



Credible Catholic

CREDIBLE CATHOLIC

Big Book - Volume 3

EVIDENCE FOR THE HISTORICITY AND DIVINITY OF JESUS



Content by: Fr. Robert J. Spitzer, S.J., Ph.D.

Credible Catholic Big Book

Volume Three

Evidence for the Historicity and Divinity of Jesus Christ

Fr. Robert J. Spitzer, S.J., Ph.D.

As dictated to Joan Jacoby

Edits and formatting by Joey Santoro

Editor's Note: Much of the material presented in this chapter was originally published by Ignatius Press in *God so Loved the World: Clues to our Transcendent Destiny from the Revelation of Jesus*. It is reprinted with permission. To read more, you can find the book at the following link:
<https://www.ignatius.com/God-So-Loved-the-World-P1017.aspx>.

**This Volume supports The Catechism of the Catholic Church,
Part One – The Profession of Faith**

NOTE: All teachings in the **Credible Catholic** materials conform to the **Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)** and help to explain the information found therein. **Father Spitzer** has also included materials intended to counter the viral secular myths that are leading religious people of all faiths, especially millennials, to infer that God is no longer a credible belief. You will find credible documented evidence for God, our soul, the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and the Catholic Church, as well as spiritual and moral conversion.

Part One from the **CCC** is titled, ***THE PROFESSION OF FAITH***. The first 5 Volumes in the *Credible Catholic Big Book* and *Credible Catholic Little Book* fall into Part One. **Part Two** of the CCC is titled, ***THE CELEBRATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERY***. This is covered in Volumes 6 through 12. **Part Three** of the CCC is ***LIFE IN CHRIST*** and information related to this topic will be found in Volumes 13 through 17. Credible Catholic Big and Little Book Volumes 18 through 20 will cover **Part Four** of the CCC, **Christian Prayer**.

The Big Book can also be divided into two major movements – the rational justification for God, the soul, Jesus, and the Catholic Church (Volumes 1 through 6), and life in Christ through the Catholic Church (Volumes 9 through 20). If you would like a preview of this dynamic, please go to Volume 6 (Chapter 7) at the following link – [Chapter 7 – Where Have We Come From and Where are We Going?](#)

We all need to be Credible Catholics. St. Augustine said in his work, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*,

"Usually, even a non-Christian knows something about the earth, the heavens and other elements... Now, it is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these topics; ...If they find a Christian mistaken in a field which they themselves know well and hear him maintaining his foolish opinions about our books, how are they going to believe those books in matters concerning the resurrection of the dead, the hope of eternal life, and the kingdom of heaven..."

If we don't respond to these secular myths, who will?

Table of Contents

NOTE- References to “section(s)”, throughout all volumes, refer to the “sections” denoted by Roman numerals under each Chapter title.

CHAPTER ONE: SIX QUESTIONS FROM A CREATOR TO JESUS 6

CHAPTER TWO: CORROBORATION OF JESUS OUTSIDE THE NEW TESTAMENT 12

CHAPTER THREE: THE PREACHING OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH 14

CHAPTER FOUR: THE EVIDENCE OF THE HEART 16

CHAPTER FIVE: JESUS' RESURRECTION IN GLORY 18

- | | | |
|------|---|----|
| I. | Gary Habermas' Study of Recent Scholarship on the Resurrection | 19 |
| II. | The Gospel Accounts of Jesus' Risen Appearances to the Apostles | 21 |
| III. | Paul's Testimony to the Resurrection of Jesus | 25 |
| IV. | N.T. Wright's Two Arguments for the Historicity of Jesus' Resurrection | 31 |
| V. | The Empty Tomb | 37 |
| VI. | Correlations Between the Resurrection of Jesus and Near Death Experiences | 38 |
| VII. | Conclusion | 42 |

CHAPTER SIX: MIRACLES BY HIS OWN AUTHORITY JESUS' MIRACLES AND SPIRIT 44

- | | | |
|------|--|----|
| I. | The Purpose and Distinctiveness of Jesus' Miracles | 46 |
| II. | The Historicity of Jesus' Exorcisms and Healings | 52 |
| III. | The Historicity of Jesus Raising the Dead | 56 |
| IV. | Conclusion | 58 |

CHAPTER SEVEN: JESUS' GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT	59
I. Jesus' Gift of the Holy Spirit	60
II. The Interior Gifts of the Spirit According to St. Paul	67
III. Conclusion	68
CHAPTER EIGHT: SCIENCE AND THE SHROUD OF TURIN	68
I. The Blood Stains in Relation to the Image	70
II. Dating the Shroud	71
III. Four New Scientific Dating Methods	75
IV. Other Indications of the Shroud's Age	79
V. The Image on the Shroud	87
VI. Conclusion	98
CHAPTER NINE: MIRACLES ASSOCIATED WITH MARY, SAINTS AND THE HOLY EUCHARIST	99
I. Three Marian Apparitions	102
II. Validated Miracles through the Intercession of Contemporary Saints	118
III. A Contemporary Eucharistic Miracle	121
IV. Conclusion	123
REFERENCES	126

Please note: All footnotes in this Chapter (except for Chapter Nine) are done according to the MLA style manual—that is, last name of author, followed by date of publication, followed by page number. For full references to these citations, go to the references at the end of this volume.

Chapter One

Six Questions from a Creator to Jesus

[Back to top](#)

When I was teaching at Georgetown University, I was privileged to direct a physics and philosophy student on an Ignatian retreat. He was exceptionally bright and good-willed, and had the capacity to express what was on his mind in a very straightforward way. At the beginning of our first conference he said, “Could I ask you something very elementary which has been bothering me for several years? I don’t have any real difficulty believing in God because I think the evidence of physics points to the finitude of past time – implying a beginning and a creation.¹ My real problem is Jesus – I don’t get it. If I believe in God, why do I need anything more – like Jesus? Can’t we just stick with a ‘Creator outside of space-time asymmetry’?”

I thought about it for a couple of minutes and said to him, “Jesus is about the *unconditional love* of God. He is about God’s desire to be with us in a perfect act of empathy; about God wanting to save us unconditionally and to bring us to His own life of unconditional love. A Creator alone, indeed, even a Creator with infinite power, could be tantamount to Aristotle’s God. Once he has fulfilled his purpose of ultimate, efficient, and final causation, he is detached from the affairs of rather base and boring human beings. The God of Jesus Christ is about the desire to be intimately involved in the affairs of human beings made in His image and destined for His eternity – and that makes all the difference.”

He said in reply, “This all seems a bit too good to be true. I would like the Creator to be the God of Jesus Christ, but do you have any evidence that this is not just wishful thinking – evidence showing that this is really the way God is? Is there any reason why we would think that God is loving instead of indifferent?” I responded by noting that it would be better for *him* to answer six questions rather than have *me* give an extended discourse, because the six questions could reveal not only what was in his mind, but more importantly, what was in his heart – what he thought about love, life’s purpose, others, and his highest imaginable state of existence. If he answered these six questions (from his heart) in a manner commensurate with “the logic of love,” then the unconditional love and divinity of Jesus (Jesus being Emmanuel – “God with us”) would become evident.

¹ See Spitzer, 2010 (a) Chapters One through Three and also Spitzer 2003. See also CCBB Volume 1 which summarizes the evidence for an intelligent Creator from physics.

Question #1

What is the most positive and creative power or capacity within you?

At first glance, one might want to respond that this power is intellect, creativity, wisdom, or artistic or literary genius, but further reflection shows that the capacity to apprehend truth or knowledge, or to create beauty, *in and of itself*, is not necessarily positive. Knowledge and beauty can be misused, and therefore be negative, destructive, manipulative, inauthentic, and thus undermine both the individual and the common good.

There is but one human power that contains its own end of “positivity,” one power that is directed toward the positive by its very nature, and therefore one power that directs intellect and artistic creativity to their proper, positive end. As may by now be evident, that power is love (*agapē*). Love’s capacity for empathy, its ability to enter into a unity with others leading to a natural “giving of self,” forms the fabric of the common good and the human community, and so seeks as its end the good of both individuals and the community.

Agapē seeks the good of *the other*, and derives its power from looking for the intrinsic goodness, lovability, and transcendent mystery of *the other*. For this reason, it needs no rewards like the mutuality of friendship or the romantic dimensions of *eros*. The good of the other *is* its own reward. Thus it is not deterred by the appearance of the other, whether the other is a stranger, or even whether the other has been offensive, or harmful. This enables *agapē* to be the dynamic of forgiveness, compassion, and self-sacrifice – for anyone and everyone.

Agapē by its very nature unifies, seeks the positive, orders things to their proper end, finds a harmony amidst diversity, and gives of itself in order to initiate and actualize this unifying purpose. This implies that love (*agapē*) is naturally oriented toward perfect positivity and perfect fulfillment.

Furthermore, love (*agapē*) would seem to be the one *virtue* that can be an end in itself. Other virtues do not *necessarily* result in positivity or culminate in a good for others. So for example, courage left to itself, might be mere bravado or might lead to the persecution of the weak. Self-discipline, left to itself, might lead to a disdain for the weak or a sense of self-sufficiency which is antithetical to empathy. Even humility can be overbearing and disdainful if it is not done out of love. Even though these virtues are necessary means for the actualization of love (i.e., authentic love cannot exist without courage, self-discipline, and humility), they cannot be ends in themselves, for they can be the instruments of “unlove” when they are not guided by the intrinsic goodness of love. Love seems to be the only virtue that can be an end in itself and therefore can stand by itself.

Now, if *you*, the reader, affirm the existence of this power within yourself and further affirm that it is the guiding light of both intellect and creativity, that its successful operation is the only way in which all your other powers can be guided to a positive end, that it is therefore

the only way of guaranteeing positivity for both yourself and others, and that it therefore holds out the promise of authentic fulfillment, purpose in life, and happiness, then you will have acknowledged *love* to be the highest of all powers and the central meaning of life. You will then want to proceed to the next question.

Question #2

If love is the one power that seeks the positive in itself, and we are made to find our purpose in life through love, could God (the unique unrestricted act of thinking that creates everything else), who created us with this loving nature, be devoid of love?

If the Creator were devoid of love, why would that Creator create human beings not only with the capacity for love, but to be fulfilled only when they are loving? If the Creator is devoid of love, why make love the fulfillment of all human powers and desires, and therefore of human nature? If the Creator is not loving, then the creation of “beings meant for love” seems absurd. However, if the Creator *is* love, then creating a loving creature (i.e., sharing His loving nature) would seem to be both intrinsically and extrinsically consistent with what (or perhaps better, “who”) He is. Could the Creator be any less loving than the “loving nature” He has created? Furthermore, if the Creator is perfectly intelligent – a unique unrestricted act of thinking² – wouldn’t that perfection extend to the highest perfection—love?

If you, the reader, can reasonably affirm the love of the Creator from the above, then proceed to the third question.

Question #3

Is your desire to love and to be loved merely conditional, or unconditional?

We not only have the power to love (i.e., the power to be naturally connected to another human being in profound empathy, care, self-gift, concern, and acceptance), we have a “sense” of what this profound interpersonal connection would be like if it were perfect. This sense of perfect love has the positive effect of inciting us to pursue ever more perfect forms of love. However, it has the drawback of inciting us to *expect* ever more perfect love from others. This generally leads to frustrated expectations of others and consequently to a decline of relationships that can never grow fast enough to match this expectation of perfect and unconditional love.

The evidence for our awareness of and desire for perfect love can be seen in our capacity to recognize *every* imperfection of love in others and in ourselves.³ How could we have this seemingly unlimited capacity to recognize imperfection in love without having some sense of what perfect love would be like? Without at least a tacit awareness of perfect love, we would be quite content with any manifestation of affection that just happens to come along.

² See Lonergan’s proof of God in CCBB Volume 1.

³ See the detailed exposition of this point in CCBB Volume 2 (Chapter Two).

Do you, the reader, have a capacity to recognize imperfection of love in others and yourself? Do you do this seemingly without limit? If so, could you do this without some sense of what perfect love would be like? And if you have this awareness of and desire for perfect love, would you be content with anything less? Do you want to continue the pursuit of love until you have arrived at what you truly desire? If so, then you will have also affirmed within yourself the intrinsic desire for unconditional love, which leads to the next question.

Question #4

If our desire for love can only be ultimately satisfied by unconditional love, then could the Creator of this desire be anything less than unconditional love?

A simple response to this question might run as follows: if we assume that the Creator does not intend to frustrate our desire for unconditional love, it would seem that His creation of the desire would imply an intention to fulfill it, which would, in turn, imply the very presence of this quality within Him. This would mean that the Creator of the desire for unconditional love is Himself unconditional love.

The converse is a contradiction. Why would God create us with a desire for unconditional love, only to allow it to go unfulfilled in everyone? Such a God would be a trickster and abjectly cruel, which contradicts the love of the Creator affirmed above in *Question #2*. The argument may be summed up as follows: If God is really the Creator of our desire for unconditional love, and He does not intend to frustrate it in us, then He intends to fulfill it; and if He intends to fulfill it, He must have the capacity to do so – which means, He must be unconditionally loving. So did God really create our desire for unconditional love?

Recall from above, that we have the capacity to recognize every imperfection of love in others and ourselves, revealing at least a tacit *awareness* of perfect love, which brings these imperfections to light. This tacit awareness of unconditional love seems to be beyond any specifically known or concretely experienced love, because every manifestation of love we encounter is *imperfect*. How can we have an awareness of unconditional love that we have not experienced? How can we even extrapolate to it if we do not know what we are looking for? So it seems that there must be some source of our awareness of unconditional love that is capable of unconditional love.

Is God the source of our tacit awareness of unconditional love? Recall, from Lonergan's proof of God (in Volume 1) that there must be a *unique*, unrestricted act of thinking to create everything else. Recall also, from our investigation of the transcendentals (in Volumes 1&2) that perfect thinking must be a perfect unity and so also must be perfect love. Yet, as we saw, there can only be *one* perfect unity and so, perfect thinking and perfect love must be *the same* reality (otherwise, there would be *two* perfect unities). If this reasoning is correct, then God must be the *one and only* perfectly loving reality, and therefore must be the *one and only* source of our tacit

awareness of perfect and unconditional love.⁴

If you the reader are in agreement with “God being unconditional love,” then you will want to proceed to the next question.

Question #5

If the Creator is Unconditional Love, would He want to be with us and enter into a personal empathetic relationship with us – face to face? Would he be Emmanuel (“God with us?”)

If one did not attribute unconditional Love to God, then the idea of God wanting to be with us would seem implausible. If God were not loving, He would not bother to relate to creatures, let alone actually be among them and enter into empathetic relationship with them. However, in the logic of love, or rather, in the logic of unconditional Love, all this changes.

If we attribute the various parts of the definition of *agapē* to an unconditionally loving Creator, we might obtain the following result: God would be focused on what is uniquely good, lovable, and mysterious in each one of us, and in seeing this perfectly would enter into a perfect empathetic relationship with us – whereby doing the good for us would be just as easy if not easier than doing the good for Himself. Thus God would empathize with and do the good for us unconditionally – without expecting the “reward” of the other three kinds of love. He would love us unconditionally even if we did not love Him – even if we resented and rejected Him. He would love us unconditionally even if we had sinned terribly – so terribly that we had no hope of being excused, but only forgiven. His unconditional love would seek as deep a relationship with us as *we*, in our freedom, would allow. He would not only want to be with us in deepest intimacy, He would even sacrifice Himself for us – sacrifice Himself *unconditionally* for us – even if we did not deserve it – *particularly* if we did not deserve it. If God were unconditional love, and the purest form of love is *agapē*, then God’s love would naturally extend itself to us in an unmitigated act of compassion and affection, irrespective of our transgressions. If we open ourselves and respond to His love, He will deepen it until He brings us into the fullness of relationship with Him which is perfect joy. If God truly is unconditional *agapē*, then it would be

⁴ Karl Rahner expresses this explicitly in 1982 *Foundations of Christian Faith*, pp.123-124.

perfectly consistent with His nature (and heart) to want to be perfectly present to us – as Emmanuel.⁵

If God is truly Unconditional Love (*agapē*), then He is also unconditional empathy; and if He is unconditional empathy, He would want to enter into a perfectly empathetic relationship with us – “face-to-face” and “peer-to-peer” – where the Lover and beloved would have an equal access to the uniquely good and lovable personhood and mystery of the other through empathy. A truly unconditionally loving Being would want to give *complete* empathetic access to His heart and interior life in a way which was proportionate to the receiving apparatus of the weaker (creaturely) party. Thus it seems that an unconditionally loving Creator would want to be Emmanuel in order to give us complete empathetic access to that unconditional Love through voice, face, touch, action, concrete relationship, and in every other way that love, care, affection, home, and felt response can be concretely manifest and appropriated by us. If God really is Unconditional Love, and *agapē* is the perfection of love, then we might expect that this God would want to be perfectly present to us as Emmanuel. If this resonates with the reader’s thoughts and feelings, you will want to proceed to the next question.

Question #6

Inasmuch as the unconditionally loving God would want to be perfectly present to us, is Jesus the One?

As we reflect on this question in light of the historical evidence given below, it will impart a gradual freedom to believe. Instead of thinking, “God with us is too good to be true,” we begin to think that an unconditionally loving God would *really* want to be with us – and if He were to come, that Jesus would be his perfect presence to us.

Since this is a truth of the heart, we will have to enter with our hearts into the mystery of Jesus’ teaching and life of love. As we do so, we are likely to feel a deeper affinity for Him and recognize His love for us personally. This will galvanize the truth about *agapē*, Jesus’ identity, and the Father’s love within our hearts.

⁵ Even though an unconditionally loving God would never stop loving us, he would give us the freedom to reject His love, because He would not want to force it upon us. Therefore, He would have to make some accommodation for those who wanted to live without Him and without love – even eternally.

Chapter Two

Corroboration of Jesus Outside the New Testament

[Back to top](#)

Evidence of Jesus outside of Christian Scripture

There are three major extratestamental sources of the Historical Jesus:

1. The Roman historian, Cornelius Tacitus,
2. The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, and
3. The Babylonian Talmud.

Cornelius Tacitus

The Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus makes explicit reference to the crucifixion of Jesus in the *Annals* (15.44) when speaking about Nero's blaming the Christians for the burning of Rome:

Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty [crucifixion] during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular.⁶

There has been considerable discussion about the authenticity of this passage, but the majority of mainstream scholars concur with Kirby that:

The most persuasive case is made by those who maintain that Tacitus made use of a first century Roman document concerning the nature and status of the Christian religion. As to the reliability of that source, following normal historical practice, it is prudently assumed to be accurate until demonstrated otherwise. The reference from Tacitus constitutes *prima facie* evidence for the historicity of

⁶ Tacitus 2011, *Annals* Bk. 15, Ch. 44.

Jesus.⁷

Flavius Josephus

Flavius Josephus (a Jewish historian writing a history of the Jewish people for a Roman audience in approximately 93 AD) provides the most impressive and detailed evidence for the historical Jesus outside Christian scripture. Many historians and exegetes have written extensively on Josephus' testimony about Jesus because there were obvious Christian edits and interpolations of this text. Luke Timothy Johnson,⁸ Raymond Brown, and John P. Meier have a very balanced (and somewhat minimalistic) approach to the critical passage. All three scholars believe that the beginning part of the passage from Josephus' *Antiquities* has not been significantly changed or edited, though later parts clearly were. The passage (sometimes called the *Testimonium Flavianum*) appears directly below. The italicized portions represent those which many scholars believe are part of the original text of Josephus. The unitalicized parts are either probably or definitely Christian additions or interpolations.

*Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.*⁹

Johnson provides a mainstream-minimalistic view of the matter:

Stripped of its obvious Christian accretions, the passage tells us a number of important things about Jesus, from the perspective of a first-century Jewish historian Jesus was both a teacher and a wonder-worker, that he got into trouble with some of the leaders of the Jews, that he was executed under the prefect Pontius Pilate, and that his followers continued to exist at the time of Josephus' writing.¹⁰

“Wonder-worker” in the above passage refers to Jesus' miracles, and it is one of the most explicit references to miracle-working in Josephus' works. Meier explains it as follows:

⁷ Kirby 2014

⁸ See Johnson 1991, pp. 113-114. ⁹ See Brown 1994(a), pp.373-376. ¹⁰ See Meier 1994, pp. 592-593.

⁹ Josephus 1965, 18:3.3.

¹⁰ Johnson 1991, pp. 113-114.

Thus, Jesus of Nazareth stands out as a relative exception in *The Antiquities* [of Josephus] in that he is a named figure in 1st-century Jewish Palestine to whom Josephus is willing to attribute a number of miraculous deeds (*Ant.* 18.3.3 Sec. 63: *paradoxōn ergōn poiētēs*). That Josephus did not transform 1st-century religious figures into miracle-workers in an irresponsible fashion is shown not only by his presentation of the “sign prophets” but also by the intriguing contrast between Jesus and the Baptist in Book 18 of *The Antiquities*. The Baptist receives the longer and more laudatory notice (18.5.2 Sec.16-19), but without benefit of miracles, while Jesus is presented as both miracle-worker and teacher. The distinction implied in Josephus is mirrored perfectly in the Four Gospels....¹¹

Babylonian Talmud

The *Babylonian Talmud* refers to Jesus in several references that can be dated between 70 to 200 AD. It uses the terms, “Yeshu,” “Yeshu ha-Notrzri,” “ben Satda,” and “ben Pandera” to refer to Jesus. In view of the fact that the passages indicate Rabbinical hostility toward Jesus and cast His crucifixion in a negative light, they may be considered to be free of later interpolation. One of the passages states that Jesus was accused of “witchcraft,” indicating that Jesus was known to have some kind of extraordinary and other-worldly power.¹²

In sum, Tacitus speaks to the historicity of Jesus’ trial and crucifixion – naming both Pontius Pilate as procurator and Tiberius as Caesar. Josephus also speaks to Jesus’ crucifixion and Pontius Pilate, adding Jesus’ miracle working, “wisdom” (authority), and teaching. The Babylonian Talmud affirms Jesus’ crucifixion and miracle working.

Chapter Three

The Preaching of the Apostolic Church

[Back to top](#)

The *kerygmas* represent the earliest extant proclamations of the primitive Church (AD late 30s and 40s).¹³ They are brief texts that resemble very simple creedal statements, and are to be found mostly in the Pauline letters, and the Acts of the Apostles (particularly in the speeches of Peter and Paul). These texts predate the Pauline letters and the Acts of the Apostles in which they are contained. They are identifiable through form critical methods, which were elucidated by C.H. Dodd and his predecessors.¹⁴

¹¹ Meier 1994, pp. 592-593.

¹² See *Babylonian Talmud*; Tractate “Sanhedrin” 43a.

¹³ Dodd 1962, p. 16.

¹⁴ Four of the key elements here are: 1) its formulaic character, 2) in the Acts of the Apostles, the occurrence of doublets in a style diverging from Luke’s, 3) the absence of any theological interpretation from a later era of the Church, and 4) a Semitic and Aramaic background identified originally by Torrey 1916. For a fuller explanation, see Dodd 1962, pp. 19-22.

There are nine major *kerygma* statements: Acts 2:14-39, Acts 3:13-26, Acts 4:10-12, Acts 5:30-32, Acts 10:36-43, Acts 13:17-41, 1Thess 1:10, 1 Cor 15:1-7, Rom 8:34.

When we combine the content of these *kerygmas*, we find eight major repeated themes:

1. Jesus was a descendent of David,
2. Jesus was predicted by the Prophets,
3. Jesus worked miracles,
4. Jesus was crucified and buried for our sins (in all major *kerygmas*),
5. Jesus rose in glory (in all major *kerygmas*),
6. Jesus gave his disciples the Holy Spirit,
7. Jesus is now exalted in God,
8. Jesus is therefore, Messiah and Lord.

There is considerable historical evidence to substantiate four of these apostolic themes:

1. *Jesus worked miracles* – extratestamental sources, the Jewish polemic to explain Jesus' miracles ("It is by Beelzebul..."), and historical verification by Raymond Brown and John P. Meier .
2. *Jesus was crucified and buried* – extratestamental sources, archaeological evidence, historical verification by Brown and Wright.
3. *Jesus rose in glory* – Wright's assessment of messianic movements, St. Paul's witness dilemma, and Wright's analysis of Second Temple Judaism.
4. *Jesus gave the Holy Spirit* – Dunn's analysis of miracles in the early Church and contemporary evidence of the power of the Spirit.

When this evidence is combined, it reveals why the early Church believed that Jesus is the exclusive Son of the Father (the Son of God), and why it was willing to make so many sacrifices to proclaim Him not merely risen from the dead, but the Lord (*ho Kurios* – the Greek Septuagint translation of the Divine name Yahweh).

The attribution of divinity to Jesus cost the apostolic Church dearly, because it ran contrary to the strict monotheism of Second Temple Judaism and was viewed as blasphemous and repugnant to most Jewish audiences. This eventually led to Jewish Christians being banned from the Synagogue (which they did not want), a loss of social and financial status, and even persecution and death.¹⁵

At the very least, the proclamation of Jesus' divinity was apologetically unappealing.

¹⁵ For a general context in which these events occurred, see Dunn 1991, Hengel 1980, and Wright 1996.

Both Jewish and Gentile audiences would have been repulsed by the divinization of a crucified man (tried as a criminal). Why would the apostolic Church have selected a doctrine that was viewed so unfavorably by the very audience which it wanted to attract?

As Joachim Jeremias remarks, this was wholly unnecessary, for the apostolic Church did not have to proclaim or even imply that Jesus was divine (or raised in glory) in order to bestow great favor upon Him within the culture of the day. It could have proclaimed Him to be a “martyr prophet,”¹⁶ which would have allowed converts to worship at His tomb and to pray through His intercession. This more modest claim would have made him acceptable to Jewish audiences who could then have ranked him high among the “holy ones”.

Why then did the leaders of the apostolic Church go so unapologetically and dangerously far to proclaim that “Jesus is Lord?” Why did they suffer social and financial loss, religious alienation, and even persecution and death, when it all could have been avoided by simply giving up the implication of His divinity? The most likely answer is that they believed Him to be *truly* divine.

So why did the apostolic Church believe Him to be divine (and even to share a unity with the Father throughout all eternity)? How could they be so sure of this radical proclamation which had so many negative consequences, when they could have taken the “easier road” in proclaiming Him to be a martyr -prophet? Was it simply because of Jesus’ claim to be the exclusive Son of the Father – or something more? When we read the nine major *kerygmas*, we see the “something more” – His glorious resurrection, the gift of the Holy Spirit (the power of God), His miracles (by *His own* power and authority), and the love he shares with the Father for all eternity.

These experiences showed the apostolic Church that Jesus shared in God’s power, authority, and love, making it the *truth* that could not be compromised – a truth worth sacrificing everything for – financially, socially, and religiously – even to the point of death.

Chapter Four

The Evidence of the Heart

[**Back to top**](#)

Those who have read the New Testament with care will probably have discovered the worthiness of its authors. I recall my first careful reading of the New Testament in college when it struck me that the authors of the Gospels could have embellished the accounts of miracles and the resurrection beyond their rather prosaic form. Indeed, they seemed to underplay these “deeds of

¹⁶ Jeremias 1958 and Küng 1978, p. 371.

power” so much that the actual event appeared somewhat anticlimactic. What really amazed me was that all three major accounts of Jesus’ risen appearances to the apostles in Matthew, Luke, and John reported *doubts*! Though these doubts were not absolute (for the apostles clearly witnessed the appearance of a powerful divine reality which they later discovered to be the risen Jesus), it made no sense to me that the authors would be honest enough to plant the seed of “doubt” in a text attempting to elicit belief. Why would they have done this if they had not intended to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

Furthermore, when I compared the exorcism stories (which were dramatic) to the miracle stories (which were quite subdued), I got the feeling that an editor went through the miracle stories to take out the exciting parts. Why would an author conclude these stories with “Go now and don’t tell anybody about this”? When I later studied the gnostic gospels,¹⁷ I was struck not only by the hyperbole in them, but also by their departure from the canonical teaching of Jesus. In stark contrast to this, the four canonical evangelists were unbelievably sober, respectful of the oral tradition they received, and faithful to Jesus’ teaching about truth, goodness, and love. The writing of the texts corresponded splendidly with their content – which made them – at least on the surface – believable.

I also marveled at the *humility* of the authors and the people about whom they wrote. The inclusion of insults leveled at Jesus by the religious authorities (e.g. “he casts out demons by the prince of demons”), the failings and weaknesses of the apostles (e.g. Peter, Thomas, and Matthew), and the accusation that the apostles stole Jesus’ body from the tomb, etc. showed the interest the evangelists had in putting the truth before the reputation of Christianity’s foundational leaders. If those leaders had not had the humility to tell the whole truth, I wondered, wouldn’t they have asked the evangelists to use their editorial pens a little more assiduously? Humility speaks convincingly about the reliability of witnesses and authors.

Most importantly for me, the *tone* of the Gospel texts seemed “just right.” The Gospels manifested an interest in *my salvation, my soul, and my virtue*. The texts were not written in a soft and flattering way to gain my approval, but rather in a challenging – almost “off-putting” way to help me toward salvation – to call me out of self-delusion and darkness into the light of Christ’s love. “Tough love” can dissuade more converts than it persuades. If the evangelists had been more interested in “winning converts” instead of “helping souls,” the Gospels would have been written quite differently – avoiding the “tough love.”

¹⁷ The gnostic gospels are a set of apocryphal works attributed falsely to Jesus’ disciples and friends. They were written several decades after the four canonical gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) during the second half of the second century to the fourth century. Their authors are not accepted authorities within the apostolic Church (as the four canonical gospels), but rather spiritual writers who were heavily influenced by gnostic philosophy (which attempts to achieve spiritual freedom through special knowledge or enlightenment). The so-called “Christian Gnostics” who wrote these texts departed from apostolic Christianity by advocating salvation not only through Jesus Christ, but through enlightenment proposed by its spiritual leaders. As can be seen from their miracle stories, their view of salvation and miracles was considerably different from that of Jesus, and in some cases, are ridiculous and fantastic.

There was something about the collective ethos of the New Testament writers that attracted me – despite its challenging tone, and I wanted to be part of it. Though I knew I was far from the ideal they set, I wanted to be like them, on the same mission as they were, with the same trust and love of the One about whom they were writing. The more I read the New Testament, the more I was confirmed in this truth of the heart – the foundation of my faith.

Though the truth of the *heart* is the foundation of faith, there may be some who need extra confirmation of the *mind* to become convinced of the reality of the risen glory to which they are called by Jesus.

Chapter Five

Jesus' Resurrection in Glory

[Back to top](#)

Introduction

We need a movement of the heart – to see the significance of love (*agapè*), our need for this love, our need for fulfillment through this love, and our need for Jesus and God to help us. Jesus exceeded the highest standard of *agapè* (which he defined), and showed himself to be unconditionally loving – precisely as he preached the Father to be. If we are to affirm that He is truly Emmanuel (the presence of the unconditionally loving *God* with us), then we will need some sign of His Divine authority and power, so that we can know through both our hearts and minds whether he is more than an unconditionally loving *man* -- and is really the unconditionally loving *God* with us.

The doctrine of the resurrection¹⁸ is central to Christianity – so much so that St. Paul states:

If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead... Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied (1 Cor 15:13-15, 18-19).

It is truly extraordinary that Paul made the claim that if there is no resurrection from the dead, that the faith of believers is useless and that all who have died in Christ have died in their sins. Paul knows that if he is lying, he and the other disciples have jeopardized the salvation of the whole Christian community, and furthermore he emerges as a false witness (a perjurer)

¹⁸ There are at least 45 explicit references to eternal life in the New Testament, and literally hundreds of other implications of it, 43 explicit references to resurrection, and 45 explicit references to “raised from the dead,” and many other implicit references to the risen life.

before God, and is answerable to Him. The consequences of lying to (or even deceiving) believers about the resurrection cannot be overstated, because the resurrection is the foundation of Jesus' claim to be the exclusive Son of God – and the unconditional love of God with us.

Is there any way of verifying the claims made by the Christian church about Jesus' resurrection in glory? As a matter of fact, there is – through the use of historical criteria.¹⁹ We will use some of these criteria to probe the historicity of Jesus' resurrection in four areas:

1. The common elements in the gospel narratives about Jesus' risen appearance to the apostles (Section II).
2. The historical evidence of the resurrection in the writings of St. Paul (Section III).
3. N.T. Wright's historical analysis of the resurrection (Section IV).
4. The historical status of the empty tomb (Section V).

There are two other ways in which the historicity of Jesus' resurrection can be validated:

1. The remarkable scientifically accessible evidence of His spiritual and glorious resurrection on the Shroud of Turin (see below Chapter 8)
2. Correlations of the Christian teaching of the resurrection and scientific studies of near death experiences (Section VI of this Chapter)

There are many other ways of probing the historicity of the resurrection, but these six will be sufficient to give reasonable validation to the Christian claim that Jesus rose in a spiritual body (*pneumatikon soma*) and promised to bestow this resurrection eternally on those who are willing to accept and abide by that love. Before investigating the above six historical sources, we will examine Gary Habermas' survey of contemporary scholarship on the resurrection.

I.

Gary Habermas' Study of Recent Scholarship on the Resurrection

[**Back to top**](#)

Gary R. Habermas has completed an extensive survey of contemporary exegetes, and has made several interesting discoveries. He notes:

The latest research on Jesus' resurrection appearances reveals several extraordinary developments. As firmly as ever, *most* contemporary scholars agree that, after Jesus' death, his early followers had *experiences* that they at least

¹⁹ I will not discuss all of these criteria in this book, but only the ones which are most relevant to the resurrection appearances (and the New Testament narratives that describe them). Readers interested in a fuller explanation may want to consider the following outstanding studies: Jeremias 1969, pp.125-130; Latourelle 1979; McArthur 1969; Meier 1999, pp.459-487; Wright 2002.

believed were appearances of their risen Lord. Further, this conviction was the chief motivation behind the early proclamation of the Christian gospel. ¶ These basics are rarely questioned, even by more radical scholars. They are among the most widely established details from the entire New Testament.²⁰

Habermas goes on to explain that:

More skeptical scholars often still acknowledge the grounds for the appearances as well. Helmut Koester [notes]: ‘We are on much firmer ground with respect to the appearances of the risen Jesus and their effect.... That Jesus also appeared to others (Peter, Mary Magdalene, James) cannot very well be questioned.’²¹

In view of this general agreement about the historicity of the resurrection appearances, where do opinions diverge? Habermas again notes, “the *crux* of the issue, then, is not *whether* there were real experiences, but how *we explain the nature* of these early experiences.”²²

Habermas then inquires into what these exegetes consider to be the cause of the apostolic Church’s early and widespread belief that Jesus rose from the dead. Was it a natural cause or a supernatural cause? The vast majority of exegetes believe that the cause was *supernatural*. Nevertheless, Habermas examines the minority opinion, namely, natural causation. His investigation ranges from the subjective vision theory of Gerd Lüdemann (who grounds his hypothesis in “stimulus,” “religious intoxication,” and “enthusiasm”²³), to the illumination theory of Willi Marxsen (who asserts that Peter had an internal experience which led him to convince the other apostles about Jesus’ resurrection).²⁴ These theories do not stand up well to historical and exegetical scrutiny (see below Section III.B),²⁵ and so Habermas concludes, “In the twentieth century, critical scholarship has largely rejected wholesale the naturalistic approaches to the resurrection.”²⁶

He then examines *supernatural* causes for the early witnesses’ experience of the risen Jesus. “Supernatural causation” means that something happened to *Jesus* rather than to His followers. What happened to Jesus must be supernatural because it effects a transition from death to new life. Variations among supernatural explanations are centered on the ways in which the risen Jesus appeared – that is, *the ways* in which His risen life was mediated in the physical world (in history) so that it could be collectively experienced by His followers. There are two

²⁰ Habermas 2006, p. 79, italics mine.

²¹ Habermas 2006, p. 80.

²² Habermas 2006, p. 80.

²³ Lüdemann 1994, pp. 106-7, 174-75, and 180.

²⁴ Marxsen 1970, pp. 88-97.

²⁵ See Habermas 2006, pp. 84-86. See also Davis 1999, pp. 57-58: “All of the alternative hypotheses with which I am familiar are historically weak; some are so weak that they collapse of their own weight once spelled out.”

²⁶ Habermas 2006, p. 86.

major hypotheses in this regard: (1) a luminous appearance and (2) a transformed corporeal appearance.

The vast majority of scholars hold to the second explanation – namely that Jesus rose in a transformed corporeal state (as a spiritual body), and some scholars hold that this appearance also had luminescent features.

Given the large number of scholars interviewed by Habermas (from every point on the theological and exegetical spectrum) and given the deep scrutiny with which these scholars examined the historicity of the resurrection, their overwhelming consensus lends considerable probative force to the contention that Jesus appeared to his apostles (and hundreds of other followers) in a supernaturally transformed state, manifesting continuity with his former embodiment as well as a spiritual (transphysical) transformation.

There are three major reasons why scholars agree so overwhelmingly about Jesus' transformed corporeality in His risen appearance:

- (1) It is the overwhelming consensus of the Gospel writers in describing Jesus' appearance to his apostles after the resurrection (see Section II),
- (2) This Gospel view is in agreement with St. Paul's description of the "spiritual body" in 1 Corinthians 15 (see Section III), and
- (3) The Christian view of "spiritual body" explains many other differences between Apostolic Christianity and Second Temple Judaism (see Section IV).²⁷

I will briefly address each in turn.

II.

The Gospel Accounts of Jesus' Risen Appearances to the Apostles

[**Back to top**](#)

The Gospel accounts show substantial agreement about Jesus' transformed embodiment in his risen appearances. Though it is described in different ways, several characteristics are quite similar. Let us begin with Matthew's Narrative of Jesus' risen appearance.

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshipped, but some doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, 'all power in heaven and on earth has been given to me' (Matthew 28:16-18).

²⁷ Second Temple Judaism refers to the religion of Judaism during the Second Temple period, between the construction of the second Jewish temple in Jerusalem in 515 BC, and its destruction by the Romans in 70 AD.

Matthew accentuates the transformation of Jesus' appearance, noting that the apostles bow down and worship him. Matthew rarely uses "worship" in his Gospel. Two of these uses concern Jesus' temptation when the devil asks, "All these things I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me," to which Jesus replies, "The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve" (Matthew 4: 9-10). It seems that Jesus has been transformed in a divine and spiritual way – so much so that it evokes worship (reserved for God alone) from the disciples. This interpretation is confirmed by Jesus' subsequent words, "All power on heaven and earth has been given to me (which belongs to God alone)."

There is yet another confirmation of Jesus' Divine/Spiritual transformation, namely that many of the disciples have difficulty recognizing him ("some doubted"). What did they doubt? They were not doubting that a divine appearance (a theophany) was occurring – they were all bowing down and worshipping It. Thus, they must have been doubting that *Jesus* was part of the theophany. They thought they were seeing God, but they were uncertain about *Jesus*. When this Divine-Spiritual Being communicates with and *missions* them, they apparently become aware of His identity – it is Jesus who is transformed into a Spiritual- Divine Being to which "all authority on Heaven and Earth" has been given.

Luke communicates the same spiritually transformed appearance of Jesus in the narrative of Jesus' appearance to the eleven (Luke 24:33ff). He differs from Matthew in attempting to show continuity between Jesus' risen appearance and his former embodiment:

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a spirit. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have" (Luke 24: 36-39).

Luke implies here that Jesus is transformed in appearance – looking like a spirit (the word "spirit" is mentioned twice in three sentences). As in Matthew, Luke mentions the disciples' "doubts". They are certainly not doubting that a spirit is appearing (because they are startled and frightened), so presumably they are doubting the presence of Jesus in this *spiritual* appearance. Notice that Jesus resolves those doubts by showing him the wounds of his crucifixion, and inviting them to touch him – calling attention to his body.

Luke is more concerned than Matthew to show continuity with Jesus' former embodiment – amidst his spiritually transformed appearance. Perhaps there was confusion in the Gentile churches about Jesus being *only* a spirit (having no continuity with his former embodiment). However, Luke's repeated insistence on Jesus' embodiment shows that Jesus revealed not only his spiritual, but also his embodied self. Given the parallel with John 20 – Jesus probably showed the disciples his wounds in addition to his embodiment.

John's Gospel communicates the same point in a slightly different way. Instead of asserting that Jesus has appeared in a divine-like way (as Matthew does) or in a spiritually transformed way (as Luke does), he says that Jesus appears through locked doors (Jn 20:19 and 20:26) which would not be possible for a resuscitated corpse:

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" (John 20:19)

He then shows them the wounds of the crucifixion on his hands and side (John 20:20) as if he were intentionally identifying himself. John focuses all of the "doubts" in the story on Thomas, and so the doubts of the disciples about who Jesus is in the appearance are somewhat obscured. However, in the Appendix (John 21), John makes very clear that the apostles have doubts about Jesus in the appearance when he says, "None of the disciples dared ask him, 'Who are you?' They knew it was the Lord" (John 21:12).

The term "the Lord" (*Ho Kurios*) is significant here, showing that the Evangelist is pointing to Jesus' *divine* appearance (very much like Matthew's Gospel). *Kurios* (Lord) in Greek can mean anything from "sir" to "master," but "*Ho Kurios*" (*the* Lord with the definite article) is the Septuagint Greek translation of the Hebrew divine name (Yahweh). Prior to Jesus' resurrection, John never uses "*Ho Kurios*" of Jesus, but after the resurrection this is the *only* term used to refer to Jesus in the minds and on the lips of the Apostles.²⁸ It seems that they saw a divinely transformed Jesus, and that Jesus makes His embodiment known to them through the wounds of his crucifixion.

Now let us return to the curious passage, "No one dared to ask him 'Who are you?' for they knew it was the Lord" (John 21:12). If the apostles knew that it was the Lord (the Divine One) appearing to them, then why are they having doubts (as might be suggested by the phrase, "No one dared to ask him, who are you?"). Once again we see the apostles having difficulty identifying *Jesus* amidst his transformed divine appearance. Jesus apparently makes his embodiment known to them through his communication with and missioning of them.

As can be seen, all three Gospel writers who describe Jesus' risen appearance to the apostles (Matthew, Luke, and John) indicate that he has been divinely and spiritually transformed and that this transformation outshines his former corporeality – so much so that the apostles at first have doubts about whether Jesus is in this divine-spiritual appearance. Jesus

²⁸ In the closed room, when Jesus appears, the Apostles recognize "the Lord." When Jesus appears to Thomas a week later, he says, "My Lord and My God" ("*Ho Kurios* mou, *Ho Theos* mou"). At the Sea of Tiberius, when John recognizes the appearance to be Jesus, he turns to Peter and says, "Peter, it is the Lord" ("*Ho Kurios*"). On shore, the Apostles recognize that it is "the Lord" who is appearing, but they want to ask him, "Who are you?" indicating that they are having trouble recognizing *Jesus* in the appearance. Notice that only the narrator of the story (not the apostles) refers to "Jesus" in both John 20 and 21, but the apostles only see "*the Lord*" (the divine one).

overcomes these doubts by revealing his identity (and continuity with his former embodiment) through the marks of his crucifixion (Luke and John 20) and through his communication with and missioning of them (Matthew and John 21).

Paul's account of how the dead will be raised in 1 Corinthians 15 shows remarkable similarities to all three gospel accounts (Matthew, Luke, and John) with respect to Jesus' spiritually transformed body. He asserts that we will be raised in a way similar to Jesus' resurrection – namely, as spiritual bodies (*pneumatikon soma*). His explanation of this adds theological interpretation to the gospel accounts.

The pertinent passage from 1 Corinthians 15 can be broken down into three parts:

1. But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. *When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed*, perhaps of wheat or of something else.
2. So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised *imperishable*; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in *glory*; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in *power*; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a *spiritual body*. If there is a natural body, there is also a *spiritual body*.
3. The first man was of the dust of the earth; *the second man is of heaven*. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. *And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man*.

Perhaps it is best to begin with the last line of (3) above (“And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man”). When Paul says that we are going to be in the image of the heavenly man (the risen Jesus), he is saying that all the descriptions he has given of this risen state (in 1 Corinthians 15) are similar to the way that Jesus appeared to his disciples after the resurrection. Thus, if we want to know how Jesus appeared to the apostles, all we have to do is look at how Paul describes our future risen state (which will be like that of Jesus).

So, how might we infer that Jesus appeared from Paul's description of our risen state? In (1) above, Paul says that there will only be a seed of our former natural bodies, and that the rest will be transformed. There will be continuity with our earthly bodies, but also a marked transformation of those bodies. From this we might infer that Jesus maintained continuity with his former embodiment but that it was spiritually transformed, giving rise to something new, glorious, and imperishable. This resembles the Gospel accounts of Jesus' risen appearance to his disciples (Section II above).

How was Jesus transformed? In (2) above, Paul says that this seed was transformed with imperishability, glory, power, and spirit. What would this look like? Paul gives only one explicit

description – that it will be a “spiritual body.” If we want to know how the imperishability, power, and glory of this “spiritual body” appeared, we will have to turn to the Gospel writers who describe his power and glory as divine – so much so that the apostles bow down and worship him (Matthew 28:16) and were convinced that it was God appearing (see the references to “the Lord” in John 20 and 21). Furthermore, this powerful, glorious, spiritual, divine-like appearance engenders fear and awe (“They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a spirit. He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled...’” – Luke 24:38).

Paul summarizes this transformed corporeality by twice calling it “a spiritual body” (a “*pneumatikon soma*”) which is a completely new concept in both the Jewish and the Greco-Roman worldviews.²⁹ What provoked the Christian Church to develop a completely unique view of the resurrection as “spiritual body”? Why did the early Church radically depart from the doctrine of Second Temple Judaism in this regard (when they were careful not to do so in other doctrinal matters)?³⁰ Such a large-scale, uniform transformation of the doctrines of Second Temple Judaism by the Christian Church is exceedingly difficult to explain if Jesus’ embodiment did not appear as spiritually transformed as the early witnesses maintain (see below Sections IV. A and B). This points to the plausibility that Jesus appeared in a divine-like glory, power, and spirit in which he showed continuity with his former embodiment.

III.

Paul’s Testimony to the Resurrection of Jesus

[Back to top](#)

St. Paul’s testimony about the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, gives scholars of all subsequent generations the opportunity to test the historicity of his, and the other witnesses’ claims. While writing within living memory of the resurrection, he challenges his Corinthian audience to “check out the facts” (Section III.A). He then provides an argument to show the value of his and the other witnesses’ testimony to the resurrection through an insightful dilemma (Section III.B).

III.A.

Witnesses to the Resurrection

The most famous *kerygma* (very early proclamation about Jesus by the apostolic church) concerned with the resurrection is found in 1 Corinthians 15: 3-8. Here, Paul says he is repeating

²⁹ See Wright’s exhaustive analysis of this in Wright 2003, pp. 32-128.

³⁰ The early Christian Church did not want to separate from the Synagogue or mutate the established doctrine of Second Temple Judaism. They did so only when there was strong reasons given by Jesus Himself. As will be seen below, Wright shows that virtually every mutation of Second Temple Judaism’s doctrine of the resurrection (as well as the end time and Messiah) is explained by the description of Jesus’ risen appearance given in both the Gospels and St. Paul. This is viewed by many exegetes as an extrinsic confirmation of the historical truth of His appearance as a transformed or spiritual body.

a tradition which he himself received (showing that it predates the writing of 1 Corinthians). It has an obvious formulaic character, relates the resurrection to the death and burial, and gives a list of witnesses to these appearances. This primitive formula contains some additions by Paul (indicated below by square brackets). The *kerygma* may be translated as follows:

[For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received], that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures,
that he was buried,
that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas,
then to the twelve.
Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time [most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.] Then he appeared to James,
then to all the apostles.
[Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.] (1 Cor. 15:3-8).

Two parts of the *kerygma* are obviously Pauline additions (in square brackets). First, the passage beginning with “Last of all...he appeared also to me” is Pauline in origin, for Paul does not need to refer to a *tradition* about himself. The first passage, “most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep” is also Pauline in origin. This passage merits special attention, not only because it is a Pauline addition, but also because it has value in ascertaining the historicity of the events portrayed in the *kerygma*. By phrasing the passage in this way, Paul is virtually inviting his Corinthian audience to “check out the facts” with the living witnesses. The fact that Paul is writing within living memory of these extraordinary events, and seems to be acquainted with many of the witnesses he lists, that he is aware that these witnesses are still alive, and challenges the Corinthians to investigate them, gives evidential weight to the claims in the passage.³¹

There are varied interpretations of Paul’s list of witnesses. Some exegetes believe that the list could be chronological, as Paul seems to suggest with his use of “first,” “next,” and “last of all...He appeared to me.” Others have suggested that the first part of the list establishes Church governance³² (and may also be chronological) while the second part of the list establishes the missionary Church.³³ It is not inconceivable that both interpretations could be true, such that Jesus could have established Church governance and a missionary Church through the precise chronology elucidated by the *kerygma*.

So who were these witnesses? The first appearance to Peter and to the Twelve are probably linked and occurred in Galilee. Fuller notes in this regard:

³¹ See Jeremias 1971, pp. 307-308.

³² Fuller indicates “that the appearances to Peter and to the Twelve share a common function. In these appearances the Risen One initiates the foundation of the eschatological community: they are church-founding appearances” (Fuller 1971, p. 35).

³³ “[The first two appearances] must be distinguished from the later appearances, whose function is the call and sending of apostles to fulfill a mission” (Fuller 1971, p. 35).

...[T]he appearances to Cephas and to the Twelve form a closely linked group. A single *ōphthē* (“he appeared”) functions for both appearances, and the particle *eita* (“then”), used in verses 5-7 to join two items within a single group, connects these two appearances. ... ¶ Even if we assume that the disciples remained hidden in Jerusalem until after the Sabbath, as Mark seems to suppose, yet according to the earliest available tradition (Mark) it was in Galilee that the first appearances took place. ... ¶ We may conjecture that upon arriving back in Galilee, Peter proceeded to assemble the disciples for the second appearance. Luke contains a hint that this was the procedure: “When you [singular] have turned again, strengthen your brethren” (Luke 22:32).³⁴

The third appearance (to the 500+) probably took place after the Twelve returned to Jerusalem and gathered the community together. Fuller believes that this Jerusalem appearance may have been the point at which the risen Jesus bestowed the Holy Spirit upon the large crowd gathered there.³⁵ Jeremias adds to this contention by noting:

Paul’s remark in 1 Cor. 15.6 that of the five hundred “most are still alive, but some have fallen asleep,” which is meant to underline the reliability of the account, also contains an indirect reference to the place of the appearance. That it is possible to ascertain which of the eye-witnesses to this appearance are still alive a quarter of a century later makes one wonder whether at least the majority of the five hundred lived in one and the same place, and that would apply to Jerusalem. Since the days of the Tübingen school, therefore, the hypothesis that the appearance to the five hundred and Pentecost are two different traditions of one and the same event has found many supporters. A further point in favour of this combination is that in John 20.22 we find Christophany and the receiving of the spirit linked together.³⁶

Some exegetes stress caution with this thesis, because the appearance to the 500 is clearly a Christophany, while the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts is a charismatic activity, including speaking in tongues. But there is no evidence from Scripture to preclude both of these from being combined (i.e., the risen Christ giving the Holy Spirit to the disciples at Jerusalem). Even if one separates the gift of the Holy Spirit from the appearance to the 500+, the remainder of Fuller’s thesis could still be true, namely, that “the +500 are the first- fruits of the church-founding function of Peter and the Twelve after their return from Galilee to Jerusalem.”³⁷

The fourth appearance to James would seem to be (like Paul’s) a post-Pentecost event. Fuller notes that this “James” would almost certainly have to be James the brother (the relative/follower)³⁸ of Jesus, for James the Less is too insignificant, and James the Greater is

³⁴ Fuller 1971, pp. 34-35.

³⁵ Fuller 1971, p. 36.

³⁶ Jeremias 1971, pp. 307-308.

³⁷ Fuller 1971, p. 36.

³⁸ “In a wider use [brother] signifies a person of common ancestry and relationship; in particular, a member of the

martyred very early on. The appearance to this James would explain why he experienced such a rapid rise in the post-Pentecost Church when he does not appear to be even a significant disciple of Jesus during the ministry. Fuller goes so far as to say:

It might be said that if there were no record of an appearance to James the Lord's brother in the New Testament we should have to invent one in order to account for his post-resurrection conversion and rapid advance.³⁹

There is ample evidence in the Acts of the Apostles to show that James serves a double role – he is at once the head of the Jerusalem Church, and also appears to be head of all missionary activities stemming from Jerusalem.⁴⁰ If this is the case, then the post-Pentecost appearance to James both establishes Church governance and initiates the mission function of the Church.

The fifth appearance to “all the apostles” refers to “apostles” in another sense than “the Twelve.” Paul commonly uses the term *apostolos* in a way similar to its common usage (“sent forth” or “those sent forth”)⁴¹ – that is, “missionaries.” This meaning would certainly correspond to the theory that the second set of appearances (James, “all the apostles,” and Paul) in the 1 Corinthians 15 *kerygma* are “mission-initiating.”

If “all the apostles” is meant in this missionary sense, then it refers to all the primary missionaries mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. This would include both Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians and Hellenistic Jewish Christians in the early Church (i.e., prior to the conversion of Paul).⁴² Fuller conjectures further:

Were these perhaps the missionaries referred to in Acts 11:19, who embarked upon a mission to Hellenistic Jews in Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch? Were the seven of Acts 6 originally part of the group consisting of “all the apostles?”⁴³

Whether or not they were, “all the apostles” seems to refer to a significant group of Aramaic-speaking and Hellenistic missionaries who enjoyed prominence in the pre-Pauline Church.

same clan or tribe (e.g., Nm 16:10). It is extended to members of the same race or nation (e.g., Dt 15:12) or of a kindred nation (e.g., Dt 23:7). In the NT Christians are called brothers about 160 times, and Jesus Himself said that one who does the will of the Father is His own brother (Mt 12:50; Mk 3:35; Lk 8:21).” (McKenzie 1965, p. 108).

³⁹ Fuller 1971, p. 37.

⁴⁰ Fuller 1971, p. 38.

⁴¹ McKenzie notes: “A similar use transferred to a religious sense seems to lie behind 2 Co 8:23, where the apostles mentioned are not apostles in the technical sense, but missionaries or messengers sent by particular churches” (McKenzie 1965, p. 46).

⁴² See Fuller 1971, pp. 40-41.

⁴³ Fuller 1971, p. 40.

It seems that these missionaries may have witnessed Jesus' appearance in several different groupings after Pentecost. Why several? Because there is no specific reference to "all at once" as is noted in the passage about the 500+. It seems that these appearances were shared by different *groups* because specific individuals are not named (as they are for Peter, James, and Paul). Furthermore, Jerusalem is a likely place for these appearances, because it follows upon the Church-founding and mission-initiating activities which had already occurred there. The final appearance to Paul will be taken up below.

If the above explanation of Paul's list of witnesses is correct, then the 1 Corinthians 15 *kerygma* refers to: (1) an appearance to Peter and (2) a subsequent appearance to the Twelve (both of which probably took place in Galilee and were both Church-founding and governance-establishing), (3) an appearance to 500 brethren, which may be a Christophany associated with the gift of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem (which is both Church-founding and mission-establishing), (4) a post-Pentecost appearance to James, the "brother" of Christ, in Jerusalem (which was both governance-establishing and mission-initiating, given that James is both the head of the Jerusalem Church and the head of the mission activities originating in Jerusalem), and (5) multiple post-Pentecost appearances, probably in Jerusalem, to the primary Aramaic-speaking and Hellenistic missionaries in the early Church (prior to the conversion of Paul). Most of the witnesses (from the above five groupings) would have lived within Paul's writing of the 1 Corinthians 15 *kerygma* (as Paul, himself, notes). The above list of witnesses is probably incomplete, for it does not account for the appearances to the women,⁴⁴ or seemingly to minor disciples (such as those on the way to Emmaus).

III.B.

St. Paul's Witness Dilemma

Immediately after the 1 Corinthians 15 *kerygma* (with its list of witnesses), Paul presents an interesting dilemma that could apply to all the witnesses in that list:

First side of the dilemma: ...if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are also found to be false witnesses of God because we witnessed before God that He raised Christ...

The other side of the dilemma: If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied. ...Why am I in peril every hour? ...I die every day! What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor 15:14-32).

If we look at this passage carefully, we can see the makings of a classical dilemma, which has

⁴⁴ It is quite certain that the women discovered the empty tomb, but their absence from the list of witnesses in the 1 Cor 15 *kerygma* is puzzling. Many exegetes believe that the women were the first to receive an appearance of the risen Christ, but that their witness value in a creedal list was less significant because of Jewish practice and law (see Brown 1973, p. 122, note 204 – "their testimony would have less public authority").

the objective of verifying the witness value not only of Paul, but also of the Twelve, the 500, James, and the “other apostles.” From a legal perspective, the most objective way of validating a witness’ testimony is to show that that witness has “everything to lose, and nothing to gain.” From the opposite perspective, a witness who has everything to gain and nothing to lose may be telling the truth, but there is no extrinsic way of validating this. Indeed, there is a haunting suspicion that the witness may be acting in his own self-interest. A better witness would be one who had nothing to gain or lose, for at least he would not be acting in his own self-interest. But the best witness would be one who had everything to lose (and nothing to gain) because this witness would be acting against his own self-interest, which is a disposition which most of us want desperately to avoid. I believe that Paul is trying to show that not only he, but also the others in the list of witnesses, are in this category, and therefore deserve to be ranked among the best possible witnesses.

Paul sets out his test for witness validity in a dilemma with (of course) two opposed parts: (1) the assumption that the witnesses believed in God, and (2) the assumption that the witnesses did *not* believe in God. Let us return to the passage above, and insert these phrases:

- 1) [If, on the one hand, we believe in God, and] if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are also found to be false witnesses of God because we witnessed of God that He raised Christ....
- 2) [If on the other hand, we do not believe in God, and] if for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are, of all men, most to be pitied. ...If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

The first part of the dilemma assumes that Paul (and the other witnesses) believe in God. If Paul truly believes in God, He does not want to bear false witness before God, because this would not only disappoint the Lord whom He adores, but also might, in fact, jeopardize his salvation. This problem is compounded by the fact that his false testimony would be leading hundreds, if not thousands of people astray, which would not only be a colossal waste of his ministry and time (“our preaching is in vain”), but also a colossal waste of the time and lives of the people he is affecting by his false testimony (“your faith is in vain”). If Paul really does believe in God, why would he waste his life, waste the faith of believers, lead them to apostasy, bear false witness, and risk his salvation? This does not seem to be commensurate with someone of genuine faith (or commonsense).

The second part of the dilemma looks at the consequences of Paul and the other witnesses being unbelievers. Paul is saying that the cost of preaching a false resurrection (without any belief in a God who saves) is simply too high. He and the other witnesses are not only being challenged by Jewish and Roman authorities, they are being actively persecuted. As he puts it, he is dying every day and is being subject to trials with substantial risk of martyrdom.

Why suffer persecution for preaching the resurrection of Jesus if that preaching is false

and he does not believe in God, for there would be no hope of a resurrection or being saved by God. He would be suffering persecution for *nothing*. As he puts it, he may as well, “eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow, he will die.”

Paul uses this dilemma to show (in a legal fashion) that he and the other witnesses have everything to lose and nothing to gain by bearing false witness to the resurrection of Christ. Could all of the witnesses within living memory of Christ’s resurrection have been so naïve? It seems to me that they could not. If the witnesses lacked authentic motives for preaching the resurrection, they would have had self-interested ones. However, as Paul shows, they could not have had self-interested motives, because false preaching of the resurrection would have led either to risking their salvation for undermining God’s will (if they believed in God), or to persecution for nothing (if they did not believe in God and a resurrection). This dilemma supports the likelihood of the witness’ testimony that they had seen the risen Jesus. In view of this we should give Paul the benefit of the doubt – that he was speaking truthfully and with authentic motivations.

Paul not only believes that he is speaking the truth, but that he is speaking the truth about the Lord he loves (that is, the Lord who has loved him first). He endures persecution not simply because he believes he has a *duty* to bear witness to the truth about the resurrection, but also because he *loves* the One about whom he bears witness. If Paul’s love is true, then it can hardly be thought that he is preaching a falsity about his Beloved. As one probes the depths of Paul’s authenticity, integrity, and love, it is very hard to believe that he (and others like him) could deliberately falsify their claim about the resurrection.

IV.

Wright’s Two Arguments for the Historicity of Jesus’ Resurrection

[Back to top](#)

New historical-exegetical evidence has recently emerged in a particularly probative way through the scholarship of N.T. Wright⁴⁵ and other exegetes. He presents two important arguments:

1. The growth of the Christian messianic movement after the public persecution of its messiah (in his volume, *Jesus and the Victory of God*), and
2. The Christian mutations of Second Temple Judaism’s view of the resurrection (in *The Resurrection of the Son of God*).

IV.A.

The Remarkable Rise of Christian Messianism

⁴⁵ Wright 2003 is a remarkably scholarly and comprehensive example of the recent application of historical-exegetical method applied to the resurrection appearances of Jesus.

E. P. Sanders presents the key insight of the messianic argument as follows:

What is unique [about Jesus' claim to bring the kingdom of God] is the result. But, again, we cannot know that the result springs from the uniqueness of the historical Jesus. Without the resurrection, would his disciples have endured longer than did John the Baptist's? We can only guess, but I would guess not.⁴⁶

Wright expands this insight by noting that it applies not only to the disciples of John the Baptist, but also to the followers of:

Judas the Galilean, Simon, Athronges, Eleazar ben Deinaus and Alexander, Menahem, Simon bar Giora, and bar-Kochba himself. Faced with the defeat of their leader, followers of such figures would either be rounded up as well or melt away into the undergrowth.⁴⁷

This did not happen in the early Church. After the public humiliation, persecution, and execution of their messiah, as well as subsequent persecution by the Jewish authorities (and later, Roman authorities), the disciples maintained their identity and did not replace Jesus as the true leader of their community. Instead, the early Church acknowledged that Jesus was raised from the dead, continued to be its leader, and was the fulfillment of the prophecies of Israel. Wright points out that no other messianic movement displayed this behavior:

...In not one case do we hear of any group, after the death of its leader, claiming that he was in any sense alive again, and that therefore Israel's expectation had in some strange way actually come true.⁴⁸

This early community is even stranger still. It actually begins to *worship* Jesus as Lord, associate Him with divine status, and attribute to Him co-eternity with the Father.⁴⁹ This is not only historically unique, but also apologetically unappealing – so much so that the early Church had to pay the ultimate price for it (including separation from the synagogue and even persecution).⁵⁰

Additionally, the early Church organized itself into a missionary community that not only went beyond the boundaries of Israel but also to the very frontiers of the Roman Empire, making it one of the most pluralistic religious organizations in the history of religions. With a crucified Messiah as its head, the early Church formed one of the most dynamically expansive

⁴⁶ Sanders 1985, p. 240.

⁴⁷ Wright 1996, p. 110. An extensive consideration of all these figures is given in Wright 1992 (Vol. I), pp. 170-181.

⁴⁸ Wright 1996, p. 110.

⁴⁹ See the many indications of the community's worship of Jesus in Matthew's, Luke's and John's resurrection narratives (above in this Volume).

⁵⁰ See Wright 1996, pp. 110-112.

communities in history.

We are now led to N.T. Wright's probative questions. Why didn't the Church follow the patterns of other groups whose leaders had been persecuted? Why did it (uniquely) consider Jesus as its continued leader? Why did it consider Jesus (after the crucifixion) to be the fulfillment of Israel's destiny? Why did it organize itself so uniquely? Why did it worship Jesus as the Lord and endure persecution for that worship? How did it become one of the most inspired and dynamically expansive missionary organizations in the history of religions with a publicly humiliated and executed "Messiah" as its sole leader?

The answers to these questions require a cause capable of explaining why Christianity does not follow the pattern of other religions or messianic movements. Why does Christianity pick up momentum from a crucified leader when other messianic movements at the time quickly faded away? Why didn't Christianity pick out another leader in the face of its leader's crucifixion, like other messianic movements whose leaders were executed? Above all, why did it become such a powerful Messianic movement capable of threatening the Roman Empire within a few generations after that same empire executed its Messiah?

What kind of cause could explain so many unique phenomena? A powerful one – one capable of overcoming the crucifixion of the movement's leader, capable of communicating both imminent and transcendent hope (amidst the death of its presumed messiah); one capable of revealing that God's kingdom had arrived in the world, and capable of providing sufficient momentum to turn a little Jewish sub-cult into an empire-wide – indeed, worldwide religion within a few generations. This powerful cause would seem to be the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus in combination with Jesus' gift of the Holy Spirit which enabled the apostles' (along with other missionaries) to perform miracles in the *name* of *Jesus*. John P. Meier summarizes this unique historical phenomenon as follows:

...[T]here was a notable difference between the long-term impact of the Baptist and that of Jesus. After the Baptist's death, his followers did not continue to grow into a religious movement that in due time swept the Greco- Roman world. Followers remained, revering the Baptist's memory and practices. But by the early 2d century A.D. any cohesive group that could have claimed an organic connection with the historical Baptist seems to have passed from the scene. In contrast, the movement that had begun to sprout up around the historical Jesus continued to *grow* – amid many sea changes – throughout the 1st century and beyond. Not entirely by coincidence, the post-Easter "Jesus movement" claimed the same sort of ability to work miracles that Jesus had claimed for himself during his lifetime. This continued claim to work miracles may help to explain the continued growth, instead of a tapering off, of the group that emerged from Jesus' ministry.⁵¹

⁵¹ Meier 1994, p. 623.

Maier's last point merits emphasis, because many of the disciples in the early Church performed miracles *in Jesus' name*. A large number of Jews and Gentiles witnessing these miracles converted to Christianity not only because of the supernatural power the disciples manifested, but also because they were done in Jesus' name. Why so? They may well have thought, "If Jesus is not Risen from the dead, and His apostles are lying about this, then why is God's power and spirit working through them in *Jesus' name*?" "If these miracles continued to occur into the latter part of the first century (well after the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul in 64 AD), it could at least partially explain how the Church grew *exponentially* during a time of active persecution by both Jewish and Roman authorities.

If the resurrection appearances and the apostles' ability to work miracles are not the cause of this uniquely powerful messianic movement (after the humiliation, persecution, and execution of its Messiah), then what other cause would have the same explanatory power? History has left us with a void of realistic alternatives, suggesting that the Christian claim to have seen the risen Jesus is true, and that the early community's power to perform miracles in Jesus' name was derived from the risen Jesus Himself.

IV.B.

The Christian Mutation of Second Temple Judaism

Wright's second and more extensive argument for the historicity of the resurrection appearances stems from several Christian mutations of the Jewish doctrine of resurrection prevalent at the time of Jesus (Second-Temple Judaism). He shows through a study of the New Testament (particularly the Letters of Paul and the Gospel narratives of the resurrection appearances) that Christianity changed the dominant Jewish view of "resurrection" in five major ways:

1. The Jewish picture of resurrection was a return to the same kind of bodily life as the one experienced before death (except it would occur in a new world populated by the righteous alone). Christian views always entailed *transformation* into a very different kind of life – incorruptible, glorious, and spiritual while still maintaining embodiment.⁵² The Christian view is so different from the Jewish one that Paul has to develop a new term to speak about it – "body spiritual" (*soma pneumatikon*). In 1 Corinthians 15:44-46 he makes every effort to distinguish the Christian doctrine from the Jewish one: "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.....However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual."
2. In Second Temple Judaism, no one was expected to rise from the dead before the initiation of the final age by Yahweh, however Christians claimed that this occurred with

⁵² See Wright 2003, p. 273.

Jesus.⁵³

3. No one connected the Messiah to the resurrection or the Jewish doctrine of resurrection to the Messiah prior to Christianity: “There are no traditions about a Messiah being raised to life: most Jews of this period hoped for resurrection, many Jews of this period hoped for a Messiah, but nobody put those two hopes together until the early Christians did so.”⁵⁴
4. For the Jewish people, the eschatological age was in the future; for Christians the eschatological age had already arrived (and would be *completed* in the future).⁵⁵
5. The doctrine of resurrection is *central* to the earliest writings of Christianity (e.g., all 9 of the early *kerygmas*), central to the writings of Paul⁵⁶ and all the Gospel writers,⁵⁷ and is the interconnecting theme among early Christian doctrines. The doctrine of the resurrection grounds Christology, particularly the doctrine of Christ’s glorification and, in part, the doctrine of Christ’s divinity; it grounds the Christian doctrine of soteriology – “for if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised” (1 Cor 15:16); it shows God’s vindication of Jesus’ teaching; it grounds Christian eschatology; and is, in every respect, central to all other doctrines. St. Paul thinks it is so important that he proclaims:

If Christ has not been raised, your faith is in vain [useless]; you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all (1 Corinthians 15: 17-19).

Second Temple Judaism does not place the resurrection in any such central role, and does not use it as an interconnecting theme for its doctrines. It is almost secondary in importance to other doctrines concerned with the law and prayer.

Once again, Wright finds himself as an historian in the position of having to ask for a necessary and sufficient explanation of these radical mutations in Second Temple Judaism’s doctrine of the resurrection. A responsible historian cannot simply say that there was no reason for this universally accepted change within early Christianity, because this position runs counter to the fact that Christianity remained faithful to Judaism except for when Jesus (or some historical event connected with Jesus) changed it.

So what could explain this radical change? The preaching of Jesus? This is not tenable because Jesus does not put the resurrection at the center of His doctrine, but rather the arrival of the kingdom. Furthermore, He does not connect the resurrection to His Messiahship, and He certainly does not talk about the resurrection being transformed embodiment (or spiritual embodiment, or glorified embodiment), which is evident in the early Christian doctrine. The

⁵³ See Wright 2003 pp 200 – 206 (the conclusion to Volume 4).

⁵⁴ Wright 2003, p. 205.

⁵⁵ See Wright 2003, p. 272.

⁵⁶ See Wright 2003, p. 274. Paul makes it so central that he claims that if Jesus is not risen from the dead, “our preaching is in vain, and your faith useless.”

⁵⁷ See Wright 2003, pp. 401-584.

obvious explanation would be that the many witnesses (e.g., Peter, the Twelve, the 500 disciples, James, the early missionaries to the Gentile Church, and Paul himself) saw the risen Jesus in a transformed embodied state (manifesting at once a spiritual transformation which had the appearance of divine glory and power, *and* some form of embodiment which was continuous with Jesus' embodiment in His ministry). This would easily explain all five of the above-mentioned mutations.

Rigorous historical method requires more than leaping to the obvious explanation. The historian must eliminate all other plausible explanations for the same phenomena. In order to do this, Wright sets out five other possible explanations for the above-mentioned mutations: (1) paganism, (2) early Christian interior visions or experiences, (3) the empty tomb alone, (4) cognitive dissonance, and (5) Schillebeeckx's conjecture of a new experience of grace.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Readers who would like a summary of all of Wright's refutations of the above counter-positions to the historicity of Jesus' transformed corporeal risen appearances should consult *God So Loved the World* pp.167-173. We will here only give a brief summary of one his refutations of a counter position—the empty tomb alone.

The empty tomb alone. Some exegetes have contended that the empty tomb alone was sufficient to motivate early Christian belief in a bodily resurrection. They believe that the stories about Jesus' post-resurrection appearances were mere add-ons either to enhance the empty tomb story or to redress the polemic that Jesus' disciples had stolen the body. This hypothesis is insufficient to explain the five Christian mutations for two reasons:

- a. Empty tombs and grave robbery were quite normal in the ancient world. Why would an empty tomb have suggested the glorified resurrection of Jesus when in all other cases in the ancient world, it suggested nothing of the kind? and Wright addresses this point as follows:

An empty tomb without any meetings with Jesus would have been a distressing puzzle, but not a long-term problem. It would have proved nothing; it would have suggested nothing, except the fairly common practice of grave-robbery. It certainly would not have generated the phenomena we have studied in this book so far. Tombs were often robbed in the ancient world, adding to grief both insult and injury. Nobody in the pagan world would have interpreted an empty tomb as implying resurrection; everyone knew such a thing was out of the question. Nobody in the ancient Jewish world would have interpreted it like that either; "resurrection" was not something anyone expected to happen to a single individual while the world went on as normal.

- b. Wright addresses the second major problem by showing that an empty tomb alone would not be able to explain four of the Christian mutations:

Had the tomb been empty, with no other unusual occurrences, no one would have imagined that Jesus was the Messiah or the lord of the world. No one would have imagined that the kingdom had been inaugurated. No one, in particular, would have developed so quickly and consistently a radical and reshaped version of the Jewish hope for the resurrection of the body. The empty tomb is by itself insufficient to account for the subsequent evidence.

V.

The Empty Tomb

[Back to top](#)

As noted above, the empty tomb does not give direct evidence of Jesus' resurrection and spiritual transformation as do His risen appearances; however, it gives *indirect* corroboration of His resurrection and an indication of His continuity with His former *embodiment*. Some scholars have suggested that the empty tomb is a tenuous datum because we cannot be sure about where Jesus' body was placed, and therefore whether the tomb was in fact, empty. However, the majority of mainstream scholars do not share this skeptical opinion for the following reasons.

It is unthinkable that Matthew would have reported the unflattering and embarrassing accusation of the Jewish authorities--that Jesus' disciples had stolen his body--unless the accusation had in fact been made. Why call attention to an accusation capable of undermining faith in Jesus' resurrection unless it was already widely known by Church members and required a response. Why did the Jewish authorities make this accusation? They must have needed an explanation for *a real missing body*. If Jesus' body had been present where they laid Him, the polemic would be ridiculous (i.e. how could the apostles have stolen His body if it were still there?).

Some contemporary scholars have speculated that Jesus was not placed in a tomb, but instead, a mass grave or, in the case of Crossan, left in an unknown place.⁵⁸ Aside from the *unlikelihood* that the followers of Jesus would have lost track of His body, one must return to the

⁵⁸ Dominic Crossan has proposed this on the basis of his interpretation of the Gospel of Peter. He holds the highly contested position that Matthew's Gospel is reliant on the gnostic Gospel of Peter – rather than vice-versa. John P. Meier responds to Crossan with a far more plausible contention: “When it comes to who is dependent on whom, all the signs point to Matthew's priority.... The clause [concerning the empty tomb in the Gospel of Peter] is a tissue of Matthean vocabulary and style, a vocabulary and style almost totally absent from the rest of the Gospel of Peter” (Meier 1991, p. 117).

See also Quarles' response to Crossan's contention that the Gospel of Peter is the source for the canonical Gospels in Quarles 2006 pp 106 – 120. See also Brown's response to Crossan's contention that the apostles didn't know much about Jesus' crucifixion and burial: “It is inconceivable that they showed no concern about what happened to Jesus after the arrest... The crucifixion itself was public, and nothing suggests that the burial was secret” (Brown 1994(b) p 14).

above argument – why would the Jewish authorities have charged the apostles with stealing His body unless there were a *provably* missing body? If there were any ambiguity about where the body lay (e.g., in a mass grave), then there would be no problem about a missing body. They would not have had to explain why it couldn't be found. But the fact is that the authorities feel compelled to charge the apostles with stealing the body, which implies that a body is gone from a *known* place – presumably a tomb (the most identifiable burial place).⁵⁹

We are now in a position to reconstruct the events surrounding the Jewish authorities' accusation of the apostles' theft of Jesus' body. The moment the apostles started preaching that Jesus had appeared to them (and began making converts on the basis of that preaching), their adversaries would have likely made every attempt to produce a body that would disprove (or undermine) the apostolic claim. Apparently, they could not do this. We might infer from this that the authorities made every attempt to find out where the body was laid, located the site of the grave/tomb, and found the body gone. If the body had not been put into an identifiable place, the charge of theft would not have been necessary. Now, if the authorities could have identified where the body was, we must suppose that His followers could do the same. Given this, it is quite likely that the women and other apostles witnessed the empty tomb, and shortly thereafter, Jesus appeared to them transformed – spiritually transformed.

When we combine the *spiritual* dimensions of Jesus' risen appearances with the implications of His *corporeality* from the empty tomb (as well as His risen appearance), we see why St. Paul was so careful to call Jesus' risen state “a spiritual body” (*pneumatikon soma*), and why the majority of scholars think that Jesus appeared as a spiritually transformed body (see Habermas' survey above in Section I).

VI.

Correlations Between the Resurrection of Jesus and Near Death Experiences

[Back to top](#)

The above evidence is sufficient to show the likelihood of Jesus' resurrection in glory. The Gospel and Pauline accounts of this are sufficient to explain Wright's five historical mutations (see above Section IV). Furthermore, St. Paul claimed that our resurrection would be like Jesus' – a transformed spiritual, glorified body (1 Cor 15:42-46). This partially corresponds to the descriptions of near death experiences (given in the previous volume). Recall that a significant percentage of people having a near death experience described a transphysical dimension of their “new” form (outside of their physical bodies). This new transphysical form is not subject to physical laws and structures such as walls and gravity. Patients would hover above

⁵⁹ Recent archaeological evidence at the site of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher shows details about the placement of the crucifixion and *burial* of Jesus in the Gospel of John to be remarkably accurate. See the research of Charlesworth 2006(b) and von Wahlde 2006.

their physical bodies, pass through the walls of waiting rooms and hospitals, ascend multiple floors of the hospital, and frequently “go to the other side.”

Though Jesus’ appearance supersedes those of near death experiences in its *power and glory*, it does bear a resemblance to them in its transphysicality (e.g. Jesus appearing like a spirit – Lk 24:37, passing through closed doors – Jn 20:19). Recall that Jesus arose not only in spirit, but also in power and glory (see Mt 28: 16-20 – the disciples worshiped him; the use of “*ho Kurios*” – the Lord in Jn 20 – 21; and Paul’s testimony that Jesus’ body is raised in power and glory – 1 Cor 15: 40-44). Though near death experiences indicate a transphysical state, they do not by themselves indicate a further transformation in power and glory. Christian revelation however does indicate this, and St. Paul promises it (1 Cor 15: 40-44).

The new transphysical form of near death experiences is not only transphysical, it also frequently has continuity with embodiment – patients can not only see and hear, but also frequently have a sense of being extended. When patients pass to the “other side” they see their relatives and friends as embodied, but in a transformed way. They are visible, extended, and recognizable (from their former physically embodied state), but they are also transformed – appearing spiritual, beautiful, and somewhat luminous. This correlates with St. Paul’s and the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ continued embodiment (Lk 24:39-40 and Jn 20:19-20 and 1 Cor 15:42-46).

In sum, there is *partial* correlation between the new transphysical form of near death experiences and Jesus’ risen appearances. Jesus’ risen appearance differs from near death experiences in its powerful and glorious manifestation. St. Paul states that we will one day undergo this transformation (1 Cor 15:49 – “we shall bear the image of the heavenly man [the risen Jesus]”). However, there is no indication of this from near death experiences.

There is yet another partial correlation between Jesus’ revelation and the accounts of near death experiences – namely the overwhelming presence of love. When patients cross over to the other side, they frequently encounter an overwhelmingly *loving* white light. The adjective “loving” is almost always part of the spontaneous description of the light – as if it were integral to the light’s being and nature. Its love is just as obvious as the light itself. Patients frequently go on to describe the love of the light – not just its affirming and affectionate quality, but also its compassion, its desire to fulfill us, and to bring us to its own state of love. Patients frequently say that they are overwhelmed by this love. Yet their identities are not taken away from them (absorbed by this love). Furthermore, many patients who see deceased relatives and friends notice that they are loving – unselfishly displaying goodness, concern, and care not only for the deceased, but also their families. The children who see Jesus almost always indicate that He loves them.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ In a recent popular account of a four year old boy’s near death experience, *Heaven is for Real*, a father tells the story for his son which has the prominent feature of Jesus’ love for children. Many children indicate that they have seen Jesus, and that He has expressed His love for them.

The *central* revelation of Jesus about Himself and the Father is their unconditional love. Jesus manifests this in everything He does from befriending sinners to performing miracles, to the Last Supper and His death on the cross. He also reveals that this unconditional love expresses the essence of His Father -- calling Him “Abba” (“Daddy”), who he identifies with the Father of the Prodigal Son. This view of God’s unconditional love is unique in the history of religions prior to Christianity.⁶¹

Once again we see a partial correlation between near death experiences and the Christian revelation of God – both sources indicate that God and heaven are loving – even overwhelmingly loving. However, near death experiences do not indicate the unconditional love of God or how to understand “unconditional love” (*agapē*).

As can be seen, the evidence of near death experiences corroborates part of the Christian account of Jesus’ resurrection, but Christianity goes further in revealing the power and glory of the spiritual body, the *unconditional* love of God, and the definition of love as “*agapē*.” There are two other areas in which Jesus’ revelation goes beyond the evidence of near death experiences – the *eternity* of the afterlife and God’s *universal* salvific will.

With respect to the first area, near death experiences show only that a transphysical body can survive clinical death, and in so doing, show that we are more than our physical embodiment. They do not and cannot reveal the eternity of that transphysical state. To know this would require knowing the will of the Creator, which requires, in turn, a revelation from that Creator. If we grant that Jesus Christ is “the unconditional love of God with us,” then His revelation of God’s will to give us eternal life is more than sufficient to do this. This theme is central in the writings of Paul, particularly 1 Cor 15, as well as Rom 5:21 and 6:23 and Gal 6:8. It is also central to the synoptic gospels in which there are eight distinct mentions of it (see for example Mk 8:35 and 10:30 and Mt 16:25 and 18:8-9, and Lk 9:24. The theme of eternal life is most prevalent in John’s Gospel where there are eighteen mentions of “eternal life” (see for example 3:15-16, 5:24, 17:1-11) and another nineteen mentions of “life” which imply eternal life. If we affirm that God is unconditional love (as Jesus teaches), we can also infer His desire to bring us into eternal life because if God truly is unconditional love, and unconditional love entails a desire to be with us in *perfect* empathy, it implies God’s desire to be with us eternally.

⁶¹ There is no doubt that Judaism viewed God as loving (Deut 4:37, Deut 7:7; Hos 11:1, Hos 14:5; Is 66:13; Jer 31:3; Zeph 3:17), but not in the same way as Christianity – that is, as *unconditional agapē* manifest by the father of the prodigal son and in the name “Abba.” Furthermore, God’s love in Judaism is focused on the *people Israel*, but in Christianity God’s love is focused on *individuals* – all individuals, particularly sinful and weak individuals (Lk 15:1-7; Lk 15:8-10; Mt 9:13; Mt 11:29; Jn 3:16-17; Jn 15:11-12).

The Christians also qualitatively transformed the *idea* of “love” – as McKenzie notes, “Greek uses the word *Eros*, *Philia*, and *agapē* and their cognates to designate love. *Eros* signifies the passion of sexual desire and does not appear in the NT. *Philein* and *Philia* designate primarily the love of friendship. *Agapē* and *agapan*, less frequent in profane Greek, are possibly chosen for that reason to designate the unique and original Christian idea of love in the New Testament. In English also the word “charity” is used to show the unique character of this love and is used in most English versions of the Bible to translate *agapē* and *agapan*” (McKenzie 1965 p. 521).

The second area in which Jesus' revelation goes beyond the evidence of near death experiences concerns God's desire to save *every* human being who seeks him with a sincere heart. We will encounter this theme on several levels in Volume IV, Chapter Seven, particularly with respect to Jesus' Eucharistic words – “poured out for all/the many” and Jesus' selection of Psalm 22 for His dying words (which addresses the universality of salvation). “Jesus' intention to save *everyone* who seeks God with a sincere heart” is supported by several passages of scripture throughout the Synoptics, John, and Paul.⁶² Though God's *desire* to save is universal, each person must seek that salvation with a sincere heart.

Since *God's* universal *desire* to save us may not correspond to *our desire* to accept and seek that salvation, we cannot say that everyone *is* or will be saved. We know only that God's *desire* is to save *every* human being who sincerely wants to be saved. The Catholic Church explicitly teaches the universality of salvation in its Dogmatic Constitution (*Lumen Gentium*) and its Pastoral Constitution (*Gaudium et Spes*). *Lumen Gentium* declares the following:

Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – those too may achieve eternal salvation.⁶³

Gaudium et Spes goes even further in explicitizing Christ's universal salvific intent:

The Christian is certainly bound both by need and by duty to struggle with evil through many afflictions and to suffer death; but, as one who has been made a partner in the paschal mystery, and as one who has been configured to the death of Christ, he will go forward, strengthened by hope, to the resurrection. All this holds true not for the Christian only but also for all men of good will in whose hearts grace is active invisibly. For since *Christ died for all*, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery.⁶⁴

In contrast to this, near death experiences reveal only that God (represented by the loving white light) expresses a desire to bring certain individuals to Himself. They do not indicate why only 9% - 20% of clinically dead adults have near death experiences (though 85% of children

⁶² See for example, Mt 18:14 “It is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish”, Lk 3:6 “All flesh shall see the salvation of God”, Jn 12:32 “When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw *all* men to myself”, Jn 17: 2 “For you granted him authority over *all* people that he might give eternal life to *all* those you have given him”, and Rom 6:10 “The death [Jesus] died, he died to sin once for *all*. ”

⁶³ Flannery 1975, p. 376; *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter II (section 16).

⁶⁴ Flannery 1975, pp. 923-24; *Gaudium et Spes*, Chapter I (section 22). Italics mine.

do⁶⁵), and so God's universal salvific will is left ambiguous. It is only through the revelation of Jesus that we know the intention of God to save everyone who desires and seeks His salvation.

What do we know after combining the evidence of Christian revelation and near death experiences?

1. Human beings are not limited to corporeal life or the physical world – they have a transphysical dimension that can survive bodily death (from both near death experiences and Jesus' revelation).
2. The transphysical dimension of human beings has continuity with embodiment – but is not limited by physical laws or processes (from both near death experiences and Jesus' revelation).
3. The transcendent deity (and the “other side”) are overwhelmingly loving (from both near death experiences and Jesus' revelation).
4. Our transphysical embodiment will be transformed in power and glory – like Jesus' (from only the revelation of Jesus).
5. Life after death is eternal (from only the revelation of Jesus).
6. God's and Jesus' intention is to give eternal life to *all* who accept and seek it – still allowing for the possibility of some to freely reject love, a loving God, and loving people (from only the revelation of Jesus).

If this confluence of evidence indicates our destiny, it must also indicate our nature – we are loving beings whose purpose is to love and whose destiny is the fullness of love. Only the unconditionally loving God can satisfy us. As St. Augustine said long ago, “For thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee.”⁶⁶

VII.

Conclusion

[Back to top](#)

The above historical analysis validates two conclusions:

1. There is significant reason to believe that Jesus appeared to the apostles (and other

⁶⁵ These statistics are reported by the International Association of Near Death Studies, which states that negative near death experiences are rare: “In the four prospective studies conducted between 1984 and 2001 involving a total of 130 NDErs, none reported distressing experiences. This finding seems to confirm that the experience is relatively rare” <http://iands.org/about-ndes/distressing-ndes.html#a>. The 2014 Parnia/Southampton University Study reported that the 9% who had a near death experience indicated that it was overwhelmingly positive. However, some of the 30% who maintained some post-mortem consciousness, but did not have a full near death experience, reported having some feelings of distress (Parnia *et al* 2014).

⁶⁶ Augustine 1955, Bk. I, Ch. 1.

witnesses) after the women had discovered his empty tomb. He appeared spiritually transformed – possessing transphysical capacities (such as the ability to pass through closed doors – John 20:19-20), with spirit-like qualities (that caused the disciples to think he was a spirit – Luke 24:37). He was more than a spiritual presence – appearing transformed in power and glory as if he were clothed in the glory of God (1 Corinthians 15: 50-56; Matthew 28: 16-20; and references to “the Lord” – “*ho Kurios*” in John 20&21). Though transformed, He maintained continuity with His former embodiment, revealing the wounds of His crucifixion (John 20:20-21 and Luke 24:41). This interpretation explains all five of Wright’s Christian mutations of Second Temple Judaism (see above Section IV.B).

2. After Jesus’ powerful transformed appearance to the witnesses, He imparts the Holy Spirit upon them, and they are able to perform the same miracles as He did (in *His* name).

Jesus’ risen glory and gift of the Spirit substantiated everything He said to his apostles about being “the Exclusive Son of the Father,” and so the early Church declared him to be “the Lord” and “the Son of God.” Recall that the proclamation of Jesus’ divinity was apologetically unappealing, and cost the Church dearly (separation from the synagogue, loss of social and financial status, and persecution). Jesus’ resurrection and glory explains why Church leaders brought persecution upon themselves when they could have avoided it by simply omitting mention of His divinity. It also explains why Christian messianism grew stronger after the public execution and humiliation of its messiah, and why the Christian church grew so rapidly in the midst of persecution.

In view of this, we can see why Paul and the other witnesses were so willing to risk everything in order to proclaim Jesus as risen messiah and Lord. As Paul notes in his dilemma (see above Section III.B) all these witnesses had everything to lose and nothing to gain by their proclamation. It also explains why the Jewish authorities and even the Roman Empire could not arrest the growth of this unique religion within its confines, and why that religion moved beyond Rome and became the most dynamic missionary church in human history. When this historical evidence of Jesus’ resurrection is combined with the data of near death experiences, it further corroborates the case for our ultimate spiritual destiny in Jesus – a destiny of eternal and unconditional love – without suffering – transformed in the very image of the risen Savior.

There is still one more remarkable piece of validatable evidence for Jesus’ resurrection that has borne considerable scientific scrutiny since 1998—the Shroud of Turin. As we shall see in Chapter 8, this first century relic of a burial shroud with a perfect 3-dimensional photographic negative image of a man having suffered the unique crucifixion of Jesus can only be explained by a burst of light--with a magnitude of 6-8 billion watts-- emanating from every 3-dimensional point of a mechanically transparent body lying within it. This not only points to supernatural causation, but also to the first moment of a glorified resurrection described by the gospel accounts and St. Paul.

The historical case for Jesus' resurrection is significant and it provides an essential part of the foundation for believing that He truly is the "unconditional love of God with us." In the next chapter, we will examine two additional parts of this foundation – Jesus' miracles and gift of the Holy Spirit. When these three pieces are combined with his unconditionally loving life and death (and His preaching of His Father's unconditional love), we see the solidity of His claim to be the exclusive Son of the Father.

We conclude with our introductory observation, namely, that reason alone will not bring us to faith in Jesus Christ. Reasonable evidence can mitigate barriers to faith while providing strong support for its foundations. However, faith requires that we recognize a need for God, and His help to bring us out of darkness and alienation; it requires a recognition that there is something incomplete within ourselves, a recognition that we cannot by ourselves (or even with other people) overcome this alienation and incompleteness, and a recognition that the word, actions, and way of Jesus Christ are the vehicle for doing this. When we see the evidence of the resurrection in light of Jesus' preaching about God's unconditional love, and acknowledge our *need* for that love, the assent of faith begins. The more grace works in our lives, the more we know that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

Chapter Six

Miracles by His Own Authority Jesus' Miracles and Spirit

[Back to top](#)

For Jesus, miracles are not merely an indication of divine *power*; they are the initiation of God's kingdom in the world. He performs miracles to vanquish evil and to bring the kingdom so that we may be saved. In this respect, Jesus' ministry of exorcism, healing, and raising the dead is unique in the history of religions. In order to understand the significance of this unique ministry, we will consider four major areas of contemporary scholarship:

1. The Purpose and Distinctiveness of Jesus' Miracles (Section I.A.).
2. The Historicity of Jesus' Exorcisms and Healings (Section II.).
3. The Historicity of Jesus Raising the Dead (Section III).

Why be so concerned with the historicity of Jesus' miracles? As noted above, miracles ("deeds of power") are the initiation of God's Kingdom in the world, which entails vanquishing Satan and evil. This is clearly manifest in Jesus' response to his critics' accusations that he casts out demons by the Prince of demons: "If by the finger of God I cast out the demons, the *Kingdom of God* has come upon you" (Luke 11:20). The establishment of this Kingdom is not only the entryway, but the passageway to our salvation – and when our journey is complete, it is the fullness of eternal life with the unconditionally loving God. Inasmuch as Jesus' miracles initiate God's Kingdom in the world, they initiate the pathway to our salvation – and so their historicity is of immense importance.

Jesus differentiates himself from all other Old Testament prophets by accomplishing his miracles through *his own* authority and power, meaning that he possesses this divine authority and power (see below Section I.D.3). This possession of divine authority and power not only enables him to initiate the kingdom, it also validates his claim to be the exclusive beloved son of the Father during the time of his ministry. This is precisely the question we are attempting to answer in this chapter – making the historicity of the miracles integral to our quest to discover whether Jesus is Emmanuel.

Throughout the last century of New Testament scholarship, several objections have been raised against the historicity of Jesus' miracles.⁶⁷ Some of these objections are quite superficial, manifesting almost complete ignorance of the historical biblical scholarship throughout the last six decades -- e.g. "the miracles are just a bunch of stories that Jesus' friends and disciples invented." These objections fly in the face of ancient non-Christian testimony to Jesus' miracles, the Jewish polemic against his miracles ("it is by the power of Beelzebul"), and the basic application of historical criteria to the miracle narratives. The historical analysis given below will make this point abundantly clear.

Some objections focus on Jesus' raising the dead – "perhaps Jesus did some healings and exorcisms, but raising the dead sounds like an early Christian contrivance to prove Jesus' divinity during his ministry." John P. Meier has made a 200-page rigorous investigation into the historicity of Jesus' raisings of the dead in the second volume of his series *A Marginal Jew*.⁶⁸ This evidence is sufficiently strong to respond to the above objection (see below Section I.D.).

Other objections center on the conviction that ancient people were unable to identify a "real miracle" (violating a law of nature) because they were ignorant of both natural laws and natural science. This objection erroneously associates "recognition of miracle" with "understanding of natural science." As most historians recognize, the people of first-century Palestine were quite capable of recognizing the super-ordinary and supernatural when they saw instantaneous cures of leprosy, withered limbs, deafness, and lifetime blindness (see below I.E).

In the forthcoming historical analysis, we will respond to these and other objections to

⁶⁷ Extreme naturalistic positions ruling out the possibility of miracles (such as the one advanced by David Hume and appropriated by late 19th and early 20th century liberal theologians), are unjustifiable, because natural laws are not inviolable in the sense that their violation implies logical impossibility. For example, a violation of $E=Mc^2$ is not logically impossible (an intrinsic contradiction); it is a logical possibility which we assume will not occur. Now, inasmuch as natural laws are not inviolable, and inasmuch as "miracle" is defined as a supernatural intervention in the natural order, and inasmuch as a supernatural power is neither governed nor conditioned by the natural order (and therefore the natural order cannot prevent a supernatural power from affecting it), then "miracle," as defined, is neither impossible in principle nor impossible in our natural order. Hence, any *a priori* denial of miracles must be *a priori* unjustified. Though 1st century Jewish thought did not have a formal conception of miracles similar to the one given above, its view of miracles was commensurate with it. See Wright 1996, p. 186 and Harvey 1982, pp. 101ff.

⁶⁸ Meier 1994, pp. 623-840.

the historicity of Jesus' miracles, and in so doing, show the strong likelihood that Jesus exorcised, healed, and raised the dead by his own authority and power – indicating not only that he had initiated God's Kingdom in the world, but revealed himself to be the exclusive beloved Son of the Father.

I.

The Purpose and Distinctiveness of Jesus' Miracles

[Back to top](#)

There is considerable evidence for the historicity of Jesus' miracles. They are mentioned in non-Christian polemical sources⁶⁹ and by adversaries during His ministry (who did not challenge the fact that he worked miracles, but attributed them instead to the devil or sorcery).⁷⁰ N.T. Wright notes in this regard:

...we must be clear that Jesus' contemporaries, both those who became his followers and those who were determined not to become his followers, certainly regarded him as possessed of remarkable powers. The church did not invent the charge that Jesus was in league with Beelzebul; but charges like that are not advanced unless they are needed as an explanation for some quite remarkable phenomena.⁷¹

The importance of this charge should not be underestimated, because it cannot be imagined that Mark (or the other Evangelists for that matter) would have dared to mention that Jesus was in league with the devil or was doing miracles by the power of the devil unless they believed it was absolutely necessary to respond to a charge which was *really* being leveled against Jesus (see below, Section I.B. on the criterion of embarrassment). It can hardly be thought that Jesus' harshest critics would concede to His having supernatural power unless there was wide contemporaneous acknowledgement that Jesus was doing exorcisms and healings. Therefore, his "deeds of power" are almost certainly historical.

Furthermore, miracles are an integral part of every stratum of the New Testament. They are mentioned in the earliest *kerygmas*, in the writings of Paul and 1 John, and are manifest in every tradition constituting the Gospel narratives. Whatever one might believe about the interpretation of miracles by the evangelists, it seems unreasonable to suspect that Jesus did not perform a large number of "extraordinary deeds of power" before multiple witnesses in multiple

⁶⁹ There are three credible early non-Christian sources attesting to Jesus. Though Tacitus does not mention Jesus' miracles, Flavius Josephus and the Babylonian Talmud do. Most scholars agree that this external testimony is historically accurate and, in the case of the Babylonian Talmud, corresponds to the Jewish polemic against Jesus during his ministry – "he casts out demons by the power of Beelzebul." See Brown 1994(a), pp. 62-63, 373-376, Johnson 1991, pp. 113-114, and Meier 1994(a), pp. 592-593.

⁷⁰ As Brown notes: "[Jesus' enemies] attributed [His extraordinary deeds] to evil origins, either to the devil (Mark 3:22-30) or in 2d-century polemic to magic (Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 2.32.3-5)" Brown 1994(a), pp. 62-63.

⁷¹ Wright 1996, p. 187.

places throughout the course of His ministry.

Jesus' gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost makes miracles almost commonplace in the apostolic Church -- so much so that they are openly discussed by Paul, Acts, and the Gospels without hesitation. Though Jesus performed miracles by his own power, his disciples did so through His name. The adversaries of the Church do not dispute this fact, and were therefore forced to find other grounds to attack the apostles and the young Church.

Perhaps more interesting than the consistent documentation of Jesus' miracles is the unique way in which they are presented. They are *not* similar to the presentation of miracles in Hellenistic writings or in the Old Testament and, as noted above, are not portrayed as *direct* manifestations of Jesus' divine power, but rather, as the initiation of the Kingdom of God and the vanquishing of Satan. Raymond Brown describes five unique, consistent features in the presentation of Jesus' miracles in all four Gospels: ⁷²

1. Jesus does miracles by His own authority.
2. Jesus' miracles have the purpose not of showing His glory, but of actualizing the coming of the Kingdom and the vanquishing of evil.
3. Jesus is not a wonderworker or magician in either the pagan or Jewish sense.
4. Jesus combines teaching with his miracles.
5. The faith/freedom of the recipient is integral to the miraculous deed.

We will discuss each point in turn.

1) Jesus does miracles by His own authority. As will be seen below, Jesus exorcises, heals, and raises the dead by *his* own power, and by *his* own word. The Old Testament prophets did not do anything like this, but believed themselves to be only *mediators* of God's power, and so they had to petition God to help them and work through them. Indeed, the greatest prophetic miracle workers of the Old Testament -- Elijah and Elisha -- would not have dared to make the claim that the power of God resided in *them*. As Brown notes:

...granted that Jesus did perform acts of power, does that tell us more about him than that he was a prophet like Elijah or Elisha who were thought to have performed many of the same miracles? Yes, precisely because in the tradition Jesus connects them with the coming of the kingdom, a definitive eschatological context.... The lines of demarcation between Jesus and God...are very vague. The kingdom comes both in and through Jesus. The power to do the healings and other miracles belongs to God *but also to Jesus*.⁷³

2) Jesus' miracles have the purpose not of showing His glory, but of actualizing the coming of the kingdom and the vanquishing of evil. As noted above, Jesus' miracles

⁷² Brown 1994(a), pp. 60-70.

⁷³ Brown 1994(a), p. 65.

actualized the kingdom of God. They did so by vanquishing the power of Satan in the world. This interpretation is not only integral to virtually every miracle story in the Gospels, but also explicitly mentioned in the primitive Church's *kerygmas*:

God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him (Acts 10:38).

As Brown notes, "Jesus is accomplishing something no one has ever done before since Adam's sin yielded to Satan's dominion over this world."⁷⁴ Inasmuch as Jesus is accomplishing something totally unique, the Gospel writers are totally unique in writing about it.

3) Jesus is not a wonder-worker or magician in either the pagan or Jewish sense.

Bultmann contended that Jesus' miracles were meant to show that Jesus was competitive with the so-called pagan miracle-workers.⁷⁵ Brown responds to Bultmann by advancing two more probable contentions. First, though it is popularly believed that there were a large number of miracle-workers at the time of Jesus, there is little evidence for this.⁷⁶ Secondly, among these few miracle-workers, none resembles Jesus in either style or purpose. With respect to pagan miracle-workers, Brown notes:

The most popular pagan parallel offered for Jesus is Apollonius of Tyana (1st century AD) for whose activity we are largely dependent on a life written 200 years later by Philostratus, a life that some serious scholars regard as largely fictitious. The miracles attributed to that figure, some of which may be influenced by knowledge of the stories about Jesus, have the *purpose* of causing astonishment and bringing about adulation – quite unlike the Gospel presentation of Jesus' miracles.⁷⁷

The Gospel writers not only avoid the portrayal of Jesus as a worker of "astonishing deeds," Jesus Himself is portrayed as shunning such a purpose. Indeed, when Herod, the Pharisees, and the devil ask Jesus to work a miracle for no other purpose than to show off His power, He refuses to do so.

John P. Meier (in conjunction with David E. Aune) adds to this conclusion by noting that Jesus was not in any sense a magician (as conceived by His contemporary Jewish audience). He was not even accused of magic by His adversaries. The New Testament was aware of the notion of magic designated by the term "*magos*" (Acts 13:6,8), and the Jewish authorities were certainly aware of the charge of practicing magic, but as Meier notes, this term is never used to describe Jesus' activity by His disciples, the Jewish authorities, the early Church, Jesus' fiercest critics, or

⁷⁴ Brown 1994(a), p. 66.

⁷⁵ See Brown 1994(a), p. 64, n. 82.

⁷⁶ See Brown 1994(a), p. 63.

⁷⁷ Brown 1994(a), p. 63.

Jesus Himself.⁷⁸

Some contemporary exegetes have suggested that the accusation of being in league with Beelzebul is similar to the charge of magic, but as Meier points out:

...that is a move made by modern scholars engaging in model-building at a high level of abstraction. It does not reflect the precise vocabulary and immediate reaction of Jesus' fellow Jews in his own day or in the decades immediately following his death.⁷⁹

Furthermore, if Jesus were to have been accused of magic, it would have carried a very pejorative connotation within the Jewish culture of His time, and even after His death. However, the New Testament accounts militate against this interpretation by continuously noting that Jesus' miracles are greeted with amazement and praise by His Jewish audience (while magic would have been viewed quite negatively).⁸⁰

Finally, Meier notes:

An amoral or antinomian magician, unconnected with the eschatological fate and ethical concerns of Israel, is not the historical Jesus that emerges from the most reliable traditions of his words and deeds.⁸¹

As will be seen, the contrary is very much the case.

4) Jesus combines teaching and miracle. Unlike both the pagan and Jewish miracle-workers of the time, Jesus integrated teaching into his miraculous deeds. He did not simply heal the sick (which is a good purpose in itself, and a vanquishing of Satan); He included lessons about faith, the forgiveness of sins, seeing through the eyes of faith, giving thanks, the kingdom of God, salvation for the Gentiles, and even the Holy Eucharist. Jewish miracle workers, in contrast, were not portrayed this way. As Brown again notes:

...that combination [of miracle and teaching] may be unique. The two most frequently cited Jewish wonder-workers are Honi (Onias), the rain-maker (or circle-drawer) of the 1st century BC, and the Galilean Hanina of the 1st century AD. Almost all that is known of these men comes from much later rabbinic literature, and by that time legendary and theological developments had aggrandized the portrayal.... Almost certainly in the earliest tradition they were *not* rabbinical *teachers*...⁸²

⁷⁸ Meier 1994, p. 551. See also Aune 1980, pp. 1523-1524, notes 67, 68, and 69.

⁷⁹ Meier 1994, p. 551.

⁸⁰ See Meier 1994, p. 552.

⁸¹ Meier 1994, p. 451.

⁸² Brown 1994(a), p. 63 (*italics mine*).

In contrast to the Jewish miracle workers, Jesus is not only a rabbinical teacher, but also one who integrates His teaching with the deed of power. Thus, the first effect of Jesus' miracles is to vanquish Satan and simultaneously actualize the kingdom of God; the second effect is *to teach* about faith, love, and the kingdom of God. The last effect is to manifest His possession of Divine power pointing to His Divine authority and origin.

5) The faith/freedom of the recipient is integral to the miraculous deed. Unlike pagan and Jewish miracle-workers of the time, Jesus used miracles to both teach about and call forth faith. The oft-repeated lines, "Go now, your faith has saved you," or "Do you believe that I can do this?" move the recipient of the miracle beyond a physical healing to faith and ultimately toward salvation. Notice that this call to faith involves the highest use of the recipient's freedom. Jesus wants the recipients in their freedom to enter into a *life* of salvation through the vehicle of His deed of power. The miracle-workers of Jesus' time do not have this intention.

These five unique aspects of Jesus' miracles reveal that the Gospel writers are not "competing" with other miracle-workers, or even trying to "show off" the astonishing power of Jesus. Rather, they were trying to convey *Jesus'* intentions in a remarkably restrained and humble way.

There is always a temptation when talking about a "deed of power" to emphasize power instead of the coming of the kingdom, and the importance of the miracle-worker instead of the importance of the recipient. The Gospel writers did not succumb to this temptation, but rather restricted themselves to certain sets of deeds which were well-known and attested, and presented them in subdued ways. They did not feel a need to multiply raisings of the dead, to add to or supplement the regular features of Jesus' miracles, or to exaggerate their narratives as did the later Gnostic writers.⁸³ This last point merits some discussion.

The New Testament miracles are almost free from frivolous elements, needless exaggerations, and punitive actions. In stark contrast to this, the Gnostic gospels are full of them. With respect to frivolous miracles, for example, the Infancy Gospel of Thomas has the child Jesus making clay sparrows fly to prove to His Father that He has the right to violate the Sabbath.⁸⁴ The Gnostic Gospel of Philip has Jesus going into the dye works of Levi and turning seventy-two different colors into white in order to show that "the Son of Man [has] come as a

⁸³ The gnostic gospels are a set of apocryphal works attributed falsely to Jesus' disciples and friends. They were written several decades after the four canonical gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) during the second half of the second century to the fourth century. Their authors are not accepted authorities within the apostolic Church (as the four canonical gospels), but rather spiritual writers who were heavily influenced by gnostic philosophy (which attempts to achieve spiritual freedom through special knowledge or enlightenment). The so-called "Christian Gnostics" who wrote these texts departed from apostolic Christianity by advocating salvation not only through Jesus Christ, but through enlightenment proposed by its spiritual leaders. As can be seen from their miracle stories, their view of salvation and miracles was considerably different from that of Jesus, and in some cases, are ridiculous and fantastic.

⁸⁴ See Bernhard 2006, Ch. 2, verses 1-7.

dier.”⁸⁵ We find in the Gospel of Peter (for which we have only fragmentary evidence) a gratuitous elaboration of Matthew’s reference to “darkness covering the whole land” (Mt 27:45) -- the sun had already set at the noon hour, causing people to stumble and take out lamps in order to see.⁸⁶

With respect to punitive miracles, the Gnostic Gospels portray Jesus as punishing His critics. For example, in the Infancy Gospel of Thomas the child Jesus curses a child to death who disperses water He has just collected, saying:

You godless, brainless moron, what did the ponds and waters do to you? Watch this now: you are going to dry up like a tree and you will never produce leaves or roots or fruit.⁸⁷

In another instance, He curses a child to death for accidentally bumping into Him, and strikes His neighbors blind when they complain.⁸⁸

The four canonical Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) stand in stark contrast to this tendency. Aside from the discussion surrounding Matthew 17:24-27 (the coin in the fish’s mouth) and Mark 11:12-14, 20-21 (Jesus cursing the fig tree), there is a virtual absence of frivolous and punitive miracles in the four canonical Gospels. Given the apologetical appeal and fascination intrinsic to wonder-working and blatant (but useless) displays of power, the almost total absence of such exaggerations in the four canonical Gospels is striking.

When we think of how the Evangelists could have been tempted to put the emphasis on the deed of power (instead of the deed of compassion) in order to make Jesus look more powerful, glorious, and successful; when one thinks about the temptation to appeal to the baser nature of an audience of potential converts, it seems remarkable that the evangelists resisted that temptation in almost every form and in every miracle story. Their light shines on the need of the petitioner and Jesus’ compassionate response, the gentleness of the healing, and the admonition to tell no one. This approach is quite unique among miracle stories in the ancient world, and seems to put the need and faith of the petitioner on the same plane as Jesus’ power to vanquish evil and bring the kingdom.

The four evangelists assiduously avoid aggrandizement, frivolousness, retribution, and virtually anything that does not fulfill a need of a suffering or grieving person. This editorial restraint points to the thought and care used to respect the words and actions of their Lord – an implicit indication of their historical accuracy.

⁸⁵ See Isenberg 1990.

⁸⁶ See James 1924, fragment I, V, 15-19.

⁸⁷ Bernhard 2006, Ch. 3, v. 2.

⁸⁸ See Bernhard 2006, Chapters 4 and 5.

II.

The Historicity of Jesus' Exorcisms and Healings

[Back to top](#)

Exorcisms and healings may be viewed as two extremes on a single continuum. For Jesus, healing was a form of dispelling evil (even though a demon is not driven out). Likewise, exorcisms are a form of healing, because when demons leave, people regain their sanity, capacity for speech, relief from convulsions, etc. Both actions result in the kingdom of God being actualized in the world. The key distinction between exorcisms and healings is the explicit presence of a possessing demon in the former and the presence of God's redemptive love in the latter. Thus, exorcisms accentuate the vanquishing of evil while healings accentuate the presence of God's redeeming love – both of which actualize God's kingdom in the world.

For Jesus, the kingdom of God is both present and future. He follows Jewish eschatology in announcing the future kingdom – the kingdom in its fullness and completion. However, he departs from Jewish eschatology by announcing the arrival of the kingdom “here and now” in his person. He saw himself as bringing not only an entryway into the future kingdom of heaven, but a passageway that connected the present kingdom to the future kingdom. His exorcisms, healings, and raising the dead are part of the establishment of that kingdom, but these actions alone do not fully establish it – they anticipate Jesus' Eucharist, passion, death, resurrection, and gift of the Spirit which complete Jesus' mission to build the “conduit” between earth and heaven. Since exorcisms, healings, and raising the dead represent the initial actualization of the Kingdom, we will want to be sure of their historicity, and so we will discuss each in turn.

II.A

Exorcisms

According to Meier, there are seven non-overlapping accounts of exorcisms in the Synoptic Gospels (John recounts no exorcisms, but this is his theological proclivity):

1. The Possessed Boy (Mark 9:14-29),
2. A passing reference to the exorcism of Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2),
3. The Gerasene Demoniac (Mark 5:1-20),
4. The Demoniac in the Capernaum Synagogue (Mark 1:23-28),
5. The Mute and Blind demoniac in the Q tradition (Matt 12:24/Luke 11:14-15),
6. The Mute Demoniac (Matt 9:32-33), and
7. The Syrophenician Woman (Mark 7:24-30/Matt 15:21-28).

Meier concludes as follows about the historicity of Jesus' exorcisms:

That there should be seven individual ‘specimens’ of a very specific type of miracle, namely, exorcism, supports the view that exorcisms loomed large in

Jesus' ministry.⁸⁹

These seven distinct instances are complemented by many *sayings* (about exorcisms) as well as references to exorcisms within *summary texts*.

There are multiple attestations of sources – though Mark is responsible for most of the extended exorcism narratives (which are used by Matthew and Luke).

- L (special Luke) gives a passing reference to the exorcism of Mary Magdalene: "...some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out..." (Lk 8:2);
- Q has one narrative (Matt 12:22-24/Luke 11:14-15) – the mute and blind demoniac;
- M (special Matthew) recounts one narrative (Matt 9:32-33 – Jesus exorcises a mute demoniac).

When we combine the Marcan narratives and the Q *sayings* with the above three other sources, we see a strong confluence of attestation which Meier summarizes as follows:

Q sayings join Marcan sayings and Marcan narratives in providing multiple attestation for]the existence of exorcisms in the ministry of the historical Jesus.⁹⁰

Jesus does not cast out demons by invoking the name of God or by asking God to work *through* him. Recall that Jesus distinguishes himself from other Jewish miracle workers by acting through his command and word alone. See, for example:

- "You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again" (Mk 9:25).
- The demons *begged Jesus*, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them." *He gave* them permission (Mk 5: 12-13).
- "Be quiet!" *said Jesus sternly*. "Come out of him!" The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek (Mk 1: 25).

In conclusion, there is more than ample evidence to support a belief in the historicity of Jesus' exorcisms. Indeed, the evidence suggests that they played a frequent and prominent role in His ministry, particularly in the region of Galilee.

⁸⁹ Meier 1994, p. 648.

⁹⁰ Meier 1994, p. 648.

II.B Healings

The evidence for Jesus' healing miracles is even stronger than the evidence for His exorcisms, and this is reflected in the fact that the early Church remembered Jesus more as a healer than as an exorcist.⁹¹ As noted above, Jesus' healings have a connection to his exorcisms, because they were thought to be an overcoming of evil. Recall that physical infirmity was associated with evil or sin in the Judaism of Jesus' time. However, healings do not have an element of direct struggle with spirits or Satan. Instead, they focus on the *need* of particular persons and the *plea* of those persons or a concerned petitioner. Jesus sees faith (trust in His desire and power to heal) in these cries for help and is moved by compassion to heal the sick person.

As with exorcisms, Jesus accomplishes healings by his own authority and power (without making recourse to God or prayer), and in so doing initiates the Kingdom, and reveals His possession of divine authority and power. Inasmuch as Jesus was aware of possessing divine authority and power, and aware that *possession* of this power was categorically different from *all* the Old Testament prophets, he must have also been aware of his divine status (which he termed "Sonship") that made his possession of divine power possible.

What can be said about the historicity of healings? First, with respect to multiple attestation, there is a large number of healing miracles in four out of five independent sources: Mark, Q, special Luke, and John. Special Matthew alone lacks an independent healing narrative. There are 15 distinct (non-overlapping) accounts of healing miracles in the Gospels, plus the general Q list in Matt 11:2-6 and Luke 7:18-23. This totals 16 non-overlapping references to healing miracles in the Gospels. The breakdown is as follows:

- Mark relates *eight* miracle accounts: two concerned with cures of paralytics (2:1-12 and 3:1-6), two concerned with cures of blindness (10:46-52 and 8:22-26), one concerned with the cure of leprosy (1:40-45), and three concerned with various diseases mentioned only once (fever of Peter's mother-in-law in 1:29-31, the woman with a hemorrhage in 5:24-34, and the deaf-mute in 7:31-37).⁹²
- Q relates only *one* account of a healing miracle which is the cure of a centurion's servant (at a distance). Matthew calls this a cure of a paralytic, but Luke calls it a cure of someone with a grave illness. Curiously, John agrees with Luke instead of Matthew, meaning that Matthew has probably changed the Q source (instead of Luke). The presence of this miracle in both Q and John indicates multiple attestation of sources for a single healing account. Q also has a list of miracles (Matt 11:2-6/Luke 7:18-23) which include healing of the blind, the lame, lepers, and the deaf.

⁹¹ See Meier 1994, p. 679.

⁹² This reflects Meier's list given in Meier 1994, p. 678.

- L (special Luke) relates *four* healings: one paralytic (13:10-17), one concerned with leprosy (17:11-19), and two cures of various ailments mentioned only once (the man with dropsy in 14:1-6 and the ear of the slave of the high priest in 22:49-51).
- John relates *two* healings: one concerned with the cure of a paralytic (5:1-9) and one concerned with the man born blind (9:1-41).⁹³

Evidently, healings enjoy wide multiple attestation. Furthermore, healings of paralytics, the blind, and lepers also enjoy independent multiple attestation.

Healings are mentioned in a variety of other contexts outside of narratives. For example:

- Allusions to miracles which are not narrated in full (e.g., Mark 6:56 – “And wherever He came, in villages, cities, or country, they laid the sick in the market places, and besought Him that they might touch even the fringe of His garment, and as many as touched it were made well”);
- In sayings implying His fulfillment of prophetic expectation (Luke 4:16-21 – “He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me...[to give] recovery of sight to the blind...’”);
- The disciples performing or failing to perform miracles (Luke 9:6; 10:17-20; Mark 3:15; 9:18; 28, 38);
- Various sayings in which Jesus refers to His miracles;
- The Scribes’ accusations that He performed miracles by the power of Beelzebul;
- Giving the power to heal to the disciples (Matt 10:1 par.);
- Several summary statements.

When these are combined with the disciples’ power to heal through the Holy Spirit *in the name of Jesus* (after the resurrection), it becomes evident that healings were a common and central part of Jesus’ ministry.

There is ample evidence to support reasonable belief in the historicity of Jesus’ healing miracles. Multiple attestation abounds – not only for healings in general, but even for the particular story of the centurion’s son. Furthermore, the criterion of embarrassment applies to several stories; Semitisms, place names, personal names, and unusual details are prevalent in most of these stories; and there is even the possibility of seeing a link between the recipient of a miracle and its transmission to the Jerusalem Church (Bartimaeus). There are very few facts of ancient history that are better attested than the healing miracles of Jesus.

Recall that the purpose of healings in Jesus’ ministry was to initiate the kingdom of God in the world (and in so doing to vanquish Satan and evil). He performs these acts in a unique way – not to demonstrate his supernatural power, but rather to respond in compassion to the needs of

⁹³ See Meier 1994, p. 678.

petitioners.⁹⁴ He works miracles through the faith (trust) of the petitioner, and links it to a spiritual teaching which is relevant for both the petitioner and bystanders. He performs healing miracles by his own command (by his own authority and power), and does not pray to God for the power to perform them. Each miracle puts an end to evil and brings the kingdom evermore deeply into the world. These same unique characteristics are even more manifest in Jesus' raising of the dead.

III.

The Historicity of Jesus Raising the Dead

[Back to top](#)

Unlike healing miracles (of which there are fifteen full non-overlapping stories and dozens of other references in lists, summary statements, etc.), there are only three non-overlapping stories about raising the dead, and fewer non-narrative references than the healing miracles. However, these three stories all come from *different* traditions that can be traced to their very probable early Palestinian origins.

The three traditions of “raising the dead” are the Marcan tradition (the raising of Jairus' daughter – Mark 5:21-43), the special Luke tradition (the raising of the son of the widow of Nain – Luke 7:11-17), and the Johannine tradition (the raising of Lazarus – John 11:1-46). To these three narratives we should add a saying from a list in Q: “The blind see and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, *the dead are raised*, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them” (Matt 11:5). Thus, raising the dead is mentioned in four out of five non-overlapping traditions. Special Matthew is the only source that does not specifically make mention of it. Though raising the dead is infrequent, it enjoys almost complete multiple attestation.

Curiously, despite the spectacular character of the “raisings,” none of the Gospel writers felt a need to multiply them. Mark, Matthew, and John limit themselves to one, and Luke limits himself to two. The fact that the evangelists do not multiply these stories indicates a mature editorial restraint and respect for the truth.

The three stories about *raising* the dead must be distinguished from Jesus' *resurrection*. All three stories about raising the dead are really a restoration of a person to his or her former *corporeal* existence. However, Jesus' resurrection is not a restoration to former corporeal existence, but rather is a transformation of former embodiment to a spiritual and divine-like (glorious) form. Moreover, raising the dead is not permanent, but spiritual resurrection is eternal. Despite the important differences between a temporary raising of the body and an eternal spiritual resurrection, we should not diminish the importance of Jesus raising the dead. These miracles

⁹⁴ The blind beggar Bartimaeus cries out “mercy” (“*Eleos*”) which is a near perfect explanation of Jesus' interior disposition in His ministry of healing. In His radical openness to the petitioner, Jesus manifests not only His saving heart for that petitioner, but His saving will for the world. The same word is used to describe the compassion of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:37), which describes Jesus' state of mind when he sees the sick, poor, and sinners.

indicate that Jesus has within himself power over life and death (a power reserved to Yahweh), which strongly testify to the coming of God's kingdom through Jesus. We may now examine each distinct tradition of Jesus raising the dead.

Editor's Note:

There is an extensive discussion of the evidence for the historicity of each account of raising the dead in Mark, Luke, and John given in Chapter 5 of *God So Loved the World* pp. 213-228. A brief summary of these pages is given below.

One final point should be made. In the earliest constructible pre-Johannine narrative, we see once again that Jesus gives the command to raise the dead by His own authority.⁹⁵ We saw this in the previous two narratives – Jesus commands “*talitha koum*” – “little girl, get up” (Mark), and “Young man, I say to you, arise” – using the “emphatic *egō*” (special Luke). Now we see Jesus giving a command for the dead Lazarus to come out of the tomb after the stone had been rolled away. Unlike Elijah and Elisha, He does not make recourse to prayers, and does not act as an intermediary for the working of *God's* power. Rather, He manifests divine power and authority (the power of life and death) in Himself.

It is difficult to imagine an early formulator of the tradition making such a radical claim without some grounding in history. Most impressive is the fact that this radical claim enjoys multiple attestation not only through three sources (Mark, special Luke, and John), but also through the primitive traditions standing behind these three sources.

It should be noted that the three *primitive* traditions of Jesus raising the dead were formulated by three *different* authors grounding their stories in three *different* historical incidents originating in three *different* locations. All of them reveal the same important difference from the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament -- namely, that Jesus raises the dead by His own command (authority and power). The probability of this significant difference occurring in three gospel sources derived from three different traditions with three authors from three locations by pure chance is quite miniscule. Reason dictates that there must be a common source – but what could that common source be except Jesus or the apostles who witnessed Jesus on all three occasions? The datum that reveals most lucidly Jesus' divine power and authority contains within itself the validation of its historicity.

⁹⁵ Note that in the fully expanded version of the Lazarus narrative, the Johannine author has added the passage that Jesus prayed to the Father, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me” (Jn 11: 41 - 42). This Johannine addition concerns verification of one of his favorite themes – that the Father has sent Jesus. It should not be interpreted to mean that Jesus had to pray for the power to raise the dead. As is clear from the primitive tradition (uncovered by Meier), Jesus makes the command for Lazarus to “come out” by his own authority and word.

IV.

Conclusion

[Back to top](#)

Some skeptics have contended that Jesus' healings may have been nothing more than alleviation of psychosomatic problems, that his exorcisms were nothing more than the healing of epilepsy and grand mal seizures, and that his raisings of the dead were nothing more than alleviation of suspended animation. Though there were no medical experts with appropriate equipment on the scene to make scientific diagnoses, it is safe to assume that the apostles' testimony about the blind, the lame, the lepers, the mute, etc. was accurate, because most blind people are physically blind, and the same with deaf people, mute people, people with atrophied limbs, and lepers. Furthermore, most dead people are really dead; they are not cases of extended suspended animation without signs of respiration. The signs of death, blindness, deafness, leprosy, etc., were able to be detected by ancient people – not just modern ones. Semitic people at the time of Jesus could also surmise that when individuals were *instantaneously* cured of physical maladies which either lasted a lifetime or took years to cure, something was “out of the ordinary” – even super-ordinary.

Exorcisms are a different case, because there is no physical test for spiritual possession. All scientific tests are devised to detect physical causes (not spiritual ones). Thus, cases of demonic possession (and exorcism, which rectifies it) can only be judged to have occurred by someone who believes in demons and demonic possession (as Jesus certainly did). Even if we concede that every exorcism was a cure of epilepsy or grand mal seizures (or some other physical malady), we have simply shifted the categorization of the *miracle* – from exorcism to healing. Though this may be satisfying to materialists, I do not think it is accurate. There is a long history of demonic haunting and possession that continues to this day.⁹⁶ Most Christian churches acknowledge the existence of evil spirits and Satan (the leader of the evil kingdom), and the Catholic Church has exorcists assigned to most dioceses throughout the world. The vanquishing of Satan is central to Jesus' mission of bringing the kingdom to the world. An extensive treatment of the reality of spiritual evil today and Jesus' mission to vanquish it is given in Volume 14 of *Credible Catholic* – Chapters 1-3.

We now arrive at our conclusion. There is considerable evidence for the historicity of Jesus' miracles, including:

1. Testimony in two non-Christian sources written near the time of Jesus (e.g. Flavius

⁹⁶ There is an interesting book by the psychiatrist M. Scott Peck (Peck 2005) that gives a detailed analysis of the distinction between severe mental illness and demonic possession in two well-documented cases. According to the Vatican guidelines issued in 1999, “the person who claims to be possessed must be evaluated by doctors to rule out a mental or physical illness.”

Josephus and the Babylonian Talmud—see above Chapter Two).

2. The Jewish polemic against Jesus (“It is by the power of Beelzebul that he cast out demons”) implying that his adversaries acknowledged his miraculous power.
3. Attestation in many apostolic *kerygmas*.
4. Multiple attestation of exorcisms and healings in all five independent sources (Mark, Q, special Luke, special Matthew, and John), and attestation to raising the dead in three independent sources (Mark, special Luke, and John).
5. Jesus’ unique style of performing miracles which is unlike any other miracle worker in the ancient world and unlike the performance of miracles in the apocryphal gnostic gospels.
6. Mention of particular places and people in miracle narratives which could have been checked within living memory of Jesus – particularly true for the narratives concerned with raising the dead.
7. The presence of Semitisms in narratives concerning exorcisms, healings, and particularly, raising the dead – indicating reliance on an early Palestinian tradition.
8. Coherence with Palestinian titles, expressions, and phrasing that would have been used in Israel at the time of Jesus’ ministry, but would be anachronistic after his resurrection and gift of the Spirit.

In view of the above, it is reasonable and responsible to hold not only that Jesus performed exorcisms, healings, and raisings of the dead, but did so by his own authority and power – showing that he possessed God’s authority and power in himself. The apostolic Church saw in this a confirmation of Jesus’ divine Sonship during his ministry.

If we accept this, then we also must accept that Jesus knew about his divine Sonship during his ministry; for raising the dead by his own command requires it. If he really did not possess the power and authority of God (power over life and death) within himself, he would have suffered the terrible embarrassment of saying, “Young man, I say to you arise,” only to find that the young man remained dead.

Chapter Seven

Jesus’ Gift of the Holy Spirit

[**Back to top**](#)

Introduction

We have investigated what differentiated the Christian messianic movement from those of John the Baptist and other proclaimed messiahs between the first century B.C. to the first century A.D. (such as Judas the Galilean, Simon, Athronges, Eleazar ben Deinaus and Alexander, Menahem, Simon bar Giora, and bar-Kochba). We concluded with N.T. Wright and E.P. Sanders that Christianity’s remarkable success and growth, by comparison to the failure of all the other messianic movements, required some sufficient cause. This extraordinary and unprecedented success and growth could not be attributed only to the strength of Jesus’

preaching or even Jesus' miracles because Jesus had suffered public humiliation and public execution after these events. Not just any cause was required, but a powerful one, and this very probably was Jesus' resurrection in glory.

Though this would explain how the Christian messianic movement received its remarkable jumpstart – with its certainty, exuberance, hopefulness, strong proclamation, uniform doctrinal proclivities, and its large number of missionaries (who, as we saw, were very likely recipients of resurrection appearances among the 500+ and the apostles), it does not completely explain how this Christian messianic movement accelerated and received such an open reception among both Jewish and Gentile communities (many of whom had not even heard about Jesus or the Jewish background from which He came). This seems to require another sufficient cause which John P. Meier identifies as the apostles' power to perform healings and miracles in a similar fashion to Jesus (with the important exception that Jesus performed miracles by His own authority while the apostles performed them in *His name*):

...[T]here was a notable difference between the long-term impact of the Baptist and that of Jesus. After the Baptist's death, his followers did not continue to grow into a religious movement that in due time swept the Greco- Roman world. Followers remained, revering the Baptist's memory and practices. But by the early 2d century A.D. any cohesive group that could have claimed an organic connection with the historical Baptist seems to have passed from the scene. In contrast, the movement that had begun to sprout up around the historical Jesus continued to grow – amid many sea changes – throughout the 1st century and beyond. Not entirely by coincidence, *the post- Easter "Jesus movement" claimed the same sort of ability to work miracles that Jesus had claimed for himself during his lifetime*. This continued claim to work miracles may help to explain the continued growth, instead of a tapering off, of the group that emerged from Jesus' ministry.⁹⁷

Though these miracles are performed in the name of Jesus, the power that is used to perform them (in His name) is attributed to the Holy Spirit, who works through individuals and the Church to bring about the salvation of the world.

I.

Jesus' Gift of the Holy Spirit

[Back to top](#)

The early Christians characterized the Holy Spirit as “the power of God” (“*dunamis tou Theou*”), which was uniquely possessed by Jesus during His ministry, and continued to flow from Him in the life of the Church. As their understanding of the Holy Spirit developed through experience, they became progressively aware of Its *personal* presence flowing through Jesus.

⁹⁷ Meier 1994, p. 623.

McKenzie succinctly describes this more developed theology as follows:

The spirit is basically the divine and heavenly dynamic force; it is conceived as peculiarly existing in Jesus (and specifically in the risen Jesus), as pervading the body of Jesus which is the Church, and as apportioned to the members of the Church. Jesus is the son of David in the flesh but the son of God in power according to the spirit (Rm 1:3); the unique possession of the spirit by Jesus and the unique power which flows from this possession reveal His true reality, which is the reality of the spiritual sphere, i.e., the divine and heavenly sphere.⁹⁸

We can trace the development of the early Church's experiential understanding of the Spirit through its exposition in Luke-Acts, and later exposition in Saint Paul.⁹⁹ Let us begin with the earlier exposition.

I.A

The Visible Manifestation of the Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles

In the Acts of the Apostles, Luke recounts three kinds of powerful experiences which the early Church community attributes to God, or more specifically, to "the Spirit of God" or "the power of God": (1) healings and miracles, (2) prophesy, and (3) ecstatic experiences (such as glossolalia and visions).

Though all three of these areas merit consideration, an overview of the first will be sufficient to show (1) that the early Church saw the charisms as explicit manifestations of God's power and God's Spirit, and (2) that the risen Jesus is seen to be the source of this power/Spirit (because the Spirit works through His name).

Luke recounts a large range of healings and miracles performed by Peter, Paul, and others in the Acts of the Apostles:¹⁰⁰

- ☐ the healing of the lame man at the temple (Acts 3:1-10)
- ☐ healings and exorcisms performed by Philip in Samaria (Acts 8:4-8)
- ☐ Paul's healing from blindness (Acts 9:18)
- ☐ the healing of Aeneas' paralysis (Acts 9:33f)
- ☐ the raising of Tabitha from the dead by Peter (Acts 9:36-41)
- ☐ the healing of a cripple in Lystra (Acts 14:8-10)
- ☐ Paul's restoration of Eutychus (Acts 20:9-12)
- ☐ the healings performed by Paul in Malta (Acts 28:8f)

⁹⁸ McKenzie 1965, p. 843.

⁹⁹ I am indebted to the work of James Dunn (*Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament*) from which I have derived the majority of the following materials on early apostolic miracles and charisms (See Dunn 1975).

¹⁰⁰ See the more complete list in Dunn 1975, pp. 163ff.

There are some unconventional healings and miracles also recounted in Acts, for example:

- ☐ healings through Peter's shadow (Acts 5:15)
- ☐ healings through cloths touched by Paul (Acts 19:11)
- ☐ Peter's liberation from prison (Acts 5:19-24, 12:6-11)
- ☐ Paul's liberation from prison (Acts 16:26)

There can be little doubt that such healings and miracles occurred in the earliest Church communities, as they are recounted not only by Luke, but also by Paul¹⁰¹ (who is writing to the actual witnesses of the events) and the author of the Letter to the Hebrews. With respect to the first category of healings (those worked through the personal intercession of the apostles), few scholars doubt that Luke either had firsthand experience of these miracles (the "we" passages) or reliable firsthand sources. Dunn notes even with respect to the raising of Tabitha by Peter:

"It is quite likely that the tradition goes back to a genuine episode in the ministry of Peter."¹⁰²

If one accepts that such healings and miracles were quite frequent within the early Church community, and that the members of that community viewed them as extraordinary and powerful (in contemporary terminology, falling outside normal boundaries of natural causation), then it will not be difficult to understand why they thought that the "power of God" / the "Spirit of God" was in their midst. When this is combined with Luke's contention that the Spirit's power arises out of the name of *Jesus* (or the disciples' ministry on behalf of Jesus), it seems reasonable to conclude that the primitive Church experienced the *risen Jesus* as the ongoing source of the Holy Spirit (the power of God) in the world.¹⁰³ Dunn notes in this regard:

Where Jesus healed in his own right, by the immediate power and authority of God (cf. Acts 2:22; 10:38), his disciples healed in the name of Jesus. It would appear that from the first they recognized that their power to heal was somehow dependent on Jesus and derivative from him (cf. Luke 10:17). Whereas he had been the direct representative of God in his healing ministry, they saw themselves primarily as representatives of Jesus. They healed by the same power, but that power was now linked with the name of Jesus.¹⁰⁴

The frequent occurrence of the charismatic manifestation of the Spirit arising out of the name of Jesus provides an *experiential* ground (within the early Church) for the association of Jesus with the source of divine power.

¹⁰¹ See Rom. 15:19; 1 Cor. 12:10, 28; 2 Cor. 12:12; Gal. 3:5; Heb. 2:4. See also Dunn 1975, p. 163.

¹⁰² Dunn 1975, p. 165.

¹⁰³ This key insight is justified in a detailed way in Dunn 1975, pp. 163-165.

¹⁰⁴ Dunn 1975, p. 164.

I.B

Visible and Interior Manifestations of the Spirit in Paul

Though St. Paul's letters were written before the Acts of the Apostles, Luke saves and recounts traditions about "the power of the Spirit and the name of Jesus" which *predate* Paul's theology of the Spirit. An exploration of Paul's theology of the Spirit reveals his awareness of these earlier traditions and his *personal experience* of the visible and tangible manifestations of the Spirit emphasized by Luke.

Paul's experience of the Spirit, as Fitzmyer notes, is "God's gift of his creative, prophetic, or renovative *presence* to human beings or the world...[italics mine]." ¹⁰⁵ This "presence of God" is more than merely "the power of God" viewed as a blind supernatural force; it has a subjective (indeed, intersubjective) quality. The Spirit not only searches the hearts of human beings, but also searches the depths of God the Father, having a comprehensive knowledge of Him: "For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God" (1 Cor 2:10b).

When Paul refers to either the visible gifts of the Spirit, he generally uses the term "*charismata*" (a specific instance of "*charis*" – a gratuitous gift for the wellbeing of another – which, in this case, is God's gratuitous gift of salvation). When Paul looks at the *charismata* from the vantage point of agency, he refers to them either as "*phanerōsis tou pneumatos*" (manifestation of the Spirit – e.g., 1 Cor 12:7), or as "*dunamis tou Theou*" (the power of God – e.g., 1 Cor 1:24), or as "*onomati tou kuriou*" (what is given in the name of the Lord/Christ – e.g., 1 Cor 6:11). As Dunn, referring to Gunkel's longstanding work, notes:

...[S]o far as Paul was concerned charismata are the manifestation of supernatural power. Charisma is *always* God acting, *always* the Spirit manifesting himself. ...[F]or Paul, *every* charisma was supernatural. *The character of transcendent otherness lies at the heart of the Pauline concept of charisma.* ... The "infinite qualitative distinction" (Kierkegaard) between divine and human means that every expression of grace is always something *more* than human. ¹⁰⁶

We may now explore the vast array of Paul's and others' experience of the supernatural power of the Spirit, beginning with the public charismatic gifts and concluding with the interior gifts.

It is noteworthy that Paul is writing to communities and individuals who have witnessed the powerful visible manifestations of the Spirit multiple times. It is therefore reasonable to assume that these gifts were virtually commonplace in the early community as Luke indicates in the Acts of the Apostles. Dunn mentions further:

¹⁰⁵ Fitzmyer 1990, p. 1396 (82:65).

¹⁰⁶ Dunn 1975, p. 255. See also Gunkel 1888, pp. 82f.

...[I]t is worth pointing out that in 1 Cor. 12.9, 28, 30 we have firsthand testimony to the fact that there were cures and healings experienced in the Pauline communities for which no natural or rational explanation would suffice – they could only be put down to the action of God.¹⁰⁷

So what do the visible gifts consist in? From the list given in 1 Cor 12:8f, three may be easily identified:

1. Healings (*charismata iamatōn* – gifts of cures),
2. Miracles (*energēmata dunameōn* – workings of power), and
3. The gift of tongues (*genē glōssōn* – kinds of tongues).

There are two other gifts which the community thought to be supernatural and public (as distinct from interior), namely, prophesy and revelation. As Paul recognizes, there are false prophets who can lead the Church astray, and so there is need to discern the quality of prophesy within the early community. I will give a brief description of the first three gifts as an illustration of why the community believed that the Holy Spirit was the power of God, that Jesus was the ongoing source of that Spirit, and therefore, that “Jesus is Lord.”

Healing. Paul uses the plural “*charismata*” (in contrast to using the singular in referring to the other gifts) because he probably believed that there was a special charisma for every kind of illness.¹⁰⁸ From this, we may infer that Paul witnessed different kinds of healings, and that those healings probably resembled those recounted by Luke in Acts, and in the Gospels with respect to Jesus’ ministry. There can be little doubt that Paul views these as arising solely out of the power of God (that is, not occurring in nature, but only through supernatural power).

Miracles. Paul’s distinct listing of miracles next to healings would seem to indicate that they included supernatural acts other than cures. Exegetes suspect that these would be of two sorts: exorcisms¹⁰⁹ and nature miracles.¹¹⁰ Clearly, Paul was familiar with Jesus’ exorcisms, and even though they do not figure as prominently in Paul’s ministry as in Jesus’, Paul certainly was involved in exorcisms.¹¹¹ Paul may also have in mind nature miracles, such as cures taking place through his handkerchief (Acts 19:18) or other “signs and wonders” (*en dunamei sēmeiōn kai teratōn* – by power of signs and wonders – Rom 18:19) which he evidently worked from Jerusalem to Illyricum.

The working of miracles (*energōn dunameis*) factored prominently into Paul’s ministry in

¹⁰⁷ Dunn 1975, p. 210.

¹⁰⁸ Dunn 1975, pp. 210-211.

¹⁰⁹ See Dunn 1975, p. 210.

¹¹⁰ See Dunn 1975, p. 210.

¹¹¹ See Acts 16:18 – “Turning to the Spirit, Paul said, ‘I charge thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out from her,’ and it came out in the same hour.” See also, Acts 19:17 “And diseases left them, and the evil spirits came out of them.”

new communities, and in encouraging converts among people who had not yet heard the Word. In Galatians 3:4ff, Paul uses the history of miracles worked in the community through the Holy Spirit as a proof of why the Galatians should remain faithful to him:

Did you experience so many things in vain? If it really is in vain Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and *works miracles* among you, do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?¹¹²

Given that Paul is writing to those who have directly experienced “*dunameis*,” it can hardly be doubted that the experience of these persuasive outward signs is not only common to Paul’s ministry, but continues after Paul has left (presumably through people with that charism), and is sufficiently powerful within the community to persuade it of the veracity of Paul’s words years after his departure.

The power to heal and to work miracles does not belong to the human agent working them. The power is distinctly that of God (the Spirit of God) done through the name of “the Lord Jesus Christ” (e.g., 1 Cor 6:11). That power is meant not for the benefit of the healer or miracle-worker, but for the benefit of one *in need*, or for the good of the *community*. The healer/miracle-worker is purely the instrument of God.

Despite the incredible persuasiveness of healing and miracles in the early community, Paul believes that they must be put in perspective to allow for the prominence of gifts that produce deep conversion of the heart. In this respect, Paul is distinct from Luke, who gives clear prominence to powerful visible gifts of the Spirit.

Speaking in Tongues. Paul views this ecstatic charism as a proof of the Spirit, an aspect of his ministry of initial conversion, a spiritual benefit to individual believers,¹¹³ and an occasional benefit to the community (when there is an authentic interpreter of the tongues).¹¹⁴ However, Paul views speaking in tongues as the lowest of the “deeds of power,” because it does not directly serve either to deepen conversion, or to build up the community’s understanding of God, Jesus, or even itself. Hence, in 1 Cor 14:6, Paul warns the community not to seek speaking in tongues as an end in itself, and to prefer prophesy (which builds up the community and leads to its deeper conversion) over glossolalia:

Now brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how shall I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how

¹¹² Though *dunameis* here may include healings, it certainly should not be restricted to them, for Paul would have used the more appropriate term “*charismata iamatōn*” if he meant it in the restricted sense. Therefore, he probably meant it to include exorcisms and possibly even nature miracles.

¹¹³ See Dunn 1975, pp. 230-231.

¹¹⁴ As Paul notes in 1 Cor 14:18: “I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all....”

will anyone know what is played? ... So with yourselves; since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the Church. ... I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all; nevertheless, in church, I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others [prophecy or revelation] than ten thousand words in a tongue [1 Cor 14:6-7, 12, 18-19].

I will not discuss prophecy and revelation here because the above points on healing, miracles, and speaking in tongues are sufficient to establish my central conclusion, which is explained below.

I.C Conclusion

The conclusion may be set out in three parts:

1. There were frequent “deeds of healing and power” in the early Church (as there are today) which are difficult, if not impossible, to explain by natural causation.
2. These extraordinary occurrences were reasonably interpreted by the early Church to be the power (Spirit) of God, and
3. The ongoing source of this spiritual power was attributed to Jesus, for it came through the use of His name.

The frequent occurrence of these healings and miracles through the power of the Holy Spirit and the name of Jesus, allowed the Church to engage in a remarkably expansive missionary effort, because it substantiated the apostles’ claim that Jesus was raised in glory and is the exclusive beloved Son of the Father. This gave rise to the post-Easter churches’ titles for Him – “the Lord” and “the Son of God.”

In many respects, the Holy Spirit is just as active today as in apostolic times. One does not have to look far to see the millions of testimonies to the charismatic manifestation of the Spirit (with literally millions of internet search results devoted to the Holy Spirit, healings, miracles, prophecy, and tongues) which resemble those recounted by Luke and Paul almost 2,000 years ago.¹¹⁵ Additionally, several scholars have chronicled hundreds of modern, medically documented miracles occurring through the power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ name.¹¹⁶ With so many accounts of visible manifestations of the Holy Spirit (i.e. modern miracles) in the *United States*, how much greater would be the accounts of the *interior* gifts of the Holy Spirit; and how much greater still when both the charismatic and interior gifts of the Spirit are seen throughout the entire world? It seems evident that the Holy Spirit is truly alive and well in any individual or culture that wants the Spirit’s help, guidance, inspiration, peace, and above all, love.

¹¹⁵ A simple Google search on the internet for “Holy Spirit healing” currently yields 11,200,000 results; for “Holy Spirit Miracles” there are 7,220,000 results; for “Holy Spirit prophecy” there are 5,480,000 results; and for “Holy Spirit tongues” there are 3,490,000 results.

¹¹⁶ See for example the two-volume work of Keener 2011.

There are also thousands of miracles that are connected to Jesus through His Mother (Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Lourdes, and Our Lady of Fatima), through the intercession of recognized Catholic saints (e.g. Padre Pio, Fulton J. Sheen, and John Paul II), as well as Eucharistic miracles. Many of these miracles have been very well documented and scientifically assessed to assure that there is absolutely no natural explanation for them. These well-validated miracles also show the presence and power of the risen Jesus acting through His Mother, the saints, and His precious body and blood. Ten of these well- documented miracles are presented (with sources) in Chapter Nine below.

II.

The Interior Gifts of the Spirit According to St. Paul

[Back to top](#)

Though Paul saw the importance of the powerful visible manifestations of the Spirit in initial conversion and in initiating and sustaining communities, he prefers to address the *interior* gifts of the Spirit. The reason for his preference for the interior over the exterior gifts arises out of his belief that the interior gifts have a more profound and lasting effect on the believer and the community. The interior gifts not only lead to initial conversion (as do the powerful visible gifts) but also to a deeper conversion of the heart in imitation of Christ.

It was noted above that Paul did not believe the Holy Spirit to be a blind force, but rather, a conscious and sensitive power capable of knowing the heart of the Father. This conclusion was grounded in Paul's (and others') *experience* of these interior gifts, which include prayer, hope, trust, love, zeal, peace, and joy.¹¹⁷ Though these gifts may not be immediately recognized as supernatural power or be manifest in a group or public setting (as powerful visible gifts), they do lead to the build-up of the Church through the deepening conversion arising out of them. Since these gifts are more subtle and difficult to recognize as divine, Paul takes pains not only to exhort his communities to them, but also to point to their origin in the Holy Spirit and the risen Christ.

A proper exposition of these themes would require another book beyond the scope of this one, and so I will not address it here. However, I have addressed these themes in a book entitled: *Finding True Happiness: Satisfying Our Restless Hearts*:

- ☐ Inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Chapter 8, Section I).
- ☐ Discernment of spirits (Chapter 8, Section II).
- ☐ Guidance by the Holy Spirit (Chapter 8, Section III).
- ☐ The Holy Spirit in the Church community (Chapter 6).

¹¹⁷ Paul gives one list of interior gifts as "fruits of the Spirit" in Gal 5:22-3: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...." He includes many of these gifts under the general gift of love in 1 Cor 13:1-5.

- The Holy Spirit in Contemplative Prayer (Chapter 7).
- The Holy Spirit in Deepening Faith, Hope, and Love (Chapter 9).

III.

Conclusion

[Back to top](#)

Thus far, we have encountered four significant clues in our investigation of the evidence for Jesus as the unconditionally loving “God with us” (Emmanuel):

1. His unconditional love which we studied in three parts:
 - a) His special definition of love – *agapē*.
 - b) His preaching of the unconditional love of God – His Father – *Abba*.
 - c) His unconditional love for all humankind – particularly the poor, the sick, and sinners – and His willingness to sacrifice Himself totally to give us that love.
2. His resurrection in a glorious spiritual body.
3. Exorcisms, healings, and raising the dead by His own authority and power.
4. The gift of the Holy Spirit, enabling the apostolic church to perform miracles in His name.

The complementarity of this evidence is so strong that we could almost infer from it that Jesus is the unconditionally loving Emmanuel; yet at the same time, it begs the final question – the final clue – did Jesus really say that He was “God with us”? We will discuss this in the next volume.

Chapter Eight

Science and the Shroud of Turin

[Back to top](#)

Introduction

The Shroud of Turin is a burial shroud (a linen cloth woven in a 3-over 1 herringbone pattern) measuring 14 ft. 3 inches in length by 3 ft. 7 inches in width. It apparently covered a man who suffered the wounds of crucifixion in a way very similar to Jesus of Nazareth. The cloth has a certifiable history from 1349 when it surfaced in Lirey, France in the hands of a French nobleman – Geoffrey de Charny.¹¹⁸ It also has a somewhat sketchy traceable history from Jerusalem to Lirey, France – through Edessa, Turkey and Constantinople.¹¹⁹ This history is

¹¹⁸ This history is recounted in Appendix I (Section I) of a forthcoming book *God So Loved the World: Clues to our Transcendent Destiny from the Revelation of Jesus* (Ignatius Press -- coming 2016). The history is well captured in Wilson, Ian. 1978. *The Shroud of Turin* (New York: Doubleday).

¹¹⁹ This history is recounted in Appendix I of my forthcoming book *God So Loved the World: Clues to our*

confirmed by the pollen grains found by Max Frei, the coincidences between the Shroud and the Sudarium (facecloth) of Oviedo, and the coincidences between the Shroud's seven unique facial features and those attributed to the Mandylion – the Holy Image of Edessa.

EDITOR's NOTE:

Readers interested in a much more detailed account of the Shroud's hidden history and its confirmed provenance, should consult *God So Loved the World* pp. 347-349 and 371-375.

The Shroud has undergone considerably more scientific testing than any other relic in human history. The 1978 STURP Investigation and subsequent investigations were remarkably thorough, and with the exception of the questionable 1988 carbon dating, all the evidence points to its being the burial cloth of Jesus:

1. *Four contemporary dating tests:* The vanillin dating test of Dr. Raymond Rogers, the two spectroscopic analyses (of Dr. Giulio Fanti, et. al), and the compressibility and breaking strength tests (of Dr. Giulio Fanti, et. al) date the Shroud to a time commensurate with the life and crucifixion of Jesus (see below Sections II and III).
2. *Three kinds of extrinsic dating evidence:* Testing of pollen samples by Dr. Max Frei, roman coins on the eyes of the image on the Shroud, and 120 coincidences of blood and fluid stains between the Shroud and the Sudarium (Facecloth of Oviedo) give evidence of a date and location of the Shroud's origin similar to that of Jesus (see below Section IV).
3. *The blood stains on the Shroud:* The blood stains tell a story very similar to the highly unusual crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth – they were imprinted on the Shroud before the image was made (the opposite of what would need to be done by a forger – see below Section I).
4. *Formation of the image on the Shroud:* The image was not formed by dyes, chemicals, vapors, or scorching. The only known explanation for the formation of the image is an intense burst of vacuum ultraviolet radiation (equivalent to the output of 14,000 excimer lasers) emitted from every three-dimensional point of the body in the Shroud (see below

Transcendent Destiny from the Revelation of Jesus (Ignatius Press – coming 2016). There are six important sources of this history: De Gail, Paul. 1983. "Paul Vignon" in *Shroud Spectrum International* 1983 (6) (<https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/ssi06part7.pdf>).

John Long 2007 (A) "The Shroud of Turin's Earlier History: Part One: To Edessa" in *Bible and Spade* Spring 2007 (<http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2013/03/14/The-Shroud-of-Turins-Earlier-History-Part-One-To-Edessa.aspx>).

John Long 2007 (B) "The Shroud of Turin's Earlier History: Part Two: To the Great City" in *Bible and Spade* Fall 2007 (<http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2013/03/20/The-Shroud-of-Turins-Earlier-History-Part-Two-To-the-Great-City.aspx>).

John Long 2013 (A) "The Shroud of Turin's Earlier History: Part Three: The Shroud of Constantinople" (<http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2013/03/28/The-Shroud-of-Turins-Earlier-History-Part-Three-The-Shroud-of-Constantinople.aspx>). See also Ian Wilson *The Shroud of Turin* 1978 p. 156.

John Long 2013 (B) "The Shroud of Turin's Earlier History: Part 4: To Little Lirey" (<http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2013/09/05/The-Shroud-of-Turins-Earlier-History-Part-4-To-Little-Lirey.aspx>).

Section V).

As will be seen, the combination of the above evidence is exceedingly difficult to explain in any way other than the burial cloth being that of Jesus of Nazareth. Moreover, the formation of the image by an intense outburst of vacuum ultraviolet radiation is suggestive of a resurrection event similar to that described in the Gospels. The above scientific evidence requires that a new carbon dating test be done which observes the standard protocols for sampling. When these protocols are observed, it would be surprising if the result was not similar to the results of the four new dating methods mentioned above – approximately 50 If this result is obtained, it would indicate that the Shroud of Turin is very likely the burial shroud of Jesus Christ with evidence suggestive of His resurrection in light.

I.

The Blood Stains in Relation to the Image

[Back to top](#)

The Shroud has deposits of real human blood. Dr. Alan Adler (expert on porphyrins: the colored compounds seen in blood) and Dr. John Heller (physician) studied the blood flecks gathered on the STURP (Shroud of Turin Research Project) tapes in 1978. They compared the porphyrin with the spectra of blood spots, and determined that the blood on the Shroud is real.¹²⁰ Furthermore, as Dr. Raymond Rogers (leading expert in thermal analytical chemistry) notes:

The x-ray fluorescence spectra taken by STURP showed excess iron in blood areas, as expected for blood. Microchemical tests for proteins were positive in blood areas but not in any other parts of the Shroud.¹²¹

Some researchers have found that male DNA and an AB blood type are also present on the cloth. Though genetic testing confirms these findings, there is no guarantee that they belong to the man on the Shroud. The samples are so old and the possibility of contamination so great, that they could have originated with someone else.¹²² However, the blood stains on the Shroud match those of the Sudarium (facecloth) of Oviedo which touched the same face (see below Section IV.C). The match of the blood stains themselves, the blood type, and the male genetic character suggest that these characteristics came from the same face that touched both cloths (see below Section IV.C).

The image on the Shroud is anatomically perfect and a perfect photographic negative. The image was formed after the blood stains congealed on the cloth, and the image and blood stains, relative to one another, are anatomically correct. The odds of a 13th Century forger

¹²⁰ See John Heller and Alan Adler “Blood on the Shroud of Turin” in *Applied Optics* 19 (16) 1980 pp 2742- 2744.

¹²¹ Raymond Rogers *Shroud of Turin Guide to the Facts*.

<https://shroudstory.wordpress.com/2012/02/26/introduction-to-ray-rogers-shroud-of-turin-faq/> Question #2.

¹²² See *ibid* Question #2.

being able to place blood in a precise way on the cloth without an existing image is highly unlikely – making the forgery hypothesis somewhat dubious from the outset. The image was not produced by any paint, dye, powder, or other artistic chemical or biological agent and has no brush strokes. This was confirmed by multiple tests which were overseen by Dr. Raymond Rogers who noted:

The Shroud was observed by visible and ultraviolet spectrometry, infrared spectrometry, x-ray fluorescence spectrometry, and thermography. Later observations were made by pyrolysis-mass-spectrometry, lasermicroprobe Raman analyses, and microchemical testing. No evidence for pigments or media was found.¹²³

There are some microscopic particles of paint on the cloth unrelated to the image, but these are explained by a medieval custom called “sanctification of paintings” in which an artist would paint a copy of the Shroud and then touch the painting to the Shroud to sanctify it. This contact led to the transfer of some microscopic particles of paint onto the Shroud which moved around it when the Shroud was folded and rolled.¹²⁴

Inasmuch as the blood is real, and the image was not produced by a medieval forger (see below Section VI), the Shroud seems to have enveloped a *real* man who was crucified in a similar way to Jesus of Nazareth – who underwent a very unique kind of crucifixion – including being crowned with thorns (pertinent to the charge leveled against Jesus to be “king of the Jews” – Jn 19: 2-3), being flogged (which Pilate ordered for Jesus before presenting him to the crowds – Jn 19:1-5), and being pierced in the side by a spear similar to a Roman pilium (which was thrust into Jesus’ side to assure that he had already died – Jn 19:34). The precise nature of the torments undergone by the man on the Shroud is detailed by Dr. Pierre Barbet in his famous work *A Doctor at Calvary*.¹²⁵

The confluence between the Shroud and the Gospels is so close, it is difficult to imagine how it could be anyone other than Jesus. But we are getting ahead of ourselves here, for we still have to present the evidence for this claim coming from the multifold scientific investigation of it.

II.

Dating the Shroud

[Back to top](#)

Prior to the 1988 Carbon 14 dating, the Shroud was considered by many experts to be the authentic burial cloth of Jesus -- for the reasons mentioned above. Some physicists also thought

¹²³ See *ibid* Question # 1.

¹²⁴ See John Iannone “The Shroud of Turin – Evidence it is Authentic” in *New Geology*. (<http://www.newgeology.us/presentation24.html>).

¹²⁵ Pierre Barbet, *A Doctor at Calvary: The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ as Described by a Surgeon* (New York: PJ Kennedy) 1953.

that it might indicate his resurrection, because of the way in which the image was likely formed (see below Section V). Furthermore, the presence of pollen grains dating back to First Century Palestine (see below Section IV.A) and the presence of Tiberian coins minted in Judea in 29 AD -- on the eyes of the man in the Shroud (see below Section IV.B) indicated an origin of the Shroud around the time of Jesus' death. Then came the 1988 Carbon testing which showed a date of origin between 1260 and 1390 AD (around 1350).

Since the laboratories involved in the 1988 Carbon 14 test were beyond reproach and the fibers taken for the test *seemed to be* from the Shroud itself (and not from thread or cloth used to mend the Shroud or provide a backing for it), the result appeared unquestionable -- which cast doubt on all the evidence mentioned above. Though Carbon 14 testing is by no means incontrovertible¹²⁶ and there were significant problems following the protocols for the 1988 test, the result shocked most of the 1978 STURP committee of scientists as well as the religious community.

The negative result of the 1988 Carbon 14 test did not discourage researchers who felt that the evidence for the Shroud's authenticity was too great to simply be abandoned in the face of one negative test that could be fallible for many reasons. Ironically, this led to a resurgence of new creative Shroud research which gave rise to four new testing methods (see below Section III), comparisons with the Sudarium of Oviedo -- the facecloth of Jesus (see below Section IV.C), and new studies of the image formation on the Shroud (see below Section V). This new research seriously calls into question the result obtained from the 1988 Carbon 14 test because it overwhelmingly shows that the Shroud not only dates back to the time of Jesus, but also could not have been a forgery, and possibly shows a "relic" of his resurrection. At the very least, this calls for a new Carbon 14 dating test to be performed with all of the standards recommended by the scientists who found flaws in the 1988 procedure -- Raymond Rogers, Giulio Fanti, and John Jackson (see below Section II).

At present the preponderance of scientific and historical evidence favors the authenticity of the Shroud. In fact, the preponderance is so great that a change in Carbon 14 dating should be expected from new tests -- with the swing back in time of approximately 1,000 to 1,600 years from the date given by the 1988 carbon testing (1260-1390). This would put the date of the cloth between 250 BC and 350 AD (see below Section III). Thus, the mean predictable date of the Shroud's origin would be approximately 50 AD -- quite near the time of Jesus' crucifixion.

As noted above, the 1988 Carbon 14 testing showed that *the fibers removed from the Shroud* averaged 638 years old (with a probable origin at around 1350). Note that this test did not show that the *Shroud* originated in 1350 A.D., but concerned only the fibers extracted from the Shroud (which appear to have come from threads or cloth used to mend it after the fire of Chambery in 1532). As we shall see, the fibers removed from the Shroud were probably not from the original

¹²⁶ See William Meacham "Carbon14 Debate from the Shroud Newsgroup: alt.turin-shroud" (<http://www.shroud.com/c14debat.htm>) 1998.

Shroud, but from dyed cloth added to the Shroud at that time. Furthermore, the testing did not account for microbiological contaminants or the additional carbon that would have been added by the fire. These problems indicate that the 1988 Carbon 14 testing was very likely invalid and skewed toward a much later date.

At the very outset, there were problems associated with the sampling of fibers used for the 1988 Carbon 14 test. The STURP team recommended that seven different samples from different parts of the Shroud be sent to seven labs across Europe and the United States. This was inexplicably changed. Instead of taking fibers from many parts of the Shroud, the samples were taken from a single strip from a questionable part of it. This one sample was divided into three parts and sent to only three labs. To make matters worse, chemical and microscopic testing on the single strip was not performed (even though there were experts present who could have done so). Though arguments broke out about these problems, the samples were sent to the three labs which no doubt performed the tests professionally. The problem was not with the Carbon 14 testing, but rather with the gathering of the samples.

We now turn to the three discoveries that challenge the validity of the 1988 Carbon dating:

1. Problems with the samples used to make the tests (discovered by Dr. Raymond Rogers) – Section II.A.
2. Microbiological contaminants producing additional carbon content that were not removed prior to the 1988 testing (discovered by Drs. Garza-Valdes and Mattingly) – Section II.B.
3. Additional carbon content embedded in the Shroud from the fire of Chambery and other carbon contaminants (discovered by Kouznetsov and Jackson—and modified by Moroni and associates) – Section II.C.

II.A

Raymond Rogers on Aberrant Samples used in the 1988 Carbon 14 Testing

Though the Carbon 14 testing at the three laboratories at the University of Arizona, University of Oxford, and University of Zurich were done very professionally, the collection of the sample to be tested was seriously flawed in two respects. First, the sample came from a *single* strip from a *single* site on the Shroud. According to Rogers:

The use of a single sample, assuming it was representative of the whole cloth, defied normal procedures and protocols established before the radiocarbon study. It was a serious mistake.¹²⁷

Though this single sample seemed to avoid the many patches and charred areas (from the fire of Chambery), there was no guarantee that it represented the *original* part of the cloth. Such a guarantee could have only come from following ordinary protocols – namely, obtaining fibers

¹²⁷ Raymond Rogers *Shroud of Turin Guide to the Facts*, Question #5.

from *multiple* sites of the cloth.

Secondly, the two scientists charged with certifying the originality of the single strip (Franco Testore, professor of textile technology at the Turin Polytechnic, and Gabriel Vial, curator of the Ancient Textile Museum, Lyon, France) approved the single sample for Carbon 14 testing without making any serious chemical or microscopic characterization of it.¹²⁸

These two flaws in the collection procedure made it impossible to guarantee the validity of the sample by normal Carbon 14 sapling protocol. Indeed, the procedure was wide open to an invalid sample which Rogers later discovered to be the case:

The area where the radiocarbon sample was obtained had been photographed in 1978 with an ultraviolet source... While making the UV photographs, the source was heavily filtered to exclude visible light and the camera was heavily filtered to exclude any effect of the UV on the film... The area where the radiocarbon sample was taken is relatively dark, a fact that is not the result of dirt, image color, or scorching. The cloth is much less fluorescent in that area, brightening into more typical fluorescence to the right. The photograph proves that the radiocarbon area has a different chemical composition than the main part of the cloth. This was obviously not considered before the sample was cut.¹²⁹

The ultraviolet photography should indicate fluorescence where the Carbon 14 sample was taken – if it were free of dyes (like the other parts of the cloth). However, the 1978 UV photography shows that the sample was taken from a darkened (non-fluorescing) area which suggests the presence of a darkening agent – such as dye.

Rogers and Adler discovered the chemical source of this darkening through further analysis. According to Rogers:

I found that the radiocarbon sample was uniquely coated with a plant gum (probably gum Arabic), a hydrous aluminum oxide mordant (the aluminum found by Adler), and Madder root dye (alizarin and purpurin). *Nothing similar* exists on *any other* part of the Shroud. The photomicrograph shows several fibers from the center of the radiocarbon sample in water. The gum is swelling and slowly detaching from the fibers.¹³⁰

Rogers explained the significance of this discovery in an important article published in the peer-reviewed journal *Thermochimica Acta* in 2005:

A gum/dye/mordant [(for affixing dye)] coating is easy to observe on radiocarbon

¹²⁸ Ibid Question #5.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

[sample] yarns. No other part of the shroud shows such a coating. [This indicates that] The radiocarbon sample had been *dyed*. Dyeing was probably done intentionally on pristine replacement material to match the color of the older, sepia- colored cloth. The dye found on the radiocarbon sample was not used in Europe before about 1291 AD and was not common until more than 100 years later. Specifically, the color and distribution of the coating implies that repairs were made at an unknown time with foreign linen dyed to match the older original material. The consequence of this conclusion is that the radiocarbon sample was not representative of the original cloth. The combined evidence from chemical kinetics, analytical chemistry, cotton content, and pyrolysis-mass-spectrometry *proves* that the material from the radiocarbon area of the shroud is significantly different from that of the main cloth. The radiocarbon sample was thus not part of the original cloth and is invalid for determining the age of the shroud.¹³¹

Rogers' results speak for themselves. If the sample was drawn from a piece of cotton which was dyed in the 14th Century (by a dye available in Europe only after 1291), one should expect a carbon dating result from the 14th Century – in *all three labs* which took fibers from the same dyed strip used for the sample. As yet, there has been no scientific response to rebut Rogers' chemical and microscopic analysis and his contention that the sample came from fabric of much later origin.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Readers interested in other difficulties with the 1988 Carbon dating should consult *God So Loved the World* pp. 353-355.

III.

Four New Scientific Dating Methods

[Back to top](#)

Dr. Raymond Rogers and Dr. Giulio Fanti (Professor of Mechanical and Thermal Measurement at the University of Padua's Engineering Faculty) developed four new tests for dating ancient materials which are unrelated to Carbon 14 dating. Rogers' test results were reported in the *Thermochimica Acta* in 2005¹³² and Fanti's results in a book published in 2013.¹³³ These tests show a strong likelihood that the Shroud originated around the time of Jesus and that the 1988 Carbon 14 testing was seriously in error. We will examine each of the test results in turn.

¹³¹ Raymond N. Rogers. 2005. "Studies on the Radiocarbon Sample from the Shroud of Turin." *Thermochimica Acta*, Vol. 425, Issue 1-2, January 20, 2005. pp. 189-194. Italics mine.

¹³² Rogers, Raymond N. "Studies on the Radiocarbon Sample from the Shroud of Turin." *Thermochimica Acta*, Vol. 425, Issue 1-2, January 20, 2005. pp. 189-194.

¹³³ See Giulio Fanti and Saverio Gaeta 2013 *Il Mistero della Sindone: Le Sorprendenti Scoperte Scientifiche sull'enigma del Telo di Gesu* (Milan: Editore Rizzoli).

III.A

Raymond Rogers' Vanillin Test

Rogers developed a vanillin test to measure the age of cellulose in ancient fabrics. Lignin (lignocellulose) can be converted to vanillin, an organic compound that decays with age. By measuring the percentage of vanillin in cellulose fibers in various materials of ancient origin, the age of fabrics (within a defined range of error) can be reasonably estimated. Rogers performed these vanillin tests on several ancient fabrics, and then compared them to the Shroud. He concluded that the 1988 Carbon 14 test was not consistent with the vanillin test:

If the shroud had been produced between 1260 and 1390 AD, as indicated by the radiocarbon analyses, lignin should be easy to detect. A linen produced in 1260 AD would have retained about 37% of its vanillin in 1978... The Holland cloth and all other medieval linens gave the test [i.e. tested positive] for vanillin wherever lignin could be observed on growth nodes. The disappearance of all traces of vanillin from the lignin in the [S]hroud indicates a *much older age* than the radiocarbon laboratories reported.¹³⁴

Rogers anticipated the objection that the fire of Chambery would have heated the Shroud, accelerating the disappearance of vanillin in the cellulose fibers, but he responds that the fire alone could not have been responsible for the disappearance of all the vanillin in the Shroud, because the Shroud was folded, and therefore was not exposed evenly to the heat. Moreover, the Shroud was not situated near the fire long enough to produce a complete disappearance of vanillin (if it originated in the 13th or 14th centuries – as supposedly indicated by the Carbon 14 testing). He notes in this regard:

The fire of 1532 could not have greatly affected the vanillin content of lignin in all parts of the shroud equally. The thermal conductivity of linen is very low... therefore, the unscorched parts of the folded cloth could not have become very hot... The cloth's center would not have heated at all in the time available. The rapid change in color from black to white at the margins of the scorches illustrates this fact... Different amounts of vanillin would have been lost in different areas. No samples from *any location* on the shroud gave the vanillin test [i.e. tested positive].¹³⁵

If the fire of Chambery cannot explain the absence of vanillin in the Shroud, then what can? Rogers says we will have to make recourse to the same process that explains vanillin's

¹³⁴ Raymond N. Rogers. 2005. "Studies on the Radiocarbon Sample From the Shroud of Turin." *Thermochimica Acta*, Vol. 425, Issue 1-2, January 20, 2005. p. 192 (italics mine).

¹³⁵ Raymond Rogers. 2005 pp 192-193.

complete absence in the Dead Sea Scrolls and other ancient materials (which are over 1,500 years old) -- namely, the *aging* process:

Because the shroud and other very old linens do not give the vanillin test [i.e. test negative], the cloth must be quite old... A determination of the kinetics of vanillin loss suggests that the shroud is between 1300 and 3000 years old. Even allowing for errors in the measurements and assumptions about storage conditions, the cloth is unlikely to be as young as 840 years.¹³⁶

The median age of the Shroud (within Rogers' broad margins of error) is 2,150 years old – which allows the origin of the Shroud to be situated near the crucifixion of Jesus (30 AD). This result agrees with the three new dating tests performed by Giulio Fanti (and colleagues) at six laboratories in Italy and the U.K.

III.B

Giulio Fanti's Fourier Transformed Infrared Spectroscopy Test of Cellulose Degradation

Dr. Giulio Fanti carried out three new dating tests on fibers from the Shroud he procured from Giovanni Riggi:

1. Fourier Transformed Infrared Spectroscopy Testing of Cellulose Degradation.
2. Raman Spectroscopy (Laser) Testing of Cellulose Degradation.
3. Mechanical Tests of Compressibility and Breaking Strength of Fibers.

Fanti carried out his test with six teams in six different laboratories throughout Italy and the U.K. -- Padua, Bologna, Modena, Udine, Parma and London. In 2013, he published his results in a new book entitled *Il Mistero della Sindone*,¹³⁷ which in combination with the Vanillin Test of Raymond Rogers, shows the strong likelihood that the 1988 Carbon 14 dating was in error by a large factor. We will give a basic description of each testing procedure and the results obtained by Fanti in his six labs in this and the following two subsections.

In his Fourier Transformed Infrared Spectroscopy Test of Cellulose Degradation, Fanti used a specially transformed infrared light beam to excite the molecules of the material. The resulting reflections made it possible to evaluate the concentration of particular substances contained in the cellulose of the linen fibers. According to Fanti, since cellulose degrades over time, it is possible to determine a correlation with the age of the fabric.

Fanti examined nine different ancient textiles of varying ages (five from Egypt, three from Israel, and one from Peru) – along with two modern fabrics -- and developed a calibration

¹³⁶ Raymond Rogers. 2005. p. 194.

¹³⁷ Giulio Fanti and Saverio Gaeta 2013 *Il Mistero della Sindone: Le Sorprendenti Scoperte Scientifiche sull'enigma del Telo di Gesù* (Milan: Editore Rizzoli).

curve which represented how the trend of degradation varies with age. Then he measured the same parameters on the Shroud and derived an estimate of its age by making a comparison with the calibration curve. He determined that the origin of the Shroud – at a 95% confidence level – occurred around 300 BC (+ or – 400 years) – therefore between 700 BC and 100 AD.¹³⁸

III.C

Giulio Fanti's Raman Spectroscopy Test for Cellulose Degradation

The Raman Laser Spectroscopy Test for cellulose degradation is similar to the Fourier Transformed Infrared Spectroscopy Test, but uses a different method to excite the molecules. Once again, the resulting reflections made it possible to evaluate the concentration of particular substances contained in the cellulose of the linen fibers. He then generated a new calibration curve from the same nine ancient materials (and two modern materials), and compared this to the measurements obtained from the Shroud. He then determined that the origin of the cloth – with a 95% confidence level – occurred at 200 BC (+ or – 500 years) – therefore between 700 BC and 300 AD.¹³⁹

III.D

Giulio Fanti's Mechanical Test of Compressibility and Breaking Strength of Fibers

This mechanical test is substantially different from the first two spectrographic tests. Instead of measuring the level of particular substances in the cellulose (as above) this test used a multiparametric mechanical method made possible by constructing a new mechanism capable of loading and unloading cycles of single linen fibers. Using a petrographic microscope, Fanti was able to separate Shroud linen fibers from dust particles vacuumed from the Shroud. He then mounted them on supports for testing. In collaboration with Dr. Pierandrea Malfi, he performed tests of tension and compression on the nine ancient fabrics from Egypt, Israel, and Peru. He developed five mechanical parameters (tensile strength, Young's modulus in direct cycle, Young's modulus in reverse cycle, loss factor in direct cycle, and loss factor in reverse cycle) to give five different age-dependent curves of the samples. He then measured the corresponding mechanical properties of the Shroud, and compared them to the five age-dependent curves generated from the nine ancient materials. He determined from this that the origin of the Shroud occurred – with a 95% confidence level – around 400 AD (+ or – 400 years) – therefore between 1 AD and 800 AD.¹⁴⁰

III.E

Summary of the Fanti and Rogers Dating Tests

¹³⁸ Fanti's book -- *Il Mistero della Sindone: Le Sorprendenti Scoperte Scientifiche sull'enigma del Telo di Gesù* – is not yet translated into English. Stephen E. Jones translated the results of Fanti's three new dating tests in Stephen E. Jones 2013 "New Tests by Prof. Giulio Fanti Show the Shroud of Turin Could Date from the Time of Christ" in *The Shroud of Turin* blog. (<http://theshroudofturin.blogspot.com/2013/04/new-tests-by-prof-giulio-fanti-show.html>).

¹³⁹ See the comment and references in the previous note.

¹⁴⁰ See the comment and references in the previous two notes.

Fanti averaged the results of his three tests and obtained a mean origin date of 33 BC (plus or minus 250 years) with a confidence level of 95%. The three techniques used by Fanti were used and verified in other labs in Italy and the U.K. (see above). This means that there is a strong likelihood that the Shroud originated between 283 BC and 217 AD – which allows the origin of the Shroud to be situated near the time of Jesus’ crucifixion (30 AD). Recall from Section III.A above, that Raymond Rogers obtained a similar result – within broader parameters -- from his Vanillin Tests of the Shroud.

If Fanti’s and Rogers’ dating techniques continue to bear scientific scrutiny, then a rescheduling of Carbon 14 testing will be unavoidable. When this occurs, the deficiencies of the past will have to be remedied. This will entail scheduling the tests at seven laboratories (instead of three) and assuring that the selection of the samples comes from different parts of the Shroud which are not near darkened (non-fluorescing) regions. Furthermore, the selection will have to be done with expert thermal chemists and archaeologists present who can perform the chemical, microscopic and textile tests necessary to avoid gross errors such as a selection of dyed fibers. Additionally, the threads will have to be cleaned to remove the bioplastic covering from microorganisms, and the age estimates will have to be adjusted to account for the carbon buildup from the Chambery fire.

If all these procedures are followed, the result will be significantly different from the 1988 Carbon 14 test – indicating an older age of the Shroud – probably corresponding to the age shown by the other four chemical, spectroscopic, and mechanical tests performed by Rogers and Fanti. If the carbon testing does not show this result, and the other four tests continue to bear scientific scrutiny, the Carbon 14 test may have to be “bracketed” because it will likely have too high a degree of carbon contamination to give accurate aging data.

IV.

Other Indications of the Shroud’s Age

[Back to top](#)

The above analysis was restricted to five directly measurable tests of age (within defined parameters and margins of error). But these do not exhaust the age indicators of the Shroud of Turin. As we saw above, there are three additional circumstantial indications of the Shroud’s origin at the time of Jesus:

1. The presence of pollen grains discovered by Max Frei.
2. The presence of two Roman coins (leptons) on the eyes of the man in the Shroud.
3. Similarities to the facecloth of Oviedo (known as the “Sudarium Christi”) indicating that the same face touched both cloths.

We will examine each of these age indicators in turn.

IV.A

Max Frei's Evidence of Pollen Grains

Max Frei was a Swiss botanist and a criminologist who was a professor at the University of Zurich and one of the best known criminologists in Europe. He was science editor of the German periodical *Kriminalistik*, and carried out several pollen classifications on both the Shroud and the facecloth of Oviedo (see below Section IV.C).

Frei used adhesive tapes to collect dust samples from the Shroud during the 1978 STURP investigation. He later classified 58 pollen grains by comparing them to pollen grains in the largest botanical museums around the world. He concluded that of the 58 pollen grains discovered on the Shroud, the largest number (45) were from the region of Israel (specifically from sedimentary layers from two thousand years ago near the area of the Sea of Galilee), and 6 grains from the eastern Middle East (2 grains from Edessa, Turkey, and 1 growing exclusively in Istanbul--Constantinople). The remaining grains came from France and Italy. Importantly, 13 of the pollen grains are *unique* to Israel, and are found at the bottom of both the Sea of Galilee and The Dead Sea.¹⁴¹

The botanist Avinoam Danin of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem noted:

As far as establishing the Shroud's provenance, *Zygophyllum dumosum* is the most significant plant on the list. Max Frei identified pollen grains of this species on the adhesive tapes he examined. The northernmost extent of the distribution of this plant in the world coincides with the line between Jericho and the sea level marker on the road leading from Jerusalem to Jericho. As *Zygophyllum dumosum* grows only in Israel, Jordan and Sinai, its appearance helps to definitively limit the Shroud's place of origin.¹⁴²

The three major regional similarities of pollen grain groupings indicate a high probability of the Shroud's origin and travels. The abundance of grains -- and unique grains -- indigenous to Palestine indicate a high probability that the Shroud originated there. It was probably manufactured there and exposed to the open air for a considerable period of time. Frei also believed that some of the grains came from the aloes used to anoint the body and from grains that

¹⁴¹ See Max Frei, Identificazione e classificazione dei nuovi pollini della Sindone, in *La Sindone, Scienza e Fede, Atti del II Convegno Nazionale di Sindonologia*, Bologna, November 27-29, 1981, CLUEB, Bologna 1983, pp. 277-284, on p. 281. See also P.C. Maloney, A contribution toward a history of botanical research on the Shroud of Turin, in *Proceedings of the 1999 Shroud of Turin International Research Conference*, Richmond, June 18-20, 1999, Magisterium Press, Glen Allen, Virginia, USA 2000, pp. 241-266, on pp. 244-246.

¹⁴² Avinoam Danin, "Pressed Flowers" in *Eretz Magazine* 55 (1997), pp. 35-37 and 69.

adhered to the wetness of the body after the crucifixion.

Since we know where the Shroud surfaced in Europe (Lirey, France – in the hands of Geoffrey de Charny in 1349), we can deduce from the pollen grains that the Shroud must have traveled to Turkey (Edessa and Constantinople) before its arrival in France. The fact that Geoffrey de Charny was married to Jeanne de Vergy – a fifth generation descendant of Othon de la Roche (a leader of the Fourth Crusade who occupied the area of Constantinople in which the Shroud was kept) corroborates this.¹⁴³ Frei also helped to make a connection between the Shroud of Turin and the Sudarium (facecloth) of Oviedo by showing a similar origin in Palestine from the presence of indigenous pollen grains from that region on the Sudarium.

As we shall see, the Sudarium also bears the same blood and aloe stains as the Shroud (see below Section IV.C). Frei first used dust samples not taken by him from an investigation of the facecloth in 1978 and then used his own samples obtained in 1979. According to Emanuela Marinelli:

As on the Shroud, also on the Sudarium he found cells of the epidermis of Aloe socotrina. He also identified the pollen of 13 plants, four of which do not grow in Europe but are frequently encountered in Palestine, in the deserts, in salt places or on rocks, and five others are Mediterranean plants that grow also in Palestine. Frei stressed: ‘The Acacia albida is typical for the Dead Sea area and the Hyoscyamus aureus still grows on the walls of the Old Citadel of Jerusalem. These two plants are represented also on the Shroud’.¹⁴⁴

Frei’s studies were complemented and completed by the studies of the biologist Carmen Gómez Ferreras, of the *Universidad Complutense* of Madrid.

The work of Frei and Gómez Ferreras is important for showing that the two cloths had a similar geographical origin—namely, Palestine. The blood and aloe evidence is even more important because it reveals that both cloths touched the same face (see below Section IV.C). Since the Sudarium can be dated to 616 AD, we must assume that both the Shroud and the Sudarium originated prior to that time. Thus, when we combine the pollen, blood and aloe evidence on both the Shroud and the Sudarium, we may conclude that both cloths originated in Palestine before 616 AD, which casts doubt on the 1988 Carbon 14 test and the medieval forgery hypothesis.

IV.B

¹⁴³ See John Long 2013 (B) “The Shroud of Turin’s Earlier History: Part 4: To Little Lirey” (<http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2013/09/05/The-Shroud-of-Turins-Earlier-History-Part-4-To-Little-Lirey.aspx>)

¹⁴⁴ Emanuela Marinelli “The Question of Pollen Grains on the Shroud of Turin and the Sudarium of Oviedo” Geological and Natural CC by the University of Rome *La Sapienza* (<https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/marinelli2veng.pdf>).

Roman Coins on the Eyes of the Man in the Image

The presence of coins on the eyelids of the man on the Shroud was first identified by the Greek classical numismatist Michael Marx who saw their images in the photographs of Enrie (1931) and Secundo Pia (1898). Marx identified four raised letters – UCAI -- on coins that looked like Jewish lepta (“widow’s mite” coins – copper coins minted by Pontius Pilate in 29 AD in Judea). This discovery was initially challenged by some numismatists who claimed that such a coin would not have had a Roman “C” but rather a Greek “K” – because this was the way Tiberius’ coins were typically minted. However, Fr. Francis Filas (Professor at Loyola University Chicago) responded when he was given a lepton with the “C” inscription on it. Later, Filas and Duke University Professor Alan Whanger discovered five additional leptons with the same inscription – indicating that it was unusual, but by no means, rare.

These coins enabled Whanger (and others) to use a polarized overlay photographic analysis to show that the images of the coins (on the eyes of the man of the Shroud) corresponded almost perfectly to the actual coins with the unusual “C” mint. Whanger described the discovery as follows:

We have done this by means of the polarized image overlay technique that we developed which enables the highly accurate comparison of two different images and the documentation of the various points of congruence....Using the forensic criteria for matching finger prints, we feel that there is *overwhelming evidence* for the identification of the images and the matches with the coins.¹⁴⁵

Whanger has made these results well-known internationally through a variety of media:

We have published these findings in the referenced professional literature and in many lay publications, have issued an international press and video release in 1982, have shown the findings personally to many thousands of people, and have produced detailed documentary videotapes showing the identification of these images and their congruence to two Pontius Pilate lepta.¹⁴⁶

Whanger’s polarized imaging overlay analysis is complemented and corroborated by the *digital* imaging analysis of Professor Robert Haralick (an internationally known computer imaging expert). Haralick’s results show evidence of “OUCAIC” on the coins on the eyelids of the man in the Shroud. This is a more extensive result than the previous one (UCAI) by Marx, Filas, and Whanger. He notes in this regard:

¹⁴⁵ Alan D. Whanger 1997 “A Reply to Doubts Concerning The Coins Over the Eyes” in *The Shroud of Turin Website* (<https://www.shroud.com/lombatti.htm>).

See also Alan D. and Mary Whanger, "Polarized Image Overlay Technique: A New Image Comparison Method and its Applications", *APPLIED OPTICS*, Vol. 24, No. 6, 15 March 1985, pp. 766-772.

¹⁴⁶ Whanger 1997.

The evidence is definitely supporting evidence because there is some degree of match between what one would expect to find if the Shroud did indeed contain a faint image of the Pilate coin and what we can in fact observe in the original and in the digitally processed images.¹⁴⁷

If Whanger is correct in assessing the evidence as “overwhelming” and Haralick is correct in assessing it as “definitive,” then it is highly probable that the image of the man on the Shroud of Turin has two Jewish lepta, minted in 29 AD by Pontius Pilate in Judea at the time of Jesus, on his eyelids. If this is the case, then it agrees strongly with the pollen grain evidence of Frei and Danin – which further challenges the medieval forger hypothesis and the 1988 Carbon dating test.

IV.C The Sudarium of Oviedo

The Sudarium Christi (the facecloth of Christ) is kept in the Cathedral of Oviedo (in northern Spain). It is a poor quality linen cloth measuring 84 x 53 centimeters. Though it does not have an image of a face (as does the Shroud of Turin), it has features indicating that it was applied to the face of a man who was newly deceased. It has bloodstains and serum stains from pulmonary edema fluid, which match the blood and serum patterns and blood type AB of the Shroud of Turin. The length of the nose on both cloths is 8 centimeters (3 inches). The similarities between the two cloths indicate the high probability that they touched the face of the same crucified man who was crowned with thorns. The evidence of pollen grains on both cloths (see above IV.A) corroborates their origin in Judea.

Why is this cloth significant for dating the Shroud of Turin? Its history – which is traceable to 616 AD -- can be better documented than the Shroud of Turin.¹⁴⁸ If both cloths touched the same face, then the Shroud of Turin must also go back to 616 AD – approximately 800 years earlier than the age determined by the 1988 Carbon 14 tests. In order to establish this, we will examine the blood, pulmonary fluid, and other stains on both cloths.

The Sudarium was applied to the face of a crucified man at a time proximate to his death in an upright position (if we suppose the face is that of Jesus, it would have been applied to his face while he was still upright on the cross). This was a typical part of Jewish burial custom (out

¹⁴⁷ Robert M. Haralick 1983 *Analysis of Digital Images of the Shroud of Turin* (Blacksburg, VA: Publication of Spatial Data Analysis Laboratory, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University).

¹⁴⁸ The Sudarium has been in Oviedo since 718 where it remains to this day. However, its history prior to that time was traced by Bishop Pelagius in his *Book of the Testaments of Oviedo* and the *Chronicon Regum Legionensium* -- (1121). Pelagius discovered the line of bishops who received the Sudarium when it arrived in Cartagena (from Palestine) in 616 to its arrival in Oviedo in 718.

See Mark Guscini 1997 “The Sudarium of Oviedo: Its History and Relationship to the Shroud of Turin” in *Proceedings of the Nice Symposium on the Shroud of Turin* – May 1997 (<https://www.shroud.com/guscini.htm#top>).

of respect for the deceased) – and frequently done for people whose faces had been disfigured (out of respect for the deceased and the mourners).¹⁴⁹ According to the Investigation Team of the Spanish Centre for Sindonology (who performed the analysis on the stains) and Dr. José Villalaín (who performed the medical examination),¹⁵⁰ the main stains are composed of one part blood and six parts fluid from the pleural oedema. According to Guscini:

This liquid collects in the lungs when a crucified person dies of asphyxiation, and if the body subsequently suffers jolting movements, can come out through the nostrils. These are in fact the main stains visible on the Sudarium.¹⁵¹

The Investigation Team determined that the cloth was folded over which left four stains for every imprint of fluid on the face of the crucified man – the front and back surfaces of the part touching the face as well as the back and front surfaces furthest from the face (the folded over part). This fold enabled the Investigation Team to create a timeline for the events that occurred immediately after the cloth had been applied to the dead man:

[The first stain was made while the body was still on the cross.] The second stain [on the back side of the part touching the face] was made about an hour later, when the body was taken down. The third stain [the back side of the part folded over] was made when the body was lifted from the ground about forty-five minutes later. The body was lying at the foot of the cross for about forty-five minutes before being buried. The marks (not fingerprints) of the fingers that held the cloth to the nose are also visible.¹⁵²

The presence of a fluid that would have formed in the lungs during asphyxiation and the drying patterns of the blood and fluids on all four sides of the cloth indicate a series of events strikingly similar to those recounted about the burial of Jesus in the four Gospels. Furthermore, it is evident that the facecloth was taken off the dead man's face before the main Shroud was applied (prior to the burial). This corresponds to the account of the empty tomb in the Gospel of John:

Simon Peter, following him, also came up, went into the tomb, saw the linen cloth lying on the ground, and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen cloth but rolled up in a place by itself (Jn 20:6-7).

How can the investigators be so certain that the Sudarium touched the same face as the Shroud of Turin? There are six major kinds of coincidences between the two cloths:

¹⁴⁹ See Mark Guscini 1997 "The Sudarium of Oviedo: Its History and Relationship to the Shroud of Turin" in *Proceedings of the Nice Symposium on the Shroud of Turin* -- May 1997 (<https://www.shroud.com/guscini.htm#top>).

¹⁵⁰ Guillermo Heras, J.D. Villalaín, J.M. Rodríguez. 1998, *Comparative Studies of the Sudarium of Oviedo and the Shroud of Turin*. III Congreso Internazionale de Studi sulla Sindone Turin. (<http://www.teachingfaith.com/files/books/Sudarium.PDF>) pp. 1-17.

¹⁵¹ Guscini 1997.

¹⁵² Guscini 1997.

1. The blood stains contain human male DNA and are the rare type AB.¹⁵³
2. The length of the nose through which the pleural oedema fluid was discharged was just over 3 inches (eight centimeters) – the same size as the man on the Shroud of Turin.¹⁵⁴
3. Since the Sudarium was not used to wipe the face, but only placed on the face in a stable position, the stains on the Sudarium can be laid over the image of the face on the Shroud of Turin. The positioning of the wounds relative to the beard is an exact fit. This would be extremely difficult to duplicate unless the face that touched the Sudarium and the Shroud were very similar.¹⁵⁵
4. The stain on the side of the mouth (visible on the Sudarium) was confirmed to be present on the Shroud through the VP-8 photo enhancements of Dr. John Jackson (of the STURP Investigation team).¹⁵⁶
5. The blood stains resulting from the thorns on the nape of the neck on the Sudarium correspond perfectly to the blood stains on the Shroud of Turin.¹⁵⁷
6. Dr. Alan Whanger used Polarized Image Overlay Technique on photographs of both cloths and discovered 70 coincidences on the frontal stains of the Sudarium and the Shroud, and 50 points of coincidence on the rear side of the Sudarium and Shroud. There are so many coincidences between the wounds and fluid markings of both cloths that Guscini notes, “The only possible conclusion is that the Oviedo Sudarium covered the same face as the Turin Shroud.”¹⁵⁸

In view of the similarities in blood type and facial features, as well as the 120 points of coincidence in the positioning of blood and fluids on the two cloths, it is difficult to avoid Guscini’s conclusion – that the two cloths touched the same face of a man crowned with thorns and severely beaten.

So why is this coincidence so important for purposes of dating the Shroud of Turin? As noted above, the documented history of the Shroud of Turin begins in 1349 in the hands of Geoffrey de Charny which is compatible with the 1988 Carbon dating of the Shroud. However, the documented history of the Sudarium of Oviedo goes back much earlier -- to 616 in the Middle East. If the two cloths originated at the same time by touching the same face, and the Sudarium can be documented to 616 in Cartagena, Spain, then we must conclude that the Shroud also goes back to 616 as well. We may also infer that both the Shroud and Sudarium were in Palestine prior to 616. Why? The pollen evidence on both cloths is telling. Like the Shroud, the pollen evidence on the Sudarium shows its probable origin in Palestine. Thirteen pollens are from Israel, and four of them are unique to that region.¹⁵⁹ When we compare the pollen evidence

¹⁵³ See Guillermo Heras, J.D. Villalain, J.M. Rodriguez. 1998, p. 15, and Guscini 1997, p.12.

¹⁵⁴ See Guillermo Heras, J.D. Villalain, J.M. Rodriguez. 1998, p. 15, and Guscini 1997, p.11.

¹⁵⁵ See Guillermo Heras, J.D. Villalain, J.M. Rodriguez. 1998, p. 15, and Guscini 1997, p.11.

¹⁵⁶ See Guillermo Heras, J.D. Villalain, J.M. Rodriguez. 1998, p. 15, and Guscini 1997, p.11.

¹⁵⁷ See Guillermo Heras, J.D. Villalain, J.M. Rodriguez. 1998, p. 15, and Guscini 1997, p.3.

¹⁵⁸ Guscini 1997, p.4.

¹⁵⁹ Emanuela Marinelli “The Question of Pollen Grains on the Shroud of Turin and the Sudarium of Oviedo” Geological and Natural CC by the University of Rome *La Sapienza*.

on the Sudarium and the Shroud, it shows that both cloths originated in Palestine, and since they touched the same face, we can conclude that they were in Palestine before 616. The combined evidence of the Shroud and the Sudarium once again throws the 1988 Carbon testing into question (which dates the Shroud to 1350). If the Shroud was in Palestine before 616, then the 1988 Carbon dating would be in error by at least 734 years.

IV.D

Summary of the Dating Evidence

The 1988 carbon dating cast doubts on the Shroud's origin in the First Century – and therefore on its authenticity as the burial cloth of Jesus. As we have said, Carbon 14 dating is by no means infallible. William Meacham, an archaeologist and carbon dating expert, has noted in this regard:

Over the years a whole host of difficulties have come to light with C14, e.g. modern living samples which give ages of hundreds or thousands of years, or centuries-old samples which give dates in the future. The causes of these phenomena are known, but in many other cases anomalous dates have not been satisfactorily explained.¹⁶⁰

As we have seen above, the carbon 14 dating of the Shroud conflicts with four other dating methods (Roger's Vanillin test, Fanti's infrared spectroscopy, Fanti's Raman laser spectroscopy, and Fanti's mechanical compressibility and breaking strength test) and three other reliable circumstantial methods of dating the Shroud (Frei's pollen evidence, Whanger's polarized photographic overlay analysis of the coins, and the evidence for the Sudarium having touched the same face as the Shroud from the analysis of Heras, Villalain, and Rodriguez). Each of these seven kinds of evidence can stand on its own, but in combination they corroborate one another in pointing to a First Century origin of the Shroud. It is truly difficult to imagine that all four of the above tests and the three circumstantial methods of dating the Shroud are fallacious – and it is even more difficult to imagine that they are off by a factor of 1,350 years! When a single carbon 14 test departs so radically from so many other kinds of equally substantial evidence, Meacham recommends:

As an archaeologist with 25 years of experience using C14 for the dating of excavated samples, I know what most archaeologists do when C14 produces a date which conflicts strongly with other evidence from a site: 1) run more dates on different samples from the same context, and then 2) put the aberrant dates down to some unidentified problem (usually in a footnote to the site report if mentioned at all)...This happens often in archaeology, even on sites and samples which were thought to be ideal for C14 dating. Very rarely is the problem of these

(<https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/marinelli2veng.pdf>)

¹⁶⁰ William Meacham, "C-14 Debate from the Shroud Newsgroup: alt.turin-shroud" in *The Shroud of Turin Website* (www.shroud.com).

individual aberrant dates ever resolved or even addressed.¹⁶¹

In the case of the Shroud of Turin, considerable work has been done to explain the aberrant finding of the 1988 carbon 14 test:

1. Roger's discovery of dye on the fibers used for the carbon 14 test (indicating the likelihood that the fibers were of later origin – and not from the original Shroud),
2. Garza-Valdes' and Mattingly's discovery of a bioplastic coating on the fibers (produced by microorganisms over the centuries) that could have affected the carbon dating by a factor of several centuries, and
3. Marone's analysis of the carbon buildup in the cloth from the fire of Chambery and other sources which could have affected the carbon dating by a factor of 300 years.

In the face of these problems, the 1988 carbon dating cannot be given much credibility, and a new carbon 14 dating will have to be performed according to the specifications given above in Section II.B.5. It is difficult to imagine that a new carbon 14 testing—with the above protocols in place—would not result in a much earlier date of the Shroud's origin. If it did result in a finding substantially different from the seven other dating techniques mentioned above (around the time of Jesus – within a suitable margin of error), then the new carbon dating test would have to fall into the category of what Meacham calls “an anomalous date which has not been satisfactorily explained.”¹⁶²

V.

The Image on the Shroud

[**Back to top**](#)

Explanations of the formation of the Shroud's image remain in the category of “scientifically plausible hypotheses.” We currently do not have a *definitive* explanation for how this unique and mysterious image was created from the body of a deceased man. The most plausible current hypothesis comes from a combination of two teams of researchers:

1. John Jackson's team who proposed the vacuum ultraviolet radiation hypothesis in 2008 to explain three (out of five) enigmas of the Shroud's image, and
2. Paolo Di Lazzaro's team who experimentally substantiated Jackson's hypothesis in 2010.

According to Jackson, an intense burst of vacuum ultraviolet radiation produced a discoloration on the uppermost surface of the Shroud's fibrils (without scorching it), which gave rise to a perfect three-dimensional negative image of both the frontal and dorsal parts of the body wrapped in it.

As will be shown below, this hypothesis (and its corroboration by Di Lazzaro) explains

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

only three out of five enigmas on the Shroud. In order to explain the final two enigmas, Jackson had to propose a more “unconventional” (and possibly scientifically uncorroborateable) hypothesis that the burst of intense vacuum ultraviolet radiation be emitted from every three-dimensional point within a mechanically transparent body. This hypothesis still stands today as the only explanation of the Shroud’s double image as well as the combined interior (skeletal) and exterior image of the hands.

Currently, we know of no *natural* explanation for the seemingly unique occurrence of such a burst of vacuum ultraviolet radiation from either a decomposing body or the geological/atmospheric conditions within a tomb. Though this is suggestive of a possible *supernatural* origin of the radiation – perhaps as a part of Jesus’ resurrection – we cannot prove this scientifically, because we cannot construct a scientific test for a supernatural cause – all we can do is eliminate every *known* natural cause of this seemingly unique radiation. The uniqueness and current inexplicability of this phenomenon gives us reason to *believe* that God has given us evidence of Jesus’ resurrection. This belief can be strengthened by further understanding of the light phenomenon that seems to be the source of the image as well as the continued elimination of natural causes for it. We will explain this conclusion in three steps:

1. The 1978 STURP investigation of the image.
2. The hypothesis of John Jackson, and
3. The experimental substantiation by Paolo Di Lazzaro.

V.A

The 1978 STURP Investigation of the Shroud’s Image

Prior to the STURP investigation, Secundo Pia and subsequent photographers discovered that the Shroud image was a perfect photographic negative (as distinct from the blood which is a positive image). Furthermore, the work of Dr. Pierre Barbet (and others) showed that the image of the Shroud – relative to the blood stains – was anatomically perfect. These two early findings suggested that medieval forgery was unlikely. The results of the STURP investigation in 1978 and the 3-D imaging of the Shroud by Jackson, Jumper, and Ercofine in 1982¹⁶³ showed how exceedingly unlikely a medieval forgery would be.

So what did the STURP investigation find in 1978? The image was caused by rapid dehydration, oxidation and degradation of the linen by an unidentified process, coloring it a sepia or straw yellow. The range of possible causes is restricted by the unusual characteristics of the image – namely, its *superficial* character limited to the uppermost surface of the cloth and the fact that the image does not fluoresce. This meant that the surface was likely produced by light

¹⁶³ See Jackson, J.P., E.J. Jumper and W.R. Ercofine, "Three Dimensional Characteristic of the Shroud Image," *IEEE 1982 Proceedings of the International Conference on Cybernetics and Society*, October 1982, pp. 559- 575.
Jackson, J.P., E.J. Jumper, and W.R. Ercofine, "Correlation of Image Intensity on the Turin Shroud with the 3- D Structure of a Human Body Shape," *Applied Optics*, Vol. 23, No. 14, 1984, pp. 2244-2270.

radiation, *but not by heat radiation*.¹⁶⁴ Dr. John Jackson (and other physicists) theorized that a plausible cause of such “light radiation” might be a short intense burst of vacuum ultraviolet radiation.

V.B

The Hypothesis of John Jackson

Why did Jackson select a radiation hypothesis instead of a chemical one? Because a dye, powder, ointment, or other chemical source of the image could not explain three enigmatic dimensions of the image adequately:

1. Chemicals cannot explain the superficiality of the Shroud image (limited to the uppermost surface of the fibrils without penetration to the medulla of the fiber). Chemicals that touched the Shroud would have in many places penetrated beyond that surface.
2. Chemicals do not explain how the image is evenly present on the many areas of the cloth which did *not* touch the body.
3. Vapors from chemicals on the body (or from the body itself) could not have produced a perfect photographic image on the areas of the cloth which did not touch the body.

In view of this, Jackson moved into the realm of radiation—which held out the potential of resolving all three of these enigmatic features.¹⁶⁵

There is only one problem with a radiation hypothesis—radiation not only gives off light (which could produce discoloration of the fabric), but also heat which could scorch or burn the cloth. The STURP investigation showed that the image on the cloth was not the result of a scorch, because it did not fluoresce.¹⁶⁶ So Jackson needed to find a kind of radiation that would

¹⁶⁴ See Jumper, E.J. and R.W. Mottern, "Scientific Investigation of the Shroud of Turin," *Applied Optics*, Vol. 19, No. 12, 1980, pp. 1909-1912.

Jumper, E.J., "An Overview of the Testing Performed by the Shroud of Turin Research Project with a Summary of Results," *IEEE 1982 Proceedings of the International Conference on Cybernetics and Society*, October 1982, pp. 535-537.

Jumper, E.J., A.D. Adler, J.P. Jackson, S.F. Pellicori, J.H. Heller and J.R. Drusik. "A Comprehensive Examination of the Various Stains and Images on the Shroud of Turin," *Archaeological Chemistry III, ACS Advances in Chemistry* No. 205, J.B. Lambert, Editor, Chapter 22, *American Chemical Society*, Washington D.C., 1984, pp. 447-476.

¹⁶⁵ Jackson's supposition was later confirmed when it was found that the cloth has a *double* image—one on the front surface of the cloth and a fainter, but nonetheless distinct image on the back surface of the cloth—however there is *nothing* in between the front and back surface images! Chemicals and vapors could not have done this, and it requires that the body in the Shroud be mechanically transparent. See below Section III.B.

¹⁶⁶ According to Barry Schwartz, a well-known Shroud expert, "Since the color of the image is very similar to the color of the scorches, STURP understood the need to test this theory and performed specific experiments for that purpose. A primary test was to photograph the Shroud using ultraviolet fluorescence photography, since true scorches on linen will always fluoresce in the red. As there are many documented scorches on the Shroud from the 1532 fire, testing this was not difficult and the results of the tests were published in this peer reviewed reference: Miller, V.D. and S.F. Pellicori, "Ultraviolet Fluorescence Photography of the Shroud of Turin," *Journal of*

not produce an accompanying heat radiation sufficient to scorch the cloth.

Vacuum ultraviolet radiation is an excellent candidate for explaining the Shroud image because VUV radiation would not have scorched the cloth. It dissipates so quickly that its initial energy could discolor the cloth in a brief burst without scorching or destroying it in the process.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, vacuum ultraviolet radiation could be limited to the surface of the fibrils without penetrating to the medulla of the fibers. Jackson and Propp note in this regard:

Of particular note, are the observations that the image discolorations reside on the surfaces of the image fibrils and that the inside medullas are not colored. We point out, again, that vacuum ultraviolet radiation would be absorbed at the surface of the fibrils, which would leave the medullas unaffected, thereby satisfying those requirements.¹⁶⁸

Finally, a short burst of ultraviolet radiation would also explain how the image was perfectly present (sufficient to produce a perfect photographic negative) on the many parts of the cloth that did *not* touch the body. Thus the Jackson hypothesis is able to explain three enigmas of the image on the cloth.

Yet there is another enigma. A cursory glance at the image reveals the bones of the hand encased within flesh – as if the image recorded both the inside of the hand (the skeleton) and the outside of the hand (the flesh surrounding the skeleton) at the same time. As Jackson notes:

There is, however, one particular observation that definitively places the Shroud image in a unique category... If we examine this image region carefully, we can see... that the finger bones are visible well into the palm of the hands, extending right up to the base of the wrist. These cannot be interpreted as tendons, because tendons and ligaments are much too narrow. Rather, we see that the thickness of the fingers are individually preserved well into the palm of the hand. It thus seems as though we are looking at the internal skeletal structure of the hand imaged through the intervening flesh tissues onto the Shroud cloth.¹⁶⁹

Biological Photography, Vol. 49, No. 3, 1981, pp. 71-85. Every documented scorch on the Shroud fluoresced in the red, as expected. However, the *image* did NOT fluoresce and in fact, even quenched the background fluorescence in the image areas. The only conclusion possible from these observations is that the Shroud image is NOT the product of scorched or heated linen.” Barry Schwartz, comment in “The Image on the Shroud of Turin is Not a Scorch” in *The Shroud of Turin Blog*—shroudstory.com, 2012. (URL: <http://shroudstory.com/2012/02/10/the-image-on-the-shroud-of-turin-is-not-a-scorch/>).

¹⁶⁷ See Jackson, John P., “Is the Image on the Shroud Due to a Process Heretofore Unknown to Modern Science?” *Shroud Spectrum International*, No. 34 March, 1990, pgs. 3-29.

¹⁶⁸ Jackson and Propp. “Comments on Rogers’ ‘Testing the Jackson Theory’ of Image Formation.” (<http://www.shroud.com/pdfs/jacksonpropp.pdf>).

¹⁶⁹ John P. Jackson, “An Unconventional Hypothesis to Explain all Image Characteristics Found on the Shroud Image” in *History, Science, Theology and the Shroud* ed. by A. Berard (St. Louis: Symposium Proceedings) 1991 (<http://theshroudofturin.blogspot.com/2012/01/john-p-jackson-unconventional.html>).

How could this unique image forming process occur? It would require that the frontal part of the cloth *collapse* into the dorsal part of the cloth during the process of image formation – as if the body were completely transparent – not impeding the collapse of the cloth. If the cloth had not collapsed, only the outside of the body would have been in the image – which is clearly not the case (because the skeleton of the hand is visible along with the flesh surrounding it). Thus it seems that the vacuum ultraviolet radiation is emanating evenly throughout the body, and that the body presents no obstacle to the collapse of the cloth. In Jackson's words:

I propose that, as the Shroud collapsed through the underlying body, radiation emitted from all points within that body and discolored the cloth so as to produce the observed image. As will be seen below, this assumption [also] explains the superficiality of the Shroud image and, perhaps, the differentiation in fibril coloring.¹⁷⁰

If Jackson is correct, then when the blood attached to the Shroud, the body impeded the collapse of the cloth; however, during the time of image formation, the body became mechanically transparent – it still remained a 3-dimensional source of light, but lost the mechanical quality of solidity which would have impeded a collapse of the cloth. The loss of “mechanical solidity” enabled the newly configured body to emit a burst of evenly distributed intense radiation while the cloth collapsed through it -- giving rise to the flattened 3-D image. Jackson explains:

We must assume that the Shroud initially covered a body shape [at the time that blood was being transferred to the cloth], but, for some reason, that body did not impede the collapse of the Shroud during the time of image formation.¹⁷¹

Despite the unconventional nature of this hypothesis, Jackson believes that it is warranted, because it is currently the only explanation for all of the observed data on the cloth:

...in the case of the Shroud image, the cloth did collapse *into* and *through* the underlying body structure. As a physicist, I admit to having my own difficulties with this concept, but I also know that scientists must be ready to overturn even their most hallowed principles if observation warrants.

Jackson's hypothesis seems to break completely with everything we know about bodily decomposition – and verges on the miraculous. How could a decomposing body give rise to such an intense burst of radiation? How could it become mechanically transparent so that this ultraviolet radiation could emanate evenly through it during the process of image formation?

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. See also John Jackson: “Is the image on the Shroud due to a process heretofore unknown to modern science?” Shroud Spectrum International No. 34, March 1990, pp. 3-29.

We may here be on the verge of having to use a *transphysical* explanation to explain the observational data. Nevertheless, Jackson and others persist in this line of thinking, because no other *natural* explanation seems to meet the requirements of the enigmatic image on the shroud. If Jackson's hypothesis could be experimentally confirmed in the laboratory—with short bursts of vacuum ultraviolet radiation producing an image similar to that on the Shroud, it would confirm his hypothesis as realistic and tenable. It would not answer the question of how a decomposing body could produce this very special kind of radiation – or how the cloth could collapse through the body while vacuum ultraviolet radiation emanated evenly from every point within it – but it would show that the Jackson hypothesis could explain at least three enigmas on the Shroud – the restriction of the discoloration to the uppermost surface of the fibrils, the absence of scorching in the image areas, and the perfect 3-dimensional negative image in places where the body did not touch the cloth.

The first step in this experimental verification occurred in 2010 (see below V.C), but before discussing it, we will want to examine yet another enigma of the Shroud image that can also be answered by Jackson's hypothesis—the *double* image on the frontal part of the Shroud discovered by Fanti and Maggiolo in 2004.¹⁷²

The Shroud of Turin has a *double* image—that is, a superficial discoloration on the front surface of the cloth—closest to the body—and a fainter image on the back surface of the cloth—furthest from the body. However, there is no discoloration on the fibers *between* the front surface and back surface of the cloth. Both images correspond to each other anatomically—though the one on the back surface of the cloth is fainter than the one on the front surface. The double image is evident only on the frontal part of the Shroud (but not on the dorsal part) —particularly in the area of the face and hands.¹⁷³

Chemical and vapor explanations of this double image are inadequate, because none of them can explain an image occurring on the front surface and the back surface of a cloth *without leaving any residue in-between*. In order for chemicals or vapors to reach the back surface of the cloth, they would have to go *through* the cloth leaving an obvious residue in the process. Given that the image could not have been produced by *slowly* dissipating radiation (which would leave a scorch), we are left with Jackson's explanation of a short intense burst of vacuum ultraviolet radiation (which dissipates before scorching the cloth) emitted evenly throughout a mechanically transparent body.

Could this kind of radiation produce the *double* image on the frontal part of the Shroud?

¹⁷² Giulio Fanti and Roberto Maggiolo, "The Double Superficiality of the Frontal Image of the Turin Shroud" in *Journal of Optics A: Pure and Applied Optics*, Vol. 6, No. 6, 2004, p 491.]

¹⁷³ See Ibid. No researcher has yet been able to make a digital scan of the back surface of the frontal part of the cloth, because there is a backing which was made to protect it, and the custodians of the Shroud are reluctant to have it removed. However, Fanti and Maggiolo enhanced photographs of the back surface of the cloth by a special method – "This was based on convolution with Gaussian filters, summation of images, and filtering in spatial frequency by direct and inverse bidimensional Fourier transformations." This brings the image of the face into perspective sufficiently for matching with the front surface of the cloth.

It would if we accept the validity of Jackson's mechanically transparent man (collapsing cloth) hypothesis. If the cloth collapsed into the body, the light energy would have made superficial images on both the front surface and the back surface of the cloth without penetrating more deeply. Think of it this way – the vacuum ultraviolet radiation is completely *surrounding* the cloth collapsing through the body. Thus, it is making contact with both the front surface and the back surface of the frontal part of the collapsing cloth. However, it does not penetrate either surface of the cloth deeply, because the vacuum ultraviolet energy dissipates so quickly. Thus, the radiation hits both the front and back surface of the collapsing cloth simultaneously, but dissipates so quickly that it does not penetrate into the center of the cloth from either side.

Jackson predicted that such a double image would be the consequence of his hypothesis before its discovery by Fanti and Maggiolo. Jackson and Propp reasserted this prediction in 2004:

In 1990, one of us (Jackson) offered a [mechanically transparent man] hypothesis as an attempt to explain simultaneously all observations regarding the Shroud image. This hypothesis was ventured only after a systematic study of alternatives had failed to account for various image characteristics and, though unconventional, this hypothesis makes a variety of testable predictions that are a-priori falsifiable by means of the Scientific Method. Recently, one important prediction of the hypothesis, that a double superficial frontal image without an associated dorsal image should exist on the Shroud, was reported by Fanti and Maggiolo.¹⁷⁴

In sum, there are five major enigmas of the Shroud image:

1. The fact that the image is limited to the uppermost surface of the fibrils and does not penetrate to the medulla of the fibers. This implies that the image was not produced by chemicals or vapors of any kind.
2. The fact that the image is not a scorch (but rather discoloration coming from dehydration). This implies that the image could not have been produced by *slowly* dissipating radiation (which would have scorched it).
3. The image is a perfect photographic negative in which the image intensity is related to the distance of the cloth from the body. Thus, the image was present regardless of whether the cloth touched the body. This implies that radiation – and not chemicals or vapors– was the source of image formation.

¹⁷⁴ John P. Jackson, Keith E. Propp. 2004. "Comments on Rogers' 'Testing the Jackson Theory' of Image Formation." The Shroud of Turin website 2004 (<http://www.shroud.com/pdfs/jacksonpropp.pdf>). Jackson and Propp refer to three previous investigations for this conclusion. See Jackson, John P., "Is the Image on the Shroud Due to a Process Heretofore Unknown to Modern Science?" *Shroud Spectrum International*, No. 34 March, 1990, pgs. 3-29. See also Jackson, John P., et al., "Correlation of image intensity on the Turin Shroud with the 3-D structure of a human body shape" *Applied Optics*, Vol. 23, No. 14, 15 July 1984, pgs. 2244 – 2270.

4. There is a double image on the frontal part of the cloth (a more intense image on the front surface – nearest the body – and a less intense image on the back surface – furthest from the body – without any effects between the two surfaces). This implies that the radiation was surrounding both surfaces of the cloth – further implying that the cloth collapsed into a mechanically transparent body.
5. Parts of the frontal image – particularly the hands – show an image which is resolvable into three dimensions, in which the inside skeletal parts of the hand are proportionately related to the surrounding exterior flesh on the hand. This implies that the cloth collapsed into *and through* a mechanically transparent body.

The more conventional part of Jackson's hypothesis – that a short intense burst of vacuum ultraviolet radiation emitted from the decomposing body – can explain the first three enigmas. However, the fourth and fifth enigmas – the double image on the frontal part of the Shroud as well as the inside (skeletal)-outside (flesh) characteristic -- require the unconventional part of Jackson's hypothesis – in which the body became mechanically transparent, allowing the cloth to collapse into and through it while light emanated evenly from every three-dimensional part of the transparent body.

V.C

Partial Confirmation of the Jackson Hypothesis in 2010

In 2010, six physicists from three research centers (Frascati Research Center, The University of Padua, and Casaccia Research Center) were able to confirm the Jackson hypothesis under experimental conditions by creating a burst of ultraviolet radiation through an excimer laser. According to Paolo DiLazzaro, director of the six-member team:

We have irradiated a linen fabric having the same absolute spectral reflectance of the Turin Shroud...with pulsed deep-UV radiation emitted by an ArF excimer laser. We have shown that 12 ns, 193 nm laser pulses are able to color a very thin layer on the linen yarn...The colorless inner part of a few fibers...suggests that we have locally achieved a coloration of the outermost part of the fibers. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first coloration of a linen material resembling the very shallow depth of coloration...observed in the Turin Shroud fibers.¹⁷⁵

The team specified that three of the above five enigmas were explained and experimentally confirmed by this method precisely as Jackson predicted. In an interview with Sci-News, Di Lazzaro said:

In particular, vacuum ultraviolet photons account for [1] the very thin coloration depth, [2] the hue of color and [3] the presence of image in linen parts not in contact with the body. Obviously, it does not mean the image was produced by a

¹⁷⁵ Paolo Di Lazzaro, D. Murra, A. Santoni, G. Fanti, E. Nichelatti, and G. Baldacchini. "Deep Ultraviolet Radiation Simulates the Turin Shroud Image," *Journal of Imaging Science and Technology*, July-August 2010, p 6.

laser. Rather, the laser is a powerful tool to test and obtain the light parameters suitable for a shroud-like coloration.¹⁷⁶

He adds that a single laser alone could not explain the image over the full length of the body. In fact, it would have taken *14,000* lasers like the one used by Di Lazzaro et al. to produce a full body image like the one on the Shroud. The characteristics of the kind of light impulse that would be needed to produce an image like that on the Shroud are quite remarkable. According to Di Lazzaro:

[The ultraviolet light necessary to form the image] exceeds the maximum power released by all ultraviolet light sources available today says Di Lazzaro. It would require “pulses having durations shorter than one forty-billionth of a second, and intensities on the order of several billion watts.”¹⁷⁷

How exactly could a normal decomposing body do something like this?

In sum, Di Lazzaro’s research confirms Jackson’s theory that a short intense burst of vacuum ultraviolet radiation can produce an image on the uppermost surface of the fibrils which is discolored through dehydration (rather than a scorch) yielding a perfect photographic negative image – on parts of the cloth not in contact with the body. However, his experiment did not confirm how the other two enigmas of the image originated – the double image as well as the image of the inside and outside of the hands.

Recall that Jackson had to supplement his vacuum ultraviolet radiation hypothesis with the more unconventional hypothesis of a mechanically transparent man to account for these other two enigmas. We should not be surprised that DiLazzaro and his team were not able to confirm the fourth and fifth enigmas of the image because they were not able to reproduce a mechanically transparent body in which light emanated evenly from every part.

These two enigmas may never be reproducible under experimental conditions, because the only known explanation of them (from Jackson) supersedes the known laws of physics. Thus, we may be left with a plausible explanation for the image that cannot be, strictly speaking, physically reproducible, and experimentally verifiable.

V.D

Does the Shroud Give Evidence of Jesus’ Resurrection?

The research of the 1978 STURP Investigation, as well as subsequent research of John

¹⁷⁶ Sergio Prostack 2011 “Scientists Suggest Turin Shroud Authentic,” December 21, 2011 in *Sci-News.com* (<http://www.sci-news.com/physics/scientists-suggest-turin-shroud-authentic.html>).

¹⁷⁷ Frank Viviano 2015 “Why Shroud of Turin’s Secrets Continue to Elude Science” *National Geographic* April 17, 2015 (<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/04/150417-shroud-turin-relics-jesus-catholic-church-religion-science/>)

Jackson, Giulio Fanti, Paolo Di Lazzaro and their teams, shows the likelihood that sometime after the blood deposits had dried on the Shroud, the decomposing body in the Shroud emitted a short intense burst of vacuum ultraviolet radiation that led to a dehydration and discoloration of the frontal and dorsal parts of the Shroud, giving rise to a perfect photographic negative image. Jackson's research also suggests that the body inside the Shroud became mechanically transparent and emitted light evenly from every 3-dimensional point within it. This allowed the frontal part of the Shroud to collapse – creating an image (of both the inside and outside of the hands) as well as a double image on the frontal part of the Shroud.

So where do we stand? The first three of the above five enigmas (see above V.B) of image formation can be explained by a short intense burst of vacuum ultraviolet radiation emitted from the body. This explanation has been shown to be realistic through experimental replication (by Paolo Di Lazzaro et al.). The fourth and fifth enigmas imply that the body in the Shroud became mechanically transparent and emitted light evenly from every three dimensional point within it.

Jackson, Fanti, and DiLazzaro show that alternative *physical* explanations either contradict the above enigmas or fail to explain them:

- **Chemical and vapor explanations** fail to explain four of the above five enigmas (1, 3, 4, and 5). With respect to the first enigma, chemicals and vapors would not be limited only to the uppermost surface of the fibrils, but would have penetrated to the medulla of the fibers on many parts of the cloth. Furthermore, with respect to the third enigma, chemicals and vapors would not give rise to a perfect photographic image – even the most recent ingenious attempts to do this have resulted in multiple imperfections and “clumping.”¹⁷⁸ With respect to the fourth and fifth enigmas, chemicals and vapors cannot reproduce the double image (with nothing in between) and the interior image of the skeleton of the hand.
- **Heating or scorching explanations** violate the second enigma because the image is not a scorch as shown by its failure to fluoresce.

¹⁷⁸ An organic chemistry professor at the University of Pavia, Luigi Garlaschelli and his team, who were funded by an Italian association of atheists and agnostics, tried to reproduce the Shroud image by using ochre, acid, and a special heating technique. According to the Catholic News Agency, “they created their image by placing the linen over a volunteer before rubbing it with a pigment called ochre with traces of acid. The linen was then ‘aged’ by heating it in an oven and washing it with water.” They then added blood stains. Though the image bore some resemblance to that on the Shroud superficially, it was by no means a replica of it. First, adding the blood stains afterwards is not consistent with what happened on the Shroud, but if the attempted forgers had placed the blood stains on the cloth first, they would have ruined them when adding the ochre and acid to produce the image. Furthermore, the image they produced was quite distorted. As Jackson noted, “...while the images of Garlaschelli's shroud on the internet look authentic, when taken from a 3-D perspective, ‘it's really rather grotesque. The hands are embedded into the body and the legs have unnatural looking lumps and bumps...” Catholic News Agency, “Experts question scientist's claim of reproducing Shroud of Turin” October 6, 2009, (http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/experts_question_scientists_claim_of_reproducing_shroud_of_turin/)

- **Other radiation hypotheses** besides vacuum ultraviolet radiation will likely violate the second enigma because they would not dissipate quickly enough to prevent scorching on the cloth. Furthermore, heat radiation of this kind would penetrate to the medulla of the fiber violating the first enigma.

At present, there is no alternative physical explanation for all five enigmas on the Shroud besides the 2-part explanation of John Jackson:

1. A short intense burst of vacuum ultraviolet radiation which was...
2. Emitted evenly by a mechanically transparent body from every three-dimensional point within it.

Currently, the known laws of physics cannot explain how a decomposing body can emit an intense burst of vacuum ultraviolet radiation. Furthermore, they cannot explain how such a body could become mechanically transparent and emit light from every three dimensional point within it.

So, where does that leave us? If Jackson's explanation continues to be the only one that explains all five enigmas, and if future articulations of the laws of physics cannot explain how a decomposing body could become mechanically transparent and evenly emit vacuum ultraviolet radiation from every three dimensional point within it, then we are left at the brink of a *transphysical* or *metaphysical* explanation. Under these conditions, it would be both reasonable and responsible to *believe* that a *transphysical cause* interacted with the decomposing body to transform it into an intense burst of light.

Evidently, we cannot *scientifically prove* a transphysical cause, because science is restricted to the domain of physical causation. However, if the above conditions hold, we can reasonably *infer* the possibility and perhaps the likelihood of such a transphysical cause. This is sufficient for reasonable and responsible belief.

Does this transphysical explanation of the Shroud's image point to the resurrection of Jesus? Jesus' resurrection was not a resuscitation of a material corpse but rather, a transforming event which gave rise to what St. Paul called a "spiritual body"—a body transformed in glory, spirit and power.¹⁷⁹ Could this transformation of a material body into a burst of intense light signify a beginning point of the transformation of Jesus' body from a physical one to a spiritual-glorified one? Though there can be no scientific proof of this, it is a reasonable inference from the parallels between the explanation of the Shroud's enigmatic image and the testimony of St. Paul and the Gospel writers. In this sense, we might say that the image on the Shroud presents a clue—even a relic—of Jesus' resurrection.

¹⁷⁹ This is explained in detail in Chapter 4 of a forthcoming book—*God So Loved the World: Clues to Our Transcendent Destiny from the Revelation of Jesus* (Ignatius Press—Coming in 2016)

VI. Conclusion [Back to top](#)

Why would we think the body in the Shroud was that of *Jesus*? As explained above, it is exceedingly improbable that the Shroud is a medieval forgery. First, there are no paints, dyes or other pigments on the Shroud (except for the small flecks coming from the sanctification of icons and paintings which touched it). Secondly, the anatomical precision of the blood stains—which are real human blood that congealed on the Shroud *before* the formation of the image—are in precise anatomical correlation to the image itself. How could a medieval forger have accomplished this? Thirdly, it is exceedingly difficult to explain how pollen grains indigenous to Palestine appeared in abundance on a shroud of probable Semitic origin (if it originated in medieval Europe) and how coins minted in 29 A.D. in Palestine appeared on the eyes of the man on the Shroud. How could a medieval forger have duplicated these first century Palestinian characteristics of the Shroud? Fourthly, the five enigmas of the image on the Shroud almost certainly preclude a forgery. How could a medieval forger have used vacuum ultraviolet radiation to discolor the cloth on the uppermost surface of the fibrils? How could he have created a perfect photographic negative image? How could he have created a double image on the frontal part of the Shroud? And how could he have known how to duplicate the interior and exterior of the hands in perfect proportion to each other? Thus, it does not seem reasonable or responsible to believe that the Shroud is a medieval forgery.

Beyond this, there are three probative kinds of evidence pointing specifically to *Jesus*' place and time of origin and to his *unique* crucifixion and resurrection:

1. The material of the Shroud, the pollen grains on it, and the coins on the man's eyes, all have their origin in First Century Palestine – the place where Jesus was purported to have died.
2. The blood stains come from a crucifixion event identical to the one described in the four Gospels – which was very unusual, if not unique, in many respects – such as being crowned with thorns, being flogged, and being pierced with a Roman pilum (see above – the Introduction to this article).
3. The five enigmas of the Shroud's image point to a *transphysically* caused burst of vacuum ultraviolet radiation from a mechanically transparent body. This is suggestive of the transformation of Jesus' body from a physical one to a spiritual- glorified one (as reported by St. Paul and the four Gospels). The spiritual-glorified transformation of Jesus' body was *unique* to the Christian view of resurrection.¹⁸⁰ It was

¹⁸⁰ N.T. Wright elucidates several Christian mutations of Second Temple Judaism's doctrine of resurrection. One of these mutations is the change from a merely corporeal resurrection (like a resuscitated corpse) in Jewish doctrine to a spiritual-corporeal resurrection ("spiritual body"-- "pneumatikon soma"—1 Cor.15:44) in the Christian view. This is remarkable in view of the fact that early Christians did *not* want to separate themselves from the doctrine of Second Temple Judaism. Why then, did the early Christians do this? After an exhaustive analysis, Wright concludes there is

not known in Judaism (which held to a resuscitation of the flesh) or pagan cults (which held to ethereal or ghostlike views of immortality). Thus, the enigmas on the Shroud's image point to the *uniquely* Christian view of resurrection implied by Jesus' risen appearance.

The odds of this First Century Palestinian burial shroud -- with the unique features of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection -- being that of anyone else is exceedingly remote. Inasmuch as the image is not a forgery, and it originated from a real person living at the time of Jesus, crucified in the unique way of Jesus, and producing a burst of intense vacuum ultraviolet radiation from his decomposing body, who else would it be? Given all this, we might reasonably infer that the Shroud is the burial cloth of Jesus which contains not only a relic of his crucifixion, but also his resurrection in glory. If so, it shows both the truth of the most significant event in human history as well as the accuracy of the Gospel accounts of it.

Chapter Nine

Miracles Associated with Mary, Saints and the Holy Eucharist

[**Back to top**](#)

In Chapter Seven, we mentioned that there were thousands of miracles associated with the risen Jesus through apparitions of His Mother (particularly Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Lourdes, and Our Lady of Fatima), the intercession of recognized Catholic saints (e.g. St. Padre Pio, Blessed Fulton J. Sheen, and St. John Paul II), and through Eucharistic miracles. Ten of these very well-documented and scientifically tested miracles are presented below precisely for the purpose of showing that the risen Jesus is miraculously and powerfully present in our age – manifesting Himself in ways that are open to scientific and medical testing. These miracles not only attest to the presence of the risen Jesus, but also to the miraculously powerful presence of those with whom He shares His miraculous power and glory – His mother and the saints – and of course, in the sacrament through which He Himself is present – the Holy Eucharist.

Interestingly, these contemporary scientifically validated miracles serve also to authenticate the doctrinal and juridical authority of the Catholic Church, because they occur precisely through three kinds of mediation – Mary, the saints, and the Holy Eucharist – that are denied (or at least disputed) by most Protestant churches. This leads to the question of why God (the Father) and the risen Jesus would allow the power of their Spirit to be manifested in and through these mediators if they were not chosen by them to be such. This leads to a more

only one explanation—they saw the risen Jesus in a spiritual- glorified-powerful form—which evidenced both his former corporeality as well as his spiritual transformation. See N.T. Wright 2003 *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press) pp 200-274. I have outlined the steps and substance of Wright's argument in Chapter 4 in a forthcoming book—*God So Loved the World: Clues to our Transcendent Destiny From the Revelation of Jesus* (Ignatius Press—Coming in 2016)

perplexing question -- if the Trinity did choose these mediators, why would they have done so knowing that Mary, the saints, and the Holy Eucharist were falsely proclaimed by the Catholic Church to be true mediators of the Spirit's power, knowing that this would mislead the majority of Christian people? We will take this question up again in Chapter 6 on the authenticity of Jesus' commissioning of St. Peter and his successors as supreme teaching and juridical authorities in His Church (see Chapters 1-4).

Some scientists might deny the possibility of a miracle because they mistakenly believe that miracles require the suspension of inviolable physical laws. Though there is no reason why God – as a super-natural creative being—would not be able to suspend the laws of nature, it is not necessary to explain miracles this way. C.S. Lewis put it quite succinctly—“The divine art of miracle is not an art of suspending the pattern into which events conform but of feeding new events into that pattern.”¹⁸¹ God does not need to suspend the laws of nature to make His extraordinary presence manifest—He need only add a trans-natural power to those occurring in nature.

Perhaps the greatest miracle is not the manifestation of trans-natural power, but the fact that nature itself not only has regularity, but that this regularity is describable by mathematics in a most surprising—indeed completely unexpected way. The Nobel prize winning physicist and mathematician, Eugene Wigner, recognized this remarkable coincidence of natural laws and mathematics, referring to it as a “miracle” or “the scientist’s article of faith.” “It is, as Schrödinger has remarked, a miracle that in spite of the baffling complexity of the world, certain regularities in the events could be discovered.”¹⁸² Wigner later goes on to describe a four-fold miracle in the connection between classical physics, quantum physics, higher level mathematics, and the human mind’s ability to recognize it:

Finally, it now begins to appear that not only complex numbers but so-called analytic functions are destined to play a decisive role in the formulation of quantum theory. I am referring to the rapidly developing theory of dispersion relations. ¶ It is difficult to avoid the impression that a miracle confronts us here, quite comparable in its striking nature to the miracle that the human mind can string a thousand arguments together without getting itself into contradictions, or to the two miracles of the existence of laws of nature and of the human mind's capacity to divine them.¹⁸³

Though Wigner was using the term “miracle” loosely here, this four-fold non- necessary coincidence of physics, mathematics, aesthetics, and the human mind is completely inexplicable in terms of logic, mathematics and physics themselves. Wigner and Schrödinger leave us to draw

¹⁸¹ C.S. Lewis 1947 *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (New York: Harper One) p.95

¹⁸² Eugene Wigner 1960 The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Natural Sciences in *Communications in Pure and Applied Mathematics, vol.13, No.1* (New York: John Wiles & Sons, Inc.)

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~matc/MathDrama/reading/Wigner.html>

¹⁸³ *ibid*

our own conclusions, but people of faith will see rigorous rationality and creative serendipity in this four-fold coincidence, which has all the earmarks of creative intellection coursing through nature—and intellection pointing toward a supernatural mind.

More recently, Michio Kaku (one of the founders of String Theory) has articulated a new approach to the same “miracle” within the natural universe manifesting supernatural intellection. He assumes that the pre-big-bang universe is in the hyper-dimensionality of M- theory (11-dimensional string theory), and further postulates the need for primitive semi- radius tachyons to create free spaces for interaction within the universe. If his view of the pre-big-bang universe is correct (and we do not have confirmation of this), then this universe with its primitive semi-radius tachyons would be such an elegant manifestation of extreme complexity (like a matrix) that Kaku can see only one ultimate solution-resolution – a divine mind capable of mathematical super-intellection.¹⁸⁴

Impressive as the miracle of mathematical-physical laws may be, the divine intellect has also seen fit to manifest his supernatural intellect and power in the world by, as Lewis notes, “feeding new events into the patterns of nature.” The Lord does this to manifest His presence in the world, which is particularly noteworthy in the actions of Old Testament prophets – such as Moses, Elijah, and Elisha – and above all, through Jesus and the disciples who continue to work them in His name to this very day.

This kind of miracle is rare – otherwise it would not be differentiateable from natural patterns and therefore not a “miracle.” Yet these miracles occur every day throughout the world by the power of the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus. We need only make a simple internet search to see literally hundreds of testimonies to contemporary miracles attributed to the Holy Spirit and the name of Jesus.¹⁸⁵

The most remarkable and scientifically validated contemporary miracles have occurred through the appearance of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the intercession of Catholic saints. These miracles are also done through the power of the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus, but they have, as it were, a third agent – the Virgin Mary or a saint. This “sharing” of power and glory by the Lord typifies what we noted above – namely that even though the Lord is center stage, He does not want to be the whole show, but rather, in conformity with His unconditionally loving will,

¹⁸⁴ Michio Kaku 2016 in *Geophilosophical Association of Anthropological and Cultural Studies* (June 13, 2016). <http://www.express.co.uk/news/science/742567/PROOF-of-God-real-Michio-Kaku>.
<http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/barbara-hollingsworth/string-theory-co-founder-sub-atomic-particles-are-evidence-0>

¹⁸⁵ There are multiple sites that publish non-validated accounts of miracles by the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus, such as <http://www.christian-faith.com/true-stories-testimonies-of-jesus-christ/>; and <http://www.apologeticspress.org/AboutAP.aspx> and <http://www.godisreal.today/modern-day-miracles/>. There are also many good books about contemporary miracles done through the Holy Spirit and the name of Jesus – such as, Craig Keener 2011 *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts* (2 Volume Set); (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic). See also Jeff Doles 2008 *Miracles and Manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the History of the Church* (Seffner, FL: Walking Barefoot Ministries).

shares His healing power and glory with His beloveds.

We will first examine some well-known Marian apparitions (and the medically validated miracles associated with them) and then examine some scientifically validated miracles associated with contemporary saints – Saint Padre Pio, the Venerable Fulton J. Sheen, and Saint John Paul II.

I.

Three Marian Apparitions

[Back to top](#)

The Church is quite careful about approving Marian apparitions as valid because a validation that is subsequently falsified would undermine her credibility. Perhaps this is why the apparition at Medjugorje has not been approved despite its initiation in 1981. The Church's long-standing criteria (administered by the Sacred Congregation for Propagation of the Doctrine of the Faith) are as follows:

1. There must be moral certainty, or at least great probability, that something miraculous has occurred, something that cannot be explained by natural causes, or by deliberate fakery.
2. The person or persons who claim to have had the private revelation must be mentally sound, honest, sincere, of upright conduct, and obedient to ecclesiastical authority.
3. The content of the revelation or message must be theologically acceptable, morally sound and free of error.
4. The apparition must yield positive and continuing spiritual assets: for example, prayer, conversion, and increase of charity.

Over the last five centuries, there have been nine Marian Apparitions approved by the Church. We will discuss three of them that have undergone particular historical and scientific scrutiny:

- A. The Apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe;
- B. The Apparition of Our Lady of Lourdes;
- C. The Apparition of Our Lady of Fatima.

I.A

The Apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe

According to several well-attested accounts (see below) the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to a native Aztec, Juan Diego, on December 9, 1531. She identified herself as the [Virgin Mary](#), "mother of the very true deity." She asked him to ask his Bishop – Juan de Zumarraga – to build a church atop Tepeyac Hill (now within the confines of Mexico City). Juan Diego did as he was instructed, but after relating his story to Zumarraga, he did not believe him. The Blessed Virgin appeared again to Juan Diego that same day (December 9th) and asked

him to return to the Bishop. On December 10th, Juan Diego returned to Zumarraga, but he still had doubts, and asked Juan Diego to return to the Hill and ask the Virgin for a miraculous sign. He did as he was instructed and the Lady promised a sign the next day (December 11). However, before Juan Diego could return to the Hill on December 11 his uncle Juan Bernardino became quite ill and Juan Diego stayed with him to find medical assistance and a priest. On December 12th when Juan Diego left his uncle to find a priest, the Virgin met him on the road and assured him that his uncle would be cured and told him to proceed to the Hill where he would find the sign required by Bishop Zumarraga. He went to Tepeyac Hill and found Castilian roses growing there (not native to Mexico), gathered them and put them in his tilma. When he returned with the roses to Bishop Zumarraga and opened his cloak to allow the roses to fall, the picture of the Lady of Guadalupe appeared on the tilma. Apparently the roses and the image were sufficient to convince Bishop Zumarraga to build the first Church (and sanctuary for the image) atop of Tepeyac Hill in 1531.

Some scholars have challenged the veracity of this story because it was not found either in the writings of Bishop Zumarraga or in an ecclesiastical report about the image. However, in 1995, Jesuit historian Xavier Escalada published a four-volume encyclopedia on the image and history of Our Lady of Guadalupe in which he reports and analyses a hitherto unknown sheet of parchment dated 1548 called “*Codex Escalada*.”¹⁸⁶ The parchment contains an illustrated story of the vision of Juan Diego and is signed by Antonio Valeriano and Bernardino de Sahagun. These signatures were authenticated by Banco de Mexico and Charles E. Dibble. The authentication of the signatures -- along with the parchment, illustrations, language, and style – validate both the parchment and the existence and vision of Juan Diego.¹⁸⁷

The image itself has many extraordinary attributes that border on the miraculous, and probably indicate it. Five attributes have been scientifically tested in the 20th and 21st centuries:

1. The material of the tilma has maintained its chemical and structural integrity for almost 500 years. This is quite remarkable considering that most replicas of tilmas with the same chemical and structural composition last only *15 years* before analyzable decomposition. Furthermore, the tilma was displayed without protective glass for its first 115 years, and was subjected to soot, candlewax, incense, and touching throughout its history. There is currently no scientific explanation for its physical and chemical longevity.¹⁸⁸
2. Though there are several parts of the cloth which have been painted subsequent to the original image (e.g. the moon underneath the Virgin’s feet, the angel holding the cloth, and the rays coming from the image), the original image of the Virgin herself does not

¹⁸⁶ See the *Codex Escalada* 1548 in http://basilica.mxv.mx/web1/-apariciones/Documentos_Historicos/Mestizos/Codice_1548.html

¹⁸⁷ See Alberto Peralta (2003). “El Codice 1548: Critica a una supesta Fuente Guadalupana del Siglo XVI.” *Artículos* (in Spanish). Proyecto Guadalupe. See Stafford Poole (July 2005). “History vs. Juan Diego”. *The Americas*. **62**: 1–16. doi:10.1353/tam.2005.0133. Stafford Poole (2006). *The Guadalupe Controversies in Mexico*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press..

¹⁸⁸ See Giulio Dante Guerra, AlleanzaCattolica.org, "La Madonna di Guadalupe". 'Inculturazione' Miracolosa. Christianita. n. 205–206, 1992. , accessed December 1, 2006.

appear to have been painted by an artist at the time. There is no sketch underneath it, no brush strokes, no corrections, and it appears to have been produced in a single step.

These

features were identified by Dr. Philip Serna Callahan (biophysicist and NASA consultant) who photographed the image under infrared light.¹⁸⁹

3. According to Nobel Prize winning biochemist, Richard Kuhn, who analyzed a sample of the fabric, the pigments used were from no known natural source, whether animal, mineral, or vegetable. Given that there were no synthetic pigments in 1531, this enigma remains inexplicable.¹⁹⁰
4. Dr. Callahan also noted that the original image on the tilma had not cracked, flaked, or decayed over 500 years while the paint and gold leaf had flaked or deteriorated considerably. This phenomenon has not yet been scientifically explained – and may not be able to be so explained.
5. The eyes of the Virgin have three remarkable qualities that cannot be explained through known technology in 1531 – and would be difficult to replicate with today's technology enhanced by computers, ophthalmologic knowledge, and digital photography:
 - a. Engineer, Jose' Aste Tonsmann, has amplified an image of the pupils of the Blessed Virgin by 2500 times, and can identify not only what appears to be the image of Bishop Zumarraga, but also several other witnesses of the miracle reflected there.
 - b. The images in the pupils also manifest the triple reflection called the Samson-Purkinje effect – which was completely unknown at the time of the image's formation.
 - c. The image in the eyes of the Virgin follow the curvature of the cornea precisely in the way it occurs in a normal human eye.

The first ophthalmologist to identify both the Samson-Purkinje effect and the precise corneal curvature in the images in both of the Virgin's eyes was Dr. Javier Torroella Bueno, MDS in 1956. Dr. Rafael Torrija Lavoignet made a detailed examination of the Virgin's eyes with an ophthalmoscope, and confirmed Dr. Bueno's findings, noting other remarkable similarities to human eyes. Since that time, the eyes have been examined by more than 20 ophthalmologists confirming the conclusions of the original examination. As noted above, Dr. Jose Aste Tonsmann (formerly of Cornell University working at IBM) amplified the Virgin's eyes by a factor of 2,500 times, and used a series of filters to eliminate "noise" in the amplified images. He not only confirmed the precise corneal curvature and the Samson-Purkinje effect, but also several other figures behind Bishop Zumarraga (the front figure pictured with a beard) all of whom were looking at the tilma in amazement.¹⁹¹ Readers interested in some of Dr. Tonsmann's

¹⁸⁹ See P. Callahan (1981). *The Tilma under Infrared Radiation: CARA Studies in Popular Devotion, vol. II, Guadalupe Studies, n° 3*. Washington D.C.: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, pp. 6–13. See also Thomas Sennott. 2011 "The Tilma of Guadalupe: A Scientific Analysis" in <http://www.motherofallpeoples.com/2011/12/the-tilma-of-guadalupe-a-scientific-analysis/>.

¹⁹⁰ See the comments of engineer Dr. Jose' Aste Tonsmann of the Mexican Center of Guadalupan Studies during a conference at Pontifical Regina Apostolorum Athenaeum in 2001. Reported in *Zenit* 2001. <https://web.archive.org/web/20100620110845/http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/religion/re0447.html>

¹⁹¹ Joe Aste Tonsmann 1981 *El Secreto de sus Ojos*. (Mexico City: Editorial Diana).

photographs will want to consult the following URL: <http://www.sancta.org/eyes.html>.

The above five enigmas in the tilma of Juan Diego are scientifically inexplicable today – and certainly cannot be explained by the artistic and preservation capabilities between 1531 to 1900. In view of this, it is reasonable and responsible to believe that this tilma had more than an extraordinary origin – indeed, a supernatural one.

In addition to the seemingly miraculous origin of the image, there have been many miracles associated with the tilma over the last several centuries – some concerned with healing, and one concerned with the tilma’s remarkable survival when a bomb was placed underneath it by a Mexican secularist in 1921. Despite the fact that a brass crucifix was completely bent over, and the altar was damaged, the tilma was left unharmed.¹⁹² Among the many healings that have taken place over the centuries through the tilma – or replicas that have touched the original – this author is personally acquainted with one man who has publically testified to being cured of fourth stage cancer in a remarkably short time after being prayed over under a replica of the tilma.¹⁹³

In conclusion, devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe portrayed on the remarkable tilma in the Cathedral atop Tepeyac Hill, has been a most remarkable source of conversion to Catholicism throughout Mexico. It has also been a source of strength and grace for the Catholic religion, particularly in times of persecution and secularism. The message of Our Lady to Juan Diego – filled with love and affection for the native people of the western hemisphere has inspired tens of thousands of people beyond the boundaries of Mexico, and she is now considered to be the patroness of all the Americas.¹⁹⁴ Her image can be found all over the United States as well as other non-Mexican countries in Latin America. The influence of this single devotion has been so great that Pope Benedict XIV in 1754 wept and uttered the words of Psalm 147 when he looked upon it for the first time -- “God has not dealt in like manner with any other nation.”

I.B

The Apparition of Our Lady of Lourdes

The appearance of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Bernadette Soubirous at the Grotto of Lourdes in 1858 is probably the most well-known Marian apparition in history—not so much because of the apparition itself as the thousands of miraculous cures that have taken place through the water of the Grotto.

On February 11, 1858, just outside of Lourdes, France, Bernadette Soubirous (a 14- year

¹⁹² See D.A. Brading, *Mexican Phoenix. Our Lady of Guadalupe: Image and Tradition Across Five Centuries*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, (2001), p. 314; Stafford Poole, *The Guadalupe Controversies in Mexico*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press (2006), p. 110.

¹⁹³ Michael Patterson, Seattle, Washington, was prayed over while being covered by a replica of it at the Napa Institute 2015. He testified to this at the same institute in 2016.

¹⁹⁴ See Carl Anderson 2009 *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Mother of the Civilization of Love* (NY: Doubleday Religion).

old girl without much formal education), her sister Toinette, and a friend Jeanne Abadie were searching for kindling and bones in a cave. Just as she had taken off her shoes and stockings, a lady, small in stature, dressed in white with a blue sash around her waist, and holding a gold rosary appeared to her. Bernadette tried to make the sign of the cross but was so scared she could not, at which point the Lady asked her to pray the rosary with her, restoring her calm. Bernadette was the only one to see and hear the apparition.

When Toinette returned home, she told their mother and both parents punished them for telling such a “story.” Nevertheless, Bernadette was drawn back to the cave, and the lady appeared to her again. Bernadette brought holy water with her, and sprinkled it on the apparition to see if she would shrink from it, but the Lady only smiled, at which point Bernadette told her that if she was not of God she would have to go away.¹⁹⁵ The lady smiled and bowed and Bernadette went into a kind of ecstasy—sensing her holiness and love. Her companions witnessed this ecstasy which seemed to last long after the apparition.

Bernadette returned a third time to the Grotto, and the lady gave her instructions to return several times throughout the upcoming two weeks. On February 20th, the lady taught her a prayer and asked for penance for the conversion of sinners.

Bernadette returned to the Grotto on several other occasions accompanied by hundreds of people. The official Lourdes website lists the major points of the apparitions as follows:¹⁹⁶

Sunday 21st February. Early in the morning, Bernadette was accompanied by about 100 people, after the apparition she was questioned by the Police Commissioner, Jacomet.

Tuesday 23rd February. Surrounded by 150 persons, Bernadette arrived at the Grotto. The Apparition reveals to her a secret “for her alone”.

Wednesday 24th February. The message of the Lady: "Penance! Penance! Penance! Pray to God for sinners. Kiss the ground as an act of penance for sinners!"

Thursday 25th February. Three hundred people were present. Bernadette relates; "She told me to go, drink of the spring (...) I only found a little muddy water. At the fourth attempt I was able to drink. She also made me eat the bitter herbs that were found near the spring, and then the vision left and went away."

Saturday 27th February. Eight hundred people were present. The Apparition was

¹⁹⁵ Anonymous, “The Apparitions in 1858” on the official Lourdes website. <https://en.lourdes-france.org/deepen/bernadette-soubirous/the-apparitions>.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

silent. Bernadette drank the water from the spring and carried out her usual acts of penance.

Sunday 28th. February. Over one thousand people were present at the ecstasy. Bernadette prayed, kissed the ground and moved on her knees as a sign of penance. She was then taken to the house of Judge Ribes who threatened to put her in prison.

Monday 1st. March. Over one thousand five hundred people assembled and among them, for the first time, a priest. In the night, Catherine Latapie, a friend from Lourdes, went to the Grotto, she plunged her dislocated arm into the water of the spring: her arm and her hand regained their movement.

Several additional cures occurred at the Grotto (seven of which were considered medically inexplicable--and therefore miraculous) which drew even more people to the cave. This caused a great deal of controversy both within the Church and the town. A decision was made in March to barricade the Grotto which had the effect of bringing it to the attention of the national press and national government. Bernadette was not to be deterred, and so visited the barricaded Grotto at night on several other occasions. On one such occasion (March 25, 1858) the lady declared that she was “the Immaculate Conception.” Her last apparition occurred on July 16, 1858.

The controversy concerning the closure of the Grotto became a national issue, compelling Emperor Napoleon III to formally reopen the Grotto on October 4, 1858. The Catholic Church was concerned about the immense popularity of the Grotto and the potential for people to be misled, and so the Bishop assembled an ecclesiastical committee in November 1858 to assess the veracity of Bernadette’s apparitions.¹⁹⁷ On January 18, 1860 the Bishop, following the advice of the committee, declared the apparition to be authentic. Bernadette was canonized as a saint in 1933. Today, almost 4 million pilgrims per year visit the shrine, and hundreds receive extraordinary and miraculous cures.

I.B.1 The Miraculous Cures

From the time of Blessed Mary’s first apparition to Bernadette Soubirous, the water from the Lourdes Grotto has been a source of miraculous healings both for those who have visited the

¹⁹⁷ The Church has definite criteria for judging the authenticity of an apparition. APPROVAL FOR MARIAN APPARITIONS (from the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Doctrine of the Faith): 1. “There must be moral certainty, or at least great probability, that something miraculous has occurred, something that cannot be explained by natural causes, or by deliberate fakery. 2. The person or persons who claim to have had the private revelation must be mentally sound, honest, sincere, of upright conduct, and obedient to ecclesiastical authority. 3. The content of the revelation or message must be theologically acceptable, morally sound and free of error. 4. The apparition must yield positive and continuing spiritual assets: for example, prayer, conversion, increase of charity.”

Grotto and even for those who used the water in remote places. Since the time of Bernadette, over 7,000 miraculous cures have been reported to the Lourdes Medical Bureau by pilgrims who have visited Lourdes (which does not include miracles that have taken place outside of Lourdes). There were so many purported cures associated with the water and Grotto of Lourdes that the Catholic Church decided to set up the Lourdes Medical Bureau to be constituted by and under the leadership of physicians and scientists alone. The forerunner of the Bureau was started by doctors affiliated with the Grotto in 1883. Pope Pius X formally constituted the Medical Bureau we know today in 1905. The objective of the Bureau is to render a judgment that a particular cure was near instantaneous, efficacious throughout the remainder of life, and in all other ways, scientifically inexplicable. The Bureau is constituted by 20 physicians and scientists. Its records are open to any physician or scientist who wants to make their own investigation or challenge to any particular case recognized by the above criteria as “miraculous.”

Since 1883, only 69 cases have been recognized as “miraculous” according to the strict standards of the Bureau. But this does not mean that the 7,000 other cures were not miraculous by other standards. These cases simply cannot be shown to be *completely* scientifically inexplicable – though their occurrence could be truly extraordinary and possibly – or even probably – miraculous. Recall the definition of “miracle” mentioned above – that the Lord is introducing transphysical (supernatural) causes and events into the natural patterns of physical nature.

The 69 cases approved by the Lourdes Medical Bureau have been inspected by large numbers of physicians and scientists, and the vast majority of them have been shown to be permanent and inexplicable cures. A list of cures is available at the following website -- http://www.miraclehunter.com/marian_apparitions/approved_apparitions/lourdes/downloads/lourdes_cures.pdf. Books and websites have been written about particular cases, but readers desiring more information on the above 69 cases will have to visit the Lourdes Medical Bureau. Arrangements can be made through the following website: <http://en.lourdes-france.org/deepen/cures-and-miracles/miraculous-cures-in-lourdes>.

Though many of these cases were truly remarkable, we will only examine three of them which had an impact far beyond the individual’s receiving a miraculous cure:

1. The case of Marie Bailly – attested to by the Nobel Prize winning physician Alexis Carrell – 1902.
2. The case of Gabriel Gargam – 1901.
3. The case of John Traynor – 1923.

I.B.2

Marie Bailly and Alexis Carrel – 1902

The first case concerns Marie Bailly, attested to by the Nobel Prize winning physician – Dr. Alexis Carrell. This case was examined by Fr. Stanley Jaki, Ph.D., who received two doctorates in physics and theology, was a notable contributor to the history and philosophy of

science, and a Templeton Prize winner.¹⁹⁸ This case is as much about Dr. Carrell as the recipient of the miraculous healing – Marie Bailly. Dr. Carrell won the Nobel Prize for techniques he perfected in vascular surgery and *Scientific American* credited him with “having initiated all major advances in modern surgery, including organ transplants.”¹⁹⁹

In 1902 a physician friend of Dr. Carrell invited him to help take care of sick patients being transported on a train from Lyons to Lourdes. Carrell, at that time, was an agnostic who did not believe in miracles, but consented to help out, not only because of friendship, but also an interest in what natural causes might be allowing such fast healings as those taking place at Lourdes. On the train, he encountered Marie Bailly who was suffering from acute tuberculous peritonitis with considerable abdominal distension with large hard masses.²⁰⁰ Though Marie Bailly was half-conscious, Carrell believed that she would pass away quite quickly after arriving at Lourdes – if not before. Other physicians on the train agreed with this diagnosis.

When the train arrived at Lourdes, Marie was taken to the Grotto where three pitchers of water were poured over her distended abdomen. After the first pour, she felt a searing pain, but after the second pour, it was lessened, and after the third pour, she experienced a pleasant sensation. Her stomach began to flatten and her pulse returned to normal.²⁰¹ Carrel was standing behind Marie (along with other physicians) taking notes as the water was poured over her abdomen, and wrote: “The enormously distended and very hard abdomen began to flatten and within 30 minutes it had completely disappeared. No discharge whatsoever was observed from the body.”²⁰² Marie then sat up in bed, had dinner (without vomiting), and got out of bed on her own and dressed herself the next day.²⁰³ She then boarded the train, riding on the hard benches, and arrived in Lyons refreshed. Carrel was still interested in her psychological and physical condition, and so asked that she be monitored by a psychiatrist and a physician for four months.²⁰⁴ After that, Marie joined the Sisters of Charity – to work with the sick and the poor in a very strenuous life – and died in 1937 at the age of 58.²⁰⁵

When Carrel witnessed this exceedingly rapid and medically inexplicable event, he believed he had seen something like a miracle, but it was difficult for him to part with his former

¹⁹⁸ Stanley Jaki made a thorough examination of Dossier 54 on this case at the Lourdes Medical Bureau. He gives the physician depositions (from Carrel and two other physicians) in the Dossier, as well as an analysis of it, in his introduction to a new edition of Alexis Carrel’s *The Voyage to Lourdes*. This was published by his own publishing company, Real View Books, and is available for purchase online at <http://www.realviewbooks.com/>. Fr. Jaki summarized the main parts of this case in a lecture given for the Catholic Medical Association. See Stanley Jaki 1999 “Two Lourdes Miracles and a Nobel Laureate: What Really Happened?” *Catholic Medical Association*. <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=2866>.

¹⁹⁹ See *ibid*.

²⁰⁰ Dr. Carrell wrote about this cure himself in a book entitled *The Voyage to Lourdes* using as the main protagonist Dr. Lerrac (“Carrel spelled backwards”) and changed the name “Marie Bailly” to “Marie Ferrand” in the story. It is a complete description of what Dr. Carrel saw on his train ride to Lourdes. See Dr. Alexis Carrel 1950 *The Voyage to Lourdes*, trans. by Virgilia Peterson (NY: Harper Brothers). An online is available free of charge at http://www.basicincome.com/bp/files/The_Voyage_to_Lourdes.pdf.

²⁰¹ See Jaki “Two Lourdes Miracles...”

²⁰² *Ibid*.

²⁰³ *Ibid*.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*.

skeptical agnosticism – so he did not yet return to the Catholic faith of his childhood. Furthermore, he wanted to avoid being a medical witness to a miraculous event because he knew that if it became public it would ruin his career at the medical faculty at Lyons.

Nevertheless, Marie Bailly's cure seemed so evidently miraculous (being so rapid, complete, and inexplicable) that it became public in the news media in France and throughout the world. Reporters indicated that Carrel did not think the cure was a miracle which forced Carrel to write a public reply stating that one side (some believers) was jumping to a miraculous conclusion too rapidly and the other side (the medical community) had unjustifiably refused to look at facts that appeared to be miraculous.²⁰⁶ Indeed, Carrel implied that Bailly's cure may have been miraculous.

As Carrel feared, his advocacy of the possibility of Bailly's miraculous cure led to an end of his career at the medical faculty of Lyons which ironically had a very good effect on his future – because it led him to the University of Chicago and then to the Rockefeller University. In 1912, he received the Nobel Prize for his work in vascular anastomosis. Carrel returned to Lourdes many times, and on one occasion, witnessed a second miracle – the instantaneous cure of an 18-month old blind boy. Despite these two miracles, Carrel could not bring himself to conclusively affirm the reality of miracles – real divine supernatural intervention manifest in the world. In 1938, one year after the death of Sr. Marie Bailly, Carrel became friends with the Rector of the Major Seminary in Rennes, who told him to consult with a Trappist monk -- who was a well-known spiritual director and friend of Charles de Gaulle – Fr. Alexis Presse, with whom he began a dialogue. In 1942, Carrel announced that he believed in God, the immortality of the soul, and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Two years later, in 1944, as Carrel was dying in Paris, he sent for Fr. Presse, who administered the Last Rites of the Church to him. He had not been able to let go of the miracles of Lourdes, and they had led him to continue his inquiry into his spiritual nature and Christian revelation. Ultimately he would find himself joined to the Lord through the Church of his childhood.

I.B.3

Gabriel Gargam -- 1901

The second case, that of Gabriel Gargam, occurred in 1901. He was born to practicing Catholic parents, but lost his faith at the age of 15, and no longer practiced it. Later in life he became a postal sorter, and during the course of his work in 1899, the train on which he had been sorting collided head on with another train travelling at 50 mph. He was thrown 52 feet from the train and was badly injured. After eight months, he was at the point of death -- a mere 78 pounds with gangrenous feet, unable to take solid food. He could only be fed once every 24 hours by a tube and required two nurses to take care of him. His condition was well-attested not only by his physicians, but by those involved in the lawsuit he filed against the railroad – the court records

²⁰⁶ Jaki. "Two Lourdes Miracles..."

and physicians' testimonies still exist today.²⁰⁷

Gargam spent two years in bed – unable to be moved from his room. Though his aunt (a religious sister) and his mother begged him to go to Lourdes, he refused to do so preferring to suffer his fate in his room. Finally he relented and consented to the trip, but being moved on a stretcher and riding on the train almost killed him. When he arrived at Lourdes he was in dire condition, and he went to confession and received a piece of Holy Communion, and then he was brought to the waters in the Grotto. The strain was so great, that he fell into a swoon and his attendants believed him to be dead, so they put him on a carriage, put a cloth on his face, and began to wheel him back to the hotel. On the way there, a Eucharistic procession was passing by. The priest leading the procession saw the sorrowful crowd around Gargam, and he blessed them with the Holy Eucharist, at which point Gargam's legs began to move under the sheets. He then sat upright by his own power (which he had not been able to do for two years), and then proceeded to get off the carriage and walk around by his own power. The astonished crowd accompanied him back to his hotel where he sat down to eat a hearty meal (though he had not taken solid food for two years).²⁰⁸

On August 20th, 1901, Gargam was examined by 60 physicians, all of whom pronounced him completely cured. They could not explain his cure through any known form of physical causation – a judgment which still holds true today. Gargam also underwent a spiritual metamorphosis, consecrating himself to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the service of the sick at Lourdes. He lived a normal healthy life until his death at 83 years of age.²⁰⁹

I.B.4

John Traynor – 1923

The third case, John Traynor, occurred in 1923. Traynor was raised a Catholic and was a bonafide WWI hero who was severely injured during the war. In 1915, in a third battle where he received severe wounds, he was sprayed with machine gun fire. A bullet lodged under his collarbone, he was wounded in the chest, and another bullet hit his head (which caused a permanent hole revealing his pulsating brain that was later blocked by a silver plate). As result of these injuries, Traynor's right arm was paralyzed (and his muscles atrophied), his legs were partially paralyzed, and he was epileptic (from the wound in his head). He was not able to do anything, and had to be moved from his bed to his wheelchair, sometime suffering four epileptic fits per day.²¹⁰

In 1923, Traynor's diocese of Liverpool organized a pilgrimage to Lourdes. Traynor who had a

²⁰⁷ Elaine Jordan "The Lourdes' Miracle of Gabriel Gargam" in *Tradition in Action*, http://www.traditioninaction.org/religious/h106_Lourdes.htm.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ See anonymous "Miracles of Lourdes" in Our Lady of the Rosary Library. <https://olrl.org/stories/lourdes.shtml>.

sincere devotion to the Blessed Virgin, wanted to go, though his physicians, wife, the government ministry of pensions, and even the priest organizing the pilgrimage begged him to stay home. They thought the trip would be suicide, and they were almost correct. Traynor was wheeled to the train in Liverpool, and suffered tremendously on the trip to Lourdes. When he arrived he was almost dead, and one woman wrote to his wife indicating that he would be buried at Lourdes. During his stay, he was taken to the baths nine times, and on the occasion of his tenth time (July 25, 1923), his legs felt agitated in the bath. After the bath, he was placed in the wheelchair to receive a Eucharistic blessing from the Bishop of Rheims who was passing by in a Eucharistic procession. After being blessed by the host, his arm (which had been paralyzed for 8 years) grew so strong that he was able to burst through his bandages. He then regained the use of his legs (which had been partially paralyzed for 8 years preventing him from standing and walking). He got out of his chair and walked several steps, but his attendants put him to bed for the evening because they were afraid he might hurt himself. During the night, he leapt out of his bed, knelt down to finish a rosary, and ran out his door to go to the Grotto – to the utter amazement of everyone watching. He knelt down in the Grotto to finish his prayers, but seemed to suffer a temporary lapse of memory about his condition prior to going into the bath for the tenth time. The healing not only cured his paralysis and epilepsy, it seemed to mask the memory of his former misery. Two days later, while riding on the train back to Liverpool, Archbishop Keating of Liverpool came into his compartment, and reminded him of his former condition – only then was his memory revived, and both he and the Archbishop broke down in tears.²¹¹

His cure was so complete that he went into the coal and hauling business (lifting 200-pound sacks of coal), pledged himself to service at the Grotto of Lourdes every summer, and died on the Eve of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1943 (20 years after his cure). A large number of conversions occurred in Liverpool as a result of the obvious miracle.²¹²

In 1926, the Lourdes Medical Bureau certified that Traynor was instantly and permanently cured in a completely scientifically inexplicable way. Not only was the paralysis in his arm and legs completely cured, but he regained the muscle and tendons in his skeletal arm. Moreover, the permanent hole in his temple healed completely, leaving no mark but a slight indentation. He received a certificate from Dr. McConnell of Liverpool attesting that he had not had an epileptic fit since 1923. All these cures occurred simultaneously and instantly.²¹³ A movie is currently being made by his great great grandson about the miracle, and will be available sometime in 2017.²¹⁴

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ See also Eleanor Barlow 2016 “Liverpool ‘miracle’ soldier’s story to be told in documentary directed by great-great-grandson” in *Echo News* (Liverpool), June 2016. <http://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/liverpool-miracle-soldiers-story-told-11455815>.

I.B.5
Conclusion

As previously noted, there are many other miraculous cases of healings associated with Lourdes beyond the above three – 69 of them officially judged a miracle by the Lourdes Medical Bureau, and literally thousands of others that are truly extraordinary, but not susceptible of being judged *completely* scientifically inexplicable. In view of this, it is highly likely that an extraordinary power – indeed, a supernatural power – appears to be continuously present and operative at the Grotto of Lourdes. The evidence is so extensive that even slight openness to the existence of God and God's action in the world, would lead one to draw this conclusion – at least prospectively.

If one concludes to the presence of divine power and healing at Lourdes, what would this mean beyond the obvious conclusion of God's existence and action in the world? One conclusion might be that God is love, for this is not only evident in the actual cures that take place multiple times every year at the Grotto, but also in the loving service of so many people who have dedicated their time, and even their lives, to helping sick pilgrims to bathe in these waters of hope. But what about those who do not receive a cure? What happens to them? The vast majority – though perhaps initially disappointed – find themselves spiritually renewed by the prayer, spiritual witness, and loving service at the Grotto. The experience causes them to refocus – not on receiving a cure in this world, but on their eternal salvation with the loving God who is so extraordinarily present at the sanctuary and the Grotto. Very few pilgrims leave the Grotto embittered. Quite the opposite – they are edified, spiritually rejuvenated, and focused on life with God which they now know includes an element of the cross to help them along the way. Acceptance of the cross as an integral means to the purification of love, and its ultimate purification in heaven, is perhaps the hardest dimension of human existence. Yet Lourdes, even when cures do not occur, has the remarkable effect of inciting us quite rapidly toward this acceptance. Lourdes is clearly about the love of God manifest in healing, service, and most blessedly in the acceptance of the cross of Jesus Christ.

How else does this remarkable story and Grotto affect us? There is the most obvious point of all – not only is God the Father and the risen Jesus present, but also the Blessed Virgin Mary. The modern age seems to have so much difficulty accepting the involvement of the Blessed Virgin in the work of divine providence and salvation. Yet as we have seen at Guadalupe and now at Lourdes, Blessed Mary has a way of appearing to people much like herself when she was a young woman in Nazareth. As noted earlier, the persons of the Blessed Trinity are not interested in monopolizing the providential stage – they desire to share it first with the Blessed Mother, then with saints such as Bernadette Soubirous, and even men of medicine like Alexis Carrel.

The Blessed Virgin's vital presence at Lourdes shows her centrality in the order of salvation by God's will. We might ask why He would want her to have such an important role in providence and salvation. One answer might be, as illustrated by Guadalupe and Lourdes, that

He seeks a feminine and motherly voice in the manifestation of His care and salvific intention. Mary's motherly affection toward Juan Diego and Bernadette shows this essential dimension – as well as the dimension of family – in God's providential plan and love. This motherly dimension is truly important for those who are suffering and need the kind of encouragement and solace that only a mother can give. This motherly care and solace richly complements the unconditional love of the Prodigal Son's father (Abba) and the unconditional brotherly love of Jesus Himself.

Some people might object that this constitutes “Mariolatry” – a divinization and worship of Mary. Far from it! Catholics are not interested in divinizing or worshiping Mary, but only acknowledging her vital role in the order of salvation – not only in first century Nazareth, but throughout history. When the Father made all of us adopted children through His Son Jesus, He also made us adopted children of Jesus' Mother Mary. She accepts us within the divine-human family she initiated through her consent to be the Mother of His Son. We are her children – not just in the first century – but for all time – and the miracles of Guadalupe and Lourdes confirm this logic of familial love.

One last observation—when the Blessed Virgin appeared to Bernadette Soubirous, she announced herself as “the Immaculate Conception.” This is another doctrine that non-Catholics believe to be extra-Biblical and somewhat difficult to believe. Though the Bible does not explicitly mention Mary being free of original sin at the time of her conception, the Church believed that this followed from her sinlessness-- almost universally attested by the Church Fathers. On this basis, the doctrine was declared by Pope Pius IX in 1854 in the papal bull *Ineffabilis Deus*. Given the veracity of the many miracles that have occurred at Lourdes, it is reasonable to assign the same veracity to Bernadette's account of the apparitions which apparently confirms the veracity of the Immaculate Conception by Mary's own words. This doctrine confirms God's long-standing providential plan to choose Mary as the mother of His son, and to keep her from being affected by concupiscence—one of the effects of the fall. This would protect Mary's capacity to raise Jesus with a perfected love. This doctrine makes complete sense. If the Son of God is to become incarnate as a baby (because He is fully human), then it seems fitting that His mother be able to raise Him in accordance with the fullest potential for human love. Though Bernadette may not have recognized the significance of Mary's announcement (at the age of 14 without formal education), she became a conduit to confirm an important doctrine about God's foreknowledge, unconditional love, providence, and intention to save.

I.C

The Apparition of Our Lady of Fatima

In the spring of 1916 three Portuguese shepherd children – Lucia Santos and her cousins Jacinta and Francisco Marto were visited three times by an apparition of an angel who identified himself as “The Angel of Peace.” They said that the angel taught them prayers and encouraged them to spend time in adoration. On May 13, 1917, the children were visited for the first time by

the Blessed Virgin Mary at the Cova da Iria in Fatima, who appeared to them as exceedingly radiant. She wore a white mantle edged with gold, and carried a rosary, telling the children to devote themselves to the Holy Trinity and to daily recitation of the rosary for an end to the First World War.

Though Lucia had asked her two cousins to keep the apparition secret, Jacinta told her mother, who in turn told it to several neighbors which made the children's apparition quite public. On June 13, 1917, the children experienced the second apparition, at which time the Blessed Virgin revealed that Jacinta and Francisco would die soon, but that Lucia would live longer to spread the message of peace from Fatima. This prediction proved to be true. Jacinta died in 1918 and Francisco died in 1919 during the world flu pandemic, but Lucia lived to be 97, dying on February 13, 2005 after spending most of her life in a discalced Carmelite Monastery.

On October 13, officials of the Portuguese government intercepted the children who were returning to the Cova da Iria, and interrogated them because hundreds of people were flocking to the Cova, and officials considered the three secrets that the Blessed Virgin had revealed to the children to be politically disruptive. The children returned to the Grotto on August 19 where the Blessed Virgin promised an extraordinary miracle on October 13. The Virgin visited the children three more times prior to October 13 with a similar message about praying the rosary for world peace.

On October 13, 1917, a huge crowd of around 50,000 people gathered at the Cova da Iria to witness the great miracle that Lucia had predicted would occur on that date. It had been raining and then it began to clear. Lucia shouted, "Look at the sun." The sun appeared to be rotating on its own axis, throwing out a variety of colors, and then it appeared to approach the earth causing many to believe that the world was ending. It then returned to its normal state. Though the ground had been quite wet from the rain prior to the miracle, the sun's activity during the miracle dried the ground significantly, baffling many of the engineers and scientists present. The miracle was variously described by reporters, doctors, and scientists. Dr. Domingos Pinto Coelho, reporting for the Catholic newspaper, described the event as follows:

The sun, at one moment surrounded with scarlet flame, at another aureoled in yellow and deep purple, seemed to be in an exceedingly swift and whirling movement, at times appearing to be loosened from the sky and to be approaching the earth, strongly radiating heat.²¹⁵

A reporter from the Lisbon paper, *O Dia* saw it this way:

The silver sun, enveloped in the same gauzy grey light, was seen to whirl and turn in the circle of broken clouds ... The light turned a beautiful blue, as if it had come through the stained-glass windows of a cathedral, and spread itself over the

²¹⁵ Cited in John DeMarchi 1952 *The Immaculate Heart: The True Story of Our Lady of Fatima* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young) p. 147.

people who knelt with outstretched hands ... people wept and prayed with uncovered heads, in the presence of a miracle they had awaited. The seconds seemed like hours, so vivid were they.²¹⁶

Dr. Almeida Garrett, Professor of Natural Sciences at Coimbra University described it as follows:

The sun's disc did not remain immobile. This was not the sparkling of a heavenly body, for it spun round on itself in a mad whirl, when suddenly a clamor was heard from all the people. The sun, whirling, seemed to loosen itself from the firmament and advance threateningly upon the earth as if to crush us with its huge fiery weight. The sensation during those moments was terrible.²¹⁷

Fr. John DeMarchi spent seven years researching the Fatima accounts of both the apparitions and the miracle of the sun, obtaining hundreds of testimonies to the phenomenon and presents them in three important works:

1. *The Immaculate Heart, The True Story of Our Lady of Fatima*,²¹⁸
2. *The True Story of Fatima*,²¹⁹ and
3. *Fatima: From the Beginning*.²²⁰

In addition to the large group of witnesses at the Cova de Iria, several witnesses reported seeing the solar phenomenon in the surrounding area – some as far as 18 to 40 kilometers from the Cova. DeMarchi found no witnesses outside the 40 kilometer perimeter of the Cova. The vast majority of those present attested to the sun's highly unusual and beautiful activity, giving various reports of how it seemed to look. DeMarchi found no one present who denied it.²²¹

How can this event be explained? It could not have been an astronomical phenomenon because it was not witnessed by anyone beyond 40 kilometers from the Cova da Iria. Therefore it had to be either a highly unusual local *atmospheric* phenomenon or a supernatural phenomenon acting like a gigantic spinning lens or prism suspended in the atmosphere. If it was caused by atmospheric conditions, such conditions would be exceedingly unusual in human recorded history. Though some scientists, such as Stuart Campbell, have suggested that the phenomenon might be explained by a large cloud of stratospheric dust (similar to one that created a reddening effect on the sun in China in 1983), this explanation does not explain how the phenomenon made the sun spin on its own axis, approach the earth, and then recede to its original position. Even if it could, the fact that the children predicted the precise time and place for such a highly unusual

²¹⁶ Ibid. p. 143.

²¹⁷ Ibid. p. 146.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ John DeMarchi 1956, *The True Story of Fatima* (St. Paul Minnesota: Catechetical Guild).

²²⁰ John De Marchi 1981 *Fatima: From the Beginning* (Fatima, Portugal: Missoes Consolata).

²²¹ John DeMarchi 1952 *The Immaculate Heart, The True Story of Our Lady of Fatima*, p. 143.

atmospheric event goes beyond natural explanation.²²²

The atmospheric explanation requires a convergence of a large number of highly unusual factors whose spontaneous occurrence would be very difficult to explain by natural causation. Even if one attributes the phenomenon to purely natural causes, the convergence of so many highly unusual atmospheric conditions, to produce a rotating disc approaching and then receding from the earth on the precise day predicted by the children strongly suggests that the phenomenon had a supernatural dimension. Recall C.S. Lewis' definition of a miracle: "The divine art of miracle is not an art of suspending the pattern into which events conform but of feeding new events into that pattern."²²³

Alternatively, the phenomenon could be explained on a purely supernatural basis – as a sort of transphysical round lens or prism suspended in the atmosphere spinning on its own axis, approaching the earth and then receding back to its original position. In either case, if the 50,000 witnesses were not deluded by mass hallucination, it seems that something supernatural took place at the Cova da Iria on October 13, 1917.

The explanation of mass hallucination has been proffered by some critics especially because the event was religious, and the witnesses were expecting a miracle to occur. Yet such an explanation is highly dubious because of the large number of witnesses (50,000) who ranged from believers to skeptical non-believers and included physicians, scientists, reporters, churchmen, attorneys, and other people of high education and repute. Furthermore, those who witnessed the event 18 to 40 kilometers away could not have been under the same "spell" as those in the Cova da Iria. Finally, the fact that the phenomenon dried wet ground (from a lengthy preceding rain) in a very short time shows that the event was not only in the minds of the participants. According to De Marchi, "Engineers that have studied the case indicated that an incredible amount of energy would have been necessary to dry up in a few minutes, the pools of water that had formed on the field."²²⁴ De Marchi concludes to the high improbability of mass hallucination as follows:

The prediction of an unspecified "miracle", the abrupt beginning and end of the alleged miracle of the sun, the varied religious backgrounds of the observers, the sheer numbers of people present, and the lack of any known scientific causative factor make a mass hallucination unlikely.²²⁵

In view of the combination of circumstances – the children's accurate prediction, the drying effect of the phenomenon, the highly unusual nature of the phenomenon (particularly the spinning, approaching, and receding of the sun), the large number of witnesses from various

²²² Stanley Jaki, the well-known Benedictine professor of physics and philosopher of science notes that the children's prediction alone shows the supernatural origin of the phenomenon. See Stanley Jaki, *God and the Sun at Fatima* (South Orange, NJ: Real View Books).

²²³ C.S. Lewis 1947 *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (New York: Harper One) p.95

²²⁴ See Ibid. p. 150.

²²⁵ Ibid. p. 278-82.

backgrounds and education, and the witnesses from as far away as 18 to 40 kilometers, it is reasonable and responsible to conclude to the presence of supernatural power at the Cova da Iria on October 13, 1917 – whether the event was produced by a convergence of highly unusual atmospheric factors or had a purely supernatural cause (such as a transphysical spinning lens or prism).

There have been many healing miracles connected with the Cova da Iria and the intercession of Our Lady of Fatima. Unfortunately, these miracles have not been as assiduously documented and medically confirmed as those at Lourdes; therefore I do not mention them here. The miracle of the sun is sufficient to speak of the authenticity of the apparitions.

II.

Validated Miracles through the Intercession of Contemporary Saints

[**Back to top**](#)

There are many well-documented medically confirmed miracles by objective scientific panels that occurred in the 20th and 21st centuries in connection with the canonization of some well-known saints – Saint Padre Pio, Saint John Paul II, Saint John XXIII, Blessed Fulton J. Sheen, etc. As the reader may know, one such miracle is required for beatification and a second miracle is required for canonization (declared sainthood). The diocese in which the miracles occurred is responsible for convening an objective scientific panel to judge whether a miracle is beyond any natural explanation. Such miracles are frequently instantaneously cured long-term malignancies, the instantaneous regeneration of dead tissue, instantaneous cure of blindness or long-term paralysis, etc. I will present only three such miracles here – one concerned with Padre Pio, another with Fulton J. Sheen, and another with Saint John Paul II. If readers are interested in dozens of other scientifically confirmed miracles of this kind, they need only do a google search for the canonization miracles of their favorite saints (e.g. “canonization miracles of St. John Paul II”). Normally, a description of the miracle and the procedures used to validate its non-natural (supernatural) origin are given in abundant detail.

II.A

A Miracle Attributed to St. Padre Pio

During his lifetime, Padre Pio performed a large number of miracle cures, about which several books have been written.²²⁶ Nevertheless, I will limit myself to a miracle connected with Padre Pio’s beatification, because this kind of miracle must be approved by a Diocesan Scientific Board, a Diocesan Theological Tribunal, a Vatican Scientific Board and a Vatican Tribunal. I have also taken the miracles for Venerable Fulton J. Sheen and St. John Paul II from the proceedings concerned with their beatification to assure the same quality of investigation and medical-scientific scrutiny.

²²⁶ See for example Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, 1999 *Padre Pio: The Wonder Worker*, (New Bedford, MA: Our Lady’s Chapel) or Renzo Allegri, 2000, *Padre Pio: Man of Hope* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications)

The miracle used for St. Padre Pio's beatification process was the case of Consiglia De Martino, a married woman with three children from Salerno, Italy. On October 31, 1995 Consiglia began to feel acute pain, followed by a very fast-moving growth in her neck. It quickly reached the size of a grapefruit, causing her and a friend to call their husbands to go to the Riuniti Hospital in Salerno. After ordering two CAT- scans ([Click here](#) to see photographs) the examining physician determined that she had suffered from diffuse lymphatic spilling of approximately two liters (two quarts) resulting from a rupture of the lymphatic canals. Consiglia was told that she would have to have a very difficult and complicated surgical intervention as soon as possible, and so the doctor scheduled the surgery for November 3.

Consiglia began to pray immediately to Padre Pio, and phoned his monastery at San Giovanni Rotondo where she spoke with Fra Modestino Fucci (a brother who was Padre Pio's friend and who had been promised by him before he died that he would be helping him with intercessory prayers). He prayed at the tomb of Padre Pio on November 1st and 2nd. During that time, prior to the surgical intervention, physicians gave no medical treatment to Consiglia.

On November 2, Consiglia noticed a marked decrease in pain followed by a rapid diminution of the swelling in her neck. The following day Consiglia was examined by physicians prior to the scheduled surgery. They noticed immediately the disappearance of the swelling in her neck and ordered x-rays of that area as well as her abdomen. The x-ray showed not only the complete cure of the rupture of the thoracic duct (the largest lymphatic vessel of the lymphatic system) that caused the lymphatic spilling, but also the complete disappearance of the large 2-quart liquid deposit in her neck as well as other liquid deposits in her abdomen. The surgery was cancelled, and a cat scan was ordered for November 6 which confirmed the results of the x-ray taken on November 3. Evidently, Consiglia had been immediately and inexplicably cured of a complex and dangerous condition without any medical intervention whatsoever. She attributed the cure to Padre Pio to whom she, her family, and Fra Modestino had been praying. Successive examinations of Consiglia showed no long-term effects of the condition.

The diocesan investigation of the miracle took place from July 1996 to June 1997 in the Salerno curia. Two ex officio experts and a medical consultant studied the published documentation and unanimously declared the "extraordinary and scientifically inexplicable" nature of the cure.²²⁷ On April 30, 1998, the 5-member Medical Committee of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints (CCS) at the Vatican declared unanimously that "The healing of the traumatically ruptured thoracic duct of Consiglia De Martino on November 3, 1995 is scientifically inexplicable."²²⁸ After the positive conclusion of the Medical Committee, the

²²⁷ Anonymous Vatican source 2011 "The Cure of Signora Consiglia De Martino" in *Inside the Vatican*. <https://miraclesatholic.wordpress.com/2011/03/11/the-cure-of-signora-consiglia-de-martino/>.

²²⁸ "The Path of Padre Pio to be Proclaimed Saint" <http://caccioppoli.com/The%20path%20of%20Padre%20Pio%20to%20sainthood,%20the%20miracle%20of%20Consiglia%20De%20Martino,%20the%20miracle%20of%20Matteo%20Pio%20Colella.html>.

assembly of Cardinals and Bishops Members of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints approved the Consiglia De Martino case as a miracle on October 20, 1998.

II.B

A Miracle Attributed to Fulton J. Sheen

A miracle used in the process of the beatification of Bishop Fulton J. Sheen took place on September 16, 2010 in Peoria, Illinois when James Fulton Engstrom – a newborn baby of Bonnie and Travis Engstrom – was found to be stillborn. During the delivery, James’ umbilical cord became knotted, cutting off blood, oxygen, and nutriment from the baby during the delivery process. When he emerged, James was apparently stillborn. Unlike healthy babies, he was pulseless, his arms and legs flopped to the sides and he was blue in color. Since Bonnie Engstrom had decided on a home delivery, the midwife and others had to perform CPR on the baby in anticipation of an ambulance to take him to the hospital. After 20 minutes, the ambulance arrived and took the lifeless child to the hospital. Upon arriving, doctors again tried to revive him through resuscitation and epinephrine injections, but after 61 minutes, were about to declare him deceased. Throughout the ordeal, his parents and some family friends prayed through the intercession of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen for the life of the child.

At the moment the doctors were about to call the death of James, his heart started to beat for the first time – at a normal heartbeat of 148 beats per minute. This in itself was extraordinary because James moved from lifelessness to ordinary cardiac activity instantaneously. However this is only part of the story. After 61 minutes of cardiac arrest and significant oxygen deprivation (except for the times during which CPR was administered), doctors expected James to suffer from massive organ failure. When this did not occur, they predicted that he would be severely disabled, noting that he would probably have cerebral palsy, requiring him to be strapped to a wheelchair with feeding tubes for the rest of his life, and consigning him to blindness and virtually no mental activity. Contrary to all expectations, James did not manifest any of these deficiencies or symptoms, but very clearly continued to develop like a normal child.

A seven-member panel of medical specialists assembled in Peoria (the place of the miracle) to examine all medical records associated with the case as well as James himself. They concluded in March 2014 that James’ recovery and development could not be explained through any scientifically known natural causation. Given the circumstances, he should have been either dead or severely disabled. A panel of theologians was subsequently convened that rendered a decision attributing James’ restoration to health as a miracle occurring through the intercession of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.

II.C

A Miracle Attributed to St. John Paul II

The second miracle leading to the canonization of John Paul II concerned a 50 year old woman from Santiago, Costa Rica, Floribeth Mora Diaz. She suffered a brain aneurysm in April,

2011. After a series of tests in a hospital, including a brain scan, and after a three- hour operation, the doctors told her that her condition was inoperable and terminal and that she would have only one month to live.

After receiving the bad news, Floribeth went home, and was consigned to bed to keep her comfortable for the remainder of her short life. She had a strong devotion to Pope John Paul II and so began praying for his intercession so that she could live to be with and help her husband and four children. Coincidentally, the beatification of Pope John Paul II was scheduled to take place on May 1, 2011, and Floribeth decided to watch the events on TV. After watching the beatification she went to sleep, at which time she had a vision of John Paul II speaking to her, saying “Get Up! Don’t be afraid!” Much to the surprise of her husband, she got out of bed and told him that she felt well—and that this had occurred after a vision of Pope John Paul II.

Floribeth subsequently underwent several medical tests—including new brain scans—which left her neurologist and other doctors completely stupefied by her recovery. They declared that her virtually instantaneous cure on May 1, at 2 a.m. was scientifically inexplicable by any known natural agency. Later a commission of medical physicians was assembled by the Vatican who brought Floribeth to Rome in secret, admitted her to a hospital for a new examination, comparing her current state of health to neurological records and scans from before her cure on May 1, 2011. They also concluded that her cure was scientifically inexplicable. This paved the way for the theological commission and Pope Francis to declare Pope John Paul II to be a saint.

III.

A Contemporary Eucharistic Miracle

[Back to top](#)

A true Eucharistic miracle occurs at every holy mass when the priest utters the words of consecration and the substance of the bread is transformed into the substance of Jesus’ body and the substance of the wine is transformed into the substance of His blood. However, this term is sometimes used to refer to extraordinary empirical signs of Jesus’ presence in the Eucharist, most notably, bleeding hosts, or the transmutation of a consecrated host into a piece of cardiac muscle tissue. The first reported Eucharistic miracle of the second (rarer) sort – the miracle of Lanciano -- took place in the 8th century.

Eucharistic miracles are quite difficult to certify scientifically, because of problems certifying that the blood came from the host or that the transmuted flesh was originally a consecrated host. However, one notable exception to this difficulty occurred under the auspices of Pope Francis (at that time Archbishop Jorge Bergoglio) on August 18, 1996 in the Church of Santa Maria y Caballito Almagro in Buenos Aires Argentina.²²⁹

²²⁹ See Mieczyslaw Piotrowski 2010 “Eucharistic Miracle in Buenos Aires” in *Love One Another!* http://www.loamagazine.org/nr/the_main_topic/eucharistic_miracle_in_buenos.html. For a summary of this article, see Aletheia website 2016 “Eucharistic Miracle Beheld by Pope Francis? A Polish magazine tells of Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, and an event in Buenos Aires” in <http://aletheia.org/2016/04/22/eucharistic-miracle-beheld-by-pope->

On that day in the evening, Fr. Alejandro Pezet was told by a woman parishioner that a consecrated host had been desecrated on a candleholder in the back of the Church. Unable to consume the host, Fr. Pezet put it into a glass of water into the tabernacle so that it would dissolve (the ordinary practice for respectfully handling such a host). When he opened the tabernacle on August 26, he saw that the host had been transformed into a piece of bloody tissue which was much larger than the original host. He informed Archbishop Bergoglio of the occurrence, who asked him to have the host professionally photographed. This occurred on September 6, 1996. It was decided to keep the host in the tabernacle without publicizing it or its origin.

After three years, the bloody tissue had not decomposed (which is truly extraordinary and virtually impossible to explain through natural causation – particularly because no special attempt was made to preserve it). Since the original photographs revealed the complete lack of decomposition, Archbishop Bergoglio asked that the bloody tissue be scientifically examined. On October 5, 1999, in the presence of the Cardinal's representatives, scientist Dr. Ricardo Castanon Gomez took a sample of the bloody fragment and sent it to New York for analysis.²³⁰ Since Dr. Gomez did not want to prejudice the scientific committee who would be examining the tissue in New York, he did not reveal its source. A team of five scientists was assembled, including the famous cardiologist and forensic pathologist, Dr. Frederic Zugibe (author of many books on forensic pathology, deceased 2013²³¹). Zugibe testified that:

The analyzed material is a fragment of the heart muscle found in the wall of the left ventricle close to the valves. This muscle is responsible for the contraction of the heart. It should be borne in mind that the left cardiac ventricle pumps blood to all parts of the body. The heart muscle is in an inflammatory condition and contains a large number of white blood cells. This indicates that the heart was alive at the time the sample was taken. It is my contention that the heart was alive, since white blood cells die outside a living organism. They require a living organism to sustain them. Thus, their presence indicates that the heart was alive when the sample was taken. What is more, these white blood cells had penetrated the tissue, which further indicates that the heart had been under severe stress, as if the owner had been beaten severely about the chest.²³²

What is so remarkable about this testimony is not so much the fact that the tissues comes from the wall of the left ventricle, but that white blood cells are present in large numbers in it, requiring that the tissue be removed when the heart was still alive and pumping. This feature precludes a great number of possible scenarios of fraud which a critic might propose, for it cannot be thought that officials in the Church had authorized the torture and death of a male with

[francis/](#).

²³⁰ Ibid. Aleiteia website.

²³¹ Wikipedia "Frederic Zugibe" in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Zugibe.

²³² Ibid. Aleiteia website.

AB blood type (the same as on the Shroud of Turin and the Facecloth of Oviedo), opened his chest while he was still alive (after torturing him), and removed the tissue from his beating heart. If this scenario is out of the question, then one must ask the origin of this tissue which came from the tabernacle where the desecrated host was stored (as witnessed by the physician who extracted it, Dr. Ricardo Castanon Gomez). How did a piece of non-decomposing cardiac muscle tissue from the wall of the left ventricle with significant numbers of white blood cells (which had penetrated the tissue) make its way into the glass inside the tabernacle where the desecrated host had been stored in secret by Fr. Alejandro Pezet? How did this specific piece of tissue (which could only have come from a live, tortured subject) make its way into the tabernacle? The major factors needed to avert the criticism of “pious fraud” are in place, because solid medical evaluation shows that the sample had not decomposed and cannot be obtained from a deceased subject (i.e. a cadaver). Short of the fantastic scenario mentioned above, this non-decomposing piece of tissue appears to be the result of a transmutation of a consecrated, desecrated host witnessed not only by Fr. Alejandro Pezet, but also by his Bishop, Archbishop Jorge Bergoglio (Pope Francis).

IV.

Conclusion

[Back to top](#)

The above three Marian apparitions (and the miracles associated with them), the three intercessory miracles of the saints, and the Eucharistic miracle witnessed by Pope Francis, are but a very small sample of miracles manifest in the 20th century. They are recounted here because they have been subject to considerable scientific scrutiny by experts who are believers and non-believers. As noted above, the Medical Commission of Lourdes has certified 69 miracles, the complete documentation for which is available through the Lourdes Medical Commission. Yet these 69 miracles do not exhaust the miracles of Lourdes – there are literally thousands of them that have not been subject to the above scientific scrutiny – or could not be unanimously declared by believing and unbelieving scientists to be *completely* beyond scientific and natural explanation. The same holds true for healing miracles associated with the Tilma of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the water and apparition of Our Lady of Fatima. Padre Pio performed dozens of miracles during his lifetime, and every canonized saint in the 20th century had to be connected with at least two miracles judged to be completely scientifically and naturally inexplicable. Though Eucharistic miracles are much rarer, the above miracle associated with Pope Francis in Buenos Aires does not exhaust the domain of Eucharistic miracles.²³³ Moreover, as noted above, there are literally thousands of miracles associated with charismatic healing services (in the name of Jesus) that have been catalogued and reported.²³⁴

²³³ For example, one has been recently reported in Poland. See Ibid. See Mieczyslaw Piotrowski 2010 “Eucharistic Miracle in Buenos Aires” in Love One Another!

²³⁴ There are multiple sites that publish unvalidated accounts of miracles by the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus, such as <http://www.christian-faith.com/true-stories-testimonies-of-jesus-christ/>; and <http://www.apologeticspress.org/AboutAP.aspx> and <http://www.godisreal.today/modern-day-miracles/>. There are also many good books about contemporary miracles done through the Holy Spirit and the name of Jesus – such as, Craig Keener 2011 Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts (2 Volume Set); (Grand

The above miracles not only help to give credence to Christian faith, the risen Jesus, and His real presence in the Eucharist, but also ground the rich theology of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints that constitute the mystical body and the living tradition of the Catholic Church. It seems strange to me that some Christian denominations think that God would not want to share His glory and His Son's glorification with all of us – and allow our little unique sparks of glorified goodness and love to constitute His Son's mystical body. After all, all Christians acknowledge that God is unconditional love, and as such, He cannot possibly want to hoard His glory for Himself. His nature is to give it away, to share it, to create community, and to allow His infinite richness to be expressed like countless little finite expressions that come together in His providential weave like a gigantic tapestry.

The Christian view of God shouts out that He would not only share His glory, but delight in its being freely appropriated and magnified again with everyone in the mystical body. Hence, devotion and prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints is perfectly consistent with His infinitely good and loving nature – and it enriches our experience of His goodness, glory, and love. Since we are finite in intellection and intuition, we cannot appropriate God's infinite glory, goodness, and love in a single intuitive moment. All we can do is appreciate finite manifestations of that glory in His Incarnate Son, in the goodness and wisdom of scripture, in the manifestations of the Blessed Virgin Mary who has become our Mother, and in the lives of the saints, who though imperfect reflect in so many extraordinary ways, God's glory, love, and goodness in their lives.

This fills our contemplative experience with great richness, for it breaks the Divine Light into a multifaceted spectrum, enabling us to appreciate evermore deeply not only the infinite goodness and love of God, but also His glory and beauty. Gerard Manley Hopkins saw His glory and beauty in nature in his poems "God's Grandeur" and "The Wind Hover," but he also saw God's beauty manifest in the goodness and love of the saints in his poem "Kingfishers." Beginning with God's glory, beauty, and richness manifest in nature, he concludes with his recognition of a higher beauty manifest in justice and love:

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves — goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,
Crying *Whát I dó is me: for that I came.*
I say móre: the just man justifies;

Rapids, MI: Baker Academic). See also Jeff Doles 2008 *Miracles and Manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the History of the Church* (Seffner, FL: Walking Barefoot Ministries).

Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is —
Christ — for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

What Hopkins understood is that Christ's glory is expressed not only in His goodness, love, and truth, but also in the beauty of His person. Beauty awakens us, takes hold of us, and moves us deeply within our being filling us with a sense of appreciation, awe, resonance, harmony, and fulfillment. It moves us at once to great excitement and great calm as if it is filling our deepest interior needs with a completion or fulfillment beyond our capacity to produce. Beauty takes hold of us – we do not take hold of it, and when the highest beauties of the divine person, love, goodness, and truth take hold of us, they can move us not only to feelings of ecstasy over joy, but also to an awareness of holiness, mystery, and communion with God. In the first volume of his trilogy *Glory*, Hans Urs von Balthasar expresses it this way:

Before the beautiful—no, not really *before* but *within* the beautiful—the whole person quivers. He not only 'finds' the beautiful moving; rather, he experiences himself as being moved and possessed by it.²³⁵

Von Balthasar's observation pertains to all beauty – from natural beauty to divine beauty – but when it applies to divine beauty, the feelings and consciousness awakened by it reaches a supernatural height. This insight helps to reveal why God would share His glory with the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints. It is not only because such sharing is consistent with His unrestricted goodness and love, but because it is part of His plan to awaken our sense of appreciation, awe, wonder, sacredness, and joy revealed in the beauty of the goodness and love of His Son's Mother and the saints. As we contemplate the life of the Virgin Mary and include her in our prayers – and further contemplate the lives of the saints, in their goodness, holiness and love, we put a prism in front of the light of God's unrestricted glory making it a myriad of interwoven colors and shapes – a veritable symphony of holiness and love. The above miracles not only serve to validate this view of the God of Jesus Christ, but also reveal the same beauty of goodness and love that they validate. Miracles – scientifically and naturally inexplicable events occurring through apparitions and prayer -- are not only real, they validate the truth of God's presence, goodness, and love – and above all, they reveal His beauty, glory, mystery, holiness, and majesty – they fill us with wonder, awe, fascination, and delight – the very thing lacking in a purely mundane materialistic view of reality. If we are to enjoy their richness to the full, we will also want to practice devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary (through the rosary) and allow ourselves to be moved by lives of the saints who reflect the glory and grandeur of God. We will discuss these devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the saints, and the Eucharist in Volume 12.

²³⁵ Edward T. Oakes and David Moss, eds. 2004, *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) p 270.

References

- Antonacci, Mark. 1998. "Appendix F- Fire Simulation Model." *The Resurrection of the Shroud: New Scientific, Medical, and Archeological Evidence*. New York: M. Evans and Company
- Augustine, Saint 1991. *Confessions*. Trans. by Henry Chadwick. (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Aune, David E. 1980. "Magic in Early Christianity." *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt II*, 23.2, pp. 1507-57.
- Barbet, Pierre. 2014. *A Doctor at Calvary: The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ As Described by a Surgeon* (New York: Barnes and Noble -- Allegro Editions).
- Barrett, Jim. 1996. "Science and the Shroud Microbiology Meets Archaeology in a Renewed Quest for Answers" in *The Mission* (A journal of the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio) Spring 1996.
- Bernhard, Andrew, trans. 2006. "The Infancy Gospel of Thomas" in *Other Early Christian Gospels: A Critical Edition of the Surviving Greek Manuscripts*. (T&T Clark Biblical Studies). Available through <http://www.gospels.net/translations/infancythomastranslation.html>
- Betz, Johannes. 1968-70. "Eucharist" in *Sacramentum Mundi*. Ed. by Karl Rahner, Vol. 2. (London: Burns & Oates).
- Bromiley, Geoffrey. 1988. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company).
- Brown, Raymond. 1970. *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI* (Vol. 2) in *The Anchor Bible* (Vol. 29A). (New York: Doubleday).
- . 1973. *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus*. (New York: Paulist Press).
- . 1994(a). *An Introduction to New Testament Christology*. (New York: Paulist Press).
- Catechism of Catholic Church*. 1997. (Libreria Editrice Vaticana).
- Charles, R.H. 1913. *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

- Charlesworth, James H., ed. 2006(a). *Jesus and Archaeology*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company).
- . 2006(b). "Jesus Research and Archaeology: A New Perspective" in *Jesus and Archaeology*. Ed. by James H. Charlesworth. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company).
- Danin, Avinoam. 1997. "Pressed Flowers," in *Eretz Magazine* 55, pp. 35-37 and 69, on p. 69.
- Davis, Stephen T. 1999. "Is Belief in the Resurrection Rational?" In *Philo* Vol. 2, pp. 57-58.
- De Gail, Paul. 1983. "Paul Vignon" in *Shroud Spectrum International* 1983 (6)
(<https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/ssi06part7.pdf>).
- Denzinger, H. and Schönmetzer, A. 1965. *Enchiridion Symbolorum*. (New York: Herder).
- Di Lazzaro, Paolo, Murra, Daniele, Santoni, Antonio, Fanti, Giulio, Nichelatti, Enrico, and Baldacchini, Giuseppe. 2010. "Deep Ultraviolet Radiation Simulates the Turin Shroud Image," *Journal of Imaging Science and Technology*, July-August 2010.
- Dodd, C.H. 1962. *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments*. (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers).
- Dunn, James, D.G. 1975. *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament*. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press).
- . 1991. *The Partings of Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity*. (London: SCM).
- Fanti, Giulio and Gaeta, Saverio. 2013. *Il Mistero della Sindone: Le Sorprendenti Scoperte Scientifiche sull'enigma del Telo di Gesù* (Milan: Editore Rizzoli).
- Fanti, Giulio and Maggiolo, Roberto. 2004. "The Double superficiality of the frontal image on the Turin Shroud", *Journal of Optics A: Pure and Applied Optics* 6, pp. 491- 503.
- Fitzmyer, Joseph A. 1988. "The Aramaic Background of Philippians 2:6-11." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 50, pp. 470-483.
- . 1990. "Pauline Theology." In *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Ed. by Brown, Fitzmyer, and Murphy. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall).
- Flannery, Austin. 1975. *Vatican Council II Vol. 1: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents*. (Northport, New York: Costello Publishing Company).

- Frei, Max. 1983. "Identificazione e classificazione dei nuovi pollini della Sindone," in *La Sindone, Scienza e Fede, Atti del II Convegno Nazionale di Sindonologia*, Bologna, November 27-29, 1981, CLUEB, Bologna 1983, pp. 277-284, on p. 281.
- Heras, Guillermo, Villalain, Jose-Delfin, Rodriquez, Jorge Manuel. 1998. *Comparative Studies of the Sudarium of Oviedo and the Shroud of Turin*. III Congreso Internazionale de Studi sulla Sindone Turin. (<http://www.teachingfaith.com/files/books/Sudarium.PDF>) pp. 1-17.
- Fuller, Reginald H. 1971. *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives*. (New York: The Macmillan Company).
- Gunkel, H. 1888. *Die Wirkungen des heiligen Geistes nach der populären Anschauung der apostolischen Zeit und nach der Lehre des Apostels Paulus*. Göttingen.
- Guscin, Mark. 1997. "The Sudarium of Oviedo: Its History and Relationship to the Shroud of Turin" in *Proceedings of the Nice Symposium on the Shroud of Turin*. May 1997. (<https://www.shroud.com/guscin.htm#top>).
- Habermas, Gary R. 2006. "Mapping the Recent Trend Toward the Bodily Resurrection Appearances of Jesus in Light of Other Prominent Critical Positions." In *The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N.T. Wright in Dialogue*. Ed. by Robert B. Stewart. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press).
- Haralick, Robert M. 1983. "Analysis of Digital Images of the Shroud of Turin," publication of Spatial Data Analysis Laboratory, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg VA 24061.
- Harvey, Anthony Ernest. 1982. *Jesus and the Constraints of History: The Bampton Lectures, 1980*. (London: Duckworth).
- Heller, John and Adler, Alan. 1980. "Blood on the Shroud of Turin" in *Applied Optics* 19 (16) pp. 2742-2744.
- Hengel, Martin. 1980. *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*. Trans. by John Bowden. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press).
- Iannone, John. 199-2001. "The Shroud of Turin – Evidence it is authentic" in *New Geology*

- Isenberg, Wesley W., trans. 1990. "The Gospel of Philip." In *The Nag Hammadi Library*, revised edition. Ed. by James M. Robinson. (San Francisco: HarperCollins). Available through <http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/gop.html>.
- Jackson, John P. 1990. "Is the Image on the Shroud Due to a Process Heretofore Unknown to Modern Science?" *Shroud Spectrum International* No. 34, March 1990, pp. 3-29.
- 1991. "An Unconventional Hypothesis to Explain all Image Characteristics Found on the Shroud Image" in 'History, Science, Theology and the Shroud' ed. by A. Berard (St. Louis: Symposium Proceedings) (<http://theshroudofturin.blogspot.com/2012/01/john-p-jackson-unconventional.html>).
- 2009. "Experts question scientist's claim of reproducing Shroud of Turin" October 6, 2009 (http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/experts_question_scientists_claim_of_reproducing_shroud_of_turin/)
- Jackson, John P. and Propp, Keith E. 2004. "Comments on Rogers' "Testing the Jackson 'Theory' of Image Formation" in the Shroud of Turin website 2004 (<http://www.shroud.com/pdfs/jacksonpropp.pdf>).
- Jackson, John P., Jumper, Eric J. and Ercoline, W. R.. 1982. "Three Dimensional Characteristic of the Shroud Image," *IEEE 1982 Proceedings of the International Conference on Cybernetics and Society*, October 1982, pp. 559-575.
- 1984. "Correlation of Image Intensity on the Turin Shroud with the 3-D Structure of a Human Body Shape," *Applied Optics*, Vol. 23, No. 14,15 July 1984, pp. 2244-2270.
- James, M.R., trans. 1924. "The Gospel of Peter," in *The Apocryphal New Testament*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press). Available through <http://www.gnosis.org/library/gospete.htm>
- Jeremias, Joachim. 1958. *Heiligengräber in Jesu Umwelt*. (Göttingen).
- . 1966. *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*. (London: SCM Press).
- . 1969. "The Problem of the Historical Jesus." In *In Search of the Historical Jesus*. Ed by Harvey K. McArthur. (London: Charles Scribner's Sons).
- . 1971. *New Testament Theology*. Vol.1. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons).
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. 1991. *The Gospel According to Luke*. In *Sacra Pagina*, Vol. 3. Ed. by Daniel J. Harrington. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press).

- Jones, Stephen E. 2013. "New tests by Prof. Giulio Fanti show the Shroud of Turin could date from the time of Christ" in *The Shroud of Turin Blog* (<http://theshroudofturin.blogspot.com/2013/04/new-tests-by-prof-giulio-fanti-show.html>).
- Josephus, Flavius. 1965. *Jewish Antiquities*. Ed. and trans. By Louis H. Feldman in *Loeb Classical Library*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
- Jumper, Eric J. 1982. "An Overview of the Testing Performed by the Shroud of Turin Research Project with a Summary of Results," *IEEE 1982 Proceedings of the International Conference on Cybernetics and Society*, October 1982, pp. 535-537.
- Jumper, Eric J., Adler, Alan D., Jackson, John P., Pellicori, Samuel F., Heller, John H., and Drusik, J. R. 1984. "A Comprehensive Examination of the Various Stains and Images on the Shroud of Turin," *Archaeological Chemistry III*, ACS Advances in Chemistry No. 205, J.B. Lambert, Editor, Chapter 22, American Chemical Society, Washington D.C., pp. 447-476.
- Jumper, Eric J. and Mottern, Robert William. 1980. "Scientific Investigation of the Shroud of Turin," *Applied Optics*, Vol. 19, No. 12, pp. 1909-1912.
- Karris, Robert J. 1990. "The Gospel According to Luke" in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. (Inglewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall).
- Keener, Craig. 2011. *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Publishing).
- Kirby, Peter. 2014. "Cornelius Tacitus." In *Early Christian Writings*. (<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/tacitus.html>).
- Küng, Hans. 1978. *On Being a Christian*. Trans. by Edward Quinn. (Glasgow: Fount Paperbacks).
- Latourelle, René. 1979. *Finding Jesus Through the Gospels: History and Hermeneutics*. (New York: Alba House).
- Lohmeyer, Ernst. 1928. "Kyrios Jesus: Eine Untersuchung zu Phil 2:5-11." *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Philosophisch-historische Klasse 1927-28/4. (Heidelberg: Winter).
- Lonergan, Bernard. 1972. *Method in Theology*. (New York: Herder and Herder).
- Long, John. 2007 (A). *The Shroud of Turin's Earlier History: Part One: To Edessa in Bible and Spade*. Spring 2007. (<http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2013/03/14/The-Shroud-of-Turins-Earlier-History-Part-One-To-Edessa.aspx>).

- 2007 (B) *The Shroud of Turin's Earlier History: Part Two: To the Great City in Bible and Spade*. Fall 2007. (<http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2013/03/20/The-Shroud-of-Turins-Earlier-History-Part-Two-To-the-Great-City.aspx>).
- 2013 (A) *The Shroud of Turin's Earlier History: Part Three: The Shroud of Constantinople* (<http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2013/03/28/The-Shroud-of-Turins-Earlier-History-Part-Three-The-Shroud-of-Constantinople.aspx>).
- 2013 (B) *The Shroud of Turin's Earlier History: Part 4: To Little Lirey* (<http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2013/09/05/The-Shroud-of-Turins-Earlier-History-Part-4-To-Little-Lirey.aspx>).
- Lüdemann, Gerd. 1994. *The Resurrection of Jesus: History, Experience, Theology*. Trans. By John Bowden. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press).
- Mally, Edward J. 1968. "The Gospel According to Mark." In *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Ed by Raymond Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.), Vol. II.
- Maloney, P.C. 1999. "A contribution toward a history of botanical research on the Shroud of Turin," in *Proceedings of the 1999 Shroud of Turin International Research Conference*, Richmond, June 18-20, Magisterium Press, Glen Allen, Virginia, USA 2000, pp. 241-266, on pp. 244-246.
- Marinelli, Emanuela. "The question of pollen grains on the Shroud of Turin and the Sudarium of Oviedo" Geological and Natural CC by the University of Rome *La Sapienza* (<https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/marinelli2veng.pdf>).
- McArthur, Harvey K., ed. 1969(a). *In Search of the Historical Jesus*. (London: Charles Scribner's Sons).
- . 1969(b). "Basic Issues, A Survey of Recent Gospel Research." In *In Search of the Historical Jesus*. Ed by H.K. McArthur. (London: Charles Scribner's Sons).
- McKenzie, John L. 1965. *Dictionary of the Bible*. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.).
- . 1968. "The Gospel According to Matthew." In *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc).
- Meier, John P. 1991. *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*. Vol. 1. (New York: Doubleday).
- . 1994. *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*. Vol. 2. *Mentor, Message, and Miracles*. (New York: Doubleday).

----. 1999. "The Present State of the 'Third Quest' for the Historical Jesus: Loss and Gain. In *Biblica* 80, pp. 459-487.

Miller, Vernon D. and Samuel F. Pellicori. 1981. "Ultraviolet Fluorescence Photography of the Shroud of Turin," *Journal of Biological Photography*, Vol. 49, No. 3, pp. 71-85.

Moody, Raymond A. 1975. *Life After Life*. (New York: Harper Collins).

Mullins, Terence Y. 1949. "Jewish Wisdom Literature in the New Testament" *Journal of Biblical Literature* Vol. 68, No. 4, pp. 335-339.

Quarles, Charles. 2006. "The Gospel of Peter: Does it Contain a Precanonical Resurrection Narrative?" In *The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N.T. Wright in Dialogue*. Ed. by Robert B. Stewart. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), pp. 106-120.

Rigaux, Bédard. 1958. "L'historicité de Jésus devant l'exégèse récente." In *Revue Biblique*, 68, pp. 481-522.

Rochais, Gerard. 1981. *Les Recits De Resurrection Des Morts Dans Le Nouveau Testament*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Rogers, Raymond. 2004. *Shroud of Turin Guide to the Facts*.
<https://shroudstory.wordpress.com/2012/02/26/introduction-to-ray-rogers-shroud-of-turin-faq/>

----- 2005. "Studies on the Radiocarbon Sample from the Shroud of Turin." *Thermochimica Acta*, Vol. 425, Issue 1-2, January 20, 2005. pp. 189-194.

Sanders, E.P. 1985. *Jesus and Judaism*. (Philadelphia: Fortress).

Scavone, Daniel C. 1999. "Joseph of Arimathea, the Holy Grail, and the Edessa Icon" in *Arthuriana*, 9.4 (Winter, 1999): 3-31.

----- 2008. *Besançon And Other Hypotheses For The Missing Years: The Shroud From 1200 To 1400* in *Shroud Science Group International Conference* at Ohio State University August 14-17, 2008.

Schwartz, Barry. 2012. "The Image on the Shroud of Turin is Not a Scorch" in The Shroud of Turin Blog—shroudstory.com. URL: <http://shroudstory.com/2012/02/10/the-image-on-the-shroud-of-turin-is-not-a-scorch/>.

Stewart, Robert B., ed. 2006. *The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N.T. Wright in Dialogue*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press).

- Tacitus, Cornelius. 2011. *Annals*. In *Perseus Digital Library*, N.D. Ed. by Alfred John Church, William Jackson Brodribb, Ed., (Bk. 15, Ch. 44).
- Torrey, Charles Cutler. 1916. *The Composition and Date of Acts*. (Cambridge, Harvard University Press).
- Viviano, O.P., Benedict T. 1990. "The Gospel According to Matthew." In *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Ed by Raymond Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.).
- von Wahlde, Urban C. 2006. "Archeology and John's Gospel." In *Jesus and Archaeology*. Ed. by James H. Charlesworth. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company).
- Whanger, Alan D. 1997. "A Reply to Doubts Concerning The Coins Over the Eyes" in *The Shroud of Turin Website* (<https://www.shroud.com/lombatti.htm>).
- Whanger, Alan D., and Mary. 1985. "Polarized Image Overlay Technique: A New Image Comparison Method and its Applications", *APPLIED OPTICS*, Vol. 24, No. 6, 15 March 1985, pp. 766-772.
- William Meacham, William. 1998. "C-14 Debate from the Shroud Newsgrop: alt.turin-shroud" (<http://www.shroud.com/c14debat.htm>).
- Wilson, Ian. 1978. *The Shroud of Turin* (New York: Doubleday).
- Wright, N.T. 1992. *The New Testament and the People of God*. Vol. 1. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press).
- . 1996. *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Vol 2. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press).
- . 2002. *The Contemporary Quest for Jesus*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press).
- . 2003. *The Resurrection of the Son of God*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press).