only because it seems to be a very odd note on which to end a book, but also because all the other gospels agree that the women did report to the disciples. But the reaction of fear and awe in the presence of the divine is a typical Markan characteristic. [70] The silence of the women was surely meant just to be temporary, [71] otherwise the account itself could not be part of the pre-Markan passion story.

According to Luke the disciples do not believe the women's report (Lk 24. 11). But Luke and John agree that Peter and at least one other disciple rise and run to the tomb to check it out (Lk 24. 12, 24; Jn 20. 2-10). Although Lk 24. 12 was regarded by Westcott and Hort as a Western noninterpolation, its presence in the later discovered P75 has convinced an increasing number of scholars of its authenticity. That Luke and John share the same tradition is evident not only from

the close similarity of Lk 24. 12 to John's account, but also from the fact that Jn 20. 1 most nearly resembles Luke in the number, selection, and order of the elements narrated than any other gospel. [72]

Lk 24. 24 makes it clear that Peter did not go to the tomb alone; John names his companion as the Beloved Disciple. This would suggest that John intends this disciple to be a historical person, and his identification could be correct. [73] The authority of the Beloved Disciple stands behind the gospel as the witness to the accuracy of what is written therein (Jn 21. 24; the verse certainly applies to the gospel as a whole, not just the epilogue, for the whole gospel enjoys the authentication of this revered disciple, not merely a single chapter [74]), and the identification of his role in the disciples' visit to the empty tomb could be the reminiscence of an eyewitness. So although only Peter was named in the tradition, accompanied by an anonymous disciple, the author of the fourth gospel claimed to know who this unnamed disciple was and identifies him. The Beloved Disciple is portrayed as a real historical person who went with Peter to the empty tomb and whose memories stand behind the fourth gospel as their authentication.

If the Beloved Disciple in chap. 20 is then conceived as a historical person, is his presence an unhistorical, redactional addition? Schnackenburg thinks that few words need to be said to prove that he is an unhistorical addition: in vs. 2, 3 he is easily set aside, the competitive race to the tomb is redactional, v. 9 is in style and content from the evangelist, and v. 9 refers in reality to Mary and Peter. [75] But these considerations do not prove that the Beloved Disciple was not historically present, but only that he was not mentioned in the particular tradition. That could have been proved from Lk 24. 12 alone. What I am suggesting is that the reminiscences of the Beloved Disciple are employed by the evangelist to supplement and fill out his tradition. Thus the first three considerations ought not to surprise us. Indeed, the third consideration supports the fact that the Beloved Disciple's role here was not added later to the gospel by any supposed editor who tacked on chap. 21. That *hon ephilei* instead of *hon egapa* is used in v. 2 also indicates that the evangelist himself wrote these words and not a later redactor. In fact the unity and continuity of vs. 2-10 preclude that the evangelist wrote only of Peter and Mary's visit and that the Beloved Disciple was artfully inserted by a later editor. Lk 24. 24 reveals that Peter did not go to the tomb alone, so one cannot exclude that the Beloved Disciple went with him. As for v. 9, it plainly refers to the disciples in v. 10 (Mary is not even mentioned after v. 2) and is not part of the pre-Johannine tradition, being typical for John (cf. 2. 22; 12. 16). Thus, the evangelist, who knew the Beloved Disciple and wrote on the basis of his memories, includes his part in these events. If it be said that the

evangelist simply invented the figure of the Beloved Disciple, 21. 24 becomes a deliberate falsehood, the close affinities between chaps. 1-20 and 21 are ignored, it becomes difficult to explain how then the person of the Beloved Disciple should come to exist and why he is inserted in the narratives, and the widespread concern over his death becomes unintelligible. The evangelist and the gospel certainly stem out of the same circle that appended chap. 21 and adds its signature in 21. 24c. Therefore, it seems to me, the role of the Beloved Disciple in 20. 2-10 can only be that of a historical participant whose memories fill out the tradition received. There seems to be no plausible way of denying the historicity of the Beloved Disciple's role in the visit to the empty tomb. [76]

It might be urged against the historicity of the disciples' visit to the tomb that the disciples had fled Friday night to Galilee and so were not present in Jerusalem. But not only does Mk 14. 50 not contemplate this, but it seems unreasonable to think that the disciples, fleeing from the garden, would return to where they were staying, grab their things, and keep on going all the way back to Galilee. And scholars who support such a flight must prove that the denial of Peter is unhistorical, since it presupposes the presence of the disciples in Jerusalem. But there is no reason to regard this tradition, attested in all four gospels, as unhistorical. [77] In its favor is the fact that it is improbable that the early Christians should invent a tale concerning the apostasy of the man who was their leader.

Sometimes it is said that the disciples could not have been in Jerusalem, since they are not mentioned in the trial, execution, or burial stories. But could it not be that the disciples were hiding for fear of the Jews, just as the gospels indicate? There is no reason why the passion story would want to portray the church's leaders as cowering in seclusion while only the women dared to venture about openly, were this not historical; the disciples could have been made to flee to Galilee while the women stayed behind. This would even have had the advantage of making the appearances unexpected by keeping the empty tomb unknown to the disciples. But, no, the pre-Markan passion story says, 'But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him . . .' (Mk 16. 7). So the disciples were probably in Jerusalem, but lying low. Besides this, it is not true that the disciples are missing entirely from the scene. All the gospels record the denial of Peter while the trial of Jesus was proceeding; John adds that there was another disciple with him, perhaps the Beloved Disciple (Jn 18. 15). According to Luke, at the execution of Jesus, 'all his acquaintances ... stood at a distance and saw these things' (Lk 23. 49). John says that the Beloved Disciple was at the cross with Jesus' mother and bore witness to what

happened there (Jn 19. 26-27, 35). Attempts to interpret the Beloved Disciple as a symbol here or to lend a purely theological meaning to the passage are less than convincing. So it is not true that the disciples are completely absent during the low point in the course of events prior to the resurrection. There are therefore a good number of traditions that the disciples were in Jerusalem during the weekend; that at least two of them visited the tomb cannot therefore be excluded.

It is often asserted that the story of the disciples' visit to the tomb is an apologetic development designed to shore up the weak witness of the women. Not only does there seem to be no proof for this, but against it stand the traditions that the disciples were in Jerusalem. For if the women did find the tomb empty on Sunday morning, and reported this to the disciples, then it is implausible that the disciples would sit idly by not caring to check out the women's news. That one or two of them should run back to the tomb with the women, even if only to satisfy their doubts that the women were mistaken, is very likely. Hence, attempts to dismiss the empty tomb narratives as unhistorical legends are not only insufficiently supported by the evidence, but contain positive implausibilities.

Having examined the testimony of Paul and the gospels concerning the empty tomb of Jesus, what is the evidence in favor of its historicity?

1. Paul's testimony implies the historicity of the empty tomb. Few facts could be more certain than that Paul at least *believed* in the empty tomb. But the question now presses, how is it historically possible for the apostle Paul to have presupposed so confidently the empty tomb of Jesus if in fact the tomb were not empty? Paul was in Jerusalem six years after the events themselves. The tomb must have been empty by then. But more than that, Peter, James, and the other Christians in Jerusalem with whom Paul spoke must have also accepted that the tomb was found empty at the resurrection. It would have been impossible for the resurrection faith to survive in face of a tomb containing the corpse of Jesus. The disciples could not have adhered to the resurrection; even if they had, scarcely any one would have believed them; and their Jewish opponents could have exposed the whole affair as a poor joke by displaying the body of Jesus. Moreover, all this aside, had the tomb not been empty, then Christian theology would have taken an entirely different route than it did, trying to explain how resurrection could still be possible, though the body remained in the grave. But neither Christian theology nor apologetics ever had to face such a problem. It seems inconceivable that Pauline theology concerning the bodily resurrection could have taken the direction that it did had the tomb not been empty from the start. But furthermore, we have observed that the 'he was raised' in the formula corresponds to the empty tomb pericope in the gospels, the

egegetai mirroring the *egethe*. This makes it likely that the empty tomb tradition stands behind the third element of the formula, just as the burial tradition stands behind the second. Two conclusions follow. First, the tradition that the tomb was found empty must be reliable. For time was insufficient for legend to accrue, and the presence of the women witnesses in the *Urgemeinde* would prevent it. Second, Paul no doubt knew the tradition of the empty tomb and thus lends his testimony to its reliability. If the discovery of the empty tomb is not historical then it seems virtually inexplicable how both Paul and the early formula could accept it.

2. The presence of the empty tomb pericope in the pre-Markan passion story supports its historicity.

The empty tomb story was part of, perhaps the close of, the pre-Markan passion story. According to Pesch, [78] geographical references, personal names, and the use of Galilee as a horizon all point to Jerusalem as the fount of the pre-Markan passion story. As to its age, Paul's Last Supper tradition (I Cor 11. 23-25) presupposes the pre-Markan passion account; therefore, the latter must have originated in the first years of existence of the Jerusalem *Urgemeinde*. Confirmation of this is found in the fact that the pre-Markan passion story speaks of the 'high priest' without using his name (14. 53, 54, 60, 61, 63). This implies (nearly necessitates, according to Pesch) that Caiaphas was still the high priest when the pre-Markan passion story was being told, since then there would be no need to mention his name. Since Caiaphas was high priest from A.D. 18-37, the *terminus ante quem* for the origin of the tradition is A.D. 37. Now if this is the case, then any attempt to construe the empty tomb account as an unhistorical legend is doomed to failure. It is astounding that Pesch himself can try to convince us that the pre-Markan empty tomb story is a fusion of three *Gattungen* from the history of religions: door-opening miracles, epiphany stories, and stories of seeking but not finding persons who have been raised from the dead! [79] On the contrary: given the age (even if not as old as Pesch argues) and the vicinity of origin of the pre-Markan passion story, it seems more plausible to regard the empty tomb story as substantially accurate historically.

3. The use of 'the first day of the week' instead of 'on the third day' points to the primitiveness of the tradition. The tradition of the discovery of the empty tomb must be very old and very primitive because it lacks altogether the third day motif prominent in the kerygma, which is itself extremely old, as evident by its appearance in I Cor 15. 4. If the empty tomb narrative were a late and legendary account, then it could hardly have avoided being cast in the prominent, ancient, and accepted third day motif. [80] This can only mean that the empty tomb tradition ante-dates the third day motif itself. Again, the proximity of the tradition to the events themselves makes it idle to regard the empty tomb as a legend. It makes it highly probable that on the first day of the week the

tomb was indeed found empty.

4. The nature of the narrative itself is theologically unadorned and nonapologetic. The resurrection is not described, and we have noted the lack of later theological motifs that a late legend might be expected to contain. This suggests the account is primitive and factual, even if dramatization occurs in the role of the angel. Very often contemporary theologians urge that the empty tomb is not a historical proof for the resurrection because for the disciples it was in itself ambiguous and not a proof. But that is precisely why the empty tomb story is today so credible: because it was not an apologetic device of early Christians; it was, as Wilckens nicely puts it, 'a trophy of God's victory'. [81] The very fact that they saw in it no proof ensures that the narrative is substantially uncolored by apologetic motifs and in its primitive form.

5. The discovery of the tomb by women is highly probable. Given the low status of women in Jewish society and their lack of qualification to serve as legal witnesses, [82] the most plausible explanation, in light of the gospels' conviction that the disciples were in Jerusalem over the weekend, why women and not the male disciples were made discoverers of the empty tomb is that the women were in fact the ones who made this discovery. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that there is no reason why the later Christian church should wish to humiliate its leaders by having them hiding in cowardice in Jerusalem, while the women boldly carry out their last devotions to Jesus' body, unless this were in fact the truth. Their motive of anointing the body by pouring oils over it is entirely plausible; indeed, its apparent conflict with Mk 14. 8 makes it historically probable that this was the reason why the women went to the tomb. Furthermore, the listing of the women's names again precludes unhistorical legend at the story's core, for these persons were known in the *Urgemeinde* and so could not be associated with a false account.

6. The investigation of the empty tomb by the disciples is historically probable. Behind the fourth gospel stands the Beloved Disciple, whose reminiscences fill out the traditions employed. The visit of the disciples to the empty tomb is therefore attested not only in tradition but by this disciple. His testimony has therefore the same first hand character as Paul's and ought to be accepted as equally reliable. The historicity of the disciples' visit is also made likely by the plausibility of the denial of Peter tradition, for if he was in Jerusalem, then having heard the women's report he would quite likely check it out. The inherent implausibility of and absence of any evidence for the disciples' flight to Galilee render it highly likely that they were in Jerusalem, which fact makes the visit to the tomb also likely.

7. *It would have been impossible for the disciples to proclaim the resurrection in Jerusalem had the tomb not been empty.* The empty tomb is a *sine qua non* of the resurrection. The notion that Jesus rose from the dead with a new body while his old body lay in the grave is a purely modern conception. Jewish mentality would never have accepted a division of two bodies, one in the tomb and one in the risen life. [83] When therefore the disciples began to preach the resurrection in Jerusalem, and people responded, and the religious authorities stood helplessly by, the tomb must have been empty. The fact that the Christian fellowship, founded on belief in Jesus' resurrection, could come into existence and flourish in the very city where he was executed and buried seems to be compelling evidence for the historicity of the empty tomb.

8. *The Jewish polemic presupposes the empty tomb.* From Matthew's story of the guard at the tomb (Mt. 27. 62-66; 28. 11-15), which was aimed at refuting the widespread Jewish allegation that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body, we know that the disciples' Jewish opponents did not deny that Jesus' tomb was empty. When the disciples began to preach that Jesus was risen, the Jews responded with the charge that the disciples had taken away his body, to which the Christians retorted that the guard would have prevented any such theft. The Jews then asserted that the guard had fallen asleep and that the disciples stole the body while the guard slept. The Christian answer was that the Jews had bribed the guard to say this, and so the controversy stood at the time of Matthew's writing. The whole polemic presupposes the empty tomb. Mahoney's objection, that the Matthaean narrative presupposes only the preaching of the resurrection, and that the Jews argued as they did only because it would have been 'colorless' to say the tomb was unknown or lost, fails to perceive the true force of the argument. [84] The point is that the Jews did not respond to the preaching of the resurrection by pointing to the tomb of Jesus or exhibiting his corpse, but entangled themselves in a hopeless series of absurdities trying to explain away his empty tomb. The fact that the enemies of Christianity felt obliged to explain away the empty tomb by the theft hypothesis shows not only that the tomb was known (confirmation of the burial story), but that it was *empty*. (Oddly enough, Mahoney contradicts himself when he later asserts that it was more promising for the Jews to make fools of the disciples through the gardener-misplaced-the-body theory than to make them clever hoaxers through the theft hypothesis. [85] So it was not apparently the fear of being 'colorless' that induced the Jewish authorities to resort to the desperate expedient of the theft hypothesis.) The proclamation 'He is risen from the dead' (Mt. 27.64) prompted the Jews to respond, 'His disciples ... stole him away' (Mt. 28. 13). Why? The most probable answer is that they could not deny that his tomb was empty and had to come up

with an alternative explanation. So they said the disciples stole the body, and from there the polemic began. Even the gardener hypothesis is an attempt to explain away the empty tomb. The fact that the Jewish polemic never denied that Jesus' tomb was empty, but only tried to explain it away is compelling evidence that the tomb was in fact empty.

Taken together these eight considerations furnish powerful evidence that the tomb of Jesus was actually found empty on Sunday morning by a small group of his women followers. As a plain historical fact this seems to be amply attested. As Van Daalen has remarked, it is extremely difficult to object to the fact of the empty tomb on historical grounds; most objectors do so on the basis of theological or philosophical considerations. [86] But these, of course, cannot change historical fact. And, interestingly, more and more New Testament scholars seem to be realizing this fact; for today, many, if not most, exegetes would defend the historicity of the empty tomb of Jesus, and their number continues to increase. [87]

Footnotes:

[1]

F. Gutwenger, 'Auferstehung and Auferstehungsleib Jesu', *ZKT* 9 (1969) 32.

[2]

See Rudolph Bultmann, 'Neues Testament und Mythologie', in *Kerygma und Mythos 1*, ed. Hans-Werner Bartsch, 5th ed., TF I (Hamburg: Herbert Reich, 1967) 44-8. Very typical is R. H. Fuller's characterization of the resurrection as a 'meta-historical event' (R. H. Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* [London: SPCK, 1972] 23), a phrase which is actually a self-contradiction, since an event is that which happens and so is *ipso facto* a part of history. Robinson rightly scores Fuller's disclaimers that this 'meta-historical event' left only a negative mark on history: 'Yet the negative mark, by which he evidently means not simply that there was nothing to show for it but that there was *nothing* to show for it (i.e. an empty tomb), is 'within history' and must therefore be patient of historical inquiry.' (J. A. T. Robinson, *The Human Face of God* [London: SCM, 1973] 136.)

[3]

See Joachim Jeremias, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu*, 4th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967) 95-8 and the thorough discussion in Karl Lehmann, *Auferweckt am dritten Tag nach der Schrift*, QD 38 (Freiburg: Herder, 1968) 68-157.

[4]

See Ulrich Wilckens, *Die Missionsreden der Apostelgeschichte*, 3rd ed., WMANTS (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1974) 190-223. According to Wilckens, the formula of I Cor 15 and the preaching of Acts both presuppose the same pattern, which stems out of the tradition of the passion and Easter reports. '*Lukas hat das Schema der an Juden gerichteten Apostelpredigten als solches nicht selbst gebildet, sondern aus christlich vermittelter Tradition jüdischer, deuteronomischer Umkehrpredigten übernommen.*' (Ibid., 205.)

[5]

So Hans Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 4th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970) 95.

[6]

Rudolph Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 7th ed., ed. Otto Merk (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1961) 48.

[7]

Grass argues that even if Paul held that the old body would be raised transformed, that does not guarantee that Paul knew of Jesus' empty tomb. It would only show that he would have believed it to be so on dogmatic grounds. (Grass, *Ostergeschehen*, 172.)

[8]

James Orr, *The Resurrection of Jesus* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1909) 39; Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians*, 2nd ed., ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1967) 334; Ernst-Bernard Allo, *Première épître aux Corinthiens* (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1934) 391; Jindrich Mánek, 'The Apostle Paul and the Empty Tomb', *NT 2* (1957) 277-8; C. F. D. Moule, 'St. Paul and Dualism: the Pauline Conception of the Resurrection', *NTS 12* (1965-6) 122; Neville Clark, *Interpreting the Resurrection* (London: SCM, 1967), 82; C. F. D. Moule, ed., *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ*, SBT 8 (London: SCM, 1968) 8; C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, BNTC (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968) 339; Franz Mussner, *Die Auferstehung Jesu*, BH 7 (München: Kösel Verlag, 1969) 134; J. A. T. Robinson, *The Human Face of God* (London: SCM, 1973) 133; Jacob Kremer, 'Zur Diskussion über "das leere Grab"', in *Resurrexit*, ed. Edouard Dhanis (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1974) 143-4.

[\[9\]](#)

Adolf von Harnack, *Die Verklärungsgeschichte Jesu, der Bericht des Paulus (I. Kor. 15, 3ff) und die beiden Christusvisionen des Petrus*, SAB (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1922) 64; Ernst Lichtenstein, 'Der älteste christliche Glaubensformel', *ZKG* 63 (1950-1) 7-8; Eduard Lohse, *Martyrer und Gottesknecht* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955) 115; Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, *Die Auferstehung Jesu*, 4th rev. ed. (Witten: Luther-Verlag, 1960) 51-2; Grass, *Ostergeschehen*, 146; Hans Conzelmann, 'Zur Analyse der Bekenntnisformel in I Kor. 15, 3-5', *ET* 25 (1965) 7; Erhardt Güttgemanns, *Der leidende Apostel und sein Herr*, FRLANT 90 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966) 262-4; Hans Freiherr Von Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab*, 3rd rev. ad., SHAW (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1966) 21; Ferdinand Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel*, 3rd ed., FRLANT 83 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966) 203-4; Jeremias, *Abendmahlsworte*, 96; Karl Lehmann, *Auferweckt am dritten Tag nach der Schrift*, QD 38 (Freiburg: Herder, 1968) 69, 81; Eduard Lynn Bode, *The First Easter Morning*, AB 45 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970) 98; Berthold Klappert, 'Einleitung', in *Diskussion um Kreuz und Auferstehung*, ed. idem (Wuppertal: Aussaat Verlag, 1971) 16, 48.

[\[10\]](#)

Grass, *Ostergeschehen*, 146-7.

[\[11\]](#)

See Werner Kramer, *Christos, Kyrios, Gottessohn*, ATANT 44 (Stuttgart and Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1963) 15; Mussner, *Auferstehung*, 60-1; Ulrich Wilckens, *Auferstehung* (Stuttgart and Berlin: Kreuz Verlag, 1970) 20; Joseph Schmitt, 'Le "milieu" littéraire de la 'tradition' citée dans I Cor., XV, 3b-5', in *Resurrexit*, ed. Dhanis, 178. The fourfold *hoti* serves to emphasize equally each of the chronologically successive events, thus prohibiting the subordination of one event to another.

[\[12\]](#)

Walter Künneth, *Theologie der Auferstehung*, 4th ed. (München: Claudius Verlag, 1951) 81; Rengstorf, *Auferstehung*, 61; Wilckens, *Auferstehung*, 22.

[\[13\]](#)

This phrase implies a bodily resurrection, according to Robertson and Plummer, *Corinthians*, 351; Kremer, 'Diskussion', 144; Robert H. Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) 177; cf. Paul Hoffmann, *Die Toten in Christus*, 3rd rev. ed., NTA 2 (Münster:

Aschendorff, 1978) 180-5.

[14]

On these verbs see *TWNT*, s.v. *anistemi*, *anastasis*, *exanistemi*, *exanastasis*, by Albrecht Oepke; *TWNT*, s.v. *egeiro*, *egersis*, *exegeiro*, *gregoreo* (*agrupneo*), by Albrecht Oepke; C. F. Evans, *Resurrection and the New Testament*, SBT, 2nd Series 12 (London: SCM, 1970) 21-6.

[15]

See the excellent study by Karl Bornhäuser, *Die Gebeine der Toten*, BFCT 26 (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1921). Some critics acknowledge the accuracy of Bornhäuser's exposition of resurrection in the Old Testament, but brush it aside with a word, that the New Testament knows nothing of such a conception. They ignore his clear statement that what is here most important is not what is said in the New Testament, but what is presupposed by the New Testament. (Ibid., 6.) Bornhäuser's thesis is that in the Old Testament the grave is the place where the corpse decays but the bones remain and rest until the resurrection, at which they are raised. There is no *Auferweckung* of the soul, nor even of the flesh; it is much more, properly speaking, an *Auferstehung* and *Auferweckung* of the bones. (Ibid., 26.) The New Testament presupposes this same conception. Mt. 23. 27; Jn 5. 28 show that Jesus regarded the tomb as the place where the bones are, which would be raised at the resurrection. Paul's terminology is thoroughly Pharisaic; it should never have come to be, states Bornhäuser, the 'he was raised' should be understood as anything other than the resurrection from the grave. (Ibid., 33.) Phil 1. 23; 2 Cor 5. 8 show clearly that for Paul it is not the spirit that is asleep in death. When he says that those who are asleep will rise at the last trumpet (1 Thess 4. 13-17), he means the dead *in the graves*. Thus, the grave would have to be empty after the resurrection. (See also *Hastings' Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. 'Bones', by H. Wheeler Robinson; Joseph Bonsirven, *Le Judaïsme palestinien au temps de Jesus Christ*, 2 vols. [Paris: Beauchesne, 1934] 1: 484; Künneth, *Theology*, 94.)

[16]

Rengstorff, *Auferstehung*, 62. Comments Ellis: 'it is very unlikely that the earliest Palestinian Christians could conceive of any distinction between resurrection and physical, "grave-emptying" resurrection. To them an *anastasis* (resurrection) without an empty grave would have been about as meaningful as a square circle.' (E. Earle Ellis, ed., *The Gospel of Luke*, NCB [London: Nelson, 1966] 273.) See also Moule, *Significance*, 9.

[\[17\]](#)

Grass, *Ostergeschehen*, 172.

[\[18\]](#)

The mention of the empty tomb would not pass well with the structure and rhythm of the formula in any case, since the subject of each sentence is *Christos* and the empty tomb is not something that Christ did.

[\[19\]](#)

See Lichtenstein, 'Glaubensformel', 32; *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v., 'Resurrection', by J. A. T. Robinson; Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1966) 606.

[\[20\]](#)

So Lichtenstein, 'Glaubensformel', 33; Wolfgang Nauck, 'Die Bedeutung des leeren Grabes für den Glauben an den Auferstandenen', *ZNW* 47 (1956) 247-8; Manek, 'Empty Tomb', 277-8; *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. 'Resurrection' by Robinson; Michael Perry, *The Easter Enigma* (London: Faber & Faber, 1959) 92; Rengstorff, *Auferstehung*, 61; Künneth, *Theologie*, 79-85; Lehmann, *Auferweckt*, 81; S. H. Hooke, *The Resurrection of Christ as History and Experience* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967) 114; Mussner, *Auferstehung*, 101; Wilckens, *Auferstehung*, 21; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, AB 29A (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1970) 977; Berthold Klappert, 'Einleitung', 16; Gundry, *Soma*, 176-7.

[\[21\]](#)

See Nauck, 'Bedeutung', 263; Gerhard Koch, *Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi*, GHT (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1959) 33; Von Campenhausen, *Ablauf*, 12; Ellis, *Luke*, 273; Josef Blank, *Paulus und Jesus*, SANT 18 (München: Kösel Verlag, 1968) 153-6; Gerhard Lohfink, 'Die Auferstehung Jesu und die historische Kritik', *Bib Leb* 9 (1968) 95; Ludger Schenke, *Auferstehungsverkündigung und leeres Grab* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1968) 108; Gerhart Delling, 'The Significance of the Resurrection of Jesus for Faith in Jesus Christ', in *Significance*, ed. Moule, 80; Jakob Kremer, *Des älteste Zeugnis von der Auferstehung Christi*, 3rd ed., SBS 17 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1970) 4; Joachim Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie*, 2nd ed. (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1973) 288-9; Kremer, 'Grab', 142.

[\[22\]](#)

J. W. Hunkin, 'The Problem of the Resurrection Narratives', *ExT* 46 (1935) 153; Charles Masson, 'Le tombeau vide: essai sur la formation d'une tradition', *RIP* 32 (1944) 170; Lichtenstein, 'Glaubensformel', 41; Hahn, *Hoheitstitel*, 205-6; G. W. H. Lampe and D. M. MacKinnon, *The Resurrection*, ed. William Purcell (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1966) 42.

[\[23\]](#)

Lehmann, *Auferweckt*, 160- 1, 337; Bode, *Easter*, 117-19.

[\[24\]](#)

Lehmann, *Auferweckt*, 161.

[\[25\]](#)

Frederic Field, *Notes on the Translation of the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1899) 11-13; Gerhard Kittel, *Rabbinica: Paulusim Talmud*, ARGU 1:3 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1920) 31-8; Werner Georg Kümmel, *Verheissung und Erfüllung* 3rd ed., ATANT 6 (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1956) 61; Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 6 vols., ed. Hermann L. Strack (München: Beck, 1922-63) 1: 649; *TWNT*, s.v. *hemera*, by Gerhard von Rad and Gerhard Dellling; Taylor, *Mark*, 378; Lehmann, *Auferweckt*, 163-6.

[\[26\]](#)

E. Schwartz, 'Osterbetrachtungen', *ZNW* 7 (1906) 1-33; Carl Clemen, *Religionsgeschichtliche Erklärung des Neuen Testaments*, 2nd ed. (Giessen: Topelmann, 1924) 105-7.

[\[27\]](#)

Willy Rordorf, *Der Sonntag*, ATANT 43 (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1962) 174-233; see also Grass, *Ostergeschehen*, 131-3; Lehmann, *Auferweckt*, 185-91.

[\[28\]](#)

Clemen, *Erklärung*, 95-105; Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 5th ed., FRLANT 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965) 22-6.

[\[29\]](#)

Künneeth, *Theologie*, 39-53.

[\[30\]](#)

Grass, *Ostergeschehen*, 133; cf. 134, See also the critique and literature in Lehman, *Auferweckt*, 193-200; Bode, *Easter*, 110-11.

[\[31\]](#)

Bousset, *Kyrios*, 25; Selby McCasland, 'The Scriptural Basis of "On the Third Day"', *JBL* 48 (1929) 124-37; E. C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, 2nd ed., ed. F. N. Davey (London: Faber, 1967) 199-200; Bruce M. Metzger, 'A Suggestion Concerning of I Cor. XV.4b', *JTS* 8 (1958) 118-23. On the Jewish belief, see R. Mach, *Der Zaddik in Talmud und Midrasch* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1957) 174. For a critique, see Lehmann, *Auferweckt*, 200-4; Bode, *Easter*, 113-15.

[\[32\]](#)

Maurice Goguel, *La foi à la resurrection de Jésus dans le christianisme primitif* (Paris: Leroux, 1939) 164-5; Cecil J. Cadoux, *The Historic Mission of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (London: Lutterworth Press, 1941) 286-8; J. B. Bauer, 'Drei Tage', *Bib* 39 (1958) 354-8; Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic, The Doctrinal Significance of Old Testament Quotations* (London: SCM 1961) 59-72; A. D. Nock, *Early Gentile Christianity and Its Hellenistic Background* (New York: Harper, 1964) 108; X. Léon Dufour, *Resurrection and the Message of Easter* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1974) 9. For a critique, see Lehmann, *Auferweckt*, 176-81; Bode, *Easter*, 111-12.

[\[33\]](#)

See especially *TWNT*, s.v. *hemera* by Gerhard Delling; F. Nötscher, 'Zur Auferstehung nach drei Tagen', *Bib* 35 (1954) 313-19; Grass, *Ostergeschehen*, 136-8; Jacques Dupont, 'Ressuscité "le troisième jour"', *Bib* 40 (1959) 742-61; Friedrich Mildenerger, 'Auferstanden am dritten Tage nach der Schrift', *ET* 23 (1963) 265-80; C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London: Collins, 1965) 77, 103; Evans, *Resurrection*, 48-50.

[\[34\]](#)

Other scriptures such as Jonah 2. 1; 2 Kings 20. 5 are so far removed from the idea of resurrection that they could not possibly have prompted belief that Jesus rose on the third day. Kirsopp Lake, after examining the various passages, admitted they were all improbable and confessed that the basis for the third day is unknown. (Kirsopp Lake, *The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus* [London: Williams and Norgate, 1907] 29-33.) According to Lehmann most critics choose Hos 6. 2 out of desperation and want of an alternative. Among those who see Hos 6. 2 behind I Cor 15. 4 are F. C. Burkitt, C. R. Brown, J. Weiss, M. Goguel, J. Finegan, G. Delling, H.-D.

Wendland, J. G. S. S. Thompson, J. Dupont, C. H. Dodd, U. Wilckens, H. Grass, H. E. Tödt, H. Conzelmann, F. Mildenerger, G. Strecker, G. Schunack, P. Stuhlmacher, J. Bowman, J. W. Doeve, J. Wijngaards, W. Rudolph, B. Lindars, M. Black, T. Bowman (for particulars, see Lehmann, *Auferweckt*, 228-9).

[\[35\]](#)

Metzger, 'Suggestion', 121; cf. Johannes Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, 9th ed., KEKNT 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910) 348; Kremer, *Zeugnis*, 4; Gerald O'Collins, *The Easter Jesus* (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1973) 15. For a critique, see Grass, *Ostergeschehen*, 135; Lehmann, *Auferweckt*, 242-61; Bode, *Easter*, 117.

[\[36\]](#)

Georg Kittel, 'Die Auferstehung Jesu', *DT 4* (1937) 160; Bode, *Easter*, 115-16.

[\[37\]](#)

Grass, *Ostergeschehen*, 137-8.

[\[38\]](#)

See Lehmann, *Auferweckt*, 226-7

[\[39\]](#)

Bode, *Easter*, 116.

[\[40\]](#)

As von Campenhausen urges, the detail 'on the third day' must have a biblical counterpart to warrant its inclusion, but the Scripture passages are so vague that the third day must have been somehow already given before it could be discovered in the Old Testament. (Von Campenhausen, *Ablauf*, 11-12.) So also Michael Ramsey, *The Resurrection of Christ* (London: Centenary Press, 1945) 25; C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. rev. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1966, 84-5; Barrett, *First Epistle*, 340.

[\[41\]](#)

Lehmann, *Auferweckt*, 262- 90; Bode, *Easter*, 119-26; Harvey K. McArthur, "'On the Third Day'", *NTS* 18 (1971) 81-6, holds a related view, but still casts his lot with Hos 6. 2; Fuller, *Formation*, 27.

[\[42\]](#)

Wengst observes that Lehmann actually produces only 25 passages, not 'nearly 30' and of these only nine can be truly said to have the theological significance that Lehmann sees in the third day (Gen. 22. 4; Ex 19. 11, 16; Judg 20. 30; 1 Sam 30. 1, 2; 2 Kings 20. 5, 8; Esther 5. 1; Hos 6.2). (Klaus Wengst, *Christologische Formeln und Lieder des Urchristentums*, SNT 7 [Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1972] 96.)

[\[43\]](#)

Full citations may be found in Lehmann and McArthur.

[\[44\]](#)

Full citations may be found in Lehmann and McArthur.

[\[45\]](#)

See G. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961) 193-227; R. Le Déaut, *La nuit pascale*, AB 22 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963) 198-207; J. E. Wood, 'Isaac Typology in the New Testament', *NTS* 14 (1967-8) 583-89.

[\[46\]](#)

Conzelmann dismisses Lehmann's case out of hand on this consideration alone. (Hans Conzelmann, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, KEKNT 5 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969] 302.) See also Wengst, *Formeln*, 96.

[\[47\]](#)

Lehmann, *Auferweckt*, 174; Bode, *Easter*, 125-6.

[\[48\]](#)

Lichtenstein, 'Glaubensformel', 43.

[\[49\]](#)

Actually if Paul was in Jerusalem prior to his trip to Damascus, as Acts reports, then he probably would have heard of the empty tomb then, not, indeed, from the Christians, but from the Jewish authorities in whose employ he was. For even if the Christians in their enthusiasm had not checked to see if the tomb of Jesus was empty, the Jewish authorities could be guilty of no such oversight. So ironically Paul may have known of the empty tomb even before his conversion.

[\[50\]](#)

Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, 2 vols., HTKNT 2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1977) 2: 519-20; idem, 'Der Schluss der vormarkinische Passionsgeschichte und des Markusevangelium' in M. Sabbe, *L'Evangile selon Marc* (Leuven: Gembloux, 1974) 365-409. Taylor also finds that the burial and empty tomb stories were part of the pre-Markan passion story; his qualification that 16. 1-8 cannot have been a part of that tradition is entirely arbitrary and cannot explain what happened to the original story and why. (Taylor, *Mark*, 659.) See also Edouard Dhanis, 'L'ensevelissement de Jésus et la visite au tombeau dans l'évangile de saint Marc (Mc XV.40-XVI.8)', *Greg* 39 (1958) 391-2, 396; Joachim Jeremias, 'Die älteste Schicht der Osterüberlieferungen', in *Resurrexit*, ed. Dhanis, 186.

[\[51\]](#)

Mk 15. 40-41, which first names the women, cannot be an independent piece of tradition, since it makes sense only in its context. But neither can these verses be editorially constructed out of 15. 47 and 16. 1 because then the appellation 'the younger' is inexplicable, as is the fusion of what would normally designate the wife of James and the wife of Joses into one woman, the mother of James and Joses. But if 15. 40-41 are part of the pre-Markan tradition, then so are probably 15. 47 and 16. 1. For rather than repeat the long identification of Mary in 15. 40, the tradition names her by one son in 15. 47 and the other in 16. 1; thus 15. 47 and 16. 1 actually presuppose each other's existence. And their juxtaposition is by no means a useless duplication: the omission and re-introduction of Salome's name suggests that the witnesses to the crucifixion, burial, and empty tomb are being recalled here.

[\[52\]](#)

Thus Wilckens argues that 16. 1 is a later addition designed to protect the women against the charge of breaking the Sabbath. Originally 16. 2-6a was the close of the Passion story. (Wilckens, *Auferstehung*, 56-63.) For a critique of Wilckens' hypothesis see Josef Blinzler, 'Die Grablegung Jesu in historischer Sicht', in *Resurrexit*, ed. Dhanis, 65-6. Blinzler argues that all the lists are old and unchanged. (*Ibid.*, 65-8.)

[\[53\]](#)

Wilckens, *Auferstehung*, 61. The passion story could not have ended with the death and burial of Jesus without assurance of victory; the discovery of the empty tomb by the women was part of the

passion story. (Brown, *John*, 978; Blinzler, 'Grablegung', 76; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 3 vols., 2nd ed., HTKNT 4 [Freiburg: Herder, 1976] 3: 353.)

[\[54\]](#)

Rudolf Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 8th ed., FRLANT 12 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970) 309.d Vermes.

[\[55\]](#)

Nauck, 'Bedeutung', 243-67. According to Kremer, every theological reflection on the meaning of the resurrection is lacking, so the tradition must come from a very early time. For its origin in Palestine (Jerusalem) counts not only the interest in the empty tomb itself, but also the names of the women and the Semitic *te mia ton sabbaton* (cf. *prote sabbatou* [16. 9]; 'after three days' [8. 31; 9. 31; 10. 34]). (Kremer, "'Grab'", 153.)

[\[56\]](#)

So Brown, *John*, 940; Blinzler, 'Grablegung', 81; William L. Lane, *The Gospel according to Mark*, NLCNT (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1974) 585.

[\[57\]](#)

Semachoth 8; Ebel Rabbathi 4. 11. See further Ernst Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus*, KEKNT 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1937) 351; Blinzler, 'Grablegung', 81.

[\[58\]](#)

Blinzler, 'Grablegung', 83.

[\[59\]](#)

Koch, *Auferstehung*, 29; Brown, *John*, 982.

[\[60\]](#)

Dhanis, 'Ensevelissement', 383; Paul Gaechter, 'Die Engellerscheinungen in den Auferstehungsberichten', *ZKT* 89 (1967) 195; Bode, *Easter*, 14, 16.

[\[61\]](#)

So Brown, *John*, 984. Mahoney's answer that v. 13 is singular because Mary is being addressed a personal question misses the point that the Semitic idiom means precisely 'I' and would therefore be entirely appropriate. (Robert Mahoney, *Two Disciples at the Tomb*, TW 6 [Bern: Herbert Lang,

1974] 216.) Bode attempts to support the Semitic usage by other uses of *oidamen* in Jn 3. 2, 11; 9. 31; 14. 5; 21. 24 (Bode, *Easter*, 73-4.), but most of these are in fact genuine plurals! Bernard, Moskyns, Barrett, Schnackenburg, and Kremer agree that *oidamen* implies more women. (J. H. Bernard, *Gospel according to St. John*, 2 vols., ICC [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1928] 2: 656; Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 540; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 2nd ed. [London: SPCK, 1978] 563; Schnackenburg, *Johannesevangelium*, 3: 358; Jakob Kremer, *Die Osterevangelien: Geschichten um Geschichte* [Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1977] 166.)

[\[62\]](#)

On *neaniskos* as an angel, cf. 2 Macc 3. 26, 33; Lk 24, 4; Gospel of Peter 9; Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 5.277. The white robe is traditional for angels (cf. Rev 9. 13; 10. 1). In Mark fear and awe are the typical responses to the divine. The other gospels understood Mark's figure as an angel.

[\[63\]](#)

It is highly unlikely that the pre-Markan tradition lacked the angel, for the climax of the story comes with his words in vs. 5-6 and without him the tomb is ambiguous in its meaning. (Ulrich Wilckens, 'Die Perikope vom leeren Grabe Jesu in der nachmarkinischen Traditionsgeschichte', in *Festschrift für Friedrich Smend* [Berlin: Merseburger, 1963] 32; Schenke, *Grab*, 69-71; John E. Alsop, *The Post-Resurrection Appearance Stories of the Gospel Tradition*, CTM A5 [Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1975] 92-3; Kremer, *Osterevangelien*, 45-7.)

[\[64\]](#)

Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, 19th ed., KEKNT (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968) 529; Mahoney, *Disciples*, 216; Schnackenburg, *Johannesevangelium*, 3: 373.

[\[65\]](#)

P. Gardner-Smith, *The Narratives of the Resurrection* (London: Methuen, 1926) 136; Bultmann, *Geschichte*, 308-9; Wilhelm Michaelis, *Die Erscheinungen des Auferstandenen* (Basel: Heinrich Majer, 1944) 19-20; Willi Marxsen, *Der Evangelist Markus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956) 51, 75- 6; Grass, *Ostergeschehen*, 21, 120; E. Gutwenger, 'Auferstehung and Auferstehungsleib Jesu', *ZKT* 91 (1969) 274; Schenke, *Grab*, 43-7; Evans, *Resurrection*, 78; Bode, *Easter*, 35-7; Kremer, 'Grab', 15 1; Fuller, *Formation*, 53, 60-1.

[\[66\]](#)

For example, Schenke's troop of objections against v. 7: (1) it introduces a thought independent of v. 6; (2) *egerthe* is not mentioned further; (3) 14. 28 is an insertion; (4) v. 7 does not correspond with the women's reaction; (5) v. 7 introduces the apostles and switches to direct speech. (Schenke, *Grab*, 43-7.) Except for (3) these hardly merit refutation. V. 7 introduces a thought no more independent of v. 6 than v. 6b of v. 6a. There is no need to mention further the resurrection; having been raised, Jesus is going before the disciples to Galilee. Given Mark's theology, the women's reaction is typical. The introduction of the apostles says nothing for v. 7's being an insertion, nor does direct or indirect speech,

[\[67\]](#)

It is sometimes urged that the Fayum Gospel Fragment, a third century compilation from the gospels which omits v. 28, testifies to a tradition lacking this verse. (Walter Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 7th rev. ed., THKNT 2 [Berlin: Evangelische Verlaganstalt, 1977] 395.) But as a compilation the fragment by its very nature omits material and is no evidence for the absence of v. 28 in the passion tradition. See M. J. Lagrange, *L'Évangile selon saint Marc* (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1966) 383; Lane, *Mark*, 510; Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 2: 381.

[\[68\]](#)

See Joachim Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie*, 2nd ed. (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1973) 282; Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 2: 381-2.

[\[69\]](#)

If there is an insertion, it is all of vs. 27-31; cf. Lk 22. 31-34; Jn 13. 36-38. (Lagrange, *Marc*, 383; Lane, *Mark*, 510.)

[\[70\]](#)

See helpful chart and discussion in Bode, *Easter*, 37-9.

[\[71\]](#)

So C. F. D. Moule, 'St. Mark xvi.8 once more', *NTS* 2 (1955-6) 58-9; Dhanis, 'Ensevelissement', 389; C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, CGTC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963) 469; Lagrange, *Marc*, 448; 1. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978) 887. See the helpful discussion of the women's silence in Bode, *Easter*, 39-44. He distinguishes five possible interpretations: (1) The silence explains why

the legend of the empty tomb remained so long unknown. (2) The silence is an instance of Mark's Messianic secret motif. (3) The silence was temporary. (4) The silence served the apologetic purpose of separating the apostles from the empty tomb. (5) The silence is the paradoxical human reaction to divine commands as understood by Mark. But (1) is now widely rejected as implausible, since the empty tomb story is a pre-Markan tradition. (2) is inappropriate in the post-resurrection period when Jesus may be proclaimed as the Messiah. As for (4), there is no evidence that the silence was designed to separate the apostles from the tomb. Mark does not hold that the disciples had fled back to Galilee independently of the women. So there is no implication that the disciples saw Jesus without having heard of the empty tomb. It is pointless to speak of 'apologetics' when Mark does not even imply that the disciples went to Galilee and saw Jesus without hearing the women's message, much less draw some triumphant apologetic conclusion as a result of this. In fact there were also traditions that the disciples did visit the tomb, after the women told them of their discovery, but Mark breaks off his story before that point. As for (5) this solution is entirely too subtle, drawing the conclusion that because people talked when Jesus told them not to, therefore, the women, having been told to talk, did not. Therefore (3) is most probable. The fear and silence are Markan motifs of divine encounter and were not meant to imply an enduring silence.

[\[72\]](#)

See Mahoney, *Disciples*, 209.

[\[73\]](#)

See Brown, *John*, 1119- 20.

[\[74\]](#)

Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971) 10.

[\[75\]](#)

Schnackenburg, *Johannesevangelium*, 3: 359-60.

[\[76\]](#)

I find it implausible either that the Beloved Disciple should have lied to his students that he was there when he was not or that the entire Johannine community should lie in asserting that their master had taken part in certain historical events when they know he had not. See excellent

comments by Brown, *John*, 1127-9.

[77]

So Brown, *John*, 840-1: 983; Kremer, "Grab", 158. Von Campenhausen, *Ablauf*, 44-5, also maintains the presence of the disciples in Jerusalem, but his view that Peter, inspired by the empty tomb, led the disciples back to Galilee to see Jesus fails in light of the traditions that the empty tomb did not awaken faith and is predicated on a doubtful interpretation of Lk 22. 31, which says nothing about Peter's convincing the others to believe that Jesus was risen.

[78]

Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 2: 21; cf. 2: 364-77.

[79]

Ibid., 2: 522-36. Pesch thinks the stone's being rolled away is the product of door-opening miracle stories. When it is pointed out that no such door-opening is narrated in Mark, Pesch gives away his case by asserting that it is a 'latent' door-opening miracle! The angelic appearance he attributes to epiphany stories, though without showing the parallels. Finally, he appeals to a *Gattung* for seeking, but not finding someone for the search for Jesus' body, adducing several unclear OT texts (e.g. 2 Kings 2. 16-18; Ps 37. 36; Ez 26. 21) plus a spate of post-Christian or Christian-influenced sources (Gospel of Nicodemus 16. 6; Testament of Job 39-40) and even question-begging texts from the New Testament itself. He uncritically accepts Lehmann and MacArthur's analysis of the third day motif, which he equates with Mark's phrase 'on the first day'! His assertion that the fact that the women were known in the *Urgemeinde* cannot prevent legend since many legends are attested about the disciples is a *petitio principii*. He fails to come to grips with his own early dating and never shows how legend could develop in so short a span in the presence of those who knew better. For a critique of Pesch's position as well as a timely warning against New Testament exegesis's falling into the fallacies of the old history of religions school, see Peter Stuhlmacher, "Kritischer müssten mir die Historisch-Kritischen sein!", *TQ* 153 (1973) 244-51.

[80]

Bode, *Easter*, 161; Brown agrees: '... the basic time indication of the finding of the tomb was fixed in Christian memory before the possible symbolism in the three-day reckoning had yet been perceived.' (Brown, *John*, 980.) The fact that *te mia ton sabbaton* is probably a Semitism (Barrett, *John*, 467; Bode, *Easter*, 6; Kremer, 'Grab', 15 2, *contra* J. H. Moulton and W. F.

Howard, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol.: *Prolegomena*, 3rd ed. [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1908] 95-6) also points to the early origin of the phrase.

[\[81\]](#)

Wilckens, *Auferstehung*, 64.

[\[82\]](#)

On the low rung of the social ladder occupied by women in Jewish society see J Sot 19a; B Kidd 82b. On their lack of qualification to serve as legal witnesses, see M Rosh Ha-Shanah 1.8.

[\[83\]](#)

Bode, *Easter*, 162-3.

[\[84\]](#)

Mahoney, *Disciples*, 159. His further objection that this admission by the Jews is found only in a Christian document also misses the point; the course of the argument in the polemic presupposes the empty tomb. The Christians were doing their best to refute the charge of theft, an allegation which tacitly presupposes the tomb was empty.

[\[85\]](#)

Mahoney, *Disciples*, 243.

[\[86\]](#)

D. H. van Daalen, *The Real Resurrection* (London: Collins, 1972) 41. So also O'Collins, *Easter*, 91.

[\[87\]](#)

Kremer comments that 'By far, most exegetes hold firmly ... to the reliability of the biblical statements about the empty tomb. . . .' (Kremer, *Osterevangelien*, 49-50) and he furnishes this list, to which his own name may be added: Blank, Blinzler, Bode, von Campenhausen, Delome, Dhanis, Grundmann, Hengel, Lehmann, Léon-Dufour, Lichtenstein, Mánek, Martini, Mussner, Nauck, Rengstorf, Ruckstuhl, Schenke, Schmitt, K. Schubert, Schwank, Schweizer, Seidensticker, Strobel, Stuhlmacher, Trilling, Vögtle, Wilckens. He should also have mentioned Benoit, Brown, Clark, Dunn, Ellis, Gundry, Hooke, Jeremias, Klappert, Ladd, Lane, Murshall, Moule, Perry, J. A. T. Robinson, and Schnackenburg, as well as the Jewish scholars Lapidé and Vermes.