

J. D. ATKINS

The Doubt of the Apostles and the Resurrection Faith of the Early Church

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*
495

Mohr Siebeck

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The Doubt of the Apostles and the Resurrection Faith of the Early Church

The Post-Resurrection Appearance Stories of the
Gospels in Ancient Reception and Modern Debate

Mohr Siebeck

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To Alice, Isaiah, and Elijah
for your unwavering love and support

and

πᾶσιν τοῖς διστάζουσι·
εἰρήνη ὑμῖν

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Easter 2019

J. D. Atkins

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in addition to those found in P. H. Alexander, ed., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999) and in Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidinow, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Ach	Achmimic Coptic
AJ	<i>Acts of John</i>
Adamant. Dial.	<i>Adamantius Dialogue (De Recta in Deum Fide)</i>
BBC	Blackwell Bible Commentaries
BCNHE	Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, Section “Études”
BCNHT	Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi, Section “Textes”
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BLC	Bardaïsan of Edessa, <i>The Book of Laws of Countries</i>
Boh	Bohairic Coptic
EBC	The Expositor’s Bible Commentary
Ephrem, <i>Comm. Diat.</i>	Ephrem of Syria, <i>Commentary on the Diatessaron</i>
Ephrem, <i>Hymn. c. haer.</i>	Ephrem of Syria, <i>Hymns against Heresies</i>
Ephrem, <i>PR II</i>	Ephrem of Syria, <i>Prose Refutations</i>
<i>Keph.</i>	<i>The Kephalaia of the Teacher</i>
<i>Manich. Ps. Bk. II</i>	<i>A Manichaean Psalm-Book, Part II.</i> Edited by C. R. C. Allberry. Manichäische Handschriften der Sammlung A. Chester Beatty 2. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1938.
MKAW	<i>Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling Letterkunde</i>
Nemesius, <i>Nat. Hom.</i>	Nemesius of Edessa, <i>De natura hominis</i>
NCenBC	The New Century Bible Commentary
NTApoc	<i>New Testament Apocrypha.</i> 2 vols. Revised edition. Edited by Wilhelm Schneemelcher. English translation edited by Robert McL. Wilson. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003
PFES	Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society
Philastrius, <i>Div. her.</i>	Philastrius of Brescia, <i>Diversarum hereseon liber</i>
PNTC	The Pillar New Testament Commentary
SAAA	Studies on the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles
Sah	Sahidic Coptic
SECA	Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha
Smyth	Smyth, Herbert Weir. <i>Greek Grammar.</i> Revised by Gordon M. Messing. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956.
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

Part I

Introduction and Context

Chapter 1

Introduction

Modern critical study of the resurrection narratives in the canonical gospels has often been driven by the question of heresy and orthodoxy in the second century, i.e., was the “proto-orthodox” church justified in its claim that Jesus rose in the flesh, or did the various “lost Christianities” that argued for a docetic/spiritual-only notion of resurrection reflect the more original form of Easter faith?¹ This is no doubt an important question both historically and theologically, but it can be misleading. The reason is that it may be a question that the evangelists themselves were not attempting to answer.

For better or worse, the questions that we bring to the biblical text shape our interpretation of it. The interpreter who approaches the resurrection narratives with this question of orthodoxy and heresy in mind is predisposed, at least on some level, to seeing the evangelists taking one side or the other in an early church debate. And when the stories are read in light of the categories posed by the question, it is easy to notice details that appear to be directly relevant to the controversy over docetic Christology in the second century. So when Jesus invites the apostles to touch his body and eats fish (Luke 24:36–53; John

¹ I here borrow terminology from Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battle for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); idem, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (2nd ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 13–14. On the wider modern debate over orthodoxy and heresy in the early church, see Walter Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* (BHT 10; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1934) (ET: *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* [trans. Paul J. Achtemeier; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971]); Walther Völker, review of *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum*, by Walter Bauer, *ZKG* 54 (1935): 628–31 (ET by Thomas P. Scheck in Walther Völker, “Walter Bauer’s *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum*,” *J ECS* 14 [2006]: 399–405); H. E. W. Turner, *The Pattern of Christian Truth: A Study in the Relations between Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Early Church* (London: Mowbray, 1954); Hans Dieter Betz, “Orthodoxy and Heresy in Primitive Christianity,” *Int* 19 (1965): 299–311; Thomas A. Robinson, *The Bauer Thesis Examined: The Geography of Heresy in the Early Christian Church* (Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 11; Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1988); Andreas J. Koestenberger and Michael J. Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture’s Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2010); Paul Hartog, ed., *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Early Christian Contexts: Reconsidering the Bauer Thesis* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2015).

20:24–29), it is not surprising that a diverse set of commentators – conservative, liberal, and skeptical alike – can all come to the same conclusion: Luke and John are attempting to refute docetists who advocated a non-physical view of Jesus’s resurrection.

Indeed, interpreters can support this conclusion by appealing to second-century texts that emphasize these same details as part of their polemic against docetic Christology. The most frequently cited of these is Ignatius of Antioch’s *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*. In his refutation of some early docetists, Ignatius recounts a resurrection appearance story that closely parallels that of Luke 24. Both depict Jesus as touchable (“handle me and see [ψηλαφήσατέ με και ἴδετε],” Luke 24:39 = *Smyrn.* 3.2) and able to eat (“he ate before them [ἐνώπιον αὐτῶν ἔφαγεν],” Luke 24:43; “he ate with them [συνέφαγεν αὐτοῖς],” *Smyrn.* 3.3). Because the verbal correspondence is close and because Ignatius is relatively early (ca. 115 CE), it has seemed reasonable to many to infer that Luke is also confronting docetism.² And although the verbal agreement is not as close (“Bring your finger here and see [φέρε τὸν δάκτυλόν σου ὧδε και ἴδε]”), the same inference is often made regarding to Jesus’s invitation to Thomas in John 20:24–29.³

² E.g., Hans Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956), 71, 89; Hans von Campenhausen, *Tradition and Life in the Church: Essays and Lectures in Church History* (trans. A. V. Littledale; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 52 n. 42; C. F. Evans, *Resurrection and the New Testament* (SBT 2/12; London: SCM, 1970), 109; Gerd Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus: History, Experience, Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 147; Michael D. Goulder, “The Baseless Fabric of a Vision,” in *Resurrection Reconsidered* (ed. Gavin D’Costa; Oxford: Oneworld, 1996), 56–67; Stuart G. Hall, “Docetism,” in *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* (eds. Adrian Hastings et al.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 173; François Bovon, *Luke* (3 vols.; Hermeneia; trans. Christine M. Thomas; Philadelphia: Fortress, 2002–2012), 3:389; Allen Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Martyr Bishop and the Origin of Episcopacy* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 140; Richard B. Vinson, *Luke* (SHBC 21; Macon, Ga: Smyth & Helwys, 2008), 753; Lidija Novakovic, “Jesus’ Resurrection and Historiography,” in *Jesus Research: New Methodologies and Perceptions* (eds. James H. Charlesworth and Brian Rhea; Princeton-Prague Symposium on Jesus Research 2; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 926–27.

³ E.g., Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 71, 89; Georg Richter, *Studien zum Johannesevangelium* (BU 13; Regensburg: Pustet, 1977), 180–84; Walter Schmithals, *Johannesevangelium und Johannesbriefe: Forschungsgeschichte und Analyse* (BZNW 64; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1992), 412–13; Gregory J. Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered: Thomas and John in Controversy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 92–99; Hall, “Docetism,” 173; Wolfram Uebele, “Viele Verführer sind in die Welt ausgegangen”: *Die Gegner in den Briefen des Ignatius von Antiochien und in den Johannesbriefen* (BWANT 151; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001), 113–16; Mark A. Matson, *John* (Interpretation Bible Studies; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 120; Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and Its Interpreters* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 246–47; Brent, *Martyr Bishop*, 140–42; Novakovic, “Resurrection,” 926–27.

But what if these modern readings of Luke's and John's resurrection narratives have mistaken correlation for causation? As Samuel Sandmel observed in his famous 1961 presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature on the (mis)use of parallels in the study of the NT, "Two passages may sound the same in splendid isolation from their context, but when seen in context reflect difference rather than similarity."⁴ What if Luke's and John's Gospels are not responding to the docetic/antidocetic debate but are themselves the subject matter of the debate? What if it is not that Luke and John are reacting to the rise of docetism, but that docetism is in part a reaction to Luke's and John's depictions of the risen Jesus?

Luke and John, like Matthew and Mark, reveal very little about the circumstances in which their gospels were written, and the information that can be gleaned from other first-century sources is limited as well. It is therefore quite understandable that scholars turn to the more abundant second-century materials for clues about what kind of issues the evangelists might be addressing. In fact, one could argue that by including a commissioning of the apostles in their accounts of Jesus's post-resurrection appearances the evangelists point us forward to a future generation of believers and so in some sense encourage us to consider the after-story.⁵ On the other hand, because the evangelists reveal so little about their own historical situations, it is difficult to determine how much of the after-story as it is known to us from second-century sources was also known to the evangelists and to what extent, if any, they reshaped their sources in light of this after-story. In other words, how are we to evaluate the theory that the evangelists were aware of and responding to an early form of docetism?

This study attempts to shed light on the relationship between Luke's and John's resurrection narratives and early church debates over docetic Christology by examining the *reception* of the canonical appearance stories in the second and early third centuries. I have sought to determine whether or not these earlier readings are in fact compatible with the modern antidocetic hypothesis. As will emerge, it is my contention that a close comparison of the canonical accounts with those of second and early-third century writers will reveal (i) that Luke's and John's treatments of the group appearance tradition differ fundamentally from antidocetic polemic; (ii) that Luke 24 and John 20 were written independently of controversies over docetic Christology; (iii) that the docetic/antidocetic debate in the early church, at least as it pertains to Jesus's resurrection, was primarily an exegetical battle over how the canonical

⁴ Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *JBL* 81 (1962): 2. While Sandmel was addressing the misuse of parallels from the Dead Sea Scrolls and from rabbinic literature in the interpretation of the Gospels, his warning applies equally to second-century parallels to the resurrection narratives.

⁵ In John, Jesus even pronounces a blessing on "those who have not seen, and yet have believed" (20:29).

appearance stories are to be interpreted; and (iv) that the weight of the apologetic argument in both Luke 24:36–53 and John 20:24–29 rests not on physical proofs of the resurrection but on the fulfillment of OT prophecy.

In addition to the themes of touching, eating, and prophecy, I examine two other features in the canonical stories from a reception-critical perspective: the narration of Jesus's appearance, e.g., "he stood in their midst" (Luke 24:36; John 20:25), and the motif of the doubt of the apostles (Luke 24:38, 41; John 20:25, 27). Because the latter also appears in Matt 28:17, I have included Matthew's group appearance narrative in my reception-critical analysis. Modern interpreters of Luke and John often understand the doubt as serving to enhance the apologetic value of the physical demonstrations by showing that the eyewitnesses were not easily convinced. I argue that this apologetic reading is incompatible with both the early reception of the narratives and the way ancient Christians understood doubt.

1.1 The Antidocetic Hypothesis in Previous Scholarship

Some have attempted full-scale defenses of the antidocetic hypothesis, e.g., C. H. Talbert, *Luke and the Gnostics*, and Udo Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John*.⁶ But more often interpreters seem to judge the parallel in Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3 sufficient to demonstrate that the evangelists are refuting docetists.⁷ Gerd Lüdemann, for instance, offers the following assessment of Luke 24:39: "Given such realism, one can hardly avoid seeing here an opposition to Docetism. Evidently in this verse Luke is combating challenges to the bodily reality of the resurrection of Jesus as Ignatius, *To the Smyrnaeans* 3.2,

⁶ Charles H. Talbert, *Luke and the Gnostics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966); idem, "Antignostic Tendency in Lucan Christology," *NTS* 14 (1968): 259–71; Udo Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John: An Investigation of the Place of the Fourth Gospel in the Johannine School* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992). While most have not been convinced of Talbert's claim that all of Luke-Acts is antignostic, his argument for an antidocetic interpretation of Luke 24:36–43 has been well received (see, e.g., W. Ward Gasque, *A History of the Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1989], 302; Barbara Shellard, *New Light on Luke: Its Purpose, Sources, and Literary Context* [JSNTSup 215; London: Sheffield Academic, 2002], 283–85).

⁷ E.g., Campenhausen, *Tradition*, 52 n. 42; Evans, *Resurrection*, 109; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 63–64, 569, 572; Schmithals, *Johannesevangelium*, 412–13; Goulder, "Baseless Fabric," 56–67; Hall, "Docetism," 173; Matson, *John*, 120; Josep Rius-Camps and Jenny Read-Heimerdinger, *The Message of Acts in Codex Bezae: A Comparison with the Alexandrian Tradition* (4 vols.; LNTS 415; London: T&T Clark International, 2004–2009), 2:274 n. 211; Brent, *Martyr Bishop*, 140; Vinson, *Luke*, 753; Novakovic, "Resurrection," 926–27.

does at the beginning of the second century.”⁸ Georg Richter makes a similar argument as part of his contention that John 20:24–29 was inserted by an antidocetic redactor.⁹

Today the antidocetic hypothesis has established itself as a mainstream view in reference works and textbooks.¹⁰ It has proven so attractive that it is most often treated not as a hypothesis but as a historical given: the mere fact that the evangelists refer to the risen Jesus in physical terms is considered sufficient evidence of antidocetic intent.¹¹

⁸ Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 147; similarly idem, *The Resurrection of Christ: A Historical Inquiry* (2nd ed.; Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2004), 109.

⁹ Richter, *Studien*, 180–84.

¹⁰ E.g., E. Earle Ellis, “Luke, Gospel according to,” *ISBE* 4: 183; Hall, “Docetism,” 173; Robert H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament* (4th ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 291; Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey* (2nd ed.; Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009), 416; Charles B. Puskas and C. Michael Robbins, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (2nd ed.; Eugene, Oreg.: Cascade, 2011), 241–42; Donald A. Hagner, *The New Testament: A Historical and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 244.

¹¹ E.g., Paul Schubert, “The Structure and Significance of Luke 24,” in *Neutestamentliche Studien für Rudolf Bultmann zu seinem siebenzigsten Geburtstag am 20. August 1954* (ed. Walther Eltester; BZNW 21; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1957), 172; J. G. Davies, “The Origins of Docetism,” *StPatr* 6 (1962): 18 n. 1; Walter Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (THKNT 3; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1964), 449; Evans, *Resurrection*, 117; Marvin W. Meyer, *The Letter of Peter to Philip: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (SBLDS 53; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981), 110–11; R. Joseph Hoffmann, *Marcion, On the Restitution of Christianity: An Essay on the Development of Radical Paulinist Theology in the Second Century* (AARAS 46; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982), 119; Jerome Kodell, *The Gospel according to Luke* (Collegeville Bible Commentary 3; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1982), 117; Robert L. Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (SNTW; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), 21–22; Grant R. Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives: A Redactional Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 172; Frederick W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age: A Commentary on St. Luke’s Gospel* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 396; Francis Watson, *Text, Church, and World: Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 292; Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 494; A. J. M. Wedderburn, *Beyond Resurrection* (London: SCM, 1999), 125, 277 n. 289; Mark A. Matson, *In Dialogue with Another Gospel? The Influence of the Fourth Gospel on the Passion Narrative of the Gospel of Luke* (SBLDS 178; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 212–13; Robert J. Karris, “Invitation to Luke,” in *Invitation to the Gospels* (New York: Paulist, 2002), 321; Shellard, *New Light*, 285; Richard B. Hays, “Reading Scripture in Light of the Resurrection,” in *The Art of Reading Scripture* (eds. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 231 n. 37; Paul Foster, “Polymorphic Christology: Its Origins and Development in Early Christianity,” *JTS* NS 58 (2007): 72; Heikki Räisänen, *The Rise of Christian Beliefs: The Thought World of Early Christians* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 125–26; Paul R. Hinlicky, *Divine Complexity: The Rise of Creedal Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 41; Yoseop Ra, *The Origin and Formation of the Gospel* (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 92–93; Mark T. Finney, *Resurrection, Hell, and the Afterlife: Body and Soul*

1.1.1 The Materializing-Trajectory Theory and the Antidocetic Hypothesis

One reason that a physical conception of resurrection is so readily equated with antidocetic polemic is that the antidocetic hypothesis is often bound up with a larger theory about the development of resurrection appearance traditions in the early church. According to this theory, the original appearance traditions consisted of visions of a luminous, non-physical Jesus, and over time the stories were modified to be more concrete and physical. The historical-critical reconstruction runs as follows: (i) the earliest evidence comes from Paul, who speaks in 1 Cor 15 of a “spiritual body,” and from Acts, in which Paul is said to have had a vision of a luminous Jesus from heaven; (ii) since Paul in 1 Cor 15:5–8 seems to put his experience of the risen Jesus on a par with those of Peter and the Twelve, the latter appearances must have also been heavenly visions of a luminous Christ; (iii) the resurrection accounts in the Gospels, which include an empty tomb and a palpable Jesus who does not appear from heaven, must therefore be later apologetic fabrications; and (iv) these changes were motivated by an antidocetic *Tendenz* similar to that which drove Ignatius’s retelling of the post-resurrection appearance story in *Smyrn.* 3.

First popularized by Hans Grass and introduced to the English-speaking world by Reginald H. Fuller, with various modifications this materializing-trajectory theory has gained numerous adherents.¹² One of the most influential

in *Antiquity, Judaism, and Early Christianity* (BibleWorld; New York: Routledge, 2016), 129, 132.

¹² Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*. Reginald H. Fuller, “Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte,” *ATHR* 45 (1963): 95–98; idem, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (New York: Macmillan, 1971). Within a few years of the publication of Fuller’s version of Grass’s reconstruction, John E. Alsup could write of Grass’s study: “No other work has been so widely used or of such singular importance for the interpretation of the gospel accounts – and that includes the pastor’s study” (*Post-Resurrection Appearance Stories of the Gospel Tradition: A History-of-Tradition Analysis* [Calwer theologische Monographien 5; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1975], 32). Grass’s version of the theory, though it proved to be the most influential, was by no means the first. Similar proposals appear at least a century before Grass, e.g., Christian Herman Weisse, *Die Evangelienfrage in ihrem gegenwärtigen Stadium* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1856), 272–92; Daniel Schenkel, *A Sketch of the Character of Jesus: A Biblical Essay* (trans. Hendrikus Martinus Klaassen; London: Longmans, Greek, and Co., 1869), 319; Kirsopp Lake, *The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (Crown Theological Library 21; London: Williams & Norgate, 1907), 219–26.

While the full impact cannot be assessed here, it is telling that the materializing-trajectory theory quickly made significant inroads into systematic theology. On the basis of the materializing-trajectory theory, theologians from a variety of traditions found it necessary to exclude Luke’s and John’s accounts of the risen Jesus as unreliable sources for Christology, e.g., Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus: God and Man* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 89–93; Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (trans. William V. Dych; New York: Seabury, 1978), 276; idem, *Man in the Church* (vol. 2 of *Theological Investigations*; trans. Karl-H. Kruger; Baltimore: Helicon, 1963), 214;

among them is James M. Robinson. In his 1981 presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature, Robinson updated Grass's reconstruction by incorporating texts from Nag Hammadi and by introducing a new modification.¹³ Like Grass, he argues that the original resurrection appearances were of a luminous figure from heaven, but Robinson proposes that Paul's term "spiritual body" sparked two competing streams of tradition. A "materializing" trajectory, which is reflected in the Gospels, developed in reaction against an early gnostic stream that preserved the original luminous appearances from heaven, but made them even less "bodily." According to Robinson, the evangelists retain "vestiges" of an earlier luminous appearance tradition, e.g., Jesus's "sudden appearances and disappearances," but have for apologetic reasons emphasized a physical resurrection.

Since Robinson's address, variations of the materializing-trajectory theory have appeared frequently in the secondary literature.¹⁴ One or another form of the theory has been endorsed by, e.g., Lüdemann, Michael Goulder, A. J. M. Wedderburn, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, Heikki Räisänen, Markus Vinzent, and Lidija Novakovic.¹⁵ And recently Bart D. Ehrman has produced an accessible version of the theory written for popular audiences.¹⁶

Specialized studies applying the materializing-trajectory model to individual gospels have also appeared. Taking up a similar but more narrow line of argumentation than that of Robinson, Gregory J. Riley proposed that the Thomas pericope in John 20:24–29 was written to refute the view of an early Thomasine community that denied a bodily resurrection and composed the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Acts of Thomas*, etc.¹⁷ Similarly, Crispin H. T. Fletcher-

Peter Carnley, *The Structure of Resurrection Belief* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 67–68, 234–249.

¹³ James M. Robinson, "Jesus from Easter to Valentinus (or to the Apostles' Creed)," *JBL* 101 (1982): 5–37.

¹⁴ Robinson's essay has proven so significant that the Jesus Seminar judged it worthwhile to vote on aspects of it in the same way they voted on the biblical texts themselves (The Jesus Seminar, "Voting Records: The Resurrection Appearances," *Forum* 10 [1994]: 256–57).

¹⁵ Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*; idem, *Resurrection of Christ*; Goulder, "Baseless Fabric," 55–58; Wedderburn, *Beyond Resurrection*, 125, 277 n. 289; George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity* (HTS 56; exp. ed.; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 246–47; Räisänen, *Christian Beliefs*, 125–33; Markus Vinzent, *Christ's Resurrection in Early Christianity and the Making of the New Testament* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2011), 77–191; Novakovic, "Resurrection," 926–27.

¹⁶ Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (New York: HarperOne, 2014), 181–83, 207.

¹⁷ Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered*, 69–175; similarly Kevin Madigan and Jon Douglas Levenson, *Resurrection: The Power of God for Christians and Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 221–22. See also the critique of Riley's reconstruction in Ismo

Louis and David Catchpole have argued that Luke, in an attempt to correct early resurrection appearance traditions that envisioned the risen Jesus as an incorporeal angel, depicts Jesus as inviting touch and eating fish.¹⁸

1.1.2 *The Resilience of the Antidocetic Hypothesis*

The antidocetic hypothesis has proven so attractive that it is retained even by those who strongly criticize the materializing-trajectory models of Grass, Robinson, and others. An early voice of dissent was registered in the tradition- and redaction-critical study of John E. Alsup.¹⁹ Alsup challenges Grass's notion of a development from luminous appearances to the "anthropomorphic" appearances found in the Gospels by demonstrating that the latter are independent of luminous appearance stories found elsewhere. Yet despite this potentially devastating critique, Alsup never questions the theory that Luke's "chief redactional goal" in the group appearance narrative is to counter docetism. Alsup's study – because it is so critical of Grass's model – is an early and striking illustration of the fact that the antidocetic label, once attached on Luke (and/or John), has exhibited extraordinary sticking power in the history of interpretation.²⁰

Much the same could be said of Gerald O'Collins's response to Robinson. O'Collins offers a scathing critique of Robinson's proposal of competing trajectories by arguing that Robinson forces the various texts to fit his theory. But when it comes to Robinson's antidocetic reading of Luke 24 and John 20, O'Collins concedes,

Dunderberg, "John and Thomas in Conflict," in *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration* (eds. John D. Turner and Anne McGuire; NHMS 44; Leiden: Brill, 1997).

¹⁸ Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology* (WUNT 2/294; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 62–71; David R. Catchpole, *Resurrection People: Studies in the Resurrection Narratives of the Gospels* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000), 88–98; similarly Nickelsburg, *Resurrection*, 246–47.

¹⁹ Alsup, *Appearance Stories*, 33–54, 266–74.

²⁰ Alsup, *Appearance Stories*, 172. It is unclear exactly why Alsup does not call for the abandonment of this part of Grass's reconstruction as well, especially since Alsup's analysis leaves little if any new "antidocetic" material to assign to Lukan redaction. Indeed, on the basis of his own results the only way that Alsup can attribute "antidocetic" editorial activity to Luke is by positing the "tentative" (Alsup's term) theory that in 24:36–43 Luke has combined two distinct sources, each of which already depicts Jesus in physical terms (*Appearance Stories*, 171–72). Lukan redaction in this case is minimal; it consists in little more than combining and reiterating what Luke found in his sources. Possibly, like many before and after him, Alsup has accepted second-century parallels, e.g., Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3.2 and *Ep. Apos.* 11–12, as sufficient proof of Luke's antidocetic motivations. Alsup, in a footnote, cites these texts as parallels to Luke and John (*Appearance Stories*, 174 n. 504).

In their realistic and bodily presentation of the risen Christ's appearance, Luke and John clearly want to guard against errors. Robinson rightly observes their "apologetic" against "spiritualizing the resurrection away" (*Jesus*, 12). At the same time, these two evangelists also qualify their presentation by including details which indicate the transformed existence of the risen Lord. Closed doors do not prevent his coming (John 20:19, 26); he suddenly appears and disappears (Luke 24:31–36).²¹

O'Collins makes this concession even while admitting that an antidocetic interpretation stands in tension with the observation that Jesus "suddenly appears and disappears" in the gospel accounts.²²

Further proof of the resilience of the antidocetic hypothesis can be found in conservative evangelical readings of Luke 24 and John 20. Evangelical scholars, as might be expected, reject the theory of a materializing-trajectory because it implies that the physical demonstrations in Luke 24 and John 20 are unhistorical embellishments. Some are nevertheless willing to accept a chastened version of the antidocetic hypothesis. In reference to the Lukan Jesus inviting the apostles to touch him, I. Howard Marshall argues that this detail "may have been *remembered* in the fight against docetism, *but that does not mean that it was invented for this purpose.*"²³ Similarly, Andreas Koestenberger, commenting on John 20, suggests: "From the evangelist's perspective, Thomas's objection *becomes a welcome foil* for forestalling the incipient gnostic notion that Jesus only appeared to be human (the heresy later termed 'Docetism')." ²⁴

1.1.3 Objections to the Antidocetic Hypothesis

Despite the popularity of the antidocetic hypothesis, it has not been without detractors. Brief but significant objections to an antidocetic reading of Luke 24:36–43 and/or John 20:24–29 have been voiced by a variety of scholars.

²¹ Gerald O'Collins, *Jesus Risen: A Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection* (New York: Paulist, 1987), 228 n. 9, citing Robinson, "Easter to Valentinus," 12.

²² Oddly, O'Collins agrees that Luke is "'antidocetic' in a broad sense" but then argues for a docetic interpretation of Jesus's meal: the risen Jesus didn't really eat ("Did Jesus Eat the Fish [Luke 24:42–43]?" *Greg* 69 [1988]: 69–70).

²³ I. Howard Marshall, "The Resurrection of Jesus in Luke," *TynBul* 24 (1973): 92, emphasis added; similarly Osborne, *Resurrection Narratives*, 247–48. Craig Blomberg suggests that Luke 24 emphasizes the reality of the bodily resurrection, "perhaps against incipient docetic trends in Luke's day" (*Jesus and the Gospels*, 416).

²⁴ Andreas J. Koestenberger, *John* (BECNT 4; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 579, emphasis added. Robert H. Gundry, though he argues against the "fabrication" of the group appearance narrative in Luke 24:36–53, affirms in essence Riley's proposal about the Thomas pericope: "John even uses Thomas, a Gnostic hero (compare the Gnostically tinged so-called *Gospel of Thomas*), against the Gnostics. Though at first skeptical of Jesus as the physically risen Lord and God, Thomas comes around to this orthodox belief" (*Survey*, 250, 291).

Some have noted the presence of features that seem to be in conflict with anti-docetic interests. As Ernst Käsemann, alluding to John 20, famously asked, “In what sense is he flesh, who walks ... through closed doors?”²⁵ Along similar lines, Michael R. Licona has recently raised the following objection: “If Luke and John were inventing stories to combat the Docetic idea of a Jesus who existed in a ‘spiritual,’ that is, an immaterial sense, why portray Jesus as appearing, disappearing and materializing through walls at will (Lk 24:31, 36; Jn 20:19, 26)?”²⁶

Others have drawn attention to the absence of features that they would expect from an antidocetic argument. Rudolf Schnackenburg observes that the Thomas pericope does not state “whether Thomas really placed his finger in Jesus’s wounds.” This suggests to Schnackenburg that the Thomas pericope is not an antidocetic insertion, as Richter has suggested.²⁷ Richard Dillon likewise argues that the absence in Luke’s account of a confirmation that the physical demonstrations actually convinced the disciples implies a lack of antidocetic interest on Luke’s part.²⁸

Probably the most comprehensive counter-response to the materializing-trend theory, and with it the antidocetic hypothesis, is N. T. Wright’s monograph, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*.²⁹ In explicit polemic against Robinson and Riley, Wright contends that the resurrection narratives in the Gospels preserve early traditions “with only light editing.”³⁰ Wright argues that the term “resurrection” in first-century Palestine was never understood to involve the raising of disembodied spirits or souls, and that – with the exception of cases when it was metaphorically applied to the restoration of Israel – it always denoted a literal restoration of human bodies. He concludes that the notion that Jesus rose bodily could not have been a later development. Wright calls for the abandonment of the materializing-trajectory theory:

The idea that traditions developed in the church from a more hellenistic early period (in this case, a more “non-bodily” view of post-mortem existence) to a more Jewish later period (in

²⁵ Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17* (trans. Gerhard Krodel; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 9.

²⁶ Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2010), 513.

²⁷ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John* (3 vols.; trans. Cecily Hastings; New York: Seabury, 1980), 3:329.

²⁸ Richard J. Dillon, *From Eye-Witnesses to Ministers of the Word: Tradition and Composition in Luke 24* (AnBib 82; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1978), 163–67.

²⁹ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God 3; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003). A number of Wright’s arguments are anticipated in brief in the earlier but lesser-known study of William Lane Craig (*Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus* [Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 16; Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1989], 337).

³⁰ Wright, *Resurrection*, 611.

this case, a more embodied “resurrection”) is in any case extremely peculiar and, though widely held in the twentieth century, ought now to be abandoned as historically unwarranted and simply against common sense.³¹

Wright therefore proposes a new reconstruction to replace the Grass-Fuller-Robinson theory. 1 Corinthians 15:3–7 summarizes appearance stories that had already been circulating for some time. These pre-Pauline narratives likely described the appearances in ways similar to what we now have in the Gospels, i.e., with a Jesus who was bodily and solid, on the one hand, yet was hard to recognize and could appear and disappear at will, on the other. Wright contends that if the goal were to refute docetism, it is “unthinkable” that the evangelists would include these elements: “In the cases before us, it makes no sense to think of Luke sitting down to compose an anti-docetic narrative about the genuine human body of Jesus and allowing himself so far to forget this important purpose as to have Jesus appear and disappear, not be recognized, and finally ascend into heaven. Similar things must be said of John.”³² According to Wright, Paul’s discussion of the “spiritual body” reflects a more mature “theoretical, theological and biblical framework” for understanding these otherwise puzzling stories of a “transphysical” Jesus that are later preserved in Luke and John. He argues that the evangelists wrote down these stories with only a minimal level of redactional changes because “stories as community-forming as this, once told, are not easily modified. Too much depends on them.”³³

1.1.4 Unexamined Presuppositions about Antidocetic Polemic

The arguments both for and against the antidocetic hypothesis appear to be based on unexamined presuppositions about what constitutes antidocetic polemic. Each side begins with a different definition of “antidocetic” and then evaluates the Gospels accordingly. The results are in effect predetermined. As we have seen, those who argue against the antidocetic hypothesis begin with the assumption that an antidocetic writer would be sure to omit, and would certainly never add, any elements from the tradition that might undermine a purely physical depiction of Christ. Consequently, they appeal to the appearances and disappearances of the risen Jesus in the canonical narratives as proof that neither Luke nor John are trying to refute docetism. By contrast, those who argue for the antidocetic hypothesis begin with the assumption that an antidocetic writer would retain these elements because they were traditional but add physical embellishments as an apologetic corrective. They therefore see the tension between the physical and supernatural elements as evidence that the tradition has been redacted for antidocetic purposes.

³¹ Wright, *Resurrection*, 606.

³² Wright, *Resurrection*, 606, 659.

³³ Wright, *Resurrection*, 611.

Similar presuppositions have driven assessments of Jesus's invitation to the apostles to touch his body. Again, some advocates of the antidocetic hypothesis consider any reference to the tangibility of Jesus's body to be an indication that the tradition has been modified in an antidocetic direction. And so Luke 24:39 and John 20:27 are themselves sufficient to demonstrate the influence of antidocetic concerns. Conversely, those who object to the antidocetic hypothesis do so because they maintain a different standard for what constitutes antidocetic intent. In their view an antidocetic writer would need to add an explicit statement, absent from both Luke's and John's accounts, that the apostles actually took up Jesus's invitation, touched his body, and were convinced of its physicality.

In short, underlying the disagreement over whether Luke and/or John are antidocetic is *a more fundamental disagreement over what an antidocetic writer would or would not do to change his or her source material*. The way to resolve this disagreement is to establish, by reception-critical and redaction-critical analysis, what antidocetic redaction actually looked like in the early church. In other words, it requires a detailed examination of how expressly antidocetic writers modified the appearance stories. Only after this kind of investigation is undertaken will we have any legitimate basis for claiming what an antidocetic writer would or would not do, and thereby for assessing whether the canonical narratives might have an antidocetic bent. Because no such investigation has been published to date, one of the goals of the present study is to identify some standard characteristics of antidocetic redaction in the second century.

As we will see in subsequent chapters, antidocetic writers and other defenders of the proto-orthodox view of resurrection made various additions, omissions, and changes to the appearance stories in order to make them suitable for apologetic use. We will also observe that they did so according to discernible patterns. Many of these modifications seem to revolve around a motif that occurs repeatedly in the canonical appearance narratives: the post-resurrection doubt of the apostles.

1.2 Doubt as a Motif in the Resurrection Narratives

The apostles were reputed among early Christians to be "noble examples" and "pillars" of faith (*1 Clem.* 5.1–2; *Gal* 2:9), and yet the final chapters of the Gospels repeatedly portray them as afflicted with doubt and disbelief. Jesus predicts that he will rise again (*Luke* 9:22; 18:23; 24:7), but Luke reports that the apostles dismissed the empty tomb report of the women as an "idle tale" and "did not believe" it (24:9–11). Similarly, after Mary claims to have seen the risen Jesus, the apostles remain hidden behind locked doors in fear (*John*

20:18–19) – a sign of less-than-ideal faith in the Fourth Gospel (19:38). And when the disciples do finally see the risen Jesus for themselves, the experience initially produces “doubts” rather than faith (Luke 24:38). The reason, according to Luke, is that they think they are seeing a “ghost” (24:37). Matthew’s account is more enigmatic: “When they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted” (28:17). Matthew indicates neither the cause of the doubt nor an explicit resolution to it. And though it could be implied, neither Luke nor Matthew clearly states that the apostles were convinced.³⁴ Ironically, the only apostle who is explicitly said to “believe” is “doubting” Thomas, who initially refuses to accept the testimony of his fellow apostles without firsthand, tactile proof (John 20:24–29). Indeed, when the larger group of apostles is offered the same kind of proof, Luke reports that “they were *still* (ἔτι) disbelieving” (24:39–41).

1.3 The Doubt Motif in Previous Scholarship

How are we to account for these recurring references to doubt and disbelief? This question has regularly been given short-shrift in NT scholarship. Commentators routinely offer only a brief statement of their judgment on the matter, and the most extensive discussions in monographs rarely last more than a few paragraphs.³⁵ Despite the general neglect of the topic, it is possible to speak of five different views of the origin and development of the doubt motif.

1.3.1 The Traditional View: Historical but Preserved for Apologetic Purposes

In the traditional view Luke 24 and John 20 are more or less historical. Because the resurrection of a dead man was such an unprecedented miracle, it is not implausible historically that the apostles initially responded with some doubt. It can also be attributed to “the immensity and the mystery being encountered here for the first time in human history.”³⁶ Nevertheless, for many who hold the traditional view, it is not primarily for the sake of preserving history but for apologetic purposes that Luke and John report the apostles’ doubt. As John Nolland claims, “For Luke *there is clearly an apologetic value* in the disciples’ difficulty to reach a secure knowledge of the resurrected Lord.”³⁷ Likewise, D. A. Carson, defending the historicity of the Thomas pericope (John 20:24–29),

³⁴ According to Acts 1:3, it seems to have taken “many proofs” to convince the apostles.

³⁵ The general neglect of the doubt motif has recently been recognized by Bart D. Ehrman (*How Jesus Became God*, 189–90). Ehrman’s own discussion of roughly three pages is longest I have found on the subject.

³⁶ John Nolland, *Luke* (3 vols.; WBC 35A–C; Dallas: Word, 1989–1993), 3:1216.

³⁷ Nolland, *Luke*, 3:1216, emphasis added.

writes, “*Even if the narrative has an apologetic purpose, that is scant reason for assessing it as unhistorical: it is surely as justifiable to conclude that the account was chosen precisely because it was so suitable.*”³⁸

1.3.2 The Transformational View: Historically Derived but Modified for Apologetic Purposes

The next view comes in two forms. A representative of the first is James D. G. Dunn. Dunn hears in Matt 28:17 a “genuine historical echo.” According to Dunn, “an element of ambiguity about what was seen” caused some to doubt. Dunn is in this respect close to the traditional view, but there are differences. Dunn accepts as historical Matthew’s “bare” report that the apostles doubted because he can detect no apologetic motive in Matthew’s account – Jesus neither “addresses” nor “removes” their doubt. By contrast, Dunn judges Luke’s and John’s accounts to be another step removed from history: the physical demonstrations in Luke’s and John’s accounts reflect expansions of the original appearance tradition, and the doubt motif has been reappropriated in support of the new apologetic goal of proving the reality of the resurrection body. In Dunn’s words, “The doubt motif is *of course* taken up by Luke and John and elaborated, since it provides *such excellent apologetic material*. The doubt and disbelief are emphasized in order that the physical demonstration of proof might be seen to be all the more convincing (Luke 24.36–43; John 20.24–9).”³⁹

The second form of the transformational view is yet one step further removed from history. Fuller and Ehrman agree that the absence of apologetic treatment in Matthew’s account suggests that the doubt motif derives in some sense from historical memory, but they propose a different historical reconstruction: the apostles do not doubt in response to seeing the risen Jesus for themselves – as in Matthew’s and Luke’s account – but in response to the reports of others who claim to have seen the risen Jesus. Fuller speculates that when Peter, whom he deems the first recipient of a resurrection appearance, told the other apostles about his experience, they responded in disbelief. According to Fuller, this is the historical kernel behind the “motif of doubt,” but the motif is “redirected” in Luke 24 “to provide the occasion for a massively physical demonstration.”⁴⁰ Ehrman proposes a nearly identical reconstruction to that of Fuller but expands it to include possible skepticism towards the resurrection reports of Mary or Paul as well.⁴¹

³⁸ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 657–58, emphasis added.

³⁹ James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1975), 124, emphasis added.

⁴⁰ Fuller, *Formation*, 81–82, 115.

⁴¹ Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 189–92.

1.3.3 The Skeptical View: A Late, Apologetic Invention.

A fourth view moves away from historicity entirely. The doubt is a late, apologetic invention, a redactional element designed to address the doubts and questions of second or third generation Christians.⁴² The doubts of the apostles are not their own; rather the skepticism and doubt of the evangelists' contemporaries have been "read back into the life of the immediate post-Easter church."⁴³ Consequently, the doubt in Luke and John is little more than a literary "embellishment" designed to provide an introduction to the so-called physical proofs, e.g., Jesus showing the scars of his crucifixion, inviting the apostles to touch him, and eating broiled fish.

1.3.4 The Form-Critical View: Genre-derived but Modified for Apologetic Purposes

Another set of commentators, who appear to be more hesitant to comment on the issue of historicity, employ form-critical categories to recover the origins of the doubt motif. In the view of C. H. Dodd, the closest analogy to the resurrection appearance narratives in the Gospels is the "recognition" type-scene in Greek drama.⁴⁴ In the latter, proofs are given in response to doubts about a person's identity. However, because in Luke 24:36–53 the "proofs" are of Jesus's physicality, Dodd argues that "*apologetic motives* have caused everything else to be subordinated to an elaborate presentation, not indeed of the ἀναγνώριστις itself, but of the grounds upon which such recognition was based."⁴⁵

⁴² Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 288–89; Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 29–30; Gerhard Barth, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (eds. Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held; London: SCM, 1963), 132–33; Richter, *Studien*, 181; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke* (2 vols.; AB 28–28A; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1981–1985), 2:1574–75; Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology*, 143–44; Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 133, 147–49, 163–65.

⁴³ J. K. Elliott, "The First Easter," *HT* 29 (1979): 216.

⁴⁴ C. H. Dodd, "The Appearances of the Risen Christ: An Essay in Form-Criticism of the Gospels," in *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot* (ed. D. E. Nineham; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955).

⁴⁵ Dodd, "Appearances," 17–18, emphasis added; similarly Robert W. Funk and the Jesus Seminar, *The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 485–86. Kasper Bro Larsen has recently argued that John's Gospel makes frequent use of the "recognition" type-scene in order to encourage the reader to recognize Jesus's divine identity (*Recognizing the Stranger: Recognition Scenes in the Gospel of John* [BibInt 93; Leiden: Brill, 2008]). In Larsen's analysis, the Thomas pericope is the climactic instance of *anagnorisis* (185–217). If Larsen has correctly identified the genre, the invitation to touch the wounds in John 20:27 is not offered as proof of Jesus's physicality but as a token of his identity – more specifically, his *divine* identity (similarly

Similarly, following B. J. Hubbard's form-critical study of Matt 28:16–20, Dale Allison suggests that the doubt motif originated as part of a literary imitation of OT call narratives but that Luke and John later employ it for apologetic purposes.⁴⁶ Alsup likewise argues that the original group appearance tradition was modeled after "OT anthropomorphic theophany stories" in which "the human partner(s) express a reaction mingling uncertainty, doubt and a feeling of inadequacy with both fear and worship at having been in the presence of the appearing one."⁴⁷ Alsup contends that the evangelists later developed the doubt motif "in a way that best suited their own goals."⁴⁸ Luke, for his part, expanded the doubt motif to fit the needs of an apologetic against docetists who denied the reality of Christ's resurrection body.⁴⁹

1.3.5 A Consensus: Doubt as an Apologetic Device

Although they differ with regard to their views of historicity and origin, all of the above reconstructions assign an apologetic purpose to the doubt in Luke 24 and John 20: to enhance the credibility of the story by portraying the apostles as critical witnesses.⁵⁰ Underlying each of these judgments is the presupposition that the testimony of a converted skeptic would have been considered more trustworthy than that of one who is easily convinced.⁵¹ According to Hans von Campenhausen, "the apostolic witness seems so reliable precisely because it was not caused by first, dubious impressions and information, but was the outcome of a struggle against initial doubt and scepticism. Everything was put to the test and error excluded."⁵² As Joseph L. Hug puts it, the doubt motif establishes that "the disciples did not believe easily, that they were not gullible: it is

April D. DeConick, "'Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen' [Jn 20:29]: Johannine Dramatization of an Early Christian Discourse," in *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration* [eds. John D. Turner and Anne McGuire; NHMS 44; Leiden: Brill, 1997], 392–93). In this case, the doubt could still have an apologetic purpose, but it is not addressing concerns about docetic Christology.

⁴⁶ Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus*, 246; Benjamin J. Hubbard, *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning: An Exegesis of Matthew 28:16–20* (SBLDS 19; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974).

⁴⁷ Alsup, *Appearance Stories*, 265.

⁴⁸ Alsup, *Appearance Stories*, 175.

⁴⁹ Alsup, *Appearance Stories*, 165–72.

⁵⁰ So already Maurice Goguel, *La foi à la résurrection de Jésus dans le christianisme primitif: Étude d'histoire et de psychologie religieuses* (Paris: Leroux, 1933), 280; Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 29–30; Augustin George, "The Accounts of the Appearances to the Eleven from Luke 24, 36–54," in *Resurrection and Modern Biblical Thought* (New York: Corpus Books, 1970), 61.

⁵¹ Allison suggests that "converting a doubter in a story is a way of addressing doubters in one's audience" (*Resurrecting Jesus*, 246).

⁵² Campenhausen, *Tradition*, 74; similarly Ulrich Wilckens, *Auferstehung: Das biblische Auferstehungszeugnis historisch untersucht und erklärt* (TdT 4; Berlin: Kreuz, 1970), 74.

after all a respectable attitude.”⁵³ Or as Catchpole has more recently claimed, the fact that the disciples in Luke are hard to convince “gives steel to the faith to which they were eventually won.”⁵⁴ C. K. Barrett offers a comparable evaluation of Thomas’s refusal to believe in John 20:24–29: “Such hesitation, so conclusively removed, had of course high apologetic value.”⁵⁵

1.3.6 A Political View: Doubt as Slander

Over against this widespread consensus, John Dominic Crossan issues a minority report that advocates a completely different assessment of the doubt motif. According to Crossan, the purpose of the doubt is not to strengthen the testimony of the physical demonstrations but to belittle some church leaders in favor of others: “The story in John 20 exalts the Beloved Disciple over Thomas.... The Beloved Disciple saw only empty clothes and empty grave but believed; Thomas needed to see and even wanted to touch the risen Jesus himself. That also takes care, by the way, of those disciples who needed to see Jesus, touch him, and watch him eat before they believed, in Luke 24.”⁵⁶ For Crossan, Luke 24 elevates Peter, who has already seen the Lord risen (v. 34), over the larger group who persistently disbelieve (vv. 36–43). In Crossan’s view, the doubt undermines rather than enhances the authority of those to whom it is attributed. It is in effect a slanderous accusation, and Crossan characterizes it as “absolutely insulting.”⁵⁷ Doubt does not portray the disciples as having a respectable lack of gullibility but as being weak in faith and thereby worthy of less respect.

Crossan’s reading is thus diametrically opposite to that of the majority view. Doubt serves not as a form of apologetic commendation but as ammunition for political defamation. Whereas most see the doubt as a *positive* characteristic that enhances the church’s apologetic by making the apostolic witness to the

⁵³ Joseph Hug, *La finale de l'évangile de Marc (Mc 16,9–20)* (EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1978), 74–77. James H. Charlesworth goes so far as to propose the following gushingly positive assessment of Thomas: “Thomas is not a doubter; he is the reliable *realist* in the GosJohn. He is no duped enthusiast; he is the self-reflective and thoughtful, even courageous, leader” (*The Beloved Disciple: Whose Witness Validates the Gospel of John?* [Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1995], 313, emphasis original; similarly Dennis D. Sylva, *Thomas – Love as Strong as Death: Faith and Commitment in the Fourth Gospel* [LNTS 434; London: T&T Clark, 2013], 82–107).

⁵⁴ Catchpole, *Resurrection People*, 107.

⁵⁵ Barrett, *John*, 572.

⁵⁶ John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994), 212–13.

⁵⁷ Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 209–10.

resurrection seem more reliable, Crossan perceives the doubt as a *negative* characteristic that disparages some disciples as inferior in authority to others.⁵⁸

1.3.7 Unexamined Presuppositions about the Doubt Motif

The disparity between these readings suggests that we may again have before us some unexamined presuppositions about the ancient Christian context. The contrast between Crossan's political interpretation and the standard apologetic interpretation of the doubt motif raises two important questions: (i) How did early Christians understand doubt and unbelief? (ii) And, more specifically, how did they view the post-resurrection doubt of the apostles? Answering these questions requires a thorough investigation of the themes of doubt and disbelief in early Christian literature and a reception-historical analysis of the post-resurrection doubt motif. Since to my knowledge neither task has been attempted in modern scholarship, this study will endeavor to complete both.

1.4 Methodology

As we have seen from the survey of past scholarship, the crux of the modern debate about whether Luke or John is antidocetic is a disagreement over what an antidocetic writer *would or would not do to modify the tradition*. The best, indeed the only, way to adjudicate between these *hypothetical* claims about what an antidocetic writer *would* do to modify the resurrection narratives is to observe what antidocetic writers *actually* do to modify them. I therefore propose a focused exercise in reception history to determine the viability of the historical-critical claim that Luke 24:36–49 and/or John 20:24–29 have been shaped by antidocetic apologetic.

1.4.1 Reception History as a Historical-Critical Tool

The approach I am suggesting may seem a bit backwards. Historical-critical exegesis aims first to illuminate the original meaning of the text (or of the traditions behind the text). The results are then used to test the legitimacy of later readings. I am proposing that later readings be considered before reaching any conclusions about the "original meaning." My intent is not to disparage methods that give priority to the original meaning, but rather to complement them by adding another tool to the historical critic's utility belt. What I am proposing is a *Rezeptionsgeschichte*-enhanced, historical-critical exegesis, a *via media* between the approach of the *Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar* series and

⁵⁸ The Jesus Seminar, "Voting Records," 258, suggests that the doubt in Matt 28:17b provides "the readers of Matthew with a *negative* mode of discipleship" (emphasis added).

the Blackwell Bible Commentaries.⁵⁹ The EKK pays attention to the post-history of the text, but it is organized in such a way that the history of interpretation is only considered after historical-critical exegesis has established the “original” sense of the text.⁶⁰ By contrast, the Blackwell series generally does not allow any privilege to the original meaning and concentrates almost entirely on later effects of the texts. In this study I first examine the earliest receptions of the biblical texts with the goal of producing historical-critical interpretations that are more sensitive to the ancient context.⁶¹

⁵⁹ E.g., Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (4 vols.; EKKNT 1.1–4; Zurich: Benziger, 1985–2002); François Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (4 vols.; EKKNT 3; Zurich: Benziger, 1989–2009); Judith L. Kovacs and Christopher Rowland, *Revelation* (BBC; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); Mark J. Edwards, *John* (BBC; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

⁶⁰ On the limited role of the post-history of the text in the EKK, see Mark Knight, “*Wirkungsgeschichte*, Reception History, Reception Theory,” *JSNT* 33 (2010): 142; Mark W. Elliott, “Effective-history and the Hermeneutics of Ulrich Luz,” *JSNT* 33 (2010): 166–67. Markus Bockmuehl wonders if effective history is “no more than an appendix to the task of exegesis” (*Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study* [STI; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006], 166).

⁶¹ Although this study is indirectly indebted to the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Hans Robert Jauss in drawing attention to the importance of *Wirkungsgeschichte* (“Effective History”) and *Rezeptionsgeschichte* (“Reception History”) for the interpretive process, my own methodology has been developed independently of their specific hermeneutical theories. I therefore make no claim to have worked out the proper application of Gadamer’s or Jauss’s hermeneutics, on which see David Paul Parris, *Reception Theory and Biblical Hermeneutics* (Princeton Theological Monograph Series; Eugene, Oreg.: Pickwick, 2009); Knight, “*Wirkungsgeschichte*,” 137–46; Ibrahim Abraham, “Review Essay: Biblicism, Reception History, and the Social Sciences,” *Relegere* 1 (2011): 359–67; Anthony C. Thiselton, “Reception Theory, H. R. Jauss and the Formative Power of Scripture,” *SJT* 65 (2012): 289–308; Robert Evans, *Reception History, Tradition and Biblical Interpretation: Gadamer and Jauss in Current Practice* (LNTS 510; London: Bloomsbury, 2014). I have instead sought to answer the question: how can reception history contribute in a practical way to historical-critical exegesis? Previous studies that have pursued the same or a similar question include Graham N. Stanton, “Early Objections to the Resurrection of Jesus,” in *Resurrection: Essays in Honor of Leslie Holden* (eds. Stephen C. Barton and Graham Stanton; London: SPCK, 1994); Markus Bockmuehl, “A Commentator’s Approach to the ‘Effective History’ of Philipians,” *JSNT* 60 (1995): 57–88; idem, *Seeing the Word*, 64–68, 121–228; Stefan Klint, “After Story – a Return to History? Introducing Reception Criticism as an Exegetical Approach,” *ST* 54 (2000): 87–106; Anthony C. Thiselton, “The Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians: Exegesis and Reception History in the Patristic Era,” in *The Holy Spirit and Christian Origins: Essays in Honor of James D. G. Dunn* (eds. Graham Stanton, Bruce W. Longenecker, and Stephen C. Barton; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004); Rachel Nicholls, “Is *Wirkungsgeschichte* (or Reception History) a Kind of Intellectual *Parkour* (or Freerunning)?” (Paper presented at British New Testament Conference, September 2005), 1–14, <http://issuu.com/revrach/docs/wirkungsgeschichte>; idem, *Walking on the Water: Reading Mt. 14:22–33 in the Light of Its Wirkungsgeschichte* (BibInt 90; Leiden: Brill, 2008); Joshua W. Jipp, “Ancient, Modern, and Future Interpretations of Romans 1:3–4: Reception History and Biblical Interpretation,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 3 (2009): 241–59.

As novel as this approach may appear at first, we have seen above that second- and third-century debates over Christology have already significantly shaped modern historical-critical study of the resurrection narratives. Grass attributes antidocetic motivations to the evangelists on the basis of the parallel in Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3.2, and Robinson similarly employs the Nag Hammadi materials in his reconstruction. And the fact that the antidocetic hypothesis has proven attractive to a wide variety of scholars reveals that there is among exegetes of all stripes a degree of openness to allowing later texts to shed light on earlier ones.

Appealing to later texts, of course, introduces the risk of anachronism. I will address some ways to mitigate this risk below. Before doing so, however, it is important to recognize that there is also a significant risk involved in ignoring second-century voices.

1.4.2 Reception History and Unrecognized Modern Bias

Studying the early reception of a gospel (or any ancient text) can help the historical-critic guard against anachronisms of another kind – one that is potentially even more dangerous because it can be introduced unconsciously. I am referring to the historically and culturally situated bias of the modern reader. As Rachel Nicholls observes,

It is one of the ironies about presuppositions that the ones we know we have (a certain theological approach, a preference for certain types of answers) have less effect on us than the ones we are unaware of, but which shape our view of reality so powerfully that conclusions drawn from them appear to be self-evident. It is these unseen limitations which we need to catch sight of, so that they do not operate unchecked and unconsidered. Movement [i.e., studying a text's reception in different times and in different places] helps us to catch sight of what was previously hidden from us. It is through a willingness to question ourselves, and not just the texts or artefacts we examine, that we will begin to have a clearer historical understanding and so make a more adequate job of interpretation.⁶²

In short, reception history can make the historical-critical exegete aware of his or her presuppositions and the way these presuppositions affect his or her interpretations.

Because extant sources for late first-century Christianity are especially limited, even the most gifted and knowledgeable historical-critical exegetes can at times interpret gospel passages on the basis of their own experiences, values, and cultural expectations rather than those of the evangelists themselves. It is one thing to be aware, in the abstract, of differences between ancient and modern worldviews. It is another to be able to recognize in practice how those differences might affect our interpretation of specific passages in the Gospels. Without an examination of the early reception of a text, often the best a modern

⁶² Nicholls, "Intellectual *Parkour*," 12–13.

interpreter can do is offer educated guesses to this effect. However, by comparing and contrasting the responses of a variety of ancient readers with his or her own initial reading, the modern exegete can observe in actual practice how historical and cultural differences translate into interpretive differences.⁶³ *Rezeptionsgeschichte* thus has the potential to contribute to one of the primary tasks of the historical-critical method, i.e., historically and culturally sensitive interpretation, while at the same time addressing what postmodern critics have seen as the method's primary weakness, i.e., unrecognized bias.

Markus Bockmuehl has suggested that "consistency of reception serves, more often than not, as a useful rule of thumb about the drift of ancient texts and their range of plausible meanings."⁶⁴ I would add that the reliability of this heuristic increases in proportion to diversity of the recipients. Thus, if a variety of ancient readers, particularly those who are at cross-purposes with one another, can be shown to agree against a modern interpretation, it may be a good indication that the latter is a misreading that has been skewed by modern bias.

Lest this methodological discussion remain too much in the abstract, I mention here briefly one important example that will be assessed more fully in subsequent chapters. As we have seen, most modern interpreters have understood the doubt of the apostles as a positive character trait that enhances the church's apologetic by implying that the eyewitnesses were not naïve or gullible. Prior to the inception of the present study, I held the same view. But as the following chapters will show, early receptions of the Gospels consistently exhibit a different assessment of doubt. Instead of a positive, respectable character trait that implies a lack of gullibility, the earliest readers of the Gospels, both "orthodox" and "heretical," understand doubt/disbelief to be a negative, shameful character trait that implies foolishness and/or sinfulness. By illuminating this contrast between ancient and modern assessments, reception history unmasks a modern bias that has had a profound influence on the interpretation of Luke 24 and John 20. In this case, the post-Enlightenment valorization of doubt and skepticism as the highest of intellectual virtues seems to have predisposed many historical-critical interpreters, myself included, to impose a value system onto the biblical text that is foreign both to ancient Christianity in general and to the evangelists in particular.

Ironically, this is precisely the kind of anachronistic reading that the historical-critical method is supposed to be designed to avoid. Again, I am not attempting to undermine the historical-critical method but calling for its expansion and refinement. Just as socio-rhetorical criticism has proven itself a useful addition to the traditional tools of source, form, and redaction criticism, so also

⁶³ Similarly Nicholls, *Walking on the Water*, 188.

⁶⁴ Markus Bockmuehl, "Why Not Let Acts Be Acts? In Conversation with C. Kevin Rowe," *JSNT* 28 (2005): 165.

reception-critical analysis can enhance and, in some cases, correct standard historical-critical readings.

I am also not advocating a postmodern, reader-response criticism that treats all receptions as equally valid. Like all historical-critical exegetes my goal is to understand better what Luke 24:36–49 and John 20:24–29 meant in their original contexts. Not all instances of reception are of equal value for this task. Late texts that are far removed from the original context are, in general, unlikely to yield much useful data for historical-critical exegesis. But interpretations from the earliest known readers, because of their close proximity to and familiarity with the language, culture, and theological traditions of the biblical authors themselves, have greater potential for revealing modern bias.

This study for the most part limits its inquiry to those who could conceivably belong to the first three generations of readers, i.e., approximately the first 120 years or so of reception.⁶⁵ Roughly speaking, this time period spans from Clement of Rome, a near contemporary of the evangelists, to Tertullian, who wrote in the first quarter of the third century. This period is the most relevant to the present study not only because of its proximity to the NT texts but also because it includes the primary groundswell of docetic/antidocetic debate in the early church. In order to supplement the analysis of these second- and early third-century texts, I will occasionally also draw observations from later texts, especially those that preserve and respond to the views of earlier persons and groups. In particular, I will make use of Origen's *Contra Celsum* and his *Commentary on John*, both of which reply explicitly to second-century readings of the Gospels.

1.4.3 Reception History and Ancient Bias

Although they are closer to the biblical authors in language, culture, and theology, second-century readers, like their modern counterparts, can and often do have motives and values that differ from those of the evangelists. Therefore, while second-century texts can help reveal modern biases, the historical-critical interpreter who wishes to avoid anachronism must also be careful not to

⁶⁵ In restricting my study to these first three “generations,” I follow the lead of Bockmuehl, who attempts to limit his analysis to the time period of “living memory” (Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word*, 178; idem, “New Testament *Wirkungsgeschichte* and the Early Christian Appeal to Living Memory,” in *Memory in the Bible and Antiquity: The Fifth Durham-Tübingen Research Symposium [Durham, September 2004]* [WUNT 212; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007], 353–54). I must nonetheless adjust Bockmuehl's schema to account for a significant difference in our respective investigations. Because Bockmuehl is inquiring into what can be known about Peter and Paul, the first “generation” in his analysis is delineated by the time period of the apostles themselves. By contrast, I am inquiring into what can be known about the original purposes of Luke's and John's resurrection narratives, which by most accounts were composed in the time of Bockmuehl's second generation, i.e., 70–130 CE.

infer too much from similarities between the biblical texts and second-century parallels. It is worth reiterating here the warning of Sandmel: contextual differences between two parallels may turn out to be more significant than the similarities, however striking the latter may at first appear to be. My criticism of theories that Luke's and/or John's narratives are antidocetic is not that they appeal to second-century parallels – as we have seen, these parallels can potentially be quite helpful to the modern exegete. Rather, the fatal weakness of the antidocetic hypothesis is that it does not adequately account for the differences in the respective literary and historical contexts.

At the risk of oversimplification, the logic of the antidocetic hypothesis may be summed up as follows: (i) proto-orthodox writers depict Jesus as tangible in order to refute docetism; (ii) Luke 24:39 and John 20:27 also depict Jesus as tangible; (iii) therefore Luke and John are also attempting to refute docetism. While this syllogism sounds plausible, *similarity in content does not necessitate similarity in purpose*.⁶⁶ It may come as surprise to many modern readers – it certainly did to the present writer – that a number of docetic accounts also depict Jesus's body as tangible.⁶⁷ We cannot, of course, infer from this *similarity in content* that the docetists have an antidocetic *purpose*. To do so would entail a logical contradiction. My goal in drawing attention to these counterexamples at this point is merely to uncover the tenuous logic on which the antidocetic hypothesis rests. I have not thereby disproven it. The fact remains that a number of antidocetic writers chose to emphasize the touch motif in their polemic against docetic Christology, and so it is still legitimate to ask whether Luke and/or John do the same. The counterexamples demonstrate only that a tangible Jesus is not itself proof of antidocetic intent. The question of antidocetic influence on Luke's and John's accounts must be decided on other grounds.

Sandmel's proposed cure for parallelomania is not to abandon the study of parallels altogether but to encourage a "detailed study" of the respective contexts. This is surely correct, and I have some specific proposals as to what this "detailed study" entails in the case of Luke 24 and John 20. First, in light of the logical problem just mentioned, it seems above all important to gain a more holistic understanding of the docetic/antidocetic debates in the second century and of early Christian apologetics in general. Any claim that an author or tradition is *anti*-docetic is bound to be misplaced if it is based on a false understanding of docetism. Arguments for the antidocetic intention of the

⁶⁶ As Terrence L. Donaldson observes in his response to Sandmel's essay, "Even where a case of 'borrowing' [i.e., direct literary dependence] can be identified, *one cannot assume that the borrowed element has the same function or significance in the new context as in the old*" ("Parallels: Use, Misuse and Limitation," *EvQ* 55 [1983]: 194, emphasis added).

⁶⁷ E.g., *AJ* 93; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.6.1; 1.9.3; Clement, *Exc.* 59; Tertullian, *Val.* 26; *Marc.* 4.9.4; 4.20.8–9, 13; *1 Apoc. Jas.* [NHC V,3] 31.2–32.8. See further discussion in Chapter 2.

evangelists appeal almost exclusively to isolated prooftexts that come from one side of the ancient christological debates; they do not adequately account for the polemic of the docetists themselves. It is my contention that this oversight has contributed to a misunderstanding of the actual points of agreement and disagreement between docetists and their proto-orthodox opponents, and consequently to a misidentification of the distinctive characteristics of antidocetic polemic that have been employed to assess Luke's and John's accounts. The *modern* antidocetic hypothesis is driven primarily by the question of the *historicity* of the resurrection narratives, i.e., whether the canonical accounts have been embellished with physical demonstrations of touching and eating to refute docetic Christology. But as this study will attempt to demonstrate, the *ancient* docetic/antidocetic debates were driven primarily by the question of the *interpretation* of the appearance stories, e.g., whether the physical demonstrations are to be taken literally and as proof of Jesus's humanity/flesh. This is a subtle but significant difference. For if the *fact* of the physical demonstrations is accepted as a given by both docetists and their proto-orthodox opponents, then the question of antidocetic intent is not to be determined by the presence or absence of the demonstrations but by an analysis of *what Luke and John do* with the demonstrations in the context of their respective narratives.

Therefore, in addition to an examination of the immediate literary contexts and the broader historical contexts, I propose that parallels be inspected at the redactional level. Advocates of the antidocetic hypothesis regularly claim that Luke and/or John *emphasize* the physicality of the risen Jesus for the *purpose* of antidocetic apologetic. But the mere fact that Luke and John's narratives portray Jesus as physical does not necessarily mean that Luke and John are *intentionally emphasizing* this theme. What may on an initial reading appear to be an emphasis of the evangelist may after redactional analysis prove to be no more than a restatement of source material. While traditional content is no doubt important – an evangelist would not include it if it were not – it is the redaction (additions, omissions, transformations) of the tradition that most clearly reveals *intentional* emphasis and so provides clues to the purpose of the evangelist.

But it is essential also to *analyze the second- and early third-century texts from a redaction-critical perspective*. Only when clear patterns of redaction among expressly antidocetic writers can be identified we will have reliable standard against which Luke's and John's treatments of the appearance tradition can be measured. In short, we must accurately identify the distinctive characteristics of antidocetic redaction before we can determine if the stories in Luke 24:36–49 and John 20:24–29 have been shaped by antidocetic apologetic. This study's comparison of the redactional emphases of Luke and John with those of their second- and early-third century counterparts will reveal that the evangelists approach the resurrection appearance tradition with a markedly

different set of apologetic and doctrinal concerns from those of antidocetic writers.

1.4.4 Methodology for Identifying Instances of Reception

The bulk of this study is therefore devoted to a redaction-critical analysis of second-century texts. Recognizing editorial activity can be a relatively simple process if the source can be identified and examined. But more often than not, identifying sources behind second-century texts requires untangling an almost Gordian knot of interrelated issues. Second-century authors do not regularly signal their use of sources by introductory formulas and rarely cite their sources by name. Sometimes they merely allude to a source by means of a catchphrase, and in other cases they probably echo the wording of their sources without even realizing that they have done so. And even when they do employ an introductory formula or otherwise indicate their use of a source, their wording can differ significantly from all extant parallels. For various reasons, both intentional and unintentional, early Christian writers often paraphrase rather than quote their sources verbatim. And frequently – without any notice to the reader – they conflate content from two or more sources.

It is also necessary to consider the possibility of lost sources. A second-century author may be drawing on an otherwise unknown oral tradition or on a text that is no longer extant. If this lost source originated independently of the canonical gospels, the latter may not have had any influence on the second-century author. Alternatively, it may be that the lost source was itself influenced by one of the canonical gospels. If so, the second-century author's knowledge of that gospel may be only indirect. Because of the high cost of book production in the ancient world, some ancient Christians probably only became familiar with the written gospels through oral traditions that were based on them – a phenomenon known today as “secondary orality.”⁶⁸

Other factors complicate matters even further. A number of second-century Christian texts originally composed in Greek are now only extant in later Latin or Coptic translations, making verbal comparisons with the NT text particularly difficult. Some are only available in fragmentary form, and the available manuscripts of others sometimes include significant variants that require text-critical decisions. Moreover, the source texts themselves also have variants. So even when it is fairly clear that an author is drawing directly on a known NT text, it may not always be clear which text form(s) (Alexandrian, Western, etc.) is (are) known to the second-century author.

The practical consequence of all of this is that painstaking lexical, source-critical, and text-critical research is sometimes an essential preliminary step to

⁶⁸ Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul and Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

redaction-critical analysis of second-century texts. Striking a balance here between maintaining rigor for the sake of specialists and avoiding tedious information overload for the sake of non-specialists is no easy task. In this study I have chosen to provide detailed source analysis only for (i) texts that are so early that widespread circulation of the Gospels cannot be assumed; (ii) texts for which there is no clear consensus regarding dependence on the individual gospel(s) in question; and (iii) texts for which my own source-critical conclusions differ from the majority. Specialists who prefer more source-critical discussion of texts that do not fall into any of the three categories above will find references to relevant studies, whenever they are available, in the footnotes.

While all of the factors mentioned in the preceding paragraphs need to be kept in mind in any source-critical analysis, one question in particular stands out as being the greatest cause of differences among scholarly treatments of the reception of the Gospels in the second century: how can we be sure that an author is dependent on a canonical gospel rather than on a lost text or oral tradition? There are, broadly speaking, three approaches to this issue. Each has earned a moniker according to the results they generate: maximalist, minimalist, and realist.⁶⁹

The maximalist practitioner finds it prudent to assume the influence of a known text rather than a hypothetical lost source. As long as a parallel is verbally closer to a given gospel than to any other NT text, then it is normally safe to conclude that the second-century author was influenced by that Gospel.⁷⁰ In other words, the maximalist approach requires that all other *known* sources be ruled out before concluding that an author is dependent on a particular written gospel.

The minimalist, by contrast, contends that this maximalist method is bound to produce too many false positives: the maximalist will too often deduce that a second-century text is dependent on a canonical gospel when it is really drawing from a lost text or oral tradition. Because many texts and oral traditions circulated in the second century that are no longer extant today, the minimalist approach insists that ruling out other *known* sources is insufficient to demonstrate dependence on a written gospel. To prove literary dependence, *unknown*, hypothetical sources must be ruled out as well. In order to address this problem,

⁶⁹ So Lorne R. Zelyck, *John among the Other Gospels* (WUNT 2/347; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 14; similarly Andrew Gregory and Christopher Tuckett, "Reflections on Method: What Constitutes Use of the Writings that later formed the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers," in *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* (eds. Andrew Gregory and Christopher Tuckett; The New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁷⁰ This is the approach taken in Édouard Massaux, *The First Ecclesiastical Writers* (vol. 1 of *The Influence of the Gospel of Saint Matthew on Christian Literature before Saint Irenaeus*; *New Gospel Studies* 5/1; trans. Norman J. Belval and Susan Hecht; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1993).

Helmut Koester introduced what has become known as the redaction criterion: the influence of a particular written gospel can be proven beyond a reasonable doubt only when the second-century text reproduces a detail that is specific to the redactional activity of the evangelist.⁷¹

The strength of the redaction criterion is that when it can be satisfied, it offers “assured results.”⁷² But its applicability is limited to parallels that happen to align with gospel passages in which redactional elements can be identified by means of synoptic, stylistic, or compositional analyses. This means that most of the contents of Matthew and Luke and nearly all of Mark and John are, for all practical purposes, excluded at the outset.⁷³ Consequently, second-century parallels that offer verbatim or nearly verbatim resemblance to material that, as far as we know, is unique to one specific gospel, are omitted from the final analysis because of the mere possibility of dependence on a hypothetical lost source.

Both the minimalist and the maximalist approaches are simplistic with respect to the question of lost sources. One too readily assumes the likelihood of dependence on a lost source, while the other too easily dismisses the possibility. Consequently, both inevitably give readers and researchers alike an unrealistic impression of the overall influence of a given gospel text in the second century. Growing dissatisfaction with the unreliability of the maximalist approach and with the severe limitations of the minimalist approach has led to calls for a realist approach, one that employs the redaction criterion but also assesses the probability of dependence on a written gospel in instances where the redaction criterion does not apply. This is a promising strategy, but the realist method has not yet been, and perhaps may never be, standardized. It usually involves cumulative-case arguments – which by their very nature can be difficult to evaluate – and the number and kind of criteria employed vary from practitioner to practitioner. This is not surprising. Given the complexity of the issues, some eclecticism in methodology is to be expected. My own approach leans heavily on the redaction criterion but allows for certain types of cumulative-case arguments that are able to approximate the redaction criterion by demonstrating either the improbability or implausibility of dependence on a lost source. So as to not belabor the discussion I mention just a few here.

The first type of cumulative case is when a second-century text includes multiple parallels to the same gospel. If one of the parallels can satisfy the redaction criterion, then other parallels that include material that is, as far as

⁷¹ Helmut Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung bei den Apostolischen Vätern* (TU 65; Berlin: Akademie, 1957), 3; idem, “Written Gospel or Oral Tradition?” *JBL* 113 (1994): 294–97.

⁷² Gregory and Tuckett, “Method,” 75.

⁷³ Although minimalists do sometimes discuss second-century parallels to these other parts of the gospel tradition, these discussions are a mere formality; the negative result is predetermined by the method.

we know, unique to the same gospel may *usually* be considered dependent on that gospel as well.⁷⁴ Moreover, even if none of the individual parallels can satisfy the redaction criterion, it may be that the combination of all the parallels does satisfy it. For example, if a second-century text echoed Matthew's infancy narratives, the Sermon on the Mount, and the Great Commission – each from distinctly different sections of the same gospel – we could argue that the redaction criterion is met because the evangelist's choice to include these distinct strands of tradition in a single document is itself redactional.⁷⁵ The strength of the argument will, of course, vary according to the quantity and quality of the parallels, but in principle this kind of cumulative case can demonstrate dependence on a written gospel.

A second type of cumulative case is one that employs the criterion of rare language. If the verbal overlap between the second-century text and a particular gospel includes words or expressions that are, “to the best of our knowledge,” especially rare in early Christian literature or in ancient Greek literature in general, it may be possible to demonstrate that dependence on a lost source is improbable – rare language is *ipso facto* unlikely to occur in any lost source.⁷⁶ The usefulness of this criterion varies according to the degree of rarity of the language involved. While this criterion cannot *by itself* provide the same level of certainty as the redaction criterion, it may, when used in conjunction with other criteria, be able to contribute to a strong cumulative case. For example, in addition to sharing an especially rare term or expression with a gospel passage, a second-century text may also (i) exhibit extensive verbatim overlap; (ii) involve other contextual similarities; and/or (iii) include other close parallels with the same gospel. If argued carefully, this kind of cumulative case can do much to mitigate minimalist concerns about oral traditions and lost texts.

⁷⁴ Similarly Zelyck, *John*, 18. I here employ the redaction criterion in conjunction with the criterion of recurrence. On the criterion of recurrence, see Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 37–39; Arthur J. Bellinzoni, “The Gospel of Luke in the Apostolic Fathers: An Overview,” in *Trajectories through the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers* (eds. Andrew Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett; The New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 51.

⁷⁵ Andrew Gregory, a prominent advocate of the minimalist approach, will on occasion accept this kind of cumulative case, e.g., *The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period before Irenaeus* (WUNT 2/169; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 115, 341–42.

⁷⁶ I borrow the quoted phrase from Julian V. Hills, “The Acts of Paul and the Legacy of the Lukan Acts,” *Semeia* 80 (1997): 152. In light of the fact that many ancient texts and oral traditions are now lost, all arguments for the rarity of a Greek word or expression depend on the assumption that the many other ancient texts that have survived the ravages of time are more or less representative of Greek usage in antiquity. While this assumption cannot be proven, neither can it be disproven. And, in my view, it is more reasonable than the alternative. It is a methodological fallacy to dismiss a potential instance of dependence on the basis of a hypothetical source that is, “to the best of our knowledge,” unlikely ever to have existed.

Finally, this study will introduce a new criterion to the discussion. This new criterion has limited applicability, but it has the benefit of being applicable to a set of cases where the redaction criterion is unusable: it can be applied in cases where second-century texts parallel what is known as “Special Lukan” material, i.e., material that appears in Luke but has no parallel in Matthew or Mark. The minimalist concern in such cases is to guard against false positives where a second-century author may depend on one of Luke’s now-lost sources rather than on Luke’s Gospel itself. The minimalist contends that the former is just as, if not more, likely than the latter, because many works and oral traditions circulated in the second century that are no longer extant today.

But what if – hypothetically speaking, of course – we could go back in time to the second century when all those “lost” works and oral traditions were still circulating? Would it not then be possible to create *reliable* lists as to what material is truly unique to each Gospel? Fortunately, at least in the case of Luke, we already have such a list, one that was compiled in the second century, when those many lost works and oral traditions were still circulating. Moreover, it was compiled by an author who was qualified for the task, i.e., one who was well traveled and well acquainted with the wide variety of Christian sources, both oral and written, that were circulating in this early period. I am referring to Irenaeus, who in *Haer.* 3.14.3 offers a non-exhaustive list of passages unique to Luke’s Gospel.⁷⁷ Irenaeus explicitly says that the traditions in this list can be known “solely through Luke.”⁷⁸ Given how well read Irenaeus was and the fact that his argument at various points presumes that *all* of his opponents would agree that these traditions are unique to Luke, his claim cannot easily be dismissed.⁷⁹ The implication is that any sources, whether oral or

⁷⁷ Irenaeus’s list corresponds to the following passages: 1:5–45, 56–66; 2:8–20, 25–38, 41–51; 3:1, 23; 5:1–11; 6:24–26; 7:36–50; 11:5–8; 12:16–20; 13:6–9, 10–17; 14:1–6, 7–11, 12–14, 16–24; 16:19–31; 17:5–6, 11–19; 18:1–8, 9–14; 19:1–10; 24:13–32. Irenaeus does not list these passages in order, which may suggest that he is citing from memory those passages which he knows are unique to Luke. In any case, the comment that Irenaeus makes towards the end makes clear that this list is not exhaustive: “There are many other things that one will find narrated only by Luke” (trans. Dominic J. Unger and Irenaeus M. C. Steenberg, *St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Against the Heresies, Book 3* [ACW 64; New York: Newman, 2012], 75). This appears to be a catch-all statement designed to cover all those passages that Irenaeus could not immediately recall from memory. Consequently, when a second-century author exhibits dependence on any single tradition material known only from Luke, it is in my view justifiable to conclude that dependence on Luke is *probable*. It would be a mistake to claim certainty in such cases, but it would be a bigger mistake to build an argument on the assumption of oral tradition merely because dependence on Luke cannot be proven.

⁷⁸ Irenaeus reiterates this point in *Haer.* 3.15.1.

⁷⁹ Irenaeus speculates that God in his divine wisdom “saw to it that many passages of the Gospel be made known [only] to Luke, which *all* would have to use, so that *all* would follow his subsequent testimony concerning the deeds and the doctrine of the apostles” (3.15.1 [Unger and Steenberg, emphasis added]). In other words, Irenaeus takes it as a given that when

written, that Luke employed when composing these parts of his gospel were not in general circulation during Irenaeus's lifetime. This means that, unless they are especially early, second-century authors that exhibit knowledge of traditions found in Irenaeus's list are probably dependent on Luke's Gospel rather than on hypothetical lost sources. The probability increases if the same author demonstrates knowledge of more than one strand of "Lukan" tradition. Although this Irenaean-witness criterion may not offer the same degree of certainty as that of the redaction criterion, I would suggest that it provides *reasonable certainty* by demonstrating dependence on a lost source to be especially unlikely. Because it minimizes false positives, it can provide *generally reliable* results.⁸⁰

1.4.5 The Structure of This Study

This study is divided into three main parts. Part I includes the present introduction and a second chapter that uncovers important differences between ancient and modern understandings of gnosticism, docetism, and doubt. Part II consists of several chapters that examine the reception of the canonical resurrection narratives during the second and early third centuries. Part III draws on the findings in Part II in order to refute the antidocetic hypothesis and to propose in its place new redaction-critical readings of Luke 24 and John 20 that are informed early reception history.

1.4.5.1 Part I: Introduction and Context

In the foregoing pages of this introduction, I have drawn attention to two distinct but related aspects of the ancient context that invite further investigation: (i) the points of agreement and contention in early docetic/antidocetic debates; and (ii) early Christian views of doubt and disbelief. Chapter 2 provides an initial analysis of each that will be developed further in subsequent chapters. The first section of Chapter 2 outlines the diverse and often misunderstood movements commonly known today as Gnosticism and Docetism. I sketch taxonomies for the various docetic Christologies and interpretive methods employed in these movements and define a nomenclature that will be employed throughout the study. The second section of the chapter surveys references to doubt and disbelief in Christian literature prior to 250 CE. I also give a

his opponents appeal to Lukan single tradition, they all derive this material from Luke's Gospel and not from Luke's sources. He then criticizes them for their inconsistency in accepting Luke's Gospel but not Acts.

⁸⁰ By *reliable*, I mean that the probability is high enough that I am willing to build on the results. We cannot be absolutely certain that an airplane we travel on won't crash, but the probability is high enough that we are willing to fly. Of course, just as there will always be those who have a fear of flying, there will inevitably be some who find my methodology unable to produce sufficient certainty as to call it reliable.

preliminary evaluation of the modern theory that the evangelists refer to the doubt of the apostles for apologetic purposes.

1.4.5.2 Part II: *The Reception of the Resurrection Narratives*

Chapters 3 through 8 discuss a variety of receptions of the resurrection narratives in the second and early third centuries. Since many of the authors respond by writing their own version of the appearance stories, the analysis will normally involve a redaction-critical approach. The primary goal of these chapters is to identify how and why the various authors respond to Luke's and John's resurrection narratives in the way that they do.

The number and diversity of the texts in Part II defy any simple organizational structure. For many the date and provenance are difficult to identify with precision, and so any attempt to create a clear chronological or geographical arrangement would be overly speculative. And because of the tendency of early Christian authors to harmonize the gospel accounts, it is also not possible to make a clean division between receptions of Luke 24 and receptions of John 20. Moreover, as mentioned above, some, though not all, texts require that a detailed source-critical investigation be performed prior to redaction-critical analysis. I have therefore chosen a more ad hoc approach. Some chapters investigate patterns among numerous texts while others scrutinize one or two texts in detail. Whenever possible I have grouped texts together in ways that allow me, given these challenges, to illustrate certain tendencies and patterns in reception.

Chapter 3 analyzes two of the earliest known responses, one antidocetic and one docetic, to the group appearance tradition preserved in Luke 24. Because it is the proof-text most commonly cited by advocates of the antidocetic hypothesis, I begin with an analysis of Ignatius's redaction of the group appearance tradition in *Smyrn.* 3. The second half of the chapter looks at the so-called Ophite account in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30. On the basis of Luke's Gospel this early second-century gnostic sect accepts that the apostles at first believed that Jesus rose in the flesh, but it claims that Jesus later revealed to a few disciples that this initial belief was mistaken.

Following these early docetic and antidocetic salvos, the next two chapters survey reception of the appearance narratives among proto-orthodox apologists and gnostics, respectively. Chapter 4 documents a pattern of omission of both the physical demonstrations and the doubt motif by apologists who attempt to defend the proto-orthodox doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh. Chapter 5 discusses the tendency among gnostic texts to exploit the doubt motif as an opportunity to criticize the apostles and/or to expound a gnostic doctrine of salvation that excludes the resurrection of the flesh.

Chapter 6 returns to the docetic/antidocetic debate proper by examining two additional proto-orthodox responses to two further docetic interpretations of

Luke 24. The first is Tertullian's famous reply to Marcion's version of Luke 24 and to Marcion's phantasmal view of Christ's body. The second is an apologetic treatise, attributed to Justin Martyr, that refutes docetists who claim that the flesh of the risen Jesus is mere *phantasia*.

Chapter 7 offers an extended investigation of the reuse of Luke's and John's narratives in chs. 87–93 of the apocryphal *Acts of John*, a text that promotes a docetic reinterpretation of the Jesus tradition. The antidocetic counterpart to the *Acts of John*, the *Epistula Apostolorum*, will be discussed at the end of Chapter 8. Chapter 8 evaluates the unconventional treatment of the doubt motif in the Longer Ending of Mark (Mark 16:9–20) as well as various apologetic responses to these verses elsewhere in the early church. I count the *Epistula Apostolorum* among these responses.

1.4.5.3 Part III: Rereading the Resurrection Narratives

Chapter 9 presents a cumulative case against the antidocetic hypothesis by comparing the patterns of redaction found among docetic and antidocetic writers in Part II with what can be known about Lukan and Johannine redaction. I conclude that the redactional reshaping of the appearance tradition in both Luke and John is fundamentally inconsistent with an antidocetic argument. I also argue on historical-critical grounds that neither the touch invitation nor the doubt of the apostles is the result of a late, apologetic invention. Rather, both belong to the earliest recoverable stage of the group appearance tradition, a stage that has not yet been influenced by any controversy over docetic Christology.

The rejection of the antidocetic hypothesis inevitably creates an interpretive vacuum that begs for an explanation of the doubt motif and the physical demonstrations. Therefore, in Chapter 10 I propose two new readings of Luke 24:36–49 and John 20:24–29. These new readings are primarily exegetical, interpreting the narratives in the light of their broader literary contexts, and redaction-critical, but they draw on observations from reception history. I argue that the primary redactional and apologetic interests of both evangelists lie not in proofs of physicality as in antidocetic polemic but in an appeal to the OT.

In the last chapter, I offer some brief reflections on the development of the resurrection faith of the early church and on the implications of the doubt of the apostles for historical-critical study of the resurrection narratives. Finally, I include an appendix in which I evaluate some additional theories that posit an antidocetic *Tendenz* either in the textual variants of Luke 24:36–53 or in various other passages in Luke and John that lie outside of the group appearance narratives.

Chapter 2

Gnosticism, Docetism, and Doubt in Context

In the previous chapter, I argued that modern study of Luke 24 and John 20 would benefit from a closer examination of two distinct but related features of early Christianity: (i) the points of agreement and disagreement between proto-orthodox Christians and their gnostic and docetic opponents; and (ii) early Christian perceptions of doubt and unbelief. This chapter offers an initial investigation into both areas. In the first section, I provide an analytical introduction to the diverse movements commonly known today as Gnosticism and Docetism. I include taxonomic descriptions of the Christological models and interpretive strategies employed in these movements, and I define terms and concepts that appear throughout this study. The second section of the chapter surveys views of doubt and disbelief in early Christian literature. On the basis of this survey, I offer a preliminary critique of the consensus view that the authors of the canonical Gospels mention the post-resurrection doubt of the apostles because of its apologetic value.

2.1 Gnosticism and Docetism

2.1.1 *Gnosticism: Terms and Concepts*

Although “Gnosticism” and its various cognates (gnosis, gnostic, Gnostics) appear frequently in the secondary literature, definitions of these terms vary considerably.¹ The resulting terminological “fog” has become so thick that Michael A. Williams argues for abandoning the term “Gnosticism” altogether.² While few have been persuaded by Williams’s proposal, his criticisms have

¹ In 1966, an international group of respected scholars met in Messina, Italy, in an attempt to standardize the terminology (Ugo Bianchi, *Le origini dello gnosticismo: Colloquio di Messina 13–18 aprile 1966* [SHR 12; Leiden: Brill, 1967; repr., 1970]). The definitions agreed upon at the conference have not gained widespread acceptance and have been criticized for introducing more confusion than clarity (Antti Marjanen, “What is Gnosticism? From the Pastorals to Rudolph,” in *Was There a Gnostic Religion?* [ed. Antti Marjanen; PFES 87; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005], 45–47).

² Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); similarly Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

been taken seriously and have resulted in a call for a “more rigorous” approach.³ At the heart of Williams’s critique are stereotypes of Gnosticism that fail to do justice to the wide diversity of beliefs, values, and practices exhibited among the numerous texts that have commonly been considered “Gnostic.”⁴ Already in the second century Irenaeus found the task of classifying and describing the various groups overwhelming. He laments that new sects are always springing up “out of the ground like mushrooms” and that sect leaders think up “every day something more novel.”⁵ Irenaeus complains that even within the sects the teachers “differ among themselves in both doctrine and tradition,” making it “difficult to describe all their opinions.”⁶ Such diversity means that most definitions of Gnosticism cannot adequately account for all the personalities, groups, and texts to which the label “Gnostic” has been attached.

On the one hand, removing the term “Gnosticism” from future discussion might help to avoid the false impression that the relevant texts represent a monolithic, unified movement. On the other hand, eliminating cognate terms like gnostic and Gnostics would only cause further confusion because they occur repeatedly in the ancient heresiological texts. The best way forward is to align modern usage more closely with ancient usage.⁷ Bentley Layton and Birger A. Pearson have suggested that the term “Gnostic” be limited to (i) those who self-identified with the term; (ii) those for whom the heresiologists used the term as the proper name of a particular sect; and (iii) those persons, groups, and texts

³ Birger A. Pearson, “Gnosticism as a Religion,” in *Was There a Gnostic Religion?* (ed. Antti Marjanen; PFES 87; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 99.

⁴ Williams has demonstrated, for example, that not all who have been labeled “Gnostic” are libertines, determinists, world rejecters, and body haters.

⁵ *Haer.* 1.18.1; 1.29.1 cf. 1.21.1: “those of them who are acknowledged as the more modern endeavor to excogitate something new every day and to produce something that no one has ever thought of” (trans. Dominic J. Unger and John J. Dillon, *St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Against the Heresies, Book I* [ACW 55; New York: Paulist, 1992], 80). Despite the exaggeration in this characterization, Irenaeus’s claim that gnostics continually come up with new doctrines is in part corroborated by the evidence that some texts preserved at Nag Hammadi, most notably the *Apocryphon of John*, have been subjected to multiple revisions. On the invention of new doctrines and disagreements among the Valentinians, see also Tertullian, *Val.* 4.

⁶ *Haer.* 1.21.5.

⁷ The objection that “Gnostic” has been employed as a term of abuse is perhaps valid in modern times, but the same does not appear to have been true in the second and early third centuries. The term was used as a self-designation by various groups (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.25.6; Clement, *Strom.* 2.20 [117.5–6]; 3.4 [30.1]; *Ecl.* 28; Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.2; Origen, *Cels.* 5.61). And Irenaeus’s addition of pejorative modifiers such as “so-called” and “falsely so-called” presupposes a positive connotation that he would prefer to dissociate from his opponents. That Clement distinguished between true and false gnostics (e.g., *Strom.* 2.11 [52.4]; 3.4 [30.1]; 3.18 [109.2]) also shows that the term itself was not derogatory.

that share with (i) or (ii) undeniable genetic or mythological links.⁸ Though he still objects to Layton's use of the term "Gnostic" as a "proper name," Williams himself has since agreed that this more socio-historical oriented approach – one that focuses on specific sectarian phenomena – would help avoid confusion.⁹ For practical purposes, this approach limits the term Gnostic to the "Gnostics" of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.29–31, to closely related texts from Nag Hammadi that are normally designated Ophite and/or Sethian, and to a few lesser-known groups described by ancient heresiologists. Consequently, the term "Gnostic" becomes associated with a limited group of core texts that share a basic mythological schema.¹⁰ The question then remains how far the term

⁸ Bentley Layton, "Prolegomena to the Study of Ancient Gnosticism," in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 334–50; Pearson, "Religion," 81–101.

⁹ Michael A. Williams, "Was There a Gnostic Religion? Strategies for a Clearer Analysis," in *Was There a Gnostic Religion?* (ed. Antti Marjanen; PFES 87; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 72–75.

¹⁰ A distinct "Sethian" corpus was first identified in Hans-Martin Schenke, "Das sethianische System nach Nag-Hammadi-Handschriften," in *Studia Coptica* [ed. Peter Nagel; Berliner byzantinistische Arbeiten 45; Berlin: Akademie, 1974], 165-73; *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II,1; III,1; IV,1; BG,2), *Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II,4), *Gospel of the Egyptians* (NHC III,2; IV,2), *Apocalypse of Adam* (NHC V,5), *Three Steles of Seth* (NHC VII,5), *Zostrianus* (NHC VIII,1), *Melchizedek* (NHC IX,1), *Thought of Norea* (NHC IX,2), *Marsanes* (NHC X), *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3), *Trimorphic Protennoia* (NHC XIII), the *Untitled Text* of the Bruce Codex, the "Barbeloites" of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.29, and the "Gnostics," "Sethians," and "Archontics" of Epiphanius *Pan.* 26, 39, and 40.

More recent scholarship has introduced various modifications to Schenke's view. Whereas John D. Turner adds *Hypsiphron* (NHC XI,4) and Irenaeus's Ophites (*Haer.* 1.30) to this corpus (*Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition* [BCNHE 6; Leuven: Peeters, 2001], 61–63), Alastair H. B. Logan maintains that the accounts of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.29 and 1.30 are not properly Sethian but originated prior to and independently of Sethianism (*Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy: A Study in the History of Gnosticism* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996], 36–56). More extensive changes are proposed in Tuomas Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythmaking: Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence* [NHMS 68; Leiden: Brill, 2009]. Rasimus includes the *Gospel of Judas* (Tchacos 3) and the "Sethians" of P20915 (a text not available to Schenke) but removes a number of texts (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.29; *Trimorphic Protennoia*, *Marsanes*, *Norea*, and *Hypostasis of the Archons*) that he considers Barbeloite rather than Sethian. Rasimus also makes a plausible case for a distinct Ophite corpus that includes Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30; Origen, *Cels.* 24–38; *On Origin of the World* (NHC II,5; XIII,2); *Eugnostos the Blessed* (NHC III,3; V,1) and *Wisdom of Jesus Christ* (NHC III,4; BG 3).

Layton, who largely agrees with Schenke but for classification purposes prefers the broader category of "Classic Gnosticism," includes under this label all of the above texts plus *Thunder* (NHC VI,2), the teachings of Saturninus (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.24), the "Cainites" (1.31), the "Nicolaitans" of Epiphanius (*Pan.* 25), and the "Gnostics" of Porphyry (*Vit. Plot.* 16) (Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1987]). To these we may also add the *Letter of Peter to Philip* (NHC VIII,2; Tchacos 1), which appears

should be extended to groups and texts that are less closely related. As Pearson puts it, “the farther removed the relevant sources are, in terms of content, from the basic ‘gnostic’ data base, the looser the category of ‘Gnosticism’ will become, and the more room for disagreement as to what should be included in it.”¹¹

Of particular importance is the question whether the Valentinians are to be considered Gnostics. The ancient heresiologists sometimes distinguish the Valentinians from “the Gnostics,” which would suggest that it is a category mistake to call the Valentinians “Gnostics.”¹² In fact, the writings of the heresiologists occasionally give the impression that the Valentinians and the “Gnostics” were rivals, and so some Valentinians may have eschewed the label “Gnostic.”¹³ Yet if the Valentinians felt the need to distinguish themselves from the Gnostics, it was undoubtedly because their teachings were so similar. As Irenaeus has said, and as modern studies have confirmed, there is a genetic relationship between the “Gnostics” and the “Valentinians.”¹⁴ A Valentinian

alongside other core gnostic texts in the manuscripts and summarizes the basic gnostic myth (so Antti Marjanen, “The Suffering of One Who Is a Stranger to Suffering: The Crucifixion of Jesus in the Letter of Peter to Philip,” in *Fair Play: Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity: Essays in Honour of Heikki Räisänen* [eds. Heikki Räisänen et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2002], 490; Marvin W. Meyer, “NHC VIII, 2: The Letter of Peter to Philip: Introduction,” in *Nag Hammadi Codex VIII* [ed. John H. Sieber; NHMS 31; Leiden: Brill, 1991], 229–30). Similarly, the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* (NHC VII,2) and the Coptic *Apocalypse of Peter* (NHC VII,3) both presuppose a pleromatic myth like that of the Gnostics. The following lesser-known groups can also be included because they either employ a pleromatic myth or explicitly call themselves “Gnostics”: the Basilideans (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.24.3), the Carpocratians (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.25.6), the followers of Prodicus (Clement, *Strom.* 3.4 [30.1]), the so-called Naassenes, the followers of Justin the Gnostic, and the *Docetae* (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.2; 5.6.4; 5.8.29; 5.11.1; 5.23.3; 5.28.1; 8.8.1–8).

¹¹ Pearson, “Religion,” 99. To illustrate this principle, Pearson notes that he agrees with Layton’s decision to include Saturninus whose myth shares certain features with that of the Gnostics, but then observes that Simon Magus and Menander could justifiably be included for the same reason.

¹² See e.g., Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.11.1; 1.30.15; 4.35.1; 5.26.2; Tertullian, *Scorp.* 1; *An.* 18; *Val.* 39.

¹³ See e.g., Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.11.5; Tertullian, *Val.* 39.

¹⁴ *Haer.* 1.11.1, 3, 5; 1.29.1; 1.30.15; 1.31.3; 2.13.8, 10; Anne M. McGuire, “Valentinus and the *Gnostike Hairesis*: An Investigation of Valentinus’ Position in the History of Gnosticism” (PhD diss., Yale, 1983); Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 104–5, 240 n. 66–68; Rowan Allen Greer, “The Dog and the Mushrooms: Irenaeus’s View of the Valentinians Assessed,” in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* (ed. Bentley Layton; SHR 41; Leiden: Brill, 1980) 1:170; PHEME PERKINS, “Irenaeus and the Gnostics: Rhetoric and Composition in *Adversus Haereses* Book One,” *VC* 30 (1976): 193–200, esp. 197–200; Birger A. Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 56; Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, xv–xvi, 217–22; David Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 99;

slogan quoted by Irenaeus nicely illustrates the Valentinians view of themselves vis-à-vis the “Gnostics”: the Valentinians claimed to be “more gnostic than the Gnostics (καὶ Γνωστικῶν γνωστικώτεροι)” (*Haer.* 1.11.5).¹⁵ In this instance, recognizing ancient use of the terms proves especially valuable. A distinction is made between the name “Gnostics” and the adjective “gnostic.” The Valentinians may not have self-identified as “Gnostics,” but it would be a mistake to conclude that they did not consider themselves “gnostic.” This also helps to explain (and provide justification for) Irenaeus’s seemingly inconsistent use of the terminology both in the narrow sense, as a reference to a specific sect, and in a broader sense that embraces the Valentinians and other groups that held beliefs similar to those of the “Gnostics.” Therefore, following the lead of both Irenaeus and the Valentinians themselves, in this study I reserve the upper-case initial “Gnostic” primarily for the Ophite-Sethian corpus, but employ the lower-case initial “gnostic” in a broader sense that includes the Valentinians as well.

Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 292–93. All of these studies maintain that the Valentinians derived their systems from those of the Gnostics. The only significant dissenting position is that of Simone Pétrement, who agrees that the two groups were related but contends that the Valentinians influenced the Ophites and Sethians (*A Separate God: The Christian Origins of Gnosticism* [trans. Carol Harrison; San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1990], 351–86). Pétrement’s arguments have proven unpersuasive. See the decisive refutation of Pétrement’s position in Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 7–27. Logan concedes the possibility of Valentinian influence on later Sethian documents but demonstrates the priority of the Ophite account.

¹⁵ Pace Pétrement and Thomassen, the “Gnostics” in *Haer.* 1.11.5 cannot refer to earlier Valentinians (Pétrement, *Separate God*, 357; Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the “Valentinians”* [NHMS 60; Leiden: Brill, 2006], 18). First, it is clear from the references in 1.11.1 that “Gnostics” in this chapter refers to a specific group that Irenaeus will discuss “later,” i.e., in 1.29–31. Second, in bk. 2 Irenaeus explicitly refers back to this discussion in bk. 1 and says that the Valentinians derived their understanding of the emissions of the Archons from the “Gnostics” (2.13.8, 10). Third, the identification is corroborated by parallel statements in 1.31.3. Here Irenaeus criticizes Valentinian boasts to know more about the Pleroma than the Gnostic myths discussed in 29.1–31.2 and accuses them of counting themselves “better than all the rest on account of this knowledge.” Irenaeus also states that his goal in writing is that “others will no longer be misled by their malicious though specious persuasion, thinking that they will learn of some greater or more sublime mystery from them” (1.31.3 [trans. Unger and Dillon, *Irenaeus I*, 103]). One-upmanship appears to have been typical among the Valentinians. In addition to claiming superiority to the Gnostics, they claimed superiority to each other, to the apostles, and even to Christ himself (1.25.2; 3.1.1; 3.12.7; cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* 2.9.9, in which gnostics are criticized for claiming to be nobler than men and gods). All of this suggests that the slogan “more gnostic than the Gnostics” is both authentic and representative of the kind of propaganda employed by the Valentinians. Fourth, this Valentinian claim of superiority to the Gnostics is supported by a further claim to know about “Powers” that existed prior to Abyss and Silence (*Haer.* 1.11.5). While these two entities do not always appear under the same names – Abyss is sometimes referred to as the Father while Silence is sometimes referred to as Barbelo, First-Woman, or Womb – they do stand at the head of the protologies of *Haer.* 1.29–31.

Defining more precise boundaries for this broader sense of the term is not the concern of this study, but it is worth noting that the boast of being “more gnostic than the Gnostics” is in context a claim to have more knowledge (*gnosis*) about the inner workings of the divine realm (*Haer.* 1.11.5). This suggests that evidence of dependence on a pleromatic myth is the telltale sign that a group is “gnostic.” Therefore, as a rule of thumb I include under this designation only groups that advocate or presuppose a mythological schema like that of either the “Gnostics” or the Valentinians. Accordingly, of the texts examined in this study I classify the following as gnostic: the Ophite account in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30; the *Apocryphon of John*; the *Letter of Peter to Philip*; the *Treatise on the Resurrection*; Heracleon’s commentary on John; and the *Tripartite Tractate*. Because they exhibit no claims to special, detailed knowledge of the divine realms, I treat as non-gnostic Marcion and the author of *Acts of John* 87–93.¹⁶

The one text covered in this study that is especially difficult to place is the *Gospel of Mary*. Certain statements seem to presuppose something like the basic gnostic myth, but the fragmentary nature of the extant manuscripts makes this difficult to prove.¹⁷ For the sake of convenience and because it shares several features with gnostic thought, I have included the *Gospel of Mary* in the discussion of doubt and gnosis in Chapter 5. Nevertheless, my conclusions do not depend on the identification of this text as gnostic. On the contrary, if *Mary* is not gnostic, it may actually strengthen my argument by confirming that the patterns of reception documented in Chapter 5 are not limited to gnostic circles.

2.1.2 Docetism: Terms and Concepts

Although the above discussion has been necessary to define terminology and prevent misunderstandings, in many cases the identification of individual texts as either gnostic or non-gnostic is relatively inconsequential for the purposes of this study. Far more important is how we identify, classify, and describe the various Christologies of the second century. Here it is necessary to clarify

¹⁶ *Acts of John* 94–102 appears to have been composed by a different author. This section at certain points seems to presuppose a gnostic-like myth (95.22–28 and 98.15–19). Some have therefore judged it gnostic (see discussion in Pieter J. Lalleman, *The Acts of John: A Two-Stage Initiation into Johannine Gnosticism* [SAAA 4; Leuven: Peeters, 1998], 30–39).

¹⁷ Anne Pasquier and Christopher M. Tuckett have cogently argued that the gnostic myth is presupposed (Anne Pasquier, *L’Évangile selon Marie* [BCNHT10; Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1983], 17–22; Christopher Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary* [Oxford Early Christian Gospel Texts; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 52–54). It must be admitted that certain elements usually thought to be gnostic could be explained in terms of a broad Platonic (Karen L. King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle* [Santa Rosa, Calif.: Polebridge, 2003], 27–47) or Stoic (Esther de Boer, *The Gospel of Mary: Beyond a Gnostic and a Biblical Mary Magdalene* [JSNTSup 260; London: T&T Clark International, 2004], 35–59) background.

another set of terms about which there is significant debate: Docetism, docetic, and docetist. Scholarship today is divided over how these terms should be employed. At the risk of oversimplification, there are two main positions. Many today argue that the label “docetic” should be reserved for those ancient sects that deny both the humanity and the suffering of Jesus.¹⁸ Others maintain a broader definition that covers a variety of Christologies, including those that divide Jesus Christ into two persons: a human Jesus who suffered on the cross and a divine Christ who remained impassible.¹⁹ Following the lead of Michael Slusser, I argue below that a broader definition best reflects the historical realities of the second and third centuries.²⁰ To support my argument, I now survey a variety of Christologies that were considered docetic in the early church.

I begin with those Christologies to which all agree the docetic label applies. In these, Christ’s humanity, represented especially by his flesh and his suffering, is nothing more than an illusion. Christ is a divine being who temporarily took on a human appearance but not an actual human body. The closest analogies may be found in Hellenistic-Jewish conceptions of angelophanies (e.g., Philo, *Abr.* 113: “angels changed ... into human form [ἀγγέλων μεταβαλόντων ... εἰς ἀνθρωπόμορφον ἰδέαν]”) and in Greek legends of Olympian gods who appear on earth in human form (e.g., Euripides, *Bacch.* 54: “I have changed my form into the nature of a man [μορφήν τ’ ἐμήν μετέβαλον εἰς ἀνδρὸς φύσιν]”).²¹ Because Christ’s human nature is completely denied, this Christology has often been characterized as monophysite. To avoid confusion with the

¹⁸ Peter Weigandt, “Der Doketismus im Urchristentum und in der theologischen Entwicklung des zweiten Jahrhunderts” (PhD diss., Heidelberg, 1961); Davies, “Docetism,” 16-17; Norbert Brox, “‘Doketismus’ – eine Problemanzeige,” *ZKG* 95 (1984): 301-14; Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption*, 212.

¹⁹ See already F. C. Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis oder die christliche Religions-Philosophie in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Tübingen: Osiander, 1835), 258-59.

²⁰ Michael Slusser, “Docetism: A Historical Definition,” *SecCent* 1 (1981): 163-72. Following Slusser are Marjanen, “Stranger,” 487 n. 3; D. F. Wright, “Docetism,” *DLNT*: 306-9; PHEME PERKINS, “Docetism,” *EEC*: 341-42; Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 476; Paul Foster, *The Apocryphal Gospels: A Very Short Introduction* (Very Short Introductions 201; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 53, 90; King, *What is Gnosticism?* 208. Similarly Kurt Rudolph, “‘Christlich’ und ‘Christentum’ in der Auseinandersetzung zwischen ‘Kirche’ und ‘Gnosis,’” in *Apocrypha Severini: Presented to Søren Giversen* (eds. Per Bilde, Helge K. Nielsen, and Jørgen P. Sørensen; Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1993) 129-214, esp. 202-8.

²¹ Cf. Philo, *Abr.* 118: “though incorporeal, they changed into human form (ἀσωμάτους ὄντας εἰς ἰδέαν ἀνθρώπων μεμορφῶσθαι).” See also Acts 14:11, which alludes to a legend about Zeus and Hermes “coming down ... in human form (ὁμοιωθέντες ἀνθρώποις).” The same or similar legend is recounted by Ovid, who describes Jupiter as coming to earth “in the guise of a mortal (*specie mortali*)” (*Metam.* 8.626).

later heresy by the same name, the term *proto-monophysite* is to be preferred.²² Yet perhaps an even better term – one that is already available in the English language and one that more accurately reflects ancient conceptualization – is anthropomorphosis, i.e. transformation into human form.²³

Prime examples of proto-monophysite or anthropomorphosist Christology include Saturninus (or Saturnilus); the opponents of Ignatius of Antioch; the author of *Acts of John* 87–93; the Simonians; and, of course, Marcion.²⁴ Marcion is nevertheless unique in this group. On the one hand, he claims that Christ was merely “in the form of a man” and that he had flesh “in appearance only (τῷ δοκεῖν)”.²⁵ On the other hand, Marcion paradoxically affirms the reality of Christ’s suffering.²⁶ This aspect of Marcion’s Christology should serve as a warning to all who would restrict the term “docetic” to a denial of Christ’s suffering. It was because of this inconsistency that Marcion’s disciple, Apelles, parted ways with his teacher. Apelles admitted that Jesus took on real body but

²² My thanks to Michel R. Barnes for this suggestion.

²³ Irenaeus summarizes this position as follows: “Some think that he was manifested in the form of a man (*manifestatum eum quemadmodum hominem transfiguratum*), but they assert that he was neither born nor incarnate” (*Haer.* 3.11.3). Similarly *Haer.* 1.24.4 (*in hominis forma venerit*); 27.2 (*in hominis forma manifesta*); Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.28.4–5 (ἀσώματον καὶ ἀνειδεὸν δοκῆσει δὲ ἐπιπεφηνέναι ἄνθρωπον); 10.19.3 (ὡς ἄνθρωπον φανέντα ... οὐκ ὄντα ἄνθρωπον, καὶ ἔνσαρκον οὐκ ἔνσαρκον); Origen, *Cels.* 7.35 (ἀνθρωποειδεῖς θεωρεῖσθαι θεοῦς); Eriphanius, *Pan.* 23.1.10 (ἐν σχήματι ἀνθρώπου ἐηλυθέναι καὶ ἰδέα μόνῃ).

²⁴ Saturninus: Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.24.2; Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.28.1–5; Pseudo-Tertullian, *Haer.* 1.4; Eriphanius, *Pan.* 23.1.10. The opponents of Ignatius: *Smyrn.* 2–6; *Trall.* 6–11; *Magn.* 8–11. Marcion: Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.33.2; Tertullian, *Carn. Chr.* 1.4. Simonians: Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.1, 3; 2.23.3–4; Hippolytus, *Haer.* 6.19.6; Eriphanius, *Pan.* 21.1.3. The modalistic docetism in these accounts is today widely considered to be a second-century development that does not trace back to Simon himself (Lucien Cerfaux, *Recueil Lucien Cerfaux: Études d'exégèse et d'histoire religieuse* [2 vols.; BETL 6–7; Gembloux: Duculot, 1954], 1:206–7; Werner Foerster, *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts* [2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1972], 1:29; Karlmann Beyschlag, *Simon Magus und die christliche Gnosis* [WUNT 16; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1974], 33–34; Gerd Lüdemann, *Untersuchungen zur simonianischen Gnosis* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975], 81–86; Christoph Markschies, *Gnosis: An Introduction* [trans. John Bowden; London: T&T Clark, 2003], 75–77; Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism*, 30). *Acts of John* 87–93 and 94–102 appear to come from different sources (see Chapter 7). The latter promotes a form of separationist Christology (on which see below), but the former maintains a strictly anthropomorphosist model. To the above we could add various anthropomorphosist sects described by Eriphanius (*Pan.* 26.10.5; 30.28.2; 41.1.7) and perhaps also the Manicheans (Eriphanius, *Pan.* 40.8.2), the Bardesanites (*Adamant. Dial.* 5.4–12), and the author of the *Ascension of Isaiah*. Although the ambiguity of the statements in 1 and 2 John make it difficult to be certain, I am also inclined to include the Johannine secessionists in this group.

²⁵ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.27.2; 4.33.2; Tertullian, *Marc.* 5.20.3–4; *Carn. Chr.* 1.4; 3.2, 4.

²⁶ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.33.2; Tertullian, *Marc.* 3.8; 3.11; *Carn. Chr.* 1.4; 5. See further Chapter 6.

claimed that his flesh was composed of a special substance taken “from the stars.”²⁷ This special-flesh model allowed Apelleasts to avoid the “dishonor of the flesh” that they associated with the “evil” Creator God of the Jews.²⁸

Another variant of the proto-monophysite model appears in an account of the crucifixion that Irenaeus attributes, possibly incorrectly, to “Basilides” (*Haer.* 1.24.4).²⁹ While Jesus comes “in the form of a man (*in hominis forma*)” and was only “thought to have been crucified (*putatus sit crucifixus*),” the mechanism involved in the docetic interpretation of the crucifixion is significantly more complex than the anthropomorphosist models discussed above. Rather than denying the reality of the passion simply on the basis of a phantom body, this account maintains that a real crucifixion took place but reimagines it as a divine charade in which Simon of Cyrene was crucified rather than Jesus: “since he was an incorporeal power,” Jesus was able, just prior to the crucifixion, to “transform (*transfiguratum*)” Simon of Cyrene so that he “would seem (*putaretur*) to be Jesus” and to disguise himself to look like Simon.³⁰

On the other side of the spectrum are those Christologies that claim Jesus was a mere man who, because of his great virtue, was temporarily possessed by a divine being called Christ. In this schema, Christ departs from the human Jesus just prior to the crucifixion, so that suffering and humanity is affirmed with respect to “Jesus” but explicitly denied with respect to “Christ.”³¹ This Christology has aptly been labeled “separationist.”³² The simpler forms of this

²⁷ Tertullian, *Carn. Chr.* 6; cf. Ps.-Tertullian, *Haer.* 6.5: “He [Christ] wove together for himself a starry and airy flesh (*sideream sibi carnem et aeream*).”

²⁸ Tertullian, *Carn. Chr.* 8.

²⁹ Pearson argues that a quotation of Basilides preserved in Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 4.12 [83.1]) implies that Basilides affirmed Jesus’s suffering, and so contradicts the account of Irenaeus (“Basilides the Gnostic,” in *Companion to Second-Century Christian ‘Heretics’* [eds. Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen; VCSup 76; Leiden Boston: Brill, 2005], 26). Irenaeus’s description of Basilides’s teaching also differs in significant ways from Hippolytus’s account (*Haer.* 7.14–27), which depicts a form of separationist Christology (see below). A somewhat confused mixture of elements from these two accounts appears in *Treat. Seth* (NHC VII,2) 51.20–52.3; 55.30–56.32. Pearson suggests that Irenaeus, or his source, may have misunderstood Basilides’s actual teaching. Alternatively, Irenaeus’s account may be based not on the teaching of Basilides himself but on that of a group of his followers (Werner Foerster, “Das System des Basilides,” *NTS* 9 [1963]: 233–42).

³⁰ Cf. the Manichaean claim that “the enemy” was “nailed to” the cross rather than Jesus, who “disguised himself from those murders” (*Manich. Ps. Bk. II.123*, 196 [Allberry]). According to another Manichaean text, Christ came in the “form of a servant” and in the “appearance as of men” but “without a body” (*Keph.* 12.24–26 [Gardner]).

³¹ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.26.1

³² E.g., Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption*, 16. Another term, possessionist, has been proposed in Pamela E. Kinlaw, *The Christ is Jesus: Metamorphosis, Possession, and Johannine Christology* (AcBib 18; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005). This term is descriptive of ancient conceptualization in some cases, but it is possible to have a possessionist model that does not include the separation element (see note below on Ebionite Christology).

model were adopted by Cerinthus and the Gnostics (a.k.a. the “Ophites”) of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30.³³

Because it differs markedly from the proto-monophysite / anthropomorphosist model described above, some today argue that separationist Christology should not be considered docetic. Yet this restricted definition of docetism ignores the perspectives not only of the ancient heresiologists but also of the heretics themselves. In fact, the only sect known to have self-identified as “Docetists” adopted a separationist model (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 8.8.2; 8.11.1). Consequently, it would not be unreasonable to insist instead that the proper name “Docetist” be restricted to this separationist sect.³⁴ Moreover, the *Second*

³³ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.26.1; 1.30.1–15. It is probably a mistake to assume that all Ebionites maintained a separationist Christology. Irenaeus does liken Ebionite Christology to that of Cerinthus, but in the same breath he also compares it to that of the Carpocratians (*Haer.* 1.26.2), who were decidedly not separationists. According to Irenaeus, the Carpocratians believed that the power that descended on Jesus helps Jesus’s soul ascend to the Father (1.25.1), and thus it must remain with him rather than separate from him. The only element common to the Christology of all three groups is the claim that Jesus was the son of Joseph rather than of God the Father, that is, he was born like all other human beings. Not surprisingly, when Irenaeus later offers his refutation of Ebionite Christology, he discusses only the issue of the incarnation and birth (3.21.1; 4.33.4; 5.1.3). While it is possible that a later branch of Ebionites were separationists (so Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.34.6), Irenaeus’s Ebionites do not seem to have been.

³⁴ So far as I can tell, the earliest extant appearance of “Docetist” referring unambiguously to an anthropomorphosist Christology is *Adamant. Dial.* 5.6 (ca. 290 CE). Prior to Hippolytus, “Docetist” appears on two other occasions, both of which probably refer to groups that maintained some form of separationist Christology. Writing not long before Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria mentions a sect of Docetists led by Julius Cassianus (*Strom.* 3.13 [91.1]; 3.17 [102.3]). While Clement does not explicitly describe Cassian’s docetism, he identifies Cassian as a former Valentinian (3.13 [92.1]) who now condemns marriage and birth (3.17 [102.1–104.2]). Cassian probably held to some hybrid of proto-monophysite and separationist Christology. Hippolytus’s Docetists are not to be identified with the group led by Cassian; whereas the latter’s docetism involves a denial of Christ’s birth (Clement, *Strom.* 3.17 [102.1–4]), the former’s affirms it (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 8.9.2).

The other reference to “Docetists” appears in a late second-century tract written by Serapion, bishop of Syrian Antioch (apud Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.12.6). In it we learn that certain heretics, whom Serapion and his readers “call δοκηταί,” were appealing to the *Gospel of Peter* to support their false teaching. Unfortunately, the fragment of Serapion’s book preserved by Eusebius does not include any specifics about their Christology, but it does suggest that the docetic elements in the *Gospel of Peter* consisted primarily in those things that were “added” to the Jesus tradition. It may therefore be possible to glean some information from the fragments of the *Gospel of Peter*.

Although recent scholarship has called into question the alleged docetism of the *Gospel of Peter*, these studies have often worked with a definition of docetism that is for the most part restricted to denials of the reality of Jesus’s suffering (Jerry W. McCant, “The Gospel of Peter: Docetism Reconsidered,” *NTS* 30 [1984]: 258–73; Peter M. Head, “On the Christology of the Gospel of Peter,” *VC* 46 [1992]: 209–24; Paul Foster, “The Gospel of Peter,”

Treatise of the Great Seth (NHC VII,2) from Nag Hammadi, which espouses a possession and separation schema (51.20–52.3; 56.14–19), clearly applies docetistic rhetoric to Christ: “I did not die in reality but *in appearance*” (55.18–19).³⁵ Here the separationist model is employed to support the claim that the traditional crucifixion story is not what it appears to be and must therefore be interpreted along docetic lines. Additionally, as Irenaeus observes, both the anthropomorphosist and separationist models involve a denial of a real incarnation:

The fact is, if one examines the rules of all of them, he will find that the Word of God and the Christ who is from on high are presented by them as being without flesh and impassible. *Some think that he was manifested in the form of a man (hominem transfiguratum =*

ExpTim 118 [2007]: 320–21). The *Gospel of Peter* is probably not docetic in this strict sense. Jesus’s body dies on the cross and is laid in a tomb. Even the phrase “as having no pain (ὡς μηδὲν πόνων ἔχων)” (4.10), which was probably one of the “added” elements listed by Serapion, need not be taken as docetic (Head, “Gospel of Peter,” 211–13), though it is undoubtedly susceptible to docetic interpretation – which was, after all, Serapion’s main concern.

Nevertheless, if a broader definition of docetism is entertained, the extant text of the *Gospel of Peter* includes material that qualifies as docetic. The additional account of Christ’s resurrection (9.34–10.42) is certainly docetic in the sense that Jesus has the form of a man but is so tall that his head reaches past the heavens. A similar image is employed to deny Christ’s humanity in *AJ* 90.13. More importantly, the revised and expanded account of Jesus’s cry from the cross is undoubtedly separationist: “And the Lord cried out, ‘My power, my power, you have left me.’ And having said this *he was taken up*” (*Gos. Pet.* 5.19; cf. Mark 15:34: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”). This may be compared to the explicitly separationist interpretation of the cry of dereliction in *Gos. Phil.* (NHC II,3) 68.26–9: “[My] God, my God, why, Lord, [have] you forsaken me?” It was on the cross that he said these (words), for it was in that place he was divided” (trans. Hugo Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth: Cognitive Poetics and Transformational Soteriology in the Gospel of Philip and the Exegesis on the Soul* [NHMS 73; Leiden: Brill, 2010], 503). Because the “Lord” is still on the cross in *Gos. Pet.* 6.21 (see also 6.24, where the “Lord” is buried) and later comes out of the tomb and ascends (9.35–10.40; 13:56), the “Lord,” i.e., Jesus, cannot be the subject of the verb ἀνελήφθη (“he/it was taken up”) in 5.19. Or if Jesus is the subject, then the insertion of ἀνελήφθη has introduced inconsistency to the narrative. But no contradiction is necessary if the subject of ἀνελήφθη is the “power” that leaves the Lord behind on the cross in the preceding sentence (cf. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.12.12: “he who flew off on high was another” [ANF]). Even if the author himself did not intend to communicate a separationist Christology, the differences from the canonical parallels may well have encouraged such a reading. While this separationist view is not docetic by some modern definitions, the fact that Hippolytus’s δοκηταί were separationists means that Serapion can be acquitted of the charge that he inaccurately attributed the *Gospel of Peter* to “the Docetists.”

³⁵ Gibbons, *NHL*, emphasis added. Cf. *Apoc. Pet.* (NHC VII) 81–83, which describes Christ as “apparently being seized” at his arrest, explaining that only the fleshly substitute was crucified while the living Savior, who was “in him whom they seized” was “released” in his “incorporeal body” (trans. James Brashler, “NHC VII,3: *Apocalypse of Peter*: Text, Translation, and Notes,” in *Nag Hammadi Codex VII* [ed. Birger A. Pearson; NHMS 30; Leiden: Brill, 1995], 241–45).

ἄνθρωπον μεταμορφωθέντα), but they assert that he was neither born nor incarnate; while others assert that he did not even take the form of a man, but descended as a dove upon Jesus who was born of Mary. (*Haer.* 3.11.3)³⁶

In sum, the narrower definition of docetism sometimes advocated today is an anachronistic imposition that by and large misrepresents the perspectives of the ancients themselves.

This anachronism proves all the more problematic once it is recognized that a pure separationist model, such as the one Irenaeus attributes to Cerinthus, was relatively uncommon. Most forms of separationist Christology were hybrids that incorporated elements of the anthropomorphosist model. Even the classic “Gnostics” of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30, whose Christology most closely aligns with that of Cerinthus, differ from Cerinthus in that they deny that Jesus rose in the flesh.³⁷ They argue instead for a docetic interpretation of the resurrection appearances, claiming that Jesus’s body was “psychic and spiritual” and that the disciples were mistaken to conclude that it was composed of flesh.³⁸

The Valentinians later apply this tripartite (material, psychic, spiritual) ontology to the incarnation. In fact, the Valentinians had lively internal debates over nuances with respect to the body of the Savior, resulting in a variety of hybrid Christologies. The most popular version seems to have been the Christology of the so-called Western Valentinians.³⁹ According to this model Christ took form in a body composed of a “psychic” substance that passed through Mary “like water through a pipe,” taking nothing from her, i.e., “nothing material,” because the flesh is incapable of being saved.⁴⁰ This “psychic” version of anthropomorphosist Christology is then combined with a possession-and-separation model. The spiritual Savior, an entity distinct from Christ, is said to

³⁶ Trans. Unger and Steenberg, *Irenaeus* 3, 53, emphasis added. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of *Haer.* 3 follow Unger and Steenberg. Latin text and Greek retroversions in Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, *Irénée de Lyon, Contre les hérésies, livre III* (2 vols.; SC 210–11; Paris: Cerf, 1974), 2:148–49.

³⁷ It is probably in light of this denial of the flesh of the risen Jesus that Ps.-Tertullian’s account of the Ophites (“Christ was not in the substance of the flesh; salvation for the flesh is not to be hoped for” [*Haer.* 2.4]) is to be understood.

³⁸ See Chapter 3.

³⁹ Evidence from Hippolytus (*Haer.* 6.35.7) and Tertullian (*Val.* 4.3) suggests that Axionicus, though a prominent leader in the Eastern school, was the only disciple of Valentinus to follow faithfully the teachings of his master. Not surprisingly, then, the proto-orthodox heresiologists concentrate most of their polemic against the Western school.

⁴⁰ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.6.1; 1.7.2; 3.22.1; Ps.-Tertullian, *Haer.* 4.5; Tertullian, *Carn. Chr.* 20.1; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 31.7.4.

enter this psychic body at Christ's baptism and then depart at the crucifixion.⁴¹ The Savior's impassibility is thereby preserved.⁴²

The Valentinians nevertheless maintained that the psychic Christ suffered, claiming that his body, even though it was made of a psychic substance rather than of flesh, was "visible, tangible, and passible." This was possible, they reasoned, because the psychic body was formed by some mysterious, "ineffable skill."⁴³ This rationalization, common in Western Valentinianism, makes clear that the Valentinians themselves were aware that their denial of the reality of Christ's flesh stood in tension not only with the depictions of a touchable Jesus in the Gospel tradition but also with their own affirmation of Christ's suffering.⁴⁴ It is essential not to overlook the fact that Irenaeus and Tertullian accuse Marcion of precisely the same inconsistency of maintaining Christ's suffering while denying his flesh.⁴⁵ For this reason, the separationist Christology of "Western" Valentinians is just as docetic as the proto-monophysite Christology of Marcion. Clement of Alexandria says as much when he likens the Valentinian "psychic body" to the "docetism (δόκησις)" of Marcion (*Strom.* 3.17 [102.3]). Irenaeus likewise argues that the Valentinian position is the same as that of docetism (τὸ αὐτὸ ἐστὶ, δοκῆσει λέγειν πεφηνέναι).⁴⁶ Moreover, these church fathers are not artificially forcing the Valentinians into a docetic mold for polemical reasons. According to Clement, the Valentinians themselves employed docetic rhetoric in their interpretation of John's crucifixion scene: "But they pierced the *appearance*, that is, the 'flesh' of the psychic one" (*Exc.* 62).

Evidence for the Christology of the "Eastern" Valentinians is more difficult to assess, both because the heresiologists provide less information and because the extant Valentinian texts are highly esoteric and open to various interpretations. Einar Thomassen, who has produced the most comprehensive study to date, argues that the Eastern school, in contrast to the Western school, held that the Savior had both a spiritual body and a body of flesh, but no psychic body.⁴⁷ In this schema, however, the Savior assumed the flesh not to save it but to destroy it – and so save people from it.⁴⁸ As in the Western view, the spiritual

⁴¹ Some hold that the time of departure coincided with Jesus's arrest (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.7.2), while others maintain that it was just prior to his death (Clement, *Exc.* 62).

⁴² Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.7.2.

⁴³ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.6.1; 1.9.3; Clement, *Exc.* 59; Tertullian, *Val.* 26.

⁴⁴ Similar Valentinian attempts to resolve the tension are reported in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.9.3; Clement, *Exc.* 59; Tertullian, *Val.* 26.

⁴⁵ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.33.2; Tertullian, *Marc.* 3.7–8; 3.11; *Carn. Chr.* 1.4; 5.

⁴⁶ *Haer.* 5.1.2; similarly 3.18.7; 3.22.1.

⁴⁷ Thomassen, *Seed*, 9–129.

⁴⁸ One Valentinian argued that Christ did not rise in the flesh because his goal was to destroy the sinfulness of the flesh (Tertullian, *Carn. Chr.* 16). The *Testimony of Truth* (NHC IX,3), which has been influenced by Valentinian doctrine, seems to present a similar view

Savior leaves behind the body to suffer on the cross.⁴⁹ The difference is that the body that suffers is composed of flesh rather than of some mysterious psychic substance. Consequently, this view might be judged less docetic. But it still maintains that the Savior himself did not suffer and that the resurrection is spiritual only.

Thomassen's erudite reconstruction of Eastern Valentinian Christology rests on texts that can be interpreted in different ways. There is evidence of another, more docetic, version of Valentinian Christology not discussed by Thomassen that seems to have been associated both with the Eastern school and with Valentinus himself. According to Tertullian, Valentinus admitted that Christ had "flesh" but gave the term a very "different meaning": Christ's body was composed not of normal human flesh but of a special, "spiritual flesh" (*Carn. Chr.* 1, 15).⁵⁰ This phrase cannot, as Thomassen suggests, support the idea that Valentinus and the Eastern Valentinians believed the Savior had both a spiritual body and a physical body.⁵¹ Rather, both the syntax (*carnem Christi spiritalem*) and the context make clear that Christ's flesh is itself spiritual rather than physical.⁵² Tertullian summarizes and refutes a written defense of this special-flesh theory by one of Valentinus's disciples, and later compares Valentinus's notion of spiritual flesh with the astral-flesh theory of Apelles.⁵³ Because Hippolytus says that the Eastern and Western Valentinians argued over whether the Savior's body was spiritual or psychic (*Haer.* 6.35.5–7), the

(33.10–14). Additionally, the *Treatise on the Resurrection* (NHC I,4), often thought to be Valentinian in origin, states that the spiritual resurrection will "swallow up" the fleshly resurrection (45.39–46.2).

⁴⁹ The timing and nature of the separation seem to differ. In the "Eastern" school, Luke 23:46 ("Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit") is understood as a reference to the separation (Clement, *Exc.* 1.1). In the "Western" school, opinion on the matter seems to be divided. Some agree with the Eastern position on timing but insist that Spirit "departed" rather than was "separated" from Christ (Clement, *Exc.* 61). Presumably this nuance was added to avoid the notion that the spiritual being was ever truly joined to the psychic, lest the former be contaminated by the latter (so Thomassen, *Seed*, 66–67). Others claimed that the time of departure coincided with Jesus's arrest (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.7.2). This change presumably allowed them to distance further the spiritual being from the suffering of the cross (so already Davies, "Docetism," 28–29).

⁵⁰ Cf. *Apoc. El. (C)* 5.32: "After these things both Elijah and Enoch will come down. They will put off the flesh of the world and put on *the flesh of the Spirit* (Ἰντσαρξ ἡπἰπἰα = τὴν σάρκα πνεύς)."

⁵¹ Thomassen, *Seed*, 41, 425, 459.

⁵² Cf. "other flesh (*aliam carnem*)" in *Carn. Chr.* 24.3.

⁵³ *Carn. Chr.* 15; *Res.* 2. Tertullian's Valentinian opponent objects to the proto-orthodox view by asking, if Christ rose and ascended in a flesh like ours, then why are not our bodies immediately taken up into heaven? He argues that since normal human bodies do not ascend into heaven, Christ's body must in some sense be different from ours. Tertullian's reply is that our risen bodies will be the same as Christ's, but that according to Paul we must wait until Christ has defeated all his enemies (1 Cor 15:23–28).

“spiritual flesh” Christology described by Tertullian and his unnamed Valentinian source is best understood as belonging to the Eastern school. Thus the Christology of at least some Eastern Valentinians was just as docetic as that of the Western school – perhaps more so given that the spiritual substance in this tripartite schema is one farther step removed from the flesh than is the psychic substance.

If Tertullian has correctly attributed this special-flesh Christology to Valentinus himself, then Valentinus also advocated his own form of docetism. Two other early church testimonies attest to the docetism of Valentinus. First, Ps.-Tertullian’s *Against All Heresies*, which many judge to be a Latin translation of Hippolytus’s lost *Syntagma*, attributes a view to Valentinus that is nearly identical to the special-flesh Christology described by Tertullian: “But he was not in the substance of our body, but bringing down some unknown spiritual body from heaven, he passed through the Virgin Mary as water through a pipe.... He denies the resurrection of our flesh, but [maintains the resurrection] of *another flesh*.”⁵⁴ Second, Clement of Alexandria explicitly compares Valentinus’s Christology with the “docetism (δόκησις)” of Marcion and Julius Cassian because “indeed even for Valentinus [Christ’s] body was psychic (ψυχικόν)” (*Strom.* 3.17 [102.3]). There is a discrepancy in that Valentinus speaks of a “spiritual” flesh or body (the so-called Eastern view) according to Tertullian and Ps.-Tertullian, whereas Clement refers to “psychic” body (the so-called Western view).⁵⁵ Most today think that the Eastern school more closely reflects the original views of Valentinus. However, since Clement has direct access to Valentinus’s writings, the testimony of *Strom.* 3.17 [102.3] cannot easily be dismissed.⁵⁶ Although we will probably never know for certain Valentinus’s exact view of Christ’s flesh, one thing is clear: the testimonies of Clement, Tertullian, and Ps.-Tertullian (Hippolytus?) independently attest that the heresiarch’s Christology was docetic in one sense or another.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ *Haer.* 4.5: *hunc autem in substantia corporis nostri non fuisse, sed spiritale nescio quod corpus de caelo deferentem, quasi aquam per fistulam, sic per Mariam virginem transmeasse.... resurrectionem huius carnis negat, sed alterius* (Latin text in Emil Kroymann, ed., *Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera* [CSEL 47; Vienna: Tempsky, 1906], 221). Cf. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 31.7.10: σώματι ἄλλῳ.

⁵⁵ Tertullian is also aware of some (Western Valentinians?) who maintain that Christ’s body was psychic (*Carn. Chr.* 10–14).

⁵⁶ Clement, *Strom.* 3.17 [102.3] and Ps.-Tertullian, *Haer.* 4.5 directly contradict Thomasen’s reconstruction of the Christology of Valentinus and Eastern Valentinianism.

⁵⁷ Here it is worth quoting a fragment of Valentinus preserved by Clement: “Jesus practiced divinity, he ate and drank in his own special way, not excreting the foods. His power of self-control was such that even the food in him was not corrupted, since he himself possessed no corruption” (Clement, *Strom.* 3.7 [59.3]). While the main theme of this statement is continence rather than docetic Christology, it does seem to presuppose that Jesus’s body was made of a special kind of substance that “possessed no corruption.” And this is confirmed when Clement shortly afterward says that Valentinus held Christ’s body to be

In sum, the strict distinction in much secondary literature between docetic Christology and separationist Christology is a modern construct. In the early church, docetic terminology is employed in reference to both proto-monophysite and separationist Christologies. Even certain Christologies that affirmed Christ's suffering, e.g., those of Marcion and certain Valentinians, were considered docetic because they denied the physical reality of Christ's flesh. As with Gnosticism, in this study I therefore employ a definition of docetism that attempts to approximate the views of the ancients themselves. The upper-case initial "Docetists" will be reserved for the sects that were actually called by that name, but "docetic" and "docetist" (or "doceticistic") will refer to any viewpoint that denies the reality either of Christ's flesh or of his suffering. More importantly, because one of the primary concerns of this study has been to determine if and to what degree antidocetic concerns may have shaped the canonical resurrection narratives, it will be necessary to consider groups and texts that may be doceticistic only with respect to their understanding of Jesus's resurrection body. Expanding our conception of docetism to include sects that affirm the incarnation and passion but deny a physical resurrection may seem overly broad to some modern sensibilities. Yet, historically speaking, some groups maintained a real incarnation but applied doceticistic rhetoric to the resurrection narratives, claiming that "Jesus appeared only as spiritual, and *no longer in flesh, but presented only the appearance of flesh.*"⁵⁸ In fact, the resurrection appearance tradition became a part of the docetic/antidocetic debate at an early date. Aside from possibly 1 and 2 John, the earliest extant evidence for the existence of docetic Christology comes from the letters of Ignatius of Antioch who, in the course of his polemic against anthropomorphosist Christology argues that the risen Christ appeared in the flesh (*Smyrn.* 3).

2.1.3 Gnostic Interpretive Methods

Irenaeus and Tertullian compare the gnostic use of Scripture to the popular practice of composing centos (*centones*) of Homer and Virgil.⁵⁹ A cento was a poem composed by lifting individual verses from a famous poet out of their original literary contexts and then stringing them together – and paraphrasing as necessary – to tell a radically new story.⁶⁰ The new poem would thus give

"psychic" (3.17 [102.3]). Valentinus's claim that "even the food in him was not corrupted" may be a response to the Marcionite view that completely rejected the reality of Christ's flesh because the flesh is "full of dung," i.e., corrupted food (Tertullian, *Marc.* 3.10). If so, Valentinus's special-flesh model, like that of Apelles, may have been a reaction to the extremism of Marcion's phantom-only docetism.

⁵⁸ [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 2.14 (see further Chapter 6).

⁵⁹ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.9.4 (cf. 2.14.2); Tertullian, *Praescr.* 39.

⁶⁰ On centos, see especially Karl Olav Sandnes, *The Gospel 'according to Homer and Virgil': Cento and Canon* (NovTSup 138; Leiden: Brill, 2011).

the appearance of being authentically Homeric or Virgilian without actually being so, and only those who knew the originals well would be able to detect the distortion that has taken place.⁶¹ The church fathers are not identifying the gnostic writings with centos but drawing an analogy between the centonists' use of the classical poets and the gnostics' use of Scripture. It is thus critical to note both the similarities and the differences. The primary complaint about both centonists and the heretics was their misleading reuse of traditional or well-known phraseology. The centonists would use Homeric phrases but with a significantly altered meaning. Similarly, the church fathers object that their opponents employ scriptural language but grossly violate the original sense of the text.⁶² Consequently, the gnostics deceive the simple into thinking that their teaching is supported by Scripture.⁶³

Often the distortion was a result of the gnostics' allegorical method of interpreting Scripture.⁶⁴ In such cases, it was not so much the allegorical method itself that bothered the church fathers but the fact that the heretics applied it to all genres indiscriminately and without respect to the apostolic rule of truth (*regula veritatis*).⁶⁵ The gnostics had an alternative *regula*, derived from a secret tradition revealed to a select few, that taught them to interpret allegorically not only parables but a wide variety of scriptural terms, stories, or sayings. Each could be construed as symbolic of different elements in gnostic mythology.⁶⁶ In Chapter 3, we shall have occasion to observe how one early gnostic sect, the so-called Ophites, applied this interpretive procedure to Luke's

⁶¹ Irenaeus notes that many inexperienced readers are duped into believing certain centos were written by Homer, whereas advanced readers are able to recognize easily the forgery (*Haer.* 1.9.4). Some ancient centos were composed as humorous parodies for entertainment at dinner parties (Sandnes, *Centio and Canon*, 34). Apparently, the guests were well educated and so able to recognize the comedic rearrangement.

⁶² Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.8.1–1.9.4; Tertullian, *Praescr.* 38–39. Clement of Alexandria, though he does not compare the heretics to centonists, objects to their tendentious selection and duplicitous use of scriptural phrases (*Strom.* 7.16 [94.1–105.5]) and the mischievous way in which they string them together (3.4 [38.1–5]).

⁶³ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.8.1.

⁶⁴ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.12.11.

⁶⁵ Hippolytus contends that the heretics lack the literary skill to discern between passages that were parabolic in meaning and those that were not (*Haer.* 5.8.1; similarly Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.8.1).

⁶⁶ E.g., Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.3.1; 1.7.2; 1.8.1–2; 1.30.14; 3.2.1; Tertullian, *Praescr.* 25–26; Clement, *Exc.* 66; Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.8.29; 5.10.2; 8.3; *Ap. Jas.* (NHC I,2) 1–2; *Gos. Phil.* (NHC II,3) 67.27–28; *AJ* 102.3–7. On the gnostic use of the allegorical method and Irenaeus's response, see Patricia Cox Miller, "'Words with an Alien Voice': Gnostics, Scripture, and Canon," *JAAR* 57 (1989): 459–83; Anne Pasquier, "The Valentinian Exegesis," in *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (2 vols.; ed. Charles Kannengiesser; Leiden: Brill, 2006); Lewis Ayres, "Irenaeus vs. the Valentinians: Toward a Re-thinking of Patristic Exegetical Origins," *J ECS* 23 (2015): 153–87.

Gospel, and in Chapter 5 we will examine how the Valentinian teacher Heracleon employed a similar method in his interpretation of the Gospel of John.

While allegorization was popular in gnostic circles, another method of reuse, which more closely resembles the technique of the centonists, is also employed. Irenaeus and Tertullian complain that their opponents would disregard the original literary context of the biblical material on which they drew and boldly transfer words or sayings into another context. Irenaeus satirically compares their use of Gospel materials to the jeweled mosaic of a king in which the individual jewels have been rearranged into the image of a dog or a fox (*Haer.* 1.8.1). Tertullian likewise employs the image of a patchwork quilt in which many different scraps of cloth have been stitched together.⁶⁷ Again, the use of biblical language and stories makes the arrangement sound biblical to the untrained ear, but the overall picture is decidedly unbiblical.

In this regard, the specific examples related by Irenaeus and Tertullian amply demonstrate their opponents' disregard for literary context, but they do not really illustrate the larger-scale rearrangement of material that is implied by their metaphors of a mosaic and a patchwork-quilt. On the one hand, metaphors, if extended too far, will break and cease to be useful. So it may be a mistake to think that these church fathers had themselves read heretical accounts that exhibited the large-scale rearrangement of gospel materials implied by their metaphors. On the other hand, there are at least two extant texts that adequately resemble the end-product of such a procedure.⁶⁸ The first is the *Gospel of Truth* (NHC I,3 and XII,2). Jacqueline A. Williams has demonstrated that the author of this text, whom she judges to be Valentinus himself, carefully weaves together a web of allusions to various OT and NT texts, frequently disregarding the context and original sense of the source texts.⁶⁹ If this is the same Valentinian *Gospel of Truth* known to Irenaeus, it may well have helped inspire his metaphor of a rearranged mosaic – though it must be admitted that Irenaeus discusses this apocryphal gospel in a different context (*Haer.* 3.11.9).

An even better fit for the mosaic metaphor is the “Gospel” speech included in chs. 87–93 of the *Acts of John* (*AJ*). Because there is little evidence to suggest that the bishop of Lyons knew this second text, Irenaeus's metaphor may have been more apt than he himself realized. A detailed examination of the use of the Gospels in *AJ* 87–93 is provided in Chapter 7. But since it speaks to certain wider tendencies among NT apocrypha, it will be helpful to make a few preliminary comments here. In *AJ* 87–93 the apostle John relates various (apocryphal) stories about Christ. Most of these take as their starting point a narrative

⁶⁷ *Praescr.* 39; similarly Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.14.2.

⁶⁸ Though the resemblance to centos is not as strong, two other possibilities are *The Gospel of Mary* and the Naassene system summarized in Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.1–5.

⁶⁹ Jacqueline A. Williams, *Biblical Interpretation in the Gnostic Gospel of Truth from Nag Hammadi* (SBLDS 79; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1988).

about Jesus's earthly ministry well known from the canonical gospels. Some of the new stories are radically rewritten versions of the canonical stories, and others appear to have been created by recycling and combining themes and phrases from various Gospels. The overall result is a new gospel text that advances a docetic, polymorphic Christology. The text is relevant for the present study because of its frequent importation of material from the post-resurrection appearance narratives – especially those elements that were most susceptible to docetic interpretation – into pre-passion settings. As in the centos, material is lifted from one context and refitted into another, and like Irenaeus's king that has been transformed into a fox, the human Jesus of the canonical gospels becomes a phantasmagoric, shape-shifting deity.

Especially illuminating is the justification given in the *AJ* for its revisions of Gospel traditions. In the introduction to the speech, the apostle John is quoted as saying,

We ourselves also, whom he chose for himself to be apostles, were tested by many things. I, for my part, could not capture (χωρῶ), either in conversation with you or in writing, the things I saw and the things I heard. Indeed, even now it is necessary to adapt them to your hearing (ἀκοάς); and in accordance with the things each is capable (χωρεῖ ἕκαστος) of receiving, I will share with you those things of which you are able to become hearers (ἀκροαταί), that you may see the glory that surrounds him who was and is both now and forever. (88.2–8)

In what most commentators consider an allusion to the Fourth Gospel, the apostle here mentions his previous and inevitably unsuccessful attempt to capture in writing the things he witnessed of Jesus. The problem envisaged is not so much John's inabilities as a writer, but the absolute profundity of the subject matter ("the glory that surrounds him who was and is both now and forevermore"). "For," as John later says, "his *great* deeds and *marvels* (τὰ ... μεγάλεῖα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰ θαυμάσια) ... are *unspeakable* (ἄρρητα), and, it may be, cannot at all be either uttered or heard" (*AJ* 93.15–17). This is why the apostle says that he could not capture them in writing previously and even now must adapt them to their "*hearing* (ἀκοάς), and in accordance with the things *each is capable* (χωρεῖ ἕκαστος) of receiving." The implication is that the author views the Fourth Gospel (and the other gospels by extension) as incapable of fully communicating the truth about Jesus, because all attempts to do so represent an accommodation to the limited spiritual capacities of the audience.

Many of these ideas are closely echoed in Irenaeus's descriptions of Valentinian views. According to Irenaeus, the Valentinians also assert that the divine mysteries are "*great* and *marvelous* and *unspeakable* (μεγάλα καὶ θαυμαστά καὶ ἀπόρρητα)."⁷⁰ And just as John in the *AJ* explains that he must "adapt" his

⁷⁰ *Haer.* 1.1.3. The verbal overlap with *AJ* 93 is striking, but direct literary influence is unlikely. Irenaeus indicates that his sources are Valentinian commentaries, and similar phrases appear elsewhere. For example, the Elchasites boast about "the marvelous mysteries

teaching to the capabilities of his hearers, so also the Valentinians claim, much to Irenaeus's frustration, that the apostles framed

their teaching according to *the capacity of their hearers* (*audientium capacitem* = τὸ τῶν ἀκουόντων χωρητικόν), and gave answers after the opinions of their questioners, – fabling blind things for the blind, according to their blindness; for the dull according to their dullness; for those in error according to their error. And to those who imagined that the Demiurge alone was God, they preached him; but to those who are *capable* (*capiunt* = χωροῦσιν) of comprehending the unnameable Father, they did declare the *unspeakable* (*inenarrabile* = ἄρητον) mystery through parables and enigmas; so that the Lord and the apostles exercised the office of teacher not to further the cause of truth, but even in hypocrisy, and as *each one was capable* (*quemadmodum capiebat unusquisque* = ὡς ἐχώρει εἷς ἕκαστος) of receiving.⁷¹

This is presumably why Irenaeus's opponents maintain that the Gospels, which reflect the apostles' teaching, "are ambiguous, and that the truth cannot be extracted from them by those who are ignorant of tradition. For [they allege] that the truth was not delivered by means of written documents" but through an oral tradition that was transmitted privately, first to a select few of Jesus's disciples and then to others who had the special capacity to understand, i.e., the gnostics themselves.⁷² In other words, for some of Irenaeus's opponents, the wording of the Gospels represents the public teaching of the apostles adapted to the capacity of the masses. Only those who have access to the secret tradition are able to discern the "true" meaning of the Gospels. In this way, the Gospels as a whole are understood to function like Jesus's parables: they conceal the truth from some and reveal hidden mysteries to others (Mark 4:10–12 par.).⁷³

This sheds light on Irenaeus's consternation over the fact that his opponents can sometimes appeal to the Gospels to support their own doctrines (3.11.7), and yet at other times turn and accuse the same Gospels "as if they were not correct, nor of authority" (3.2.1).⁷⁴ The gnostics accept the Gospels as established authorities in some sense – there would be no point in allegorizing their content if they were not – but they are authoritative only insofar as they are interpreted to align with revealed gnosis. As Irenaeus complains, they "indeed recognize the Scriptures, but they pervert their interpretation."⁷⁵ For the gnostics, the very details of the Gospel texts are authoritative. Indeed, they can

of Elchasai (τὰ θαυμάσια μυστήρια τοῦ Ἠλχασαί), those unspeakable and great (ἀπόρητα καὶ μεγάλα) secrets that he passes down to worthy disciples" (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 9.15.2).

⁷¹ *Haer.* 3.5.1 (*ANF* 1:418). Greek retroversions in Rousseau and Doutreleau, *Irénée III*, 2:55–57. Clement attributes a comparable view to Valentinian readings of Paul (*Exc.* 23).

⁷² *Haer.* 3.2.1 (*ANF* 1:415); similarly 1.30.14; 2.27.2; Tertullian, *Praescr.* 24–28.

⁷³ Similarly Ayres, "Exegetical Origins," 164.

⁷⁴ *Haer.* 3.12.12 (*ANF* 1:415).

⁷⁵ Similarly, according to Tertullian, Valentinus accepts the "whole" NT but perverts its meaning with "violent" exegesis by distorting "the proper meaning of every particular word" and adding "fantastical arrangements" (*Praescr.* 38.7–10 [*ANF* 3:262]).

affirm that Jesus did “all things as it has been written in the Gospels.”⁷⁶ But the truth is not equated with the plain meaning or literal sense of the text; rather, each detail is reinterpreted as part of an elaborate gnostic myth. Therefore gnostics can contradict (the plain meaning) of the Gospels while at the same time appealing to their exact wording as proof of their doctrines.⁷⁷ We should not be surprised then to find docetist texts like the *AJ* or various gnostic texts from Nag Hammadi echoing or even directly appealing to certain stories or statements in the Gospels and yet also radically revising, supplementing, or reinterpreting their content and meaning.⁷⁸ Such modifications do not by any means imply a rejection of the scriptural status or apostolic origins of the Gospels. The proto-orthodox/gnostic debate was not over the authoritative status of the Gospels, which is taken as a given by both sides, but over how they should be interpreted. Because both sides regularly claim support from the same Scriptures, Tertullian goes so far as to counsel his readers to avoid appealing to the Scriptures in arguments with heretics and to concentrate instead on the validity of the different *regulae* employed in interpretation.⁷⁹

2.1.4 Docetization as an Interpretive Method

Not all docetists are driven by the same theological motives. Some deny Christ’s flesh because they think it necessary to ensure no defilement from sin or from the corruptibility of the human body, others because they associate the

⁷⁶ Hippolytus, *Haer.* 8.10.7. Hippolytus here relates the views of gnostic sect called the “Docetae.” Similarly, *Haer.* 7.26.8; Tertullian, *Praescr.* 14.14.

⁷⁷ For example, Mark 15:34 (“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”) is interpreted as a proof-text for a form of separationist Christology (*Gos. Phil.* [NHC II,3] 68.26–28; similarly Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.11.7) and also as a symbolic reference to the abandonment of Sophia in gnostic mythology (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.8.2).

⁷⁸ In the Coptic *Apocalypse of Peter* (NHC VII,3), the Savior identifies Peter as “the one to whom these mysteries (ἄνεμύστηριον) have been given” (82.18–19), a clear allusion to the “secrets (μυστήρια) of the kingdom” in Matt 13:11 (cf. Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.8.29–30). These secrets are next identified with the details of a complex form of separationist Christology (82.20–83.15). Peter is then instructed to pass along this secret teaching only to “those of another race who are not of this age ... those who were chosen from an immortal essence that ... is able to accept him who gives his abundance” (83.15–26). This is presumably a reference to the author and his fellow gnostics. The esotericism is justified by an explicit appeal to Jesus’s enigmatic saying in Matt 13:12/25:29: “Therefore I said, ‘To everyone who has, it will be given, and that one will have plenty. But the one who does not have.... it will be taken from him’” (83.26–84.5, trans. Brashler, “Apocalypse,” 241–45). In this reading, “those who have” are those who have gnosis regarding separationist Christology, whereas “those who have not” are those who still think that the Savior himself was actually seized and nailed to the cross.

⁷⁹ *Praescr.* 14.14; 18.3–19.3; 26.9.

flesh with an evil Creator.⁸⁰ Some deny the reality of Christ's suffering because of the shame of it.⁸¹ Others want to preserve divine impassibility.⁸² Some deny Christ's resurrection in the flesh because they, following the well-known pun of Platonic thought, view the body (σῶμα) as a tomb (σῆμα) or prison and thus imagine salvation as an escape from the flesh.⁸³ For those who consider the material world evil, the promise of literal resurrection sounds more like condemnation than salvation. As *Testim. Truth* (NHC IX,3) 36.29–37.1 puts it: “[Do not] expect, therefore, [the] carnal (σαρκικὴ = σαρκική) resurrection, which is destruction.”⁸⁴ It is no wonder why some found the notion of the resurrection of the flesh revolting, or even absurd.

As the subsequent chapters of this study will make clear, docetism involved not so much a Christological model but a method of theological interpretation – not unlike allegorization – that was available to a wide variety of groups.⁸⁵ Indeed, the docetic motto “in appearance only” is ipso facto an interpretive claim that the Jesus tradition should not be understood literally.⁸⁶ On analogy with allegorization, I call this interpretative method *docetization*. And like allegorization, docetization was by no means limited to Christians and the Jesus tradition.

Analogies can be found in both Jewish and Greco-Roman literature.⁸⁷ When retelling the story of the meal eaten by Abraham's divine visitors in Gen 18, Hellenistic Jews frequently docetize the account by asserting that they gave “only the appearance of eating” (Philo, *Abr.* 118; Josephus, *A.J.* 1.197; *Tg.*

⁸⁰ E.g., Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.24.1–2, 5; Tertullian, *Carn. Chr.* 15; *Marc.* 3.10; Ps.-Tertullian, *Haer.* 1.5.

⁸¹ *Disc. Seth.* (NHC VII,2) 55.18–20; Tertullian, *Carn. Chr.* 8. Although the church fathers protest that docetism requires attributing deception and untruth to the Savior, in gnostic circles the purpose of the deception is to outwit the evil archons, e.g., *Disc. Seth.* 55.30–56.19; *Manich. Ps. Bk. II.* 196.

⁸² Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.26.1; 3.11.3, 7; 3.16.1.

⁸³ Plato, *Crat.* 400b–c; *Phd.* 81d; *Phdr.* 250c; *Ap. John* (NHC II,1) 21.10; 26.31–32; 27.20–21; 31.4; *Orig. World* (NHC II,5) 114.23; *Bk. Thom.* (NHC II,7) 143.8–16; *1 Apoc. Jas.* (NHC V,3) 27.5–6; *Interp. Know.* (NHC XI,1) 6.28–29; *Acts Thom.* 160; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.25.1–4; Tertullian, *Res.* 4; 19; *An.* 35.1.

⁸⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all translations of *Testimony of Truth* follow Søren Giverson and Birger A. Pearson, “The Testimony of Truth,” in *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X* (ed. Birger A. Pearson; NHS 15; Leiden: Brill, 1981).

⁸⁵ Similarly Guy G. Stroumsa, “Christ's Laughter: Docetic Origins Reconsidered,” *JECs* 12 (2004): 269.

⁸⁶ Cf. the fragment attributed to Irenaeus in C. Martin, “Saint Irénée et son correspondant, le diacre Démètre de Vienne,” *RHE* 38 (1942): 149. The author of the fragment refutes docetists by arguing that if what the disciples wrote about Christ's human appearance is taken as mere φαντασία and δόκησις, then the same must be true of what they wrote about his divine actions. Tertullian argues similarly in *Marc.* 3.8.

⁸⁷ Similarly Ronni Goldstein and Guy G. Stroumsa, “The Greek and Jewish Origins of Docetism: A New Proposal,” *ZAC* 10 (2006): 423–41.

Neof. Gen 18:8; *Gen. Rab.* 48.14).⁸⁸ Similarly, at the end of Tobit the angel Raphael maintains, “I did not eat or drink; rather, you were seeing a vision” (12:19). This standard reinterpretation of angelophanies was well known in early Christianity and had a direct influence on at least some docetic Christologies. Some Marcionites and Bardesanites, for example, directly appealed to Gen 18 as a precedent for their docetic interpretations of the depictions of Jesus in the Gospels.⁸⁹ And as we shall see in Chapter 6, one unnamed group of docetists seems to have appealed to this Hellenistic Jewish conception of angels to support a docetic interpretation of Luke 24:36–43.

Another kind of docetization appears in Greek and Roman literature. In an attempt to rescue Helen of Troy from the shame of adultery, some Greek writers docetized Homer’s account by claiming that the “Helen” taken by Paris was only a phantom body double fashioned from a heavenly substance and made to look like Helen.⁹⁰ According to Euripides, Paris is fooled by δόκησις while the real Helen is actually taken up into heaven by Hermes to preserve her chastity.⁹¹ A similar technique is used by the Latin author Ovid to transform the stabbing of Caesar into an apparent death in which it is only Caesar’s shade that falls by the sword.⁹² By employing a body double, ancient authors were able to resolve “the problem of an unworthy behavior on the part of the (usually divine) hero, or of his (or her) intolerable fate, without suppressing the mythical story altogether. Through the use of the device, the known version of the myth becomes erroneous, and it is the new one that is perceived as true reflection of reality.”⁹³ The phantom body double was an established literary device for retelling problematic parts of older stories, myths, and legends.⁹⁴ In the

⁸⁸ This has come to be known as the “Docetic paraphrase” (H. St. J. Thackeray, *Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, Books I–IV* [LCL; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1930], 97; Catchpole, *Resurrection People*, 90).

⁸⁹ Tertullian, *Carn. Chr.* 6; *Marc.* 4.38.5–6; 4.43.2; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Hom. cat.* 5.8; Ephrem, *Comm. Diat.* 21.3; *Adamant. Dial.* 5.4–12; cf. the angelomorphic interpretation of Jesus’s resurrection in *Soph. Jes. Chr.* (NHC III,4) 91.10–13: “The Savior appeared, not in his previous form, but in the invisible spirit. And his likeness resembles a great angel of light” (trans. Douglas M. Parrott, *Nag Hammadi Codices III,3–4 and V,1 with Papyrus Bero-linensis 8502,3 and Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 1081* [NHS 27; Leiden, 1991], 39).

⁹⁰ Euripides, *Hel.* 31–35; Apollodorus, *Epit.* 3.5; Plato, *Resp.* 9.586; *Phaedr.* 243. Cf. Apollodorus, *Epit.* 1.20, which employs the same strategy with Hera. On εἶδωλον (“image”) as a literary device, see Goldstein and Stroumsa, “Greek and Jewish Origins,” 425–29.

⁹¹ *Hel.* 31–48; 116–21; 1219.

⁹² *Fast.* 701–704.

⁹³ Goldstein and Stroumsa, “Greek and Jewish Origins,” 429. See already Gregory J. Riley, *I Was Thought to Be What I Am Not: Docetic Jesus and the Johannine Tradition* (Occasional Papers 31; Claremont, Calif.: Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1994), 2–10.

⁹⁴ Mark Griffith, “Contest and Contradiction in Early Greek Poetry,” in *Cabinet of the Muses: Essays on Classical and Comparative Literature in Honor of Thomas G. Rosenmeyer*

early church some docetists employed analogous models to resolve the scandal of Christ's crucifixion.⁹⁵ In the "Basilidean" anthropomorphosist account already mentioned, Simon is made to look like Jesus and is crucified in his place.⁹⁶ Likewise, *Apoc. Pet.* (NHC VII,3), which advocates a form of separatist Christology, claims that "the living Jesus" was not crucified but only a fleshly "substitute" that was made "in his likeness" (81.15–23).

These examples illustrate that docetization was a versatile interpretive method that could be employed in any number of situations, and so could be applied to various aspects of the Jesus tradition. For some, Christ was not truly born but only appeared to be man.⁹⁷ For others, Christ only appeared to suffer.⁹⁸ And of particular importance for this study, some docetized the resurrection appearance stories: Jesus only appeared to be in the flesh when he rose from the dead.⁹⁹ In every case, docetism entails a non-literal interpretation of widely accepted, authoritative (and often written) traditions about Jesus; there would be no need to contend that "it only appeared to be so" if the sources being interpreted could be set aside as non-authoritative.

One other aspect of the Jesus tradition that apparently could not easily be set aside was the notion that Jesus had a tangible body. In fact, it is accepted by a variety of docetists. Western Valentinians acknowledge the Savior's tangibility but docetized the idea by claiming that his body was made of a mystical psychic substance rather than of human flesh.¹⁰⁰ They argue that it could not

(eds. Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, Mark Griffith, and Donald J. Mastrorade; Homage Series; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 196–200; Norman Austin, *Helen of Troy and Her Shameless Phantom* (Myth and Poetics; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), esp. 137–204; Deborah J. Lyons, *Gender and Immortality: Heroines in Ancient Greek Myth and Cult* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 134–62.

⁹⁵ According to the heresiologists (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.2; Hippolytus, *Haer.* 6.19.3; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 21.2.4; 21.3.1), Simonian gnostics adapted and incorporated a revised version of the Helen story into their mythology (Goldstein and Stroumsa, "Greek and Jewish Origins," 436).

⁹⁶ Cf. Apollodorus, *Epit.* 3.22, where Artemis snatches up Iphigeneia and replaces her with a deer just before she is to be sacrificed by Agamemnon. Although the evidence is late (third century), there is also a Jewish instance of the body-double device. In an attempt to resolve an apparent contradiction between Exod 2:15 ("Moses fled from Pharaoh") and Exod 18:4 ("God ... delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh"), one rabbi argues that an angel took the form of Moses and was arrested in his place so that Moses could flee (*y. Ber.* 9.1).

⁹⁷ E.g., Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.24.2; 2.24.4; 5.1.2.

⁹⁸ E.g., Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 2; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.3; 3.16.1; *Adamant. Dial.* 4.17–5.1.

⁹⁹ E.g., Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 4.1; [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 2.14; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30.14; 2.32.3–4; *Ap. John* (NHC III,1) 20.21–21.21; *Ep. Pet. Phil.* (NHC VIII,2) 138.2–10; Origen, *Cels.* 2.60–61; 3.22; 7.35; *Soph. Jes. Chr.* (NHC III,4) 91.10–13; Epiphanius, *Pan.* De incarnatione 3.4–5; Augustine, *Ep. Ioset.* 2.2–7.

¹⁰⁰ E.g., Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.6.1; 1.9.3; Clement, *Exc.* 59; Tertullian, *Val.* 26. The *Gospel of Truth* (NHC I,3), often reckoned a Valentinian text – possibly written by Valentinus himself – also seems to docetize the notion of touching: "For when they saw and heard him, he

possibly be material “since matter is wholly alien to salvation.” For Apelleasts and Eastern Valentinians Christ had “flesh,” but they reinterpret it as a special, “astral” or “spiritual” flesh.¹⁰¹ Additionally, in the *First Apocalypse of James*, when the risen Lord appears and claims that he “never ... suffered,” his body is tangible enough that it can be “embraced” and “kissed” by James.¹⁰²

The anthropomorphosist docetism of the *Acts of John* allows for the possibility that Jesus could, at least on some occasions, be touched: “Sometimes when I meant to touch him, I met a material and solid body; and at other times again when I felt him, the substance was immaterial and bodiless and as if it did not exist at all” (93). Marcion’s docetic Christology also accommodates a tangible Jesus.¹⁰³ Despite his protest about the presence of late interpolations in the Gospel (of Luke), Marcion retains in his “restored” edition statements that explicitly mention Jesus touching and being touched by others.¹⁰⁴

Two important conclusions follow from these examples. First, the notion that Jesus’s body could be touched must have been widely acknowledged as an authoritative aspect of the Jesus tradition. Second, a touchable Jesus was by no means an insurmountable obstacle to docetic Christology. These points should caution us against the assumption that the touch motif in Luke 24:39 and John 20:25–27 reflects an *antidocetic* addition to the appearance tradition. If a touchable pre-crucifixion body could be reinterpreted along docetic lines, there is no obvious reason why a touchable post-resurrection body could not be docetized as well. As we shall see in Chapters 3, 5, 6, and 7, ancient docetists do not, like many modern critics, reject the canonical accounts as late inventions of antidocetic apologetics. On the contrary, they generally accept them as

let them taste him and smell him and *touch the beloved Son.... But material people were strangers to him and did not discern his appearance or recognize him. For he came in the likeness of flesh, and nothing blocked his way, for incorruptibility cannot be grasped*” (30.27–31.8, trans. Marvin W. Meyer, “The Gospel of Truth,” in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The International Edition* [ed. Marvin Meyer; San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2007], 42, emphasis added).

¹⁰¹ Others accept language like “risen again in this flesh” but reinterpret it to mean the reviving of the soul by obtaining gnosis while still in the flesh (Tertullian, *Res.* 19; cf. *Gos. Phil.* 53.23–35; 56.15–19; *Treat. Res.* 48.3–6).

¹⁰² *1 Apoc. Jas.* (NHC V,3) 31.2–32.8. That Jesus is “embraced” and “kissed” is mentioned twice (31.4; 32.8). However, in *2 Apoc. Jas.* (NHC V,4) 57.10–19 James stretches out his hands to grasp Jesus but “does not find him as [he] thought” he would.

¹⁰³ So Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God* (trans. John E. Steely; Durham, N.C.: Labyrinth, 1990), 83–84; Markus Vinzent, “Christ’s Resurrection: The Pauline Basis of Marcion’s Teaching,” *StPatr* 31 (1997): 232; Daniel A. Smith, “Seeing a Pneuma(tic Body): The Apologetic Interests of Luke 24:36–43,” *CBQ* 72 (2010): 765 n. 66.

¹⁰⁴ E.g., Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.9.4 (cf. Luke 5:13); 4.20.8–9, 13 (cf. Luke 8:44–46). Extant sources are too fragmentary to know exactly how Marcion reconciled these statements with his Christology. We can only assume that he found some way or another to docetize them.

authoritative. They appeal to details in Luke 24 and John 20, including in some cases the touch motif itself, to support docetic Christology.¹⁰⁵

2.1.5 Orthodoxy and Heresy

It is also necessary to choose a term to designate those early Christians who opposed the various forms of gnosticism and docetism just described. No clear counter-term, e.g., incarnationists or passianists, appears in second-century literature, and those designations that were employed are not very distinctive. Much to the frustration of the church fathers, some of their opponents claimed for themselves labels such as “Christian” or “apostolic.”¹⁰⁶

The church fathers often refer to “the Church,” or occasionally “the catholic church,” as a way of distinguishing themselves from the sects – though gnostics reinterpreted “the Church” in their own way.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, the pagan critic Celsus contrasted “the great church” – the members of which he refers to as “those of the multitude” – with various sects, e.g., Simonians, Marcionites.¹⁰⁸ These designations align with the standard rhetoric of Valentinians and certain other gnostics, who viewed themselves as a “spiritual” elite or chosen “few” over against the “many” who lacked gnosis.¹⁰⁹ The Valentinians referred to the latter as “common (*communes*)” and “ecclesiastical (*ecclesiasticos*)” (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.15.2). This convergence of views among various church fathers,

¹⁰⁵ See discussions of the Ophites (Chapter 3), the opponents of [Ps.-]Justin (Chapter 6), and the *Acts of John* (Chapter 7).

¹⁰⁶ According to Irenaeus, the Basilideans said they were not “Christians” (*Haer.* 1.24.6), but this was exceptional. And although some gnostics severely criticized the apostles and claimed superiority to them, many appealed to a secret apostolic tradition.

¹⁰⁷ “The catholic church” appears in, e.g., Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 8.2; *Mart. Poly.* inscr.; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.10.3.

¹⁰⁸ Origen, *Cels.* 5.59–62. Walter Bauer’s attempt to restrict the scope of these statements to Christianity in Rome (*Rechtgläubigkeit*, 219 n. 1; ET: *Orthodoxy and Heresy*, 216 n. 36) seems forced. It is uncertain whether Celsus ever even visited Rome, let alone lived there (Stephen Goranson, “Celsus of Pergamum: Locating a Critic of Early Christianity,” in *The Archaeology of Difference. Gender, Ethnicity, Class and the ‘Other’ in Antiquity: Studies in Honor of Eric M. Meyers* [eds. D. R. Edwards and C. T. McCollough; AASOR 60–61; Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2007], 364–65). Celsus himself indicates that he traveled to Phoenicia and Palestine (Origen, *Cels.* 8.3–11; Gary T. Burke, “Walter Bauer and Celsus: The Shape of Late Second-Century Christianity,” *SecCent* 4 [1984]: 1–7), and other factors suggest that he spent time in Alexandria (1.68; 3.17, 19; 4.52; 6.41; 8.58; Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952], xxviii–xxix; Burke, “Bauer and Celsus,” 3 n. 8) and Asia (Goranson, “Celsus,” 363–69). All in all, Celsus seems to be familiar with the cultural beliefs and practices of many different locales.

¹⁰⁹ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.6.1–2; 3.15.2; Tertullian, *Praescr.* 25–28; Clement, *Exc.* 56–58; Heracleon apud Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.51.341; *Treat. Res.* (NHC I,4) 44.8–10; *Gos. Phil.* (NHC II,3) 55.19–22; *Perf. Disc.* (NHC VI,8) 66.1–13; *Testim. Truth* (NHC IX,3) 33.20; *Acts Thom.* 40.3; 142.3; *AJ* 99–100.

pagans, and gnostics suggests that it is legitimate, despite all the theological diversity, to speak of a “mainstream” Christianity in the second century.¹¹⁰

But these ancient descriptions are inadequate for doctrinal classification.¹¹¹ I have therefore chosen a term that has become prominent in recent literature: *proto-orthodox*. This term is useful in that it recognizes both continuity and discontinuity with the more formal Christological orthodoxy of the creeds and ecumenical councils of fourth and fifth centuries. It guards against anachronism by acknowledging that the absence of the precise formulations provided in the creeds allowed for a greater degree of Christological diversity within “the great church” during the ante-Nicene period.

It also recognizes that the Christologies and antiheretical concerns of many second- and third-century writers align in many ways with those of later ecumenical councils. Despite the difficulties of maintaining a paradoxical view, the proto-orthodox insisted that Jesus Christ was both human and divine. And though they did not all come to agreement on exactly how the human and divine relate, they were unified in rejecting views (i) that denied Jesus’s divinity (adoptionism); (ii) that denied Jesus’s humanity (proto-monophysite docetism); (iii) and that split his person by distinguishing between a divine Christ and a human Jesus (separationist docetism).¹¹² Although they lack the conceptual precision of the creeds, they anticipate *in nuce* the Christology of the creeds and may be appropriately be called proto-orthodox. An additional unifying factor among proto-orthodox authors is their doctrine of resurrection. They believed that Jesus rose from the dead in a physical, albeit supernaturally

¹¹⁰ Many of the texts in the previous note, particularly those from Nag Hammadi, were not available to Bauer when he argued for the opposite view, but see already Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.15.2; Tertullian, *Praescr.* 25–28; Clement, *Exc.* 56–58; Heracleon apud Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.15.341. These texts, which come from two different locales, indicate that Valentinians consciously understood themselves as a minority (James F. McCue, “Orthodoxy and Heresy: Walter Bauer and the Valentinians,” *VC* 33 [1979]: 118–30; Birger A. Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990], 208). See further refutations of Bauer in Völker, review of *Rechtgläubigkeit* (by Bauer) (ET by Scheck in Völker, “Walter Bauer’s *Rechtgläubigkeit*”); Turner, *Pattern*; Robinson, *Bauer Thesis*. Perhaps the strongest support for Bauer’s thesis of a heterodox majority is Polycarp’s *Letter to the Philippians*, which refers to the heretics as “the many” (2.1 and 7.2). However, given the numerous counterexamples listed above, the evidence from Polycarp must be considered the exception rather than the rule.

¹¹¹ They are also historically problematic because some “heretics” were not immediately recognized as such and were still participating in this “mainstream” church in the middle of the second century.

¹¹² Similarly Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption*, 15. The term proto-orthodox seems especially appropriate for Ignatius, who refers to false teachers as “those who are heterodox (ἑτεροδοξοῦντας)” (*Smyrn.* 6.2), and for Justin, who distinguishes various sects from “right-minded (ὀρθογνώμων) Christians” (*Dial.* 80.5).

transformed, body, and they expected a general resurrection of the dead that would also involve the same kind of body.¹¹³

Proto-orthodox authors in this study include Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Justin, [Ps.-]Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, and the authors of the *Preaching of Peter* and *3 Corinthians*.¹¹⁴ With some hesitancy, I place the *Epistula Apostolorum* in this category as well. While some of its teachings align more closely with Marcionite or gnostic thought, the *Epistula* maintains a real incarnation and a resurrection of the flesh.

2.2 Doubt and Unbelief in Early Christianity

In Chapter 1, I noted two conflicting views of the role of doubt in Luke 24 and John 20. According to the antidocetic hypothesis, the doubt is meant to provide a *positive* portrayal of the apostles: the doubt has apologetic value for the early church because it shows that the eyewitnesses were not gullible. Conversely, according to the political-motivation thesis of Crossan, doubt is a *negative* character trait: it is a sign of inferior faith. In Crossan's view, the evangelists portray some apostles as superior in authority to others by slanderously depicting the latter as doubters. The fact that modern scholars can posit such radically different assessments suggested to me the need to undertake a more thorough investigation into early Christian views of doubt and unbelief.

2.2.1 The Doubt Motif in the Resurrection Narratives

Following a common practice among modern scholars, I have been employing "doubt" and "doubt motif" as umbrella terms for a variety of different Greek words and expressions that appear in the resurrection narratives.¹¹⁵ First and foremost, these are

¹¹³ Proto-orthodox authors differ on whether the general resurrection is for believers only or for all people.

¹¹⁴ Only fragments of the *Preaching of Peter* survive, and its Christology is not entirely clear. But the fragments do clearly affirm the OT and the suffering of Jesus Christ.

¹¹⁵ For "doubt motif" or "motif of doubt," see Fuller, *Formation*, 81, 100; Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 124; Alsop, *Appearance Stories*, 124, 212; Dillon, *Eye-Witnesses*, 160; PHEME PERKINS, *Resurrection: New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984), 164, 179; Robert Kysar, *John* (ACNT; Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg, 1986), 306; Raymond E. Brown, *A Risen Christ in Eastertide: Essays on the Gospel Narratives of the Resurrection* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991), 34; R. Alan Culpepper, *The Gospel of Luke* (NIB 9; Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 484–85; Adelbert Denaux, "Matthew's Story of Jesus' Burial and Resurrection (Mt 27,57–28,20)," in *Resurrection in the New Testament* (eds. R. Bieringer, V. Koperski, and B. Lataire; BETL 165; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 141; Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Christ*, 123;

Matt 28:17	οἱ δὲ ἐδίστασαν	but some/they doubted ¹¹⁶
Luke 24:11	ἠπίστουν	they were disbelieving
Luke 24:25	βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ τοῦ πιστεῦειν	slow in heart to believe
Luke 24:38	διὰ τί διαλογισμοὶ ἀναβαίνουσιν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν;	Why do doubts arise in your hearts?
Luke 24:41	ἔτι δὲ ἀπιστοῦντων αὐτῶν	but while they were still disbelieving
John 20:25	οὐ μὴ πιστεύσω	I will never believe
John 20:27	μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός	Do not be disbelieving but believing

To these seven phrases, we may add four from the Longer Ending of Mark:

Ulrich Luz, *Studies in Matthew* (trans. Rosemary Selle; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 134; Johannes Beutler, “Resurrection and the Forgiveness of Sins: John 20:23 against Its Traditional Background,” in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (eds. Craig R. Koester and R. Bieringer; WUNT 222; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 224; Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 147. The popularity of these phrases can be traced back to Hans Grass’s term, *Zweifelmotiv* (*Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 29–30). French equivalents, *motif du doute* and *motif de l’incrédulité*, appear in Hug, *La finale*, 76, 221; Jean Zumstein, *L’Évangile selon saint Jean* (2 vols.; CNT 4; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2007–2014), 2:289.

¹¹⁶ οἱ δὲ ἐδίστασαν can be translated in three different ways: (i) “but *some* (of them) doubted” (NRSV, NIV, NASB, NLT, NKJV, CEV); (ii) “but *they* doubted” (NABR); or (iii) “but *others* doubted” (D. A. Carson, *Matthew* [EBC 8; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984], 593; Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew* [PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992], 745). The issues are debated in Kenneth L. McKay, “The Use of *hoi de* in Matthew 28:17: A Response to K. Grayston,” *JSNT* (1985): 71–72; P. W. van der Horst, “Once More: The Translation of οἱ δέ in Matthew 28.17,” *JSNT* 27 (1986): 27–30; Charles H. Giblin, “Note on Doubt and Reassurance in Mt 28:16–20,” *CBQ* 37 (1975): 68–75.

Since Matt 28:16 identifies the participants as “the Eleven” and mentions no “others,” most scholars, the present writer included, reject (iii) as contextually implausible. Some object that (iii) is to be preferred over (i) and (ii) because attributing worship and doubt to the same individuals seems contradictory (so Carson, *Matthew*, 593; Morris, *Matthew*, 745), but this kind of argument is exegetically suspect. δίσταζω implies a wavering between two different thoughts, which suggests that Matthew is intentionally noting an inconsistency. The psychological objection cannot therefore overturn the contextual evidence against (iii).

This leaves (i) and (ii), and it is difficult to decide between the two. On the one hand, (i) may be grammatically preferable. The pronoun οἱ is, strictly speaking, unnecessary if there is no change in subject, and elsewhere in Matthew οἱ δέ normally involves a change in subject (McKay, “Matthew 28:17,” 71–72; Horst, “Once More,” 27). On the other hand, οἱ δέ does not *require* a change in subject, and so (ii) cannot be ruled out. Moreover, the evidence for taking οἱ δέ as partitive elsewhere in Matthew is limited to a single instance that need not necessarily be taken that way: “Then they spat in his face, and punched him; and *some/they* (οἱ δέ) slapped him, saying “Prophecy to us, Christ, who is it that struck you?” (26:67–68; so Giblin, “Doubt,” 69–70).

Because the grammatical and contextual evidence could support either (i) or (ii), I leave the matter undecided and translate “but some/they doubted.” Reception history may tilt the scales in favor of (ii). As we will see in the following chapters most second-century readers of Matt 28:17 seem to take it for granted that *all* the apostles doubted.

Mark 16:11	ἠπίστησαν	they disbelieved
Mark 16:13	οὐδὲ ἐκεῖνοις ἐπίστευσαν	neither did they believe them
Mark 16:14a	τὴν ἀπιστίαν αὐτῶν καὶ σκληροκαρδίαν	their unbelief and hardness of heart
Mark 16:14b	οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν	they did not believe

Finally, two more peripheral instances can also be considered under the rubric of “doubt.” When Jesus meets two disciples walking to Emmaus, Luke states that “their eyes were kept from recognizing him” (24:16). Similarly, in John 21:4, when Jesus first appears on the shore as they are fishing, “the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.” Strictly speaking, these passages do not mention doubt or unbelief, and so they might be more properly called examples of non-recognition. But the two motifs, doubt and non-recognition, are directly related to one another, as can be seen in Luke 24:37–39. When the disciples initially think that they are “seeing a ghost,” Jesus asks them, “Why do doubts arise in your hearts?” and exhorts them to recognize that “It is I myself.”¹¹⁷ Because non-recognition suggests the presence of some doubt about the identity of the risen Jesus, I count Luke 24:16 and John 21:4 as special instances of the doubt motif.

2.2.2 Key Terms for Doubt and Unbelief

It will be helpful to examine briefly the semantic range of some key Greek terms from the resurrection narratives: ἀπιστέω (Luke 24:11, 41; Mark 16:11); ἀπιστία (Mark 16:14); ἄπιστος (John 20:27). While ἀπιστέω is sometimes employed as a rough equivalent to οὐκ + πιστεύω, as in Mark 16:11, 13, and 14, the former appears to have a more negative connotation than the latter. ἀπιστέω often refers to an *active refusal* to believe someone or something specific rather than to a generic state of unbelief.¹¹⁸ This appears to be the primary meaning of ἀπιστέω in the NT and in the resurrection narratives in particular.

ἀπιστέω and its cognates can have other nuances as well. ἀπιστέω can also mean “to be unfaithful,” i.e., disloyal, or even “to disobey.”¹¹⁹ Similarly, while

¹¹⁷ The exact nature of the relationship is not immediately clear. Non-recognition may be the cause of doubt, or it may be that their unbelief keeps them from recognizing Jesus. Because unbelief comes first in the Emmaus narrative (24:11, 16), I am inclined to think the latter is closer to the truth. Possibly the two should be identified in some way. Stephen T. Davis refers to them as the “twin motifs of doubt and failure to recognize” (“‘Seeing’ the Risen Jesus,” in *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus* [eds. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O’Collins; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997], 136).

¹¹⁸ BDAG, s.v. “ἀπιστέω”; L&N 31.97; PGL, s.v. “ἀπιστέω.”

¹¹⁹ LSJ, s.v. “ἀπιστέω”; PGL, s.v. “ἀπιστέω”; BDAG, s.v. “ἀπιστέω”; L&N 31.89.

ἀπιστία is normally rendered “unbelief,” it can occasionally mean “unfaithfulness” or “treachery.”¹²⁰

ἄπιστος most frequently appears in the NT as a substantive and is usually rendered “unbeliever.”¹²¹ As an adjective it can mean “disbelieving,” “refusing to believe,” or more generically, “unbelieving,” “incredulous,” or “incredible,” but it can also have the more negative connotations of “untrustworthy,” “disloyal,” or “disobedient.”¹²² Greek tragedians and historians frequently employ ἄπιστος to refer to one of these dishonorable character traits.¹²³ ἄπιστος also occurs twice in the LXX, and in both cases the context implies that the meaning is “unfaithful.”¹²⁴

While the ἀπιστ- word group ordinarily refers to disbelief or unbelief in the NT, the fact that terms in this group can also denote infidelity or disobedience, e.g., Rom 3:3; 2 Tim 2:13, may have imbued the stem with a more negative connotation in cases when the primary meaning is not disloyalty. For example, although ἀπιστία certainly means “unbelief” in Mark 16:14, a strongly negative connotation is clear from the context: “he rebuked their ἀπιστίαν and hardness of heart.” The association of the ἀπιστ- word group with infidelity and disobedience may also in part explain why there are no clearly positive or even neutral instances of these terms in first- and second-century Christian literature.

Two terms for doubt may also be mentioned here: διστάζω and διαλογισμός. The former means to “doubt” or “hesitate” and occurs only twice in the NT (Matt 14:31; 28:17).¹²⁵ The noun διαλογισμός, which appears in Luke 24:38, can denote the kind of mental wavering implied by διστάζω. On the one hand, because the Matthean Jesus associates διστάζω with “little faith (ὀλιγόπιστος)” (Matt 14:31), it may be legitimate to make a distinction between doubt (διστάζω/διαλογισμός) and unbelief (ἀπιστέω/ἀπιστία/ἄπιστος). Origen will later insist that διστάζω does not necessary imply a complete absence of

¹²⁰ LSJ, s.v. “ἀπιστία”; PGL, s.v. “ἀπιστία”; BDAG, s.v. “ἀπιστία.”

¹²¹ In this light, perhaps John 20:27c is to be rendered “Do not be an unbeliever but a believer” (so HCSB; Carson, *John*, 657; Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012], 1187; similarly NCV). Although it is potentially anachronistic for Jesus himself to employ the categories “believer” and “unbeliever,” the meaning “unbeliever” was well established, at least in the Pauline churches – including Ephesus – by the time the Fourth Gospel was written. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to infer that some of the earliest readers of the Gospel of John would have understood Jesus’s exhortation to Thomas in this way.

¹²² LSJ, s.v. “ἄπιστος”; PGL, s.v. “ἄπιστος”; BDAG, s.v. “ἄπιστος”; L&N 31.40; 31.98.

¹²³ E.g., Sophocles, *Trach.* 1228–29; Aeschylus, *Sept.* 876; Euripides, *IT* 1298, 1476; Thucydides, *Hist.* 8.45.1; Appian, *B Civ.* 4.3.14; Dio Cassius, *Hist.* 46.3.4; 48.54.7; 67.1.3; 71.25.

¹²⁴ Prov 17:6; Isa 17:10.

¹²⁵ BDAG, s.v. “διστάζω”; L&N 31.37; PGL, s.v. “διστάζω”; LSJ, s.v. “διστάζω.” The most frequent term for doubt in the NT is διακρίνομαι.

faith.¹²⁶ On the other hand, in Matt 17:20 ὀλιγοπιστία refers to an amount of faith so miniscule (not even the size of a mustard seed) as to be negligible.¹²⁷ And despite Origen’s protest, many other ancient Christian writers do not seem to distinguish between doubt and unbelief but treat διστάζω and ἀπιστέω/οὐκ πιστεύω as equivalents.¹²⁸ Similarly, Luke 24:38–41 makes no real distinction between doubt and disbelief. Jesus asks the apostles, “Why do doubts (διαλογισμοί) arise in your hearts?” Yet a couple of lines later, Luke says that “they were *still* (ἔτι) disbelieving (ἀπιστούντων).” The implication is that their “doubts” were an instance of “disbelieving.”

2.2.3 Faith, Doubt, and Early Christian Identity

An adequate understanding of how Christians perceived doubt and unbelief requires a recognition of the paramount importance of “faith” in the early church. Anyone who performs a simple word search for terms such as “faith” or “believe” in an English Bible (or on any related Greek terms in the LXX and NT), can immediately discern from the results that the theme of faith appears far more often in the NT than in the OT – about a twenty-fourfold increase in frequency when taking into account the shorter length of the NT.¹²⁹ In large part this dramatic change can be attributed to the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels, which repeatedly stresses faith, and to Paul’s emphasis on the same.¹³⁰ But faith is not just a dominant theme in early Christian teaching. It is also a central component of early Christianity identity.

In the earliest days of the movement – likely even before the word “Christian” had been coined – various “Christian” groups referred to themselves as “believers” as a way of distinguishing themselves from outsiders or

¹²⁶ *Comm. Matt.* 11.6.

¹²⁷ In rabbinic literature, e.g., *b. Soṭah* 48b, littleness of faith is “a deprecatory word picture that represents failure” (Moisés Silva, “πιστεύω, κτλ.,” *NIDNTE*: 764).

¹²⁸ E.g., *Ep. Apos.* 11.2–6; *Acts Pet.* 10.13; 2 *Clem.* 11.1–2; Clement, *Strom.* 4.25 [157.1–3]; cf. Rom 14:23: “but whoever doubts (διακρινόμενος) is condemned if he eats, for it is not from faith.” The author of *Treatise on Resurrection* (NHC 1,4) also seems to treat doubt and unbelief as equivalents (44.6–10; 45.39–46.7; 47.1–3; 47.30–48.3; so Malcolm L. Peel, *The Epistle to Rheginos: A Valentinian Letter on the Resurrection* [NTL; London: SCM, 1969], 82, 131). διστάζω and ἀπιστέω appear in parallel in the OT pseudepigraphon known as “The Heartless Rich Man and the Precious Stone” (Georgius Monachus Hamartolus, *Chron.* 4.11 [PG 121.228]): μὴ δίσταζε ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου μηδὲ ἀπίσται τῷ θεῷ.

¹²⁹ Statistics like these will vary depending on the specific search parameters employed, but the overall conclusion will remain unchanged: faith is a far more prominent theme in the NT than in the OT.

¹³⁰ All combined, the terms πίστις, πιστεύω, and πίστος appear in the Gospels 168 times and in the Pauline corpus 229 times. The same terms occur in the Pentateuch (LXX) only 20 times.

“unbelievers.”¹³¹ Paul Trebilco has argued convincingly that this believer-unbeliever nomenclature was both widespread (employed by nearly every NT author) and early (prior to Paul’s earliest epistles and probably derived from Jesus’s own use of faith terminology).¹³² After a detailed examination of numerous self-designations found in NT, Trebilco concluded that the term “believer” was “the most *distinctive*” identifier employed by early Christians and also the one that “most differentiated ‘Christians’ from others.”¹³³ In short, “faith” lies at the very core of early Christian identity and became the primary litmus test that distinguished a member of the church from outsiders.

While this point may seem banal to the modern reader, it was nothing less than a major paradigm shift in the first century. Paul insisted that it was no longer a matter of ethnic identity (circumcision or uncircumcision) but of “*faith* working through love” (Gal 5:6). Here and elsewhere in the NT, “believing” replaces circumcision and/or ethnic descent as the boundary marker of the

¹³¹ Whereas the term *χριστιανός* appears only three times, references to Christians as believers (*πιστοί* or *οἱ πιστεύοντες*) appear nearly eighty times in the NT (Paul Trebilco, *Self-designations and Group Identity in the New Testament* [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012], 68–121, 272–97). The antonym *ἄπιστος* occurs less frequently, but it does appear in a variety of NT texts (Luke 12:46; John 20:27; 1 Cor 6:6; 7:12–15; 10:27; 14:22–24; 2 Cor 4:4; 6:14–15; 1 Tim 5:8; Titus 1:15; Rev 21:8). Additionally, 1 Pet 2:7 contrasts believers (*πιστεύουσιν*) with unbelievers (*ἄπιστοῦσιν*). Irenaeus, alluding to Acts 11:26, describes Antioch as the place “where the disciples were first called Christians because of their *faith* in Christ” (*Haer.* 3.12.14, emphasis added). Whatever we make of the historicity of Acts 11:26 with respect to the origin of the word *χριστιανός*, this verse along with the two others in which the term occurs (Acts 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16) suggest that in the early period the word was not primarily a self-identifier but a term used by outsiders.

¹³² Trebilco, *Self-designations*, 68–121. The believer and non-believer designations are prominent in the Pauline epistles (Rom 1:16; 3:22; 4:5, 11, 24; 9:33; 10:4, 11; 1 Cor 1:21; 6:1–6; 7:12–15; 10:27; 14:22–24; 2 Cor 4:4; 6:14–15; Gal 3:9, 22; Eph 1:1, 19; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:7; 2:10, 13; 2 Thess 1:10; 2:12; 16:1; 1 Tim 4:3, 12; 5:8, 16; 6:2; Titus 1:6; 3:8; cf. 1 Tim 1:2; Titus 1:4), the Johannine literature (John 1:12; 3:15–16, 18, 36; 5:25; 6:35, 40, 47, 64; 7:38, 39; 8:31; 11:25, 26; 12:44, 46; 14:12; 17:20; 20:29; 1 John 5:1, 5, 10, 13; Rev 2:13; cf. Rev 17:14), and Acts (Acts 2:44; 4:32; 5:14; 10:45; 11:21; 13:39; 15:5; 16:1; 18:27; 19:18; 21:20, 25; 22:19). It also appears in Heb 4:2–3; 1 Pet 1:21; 2:7. Other possible instances include Matt 18:6; Mark 9:23, 42; Luke 1:45; 12:46; 2 Pet 1:1.

¹³³ Trebilco, *Self-designations*, 313, emphasis original; similarly James D. G. Dunn, *Romans* (2 vols.; WBC 38A–B; Dallas: Word, 1988), 1:167, 178. The most frequent self-designation for Christians in the NT is *ἀδελφός* (271 times), but the new family is defined by faith (e.g., John 1:12; Gal 6:10; 1 Tim 1:2; 6:2; Titus 1:4; Rom 4:16; 9:25–32). Paul knows his readers understand that “brother” is shorthand for “brother in the faith” when he contrasts “brothers” with “unbelievers” (1 Cor 6:6; 7:12–15; cf. the contrast between “brothers according to the flesh” in Rom 9:3 and “brothers” in Rom 10:1).

people of God.¹³⁴ J. W. Taylor notes the significance of this shift in an ancient context:

One does not find in early Jewish literature the use of faith as a soteriological category to the extent that one finds it in the writings of Paul, and indeed in much of the New Testament, where faith becomes the key condition for salvation, and defining for membership in the people of God. The language of faith has become so familiar that it is difficult sometimes to realise how fresh or different such language may have sounded in the first century. Thus, it is common to talk of different religions as “faiths,” and adherents of various religions [as] “believers.” Though faith was important in Judaism and not unheard of in Graeco-Roman religion, the use of faith as the defining vocabulary of religious experience begins with the early followers of Jesus.¹³⁵

Though Paul may have been the most influential in solidifying these redrawn boundary lines, the new paradigm is affirmed and employed by a number of NT writers, including Luke and John. Both evangelists write with an awareness of the new categories of “believer” and “unbeliever” and recognize with Paul that this represents a change in the way the people of God are defined.¹³⁶ Because belief and unbelief were central to Christian identity, the post-resurrection doubt motif probably had greater significance to the evangelists and to their first readers than we typically attribute to it today.

2.2.4 Abraham’s Faith and the Apostles’ Doubt

For Paul, Christian identity is tied not simply to faith in Christ, but to belief in Jesus’s resurrection. In Rom 4:16–25, Paul argues that Gentiles can be incorporated into the people of God by sharing in the faith of Abraham.¹³⁷ Paul draws an analogy between Abraham’s faith and Christian belief in Jesus’s resurrection from the dead. He is careful to note that Abraham’s faith is not some

¹³⁴ Similarly Trebilco, *Self-designations*, 81, 119–20. Faith also serves as a new boundary marker in John 1:11–12; Acts 15:1–9; 21:20, 25; Rom 1:16; 3:21–23; 4:9–25; 1 Peter 2:6–10; 1 John 5:1. David C. Sim contends that Matthew’s Gospel reflects a “Christian Jewish” reaction against this new “Pauline” paradigm (“Christianity and Ethnicity in the Gospel of Matthew,” in *Ethnicity and the Bible* [ed. Mark G. Brett; BibInt 19; Leiden: Brill, 1996]; idem, “Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Identity in the Gospel of Matthew,” in *Christians Shaping Identity from The Roman Empire to Byzantium* [eds. Geoffrey Dunn and Wendy Mayer; VCSup 132; Leiden: Brill, 2015]). Although I do not find Sim’s reading of Matthew convincing, he has correctly perceived that Paul and other NT writers have a common view of Christian identity that centers on faith.

¹³⁵ J. W. Taylor, “Paul’s Understanding of Faith” (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2004), 7–8. Taylor later concludes: “It does not appear that ἄπιστος was used to indicate religious, philosophical or ethnic outsiders before its appearance in 1 Corinthians.... It seems most likely that Pauline use of οἱ πιστεύοντες, designating those who have received the gospel as believers, generated its own logical opposite” (123–24).

¹³⁶ E.g., John 1:11–12; Acts 15:1–9; 21:20, 25. Luke 7:1–10 may reflect the same paradigm shift.

¹³⁷ Rom 4:9–25; Gal 3:6–26.

generic faith in God but in the God “who gives life to the dead” (4:17).¹³⁸ Abraham “believed against hope” that God would provide him offspring despite his own “body,” which “was as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old.” Therefore “his faith was ‘counted to him as righteousness’” (4:18–22). So also, Paul says, “it will be counted to us who believe *in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord*” (4:24).¹³⁹

In short, Paul argues that Christian belief that God raised Jesus from the dead is in essence the same as Abraham’s belief that God could provide him offspring despite his “dead” body.¹⁴⁰ In this way, the Christian is justified, along with Abraham, on the basis of his or her belief in Jesus’s resurrection. As Paul puts it later in the same letter: “If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and *believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead*, you will be saved. *For man believes with his heart and so is justified*, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved” (10:9–10). This is true for both Jew and Gentile: “not only to the adherent of the law” (4:16); “for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek” (10:12). Consequently, for Paul, the Pharisee, resurrection faith, and not faith in general, is the identifying mark of the new people of God.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Similarly Frank Crüsemann, “Scripture and Resurrection,” in *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments* (eds. Ted Peters, Robert John Russell, and Michael Welker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 98–99. Crüsemann suggests that Paul may here be drawing on an emphasis in the Judaism of his day as seen in the Amidah, which repeatedly refers to God’s ability to give life to the dead. I would add that the phrase τοῦ ζῴοποιούντος τοὺς νεκρούς in Rom 4:17 is the Greek equivalent of מְחַיֶּה הַמֵּתִים, the final phrase of the second blessing of the Amidah. On the wording of the second blessing in Paul’s day and its possible influence on Paul, see David Instone-Brewer, “The Eighteen Benedictions and the Minim before 70 CE,” *JTS* 54 (2003): 25–44.

¹³⁹ Cf. 1 Pet 1:21: “[you] are believers in God who raised him from the dead.”

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Heb 11:17–19: “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac ... considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.”

¹⁴¹ See also Outi Lehtipuu, *Debates over the Resurrection of the Dead: Constructing Early Christian Identity* (OECSS; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 67–108. Lehtipuu’s study gives the impression that resurrection doctrine is established as a boundary marker only at a later stage of the Christian movement. The earliest evidence she cites is 2 Tim 2:16–18, which she dates to the late first or early second century (67–68). This is, to be sure, the first clear instance in which resurrection doctrine is used to distinguish between true Christians and apostates, but the analysis of Rom 4:9–25 and 10:9–13 above indicates that belief in Jesus’s resurrection serves as a boundary marker for the redefined people of God already in the late 50s. If Dunn (*Romans*, 2:616) is correct to argue that the key formulae in Rom 10:9–10 “go back to the earliest days of the new movement,” then resurrection faith, alongside the confession “Jesus is Lord,” was central to Christian identity from the very beginning. Not surprisingly, then, Paul can argue that the denial of the resurrection destroys the Christian faith (1 Cor 15:12–19). It is hard not to wonder if Paul’s argument against those who “say there is no resurrection” was influenced by the way resurrection doctrine was

Equally important in light of the appearance narratives in the Gospels are Paul's claims about Abraham's lack of doubt. Paul stresses that the seemingly impossible circumstances did not adversely affect Abraham's faith in any way. Abraham "*did not weaken in faith* when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead, ... or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb." In fact, "*he did not waver/doubt in unbelief* (οὐ διεκρίθη τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ) ... but *grew strong in his faith*" and was "*fully convinced* that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was 'counted to him as righteousness.'"¹⁴² Paul thus gives the impression that Abraham was considered righteous not simply on account of his faith but on account of the great strength of his faith. Indeed, Paul seems to suggest that Abraham's faith was bulletproof – there is no weakness, doubt, or unbelief involved, only a fully convinced mind. On the one hand, it is clear from his instructions regarding the "weak in faith" (Rom 14:1) that Paul recognized that not all Christians would have as "strong" a faith as Abraham. On the other hand, because Abraham's faith is paradigmatic for Christian faith, it raises the question whether Abraham's lack of doubt might have been held up as a measuring rod for Christian leaders.

To illustrate the potential significance of this passage for understanding the resurrection narratives, I propose the following hypothetical. Imagine an early Christian house church in Rome that recently received a copy of Luke's Gospel and began reading through it during their Sunday meetings. Now because these Christians live in Rome, it is reasonable to expect that they would be intimately

already functioning as boundary marker between the Pharisees and Sadducees (Acts 23:6–8; cf. Hegeppus apud Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.9, where belief in Jesus's resurrection serves as a boundary marker for Jews who become Christians). In any case, I would suggest that 2 Tim 2:16–18 reflects not so much the formation of a new boundary marker as the refinement and application of an old one to a new situation. After all, Paul argues, contrary to the claim of the opponents in 2 Tim 2:18 ("the resurrection already happened"), that the general resurrection is a future event (1 Cor 15:20–28).

¹⁴² Contra Benjamin Schliesser, "Abraham Did Not 'Doubt' in Unbelief" (Rom 4:20): Faith, Doubt, and Dispute in Paul's Letter to the Romans," *JTS* 63 (2012): 492–522. Schliesser argues that οὐ διεκρίθη in Rom 4:20 does not mean that Abraham "did not doubt/waver" (as in nearly all English translations) but that he "did not dispute." While Schliesser has rightly noted some of the lexical difficulties involved (though see the counterexamples discussed in Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James* [ICC; New York: Bloomsbury, 2013], 179–81) and offered some intriguing parallels from church history, his exegesis neglects both the immediate literary context in which the phrase occurs as well as the only other instance of διακρίνω in Romans itself (14:23). In the latter, διακρίνω is equated with a lack of faith. With respect to the former, nearly everything in Rom 4:18–21 supports the traditional reading. So even if Schliesser's proposal were correct, Paul's claim that Abraham did not "weaken in faith" despite the circumstances but instead "grew strong" in faith and was "fully convinced" makes clear that Paul believed that Abraham had no doubts.

familiar with Paul's letter to the Romans. Imagine further, then, what kind of response might be provoked upon hearing Luke 24 read for the first time.

Abraham "believes" God's promise "in hope against hope." By contrast, Luke tells us that the disciples, despite Jesus's promises that he would rise again, "did not believe" at first but dismissed the resurrection message as "nonsense" (24:11). They had lost all "hope" because of Jesus's death (24:20–21), and they are rebuked for being "slow to believe" (24:25). Whereas Paul says that difficult circumstances did not cause Abraham to weaken in faith or waver in unbelief, the apostles have "doubts arise in [their] hearts" when they see the risen Jesus (Luke 24:38) and are "still disbelieving" after being invited to touch him (24:39–41). Abraham is fully convinced though he is given a mere promise, but the apostles continue in disbelief when provided multiple forms of evidence. In comparison to the description of Abraham's faith in Romans 4, the apostles in Luke 24 look like spiritual failures who do *not* "share the faith of Abraham."

All of this is not to say that Luke had Rom 4 in mind when writing his narrative – nor Paul the group appearance tradition when composing Rom 4 – but rather to show how natural it may have been for an early reader to read one in light of the other. According to Paul, the Christian participates in Abraham's faith and is justified because of his or her belief that God raised Jesus from the dead. Yet this is precisely what Jesus's own disciples are repeatedly said to disbelieve in Luke 24. Again, this hypothetical is not intended to prove a particular intertextual interpretation of Luke 24, but it does call into question the standard apologetic view of the doubt motif. In a subculture that extolled faith as an ideal virtue, it seems to me more plausible that the doubt motif in the Gospels is a negative character trait implying a failure to trust God than a positive character trait included because of its apologetic value, i.e., to show that the eyewitnesses were not gullible. In the next few sections and in the chapters that follow, I hope to demonstrate that a wide variety of ancient Christian literature exhibits a consistently negative view of doubt and unbelief.

2.2.5 *The Condemnation of Doubt and Unbelief in Early Christianity*

There is perhaps no subject for which the contrast between the ancient church and modern society is starker than the topic of doubt.¹⁴³ Indeed, how could it

¹⁴³ This contrast is misleadingly downplayed in Anthony C. Thiselton, *Doubt, Faith, and Certainty* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 2–3. Thiselton alleges a positive role for doubt in the Bible, but he is only able to do so by anachronistically equating doubt with critical thinking and questioning. Thiselton is correct to note that the NT "commends 'thinking' in the sense of reflecting critically on options." But the NT is not thereby commending "doubt," at least not the kind of "doubts concerning the Christian faith" that Thiselton is addressing in context. Tellingly, the prooftexts that Thiselton cites in support of the allegedly positive

be otherwise after Descartes? Our post-Enlightenment world tends to belittle “faith” as intellectually naïve and to honor doubt and skepticism as signs of wisdom and mature thinking. This is bound to influence how the doubt motif is understood today. I outline below three interrelated facets of the ancient church’s view of doubt and unbelief that differ from those of the modern world.

First, ancient Christians understood unbelief to be primarily a moral rather than an intellectual issue.¹⁴⁴ In the first two hundred years of Christian literature unbelief is regularly depicted as sin. It is placed in the same category alongside perversity, lawlessness, cowardliness, sexual immorality, shameful lusts, murder, idolatry, lying, darkness, and even demonic activity.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, the Nag Hammadi tractates, though they are difficult to date, depict unbelief as blasphemous, impious, unholy, and worldly.¹⁴⁶ And because it is a sin, early Christian writers often depict repentance, rather than apologetic proofs, as the solution to doubt and unbelief.¹⁴⁷ This fact alone is likely to make some modern readers pause and scratch their heads in wonder, but there is more.

For a number of early Christian writers, unbelief is not simply a sin like any other but a root sin. According to Paul, “whatever does not proceed from faith is sin” (Rom 14:23). In the Gospel of John, not believing is the quintessential sin of which the world must be convicted (16:8–9).¹⁴⁸ And the *Shepherd of Hermas* depicts unbelief as the first and most powerful of sins (*Sim.* 9.15.3 [92.3]).

A wide variety of early Christian texts portray unbelief as a sin that merits condemnation and divine wrath. Paul says that Israel was “broken off because of their *unbelief*” (Rom 11:20). Similarly, Jude reminds his readers that the Lord “saved a people out of the land of Egypt” but “afterward destroyed those who had not believed” (5). In John’s Gospel the condemnation of unbelief is stated as a principle: “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but *whoever does not believe is condemned already*” (3:18). Likewise, in the Longer Ending of Mark, Jesus pronounces: “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but *whoever does not believe will be condemned*” (16:16). This statement is

view of doubt all refer to thinking and asking questions about fairly mundane matters, e.g., tax policy and shepherding practices.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. the description “moral defect” in *PGL*, s.v. “ἀπιστία.”

¹⁴⁵ E.g., Matt 17:17; Luke 9:41; 2 Cor 6:14; Rev 21:8; *Prot. Jas.* 19.3–20.1; *AJ* 33.6–8; *Sib. Or.* 2.260–262; 4.39–43; 8.182–187, 287; Clement, *Adumbr.* 3 (on 1 John 3:15); similarly Wis 14:25; 2 Macc 8:13.

¹⁴⁶ E.g., *Interp. Know.* (NHC XI,1) 1.24–2.20; *Melch.* (NHC IX,1) 6.28–7.3; *Perf. Disc.* (NHC VI,8) 65.32–66; 77.31–32.

¹⁴⁷ E.g., Matt 21:32; Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 5.3; Herm. *Mand.* 9.4–7 [39.4–7]; *Ep. Apos.* 12.1; *Acts Pet.* 10.13–18. For some gnostics, special revelation, i.e., *gnosis*, can help to resolve doubt (see Chapter 5).

¹⁴⁸ Similarly Origen, *Cels.* 2.75.

remarkable given that it follows Jesus's rebuke of the "unbelief" of the Eleven (16:14).¹⁴⁹

Comparable views are prevalent in early Christian literature outside of the NT. The general principle of judgment on unbelief is stated in *4 Ezra* 15.4 ("For every unbeliever shall die in his unbelief" [Metzger, *OTP*]) – possibly an echo of John 8:24 ("For unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins").¹⁵⁰ The author of the *Testimony of Truth* (NHC IX,3) restates the same principle by paraphrasing John 3:18: "For this is Christ; [those who] believed in him [have received life]. Those who did not believe [will die]" (49.7–10). Similarly, echoing Mark 16:16, the risen Jesus in the *Preaching of Peter* sends out the disciples to preach "so that those who have heard and believed may be saved, and that *those who have not believed* may hear and bear witness, *not having any excuse* so as to say, 'We did not hear.'" ¹⁵¹ Clement of Alexandria, who preserves this fragment of the *Preaching of Peter*, later repeats the principle: "Everyone who does not believe is without excuse."¹⁵² And Origen offers a brief explanation of the same: "*those who do not believe* alienate themselves from God and are on the *road to destruction through unbelief* about God."¹⁵³

The causal link between unbelief and divine condemnation was so ingrained in early Christian thinking that some authors refer to the fate of unbelievers as shorthand for judgment. For example, in the *Epistula Apostolorum*, the disciples ask the risen Jesus if Christians who sin will be treated "like unbelievers" and so be judged (36.8–9). This may be compared with the Lukan parable in which the wicked servant is cut in two and is assigned a place μετὰ τῶν ἀπίστων (12:46).¹⁵⁴

Others read the notion of unbelief into biblical texts that do not mention it. Although there is no support for the idea in the text of Genesis, Tertullian can assume that his readers know that the Flood came as judgment on "human unbelief."¹⁵⁵ Similarly, Clement of Alexandria interprets the phrase "children of wrath" in Eph 2:3 to be a reference to "those who are still unbelievers (οἱ δὲ ἔτι ἄπιστοι)" (*Protr.* 2.27.2.6). Whereas Ephesians connects "wrath"

¹⁴⁹ See further Chapter 8.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. *AJ* 39.14–15: "For your *unbelief* I will cause every one of you to die."

¹⁵¹ Frag. 7 apud Clement, *Strom.* 6.6 [48.1–2].

¹⁵² *Strom.* 7.2 [11.2].

¹⁵³ *Cels.* 5.53; cf. Xenophon, *Cry.* 7.2.17: "And when even men, if they are gentlemen – to say nothing of a god – discover that they are mistrusted (ἀπιστούμενοι), they have no love for those who mistrust (τοὺς ἀπιστοῦντας) them" (Miller, LCL).

¹⁵⁴ This last phrase can be translated "with the unfaithful" (so, e.g., NRSV, NABR, CEB) or "with the unbelievers" (so, e.g., NKJV, NIV, NASB). The former is perhaps better supported by the immediate literary context, but the latter reflects the predominant meaning of ἀπίστος in the NT.

¹⁵⁵ *Scap.* 3.2; cf. *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 7.12: "And as many as have not believed this book will be burnt up like Sodom and Gomorrah" (Stone, *OTP*, emphasis added).

with “disobedience,” “desires of the flesh,” and “trespasses,” Clement connects it with unbelief. It is also worth noting that Clement’s Greek is reminiscent of the description of the apostles in Luke 24:41: “but they were still disbelieving (ἔτι δὲ ἀπιστοῦντων αὐτῶν).” Although Clement in context does not appear to be alluding to Luke’s text, the identification of “those who are *still* unbelievers” as “children of wrath” cautions us against readings of Luke’s narrative that involve a positive assessment of the apostles’ disbelief.

Doubt comes under the same condemnation as *unbelief*. Already in Rom 14:23, Paul writes: “But whoever *has doubts* (διακρινόμενος) *is condemned* if he eats, *because it is not from faith* (ὅτι οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως).” The censure of doubt in early Christian texts is often severe. Doubt, like unbelief, is denounced as wretched, sinful, evil, satanic, and worthy of divine judgment and wrath:

But let him ask in faith, *with no doubting* (μηδὲν διακρινόμενος), *for the one who doubts* (διακρινόμενος) is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a *double-minded* (δίψυχος) man, unstable in all his ways.... Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you *double-minded* (δίψυχοι). Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. (Jas 1:6–8; 4:8–9)

Those who are *double-minded* (δίψυχοι) and *doubt* (διστάζοντες) the power of God are brought to judgment. (1 Clem. 11.2)

Therefore, *let us not be double-minded* (μὴ διψυχῶμεν), nor let our soul indulge in false ideas about his excellent and glorious gifts. Let this scripture be far from us where it says, “Wretched are the *double-minded* (δίψυχοι), those who *doubt* (διστάζοντες) in their soul.” (1 Clem. 23.2–3)¹⁵⁶

Let us therefore serve God with a pure heart, and we will be righteous. But if we do not serve him *because we do not believe* (διὰ τὸ μὴ πιστεύειν ἡμᾶς) God’s promise, we will be wretched. For the prophetic word says: “Wretched are the *double-minded* (δίψυχοι), those who *doubt* (διστάζοντες) in their heart.” (2 Clem. 11.1–2)¹⁵⁷

You, therefore, cleanse your heart of all the vanities of this life ... and ask of the Lord, and you will receive everything, and will not fail to receive all of your requests, if you ask *without doubting* (ἀδιστάκτως). *But if you doubt* (ἐὰν δὲ διστάσης) in your heart, you will certainly not receive any of your requests. For those who *doubt* (διστάζοντες) in their relation to God are the *double-minded* (δίψυχοι), and they never obtain any of their requests. But those who are perfect in faith make all their requests trusting in the Lord, and they receive them, because they ask *without doubting* (ἀδιστάκτως), without being *double-minded* (διψυχοῦντες). For any *double-minded* (δίψυχος) person who does not repent will scarcely

¹⁵⁶ Trans. Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 77–79.

¹⁵⁷ Trans. Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 153. Cf. *T. Isaac* 1.6–7: “If God has given us mastery of the earth, then how much the advantage of the one who has been firm in the faith in the word of God, and has held fast without doubt and with an upright heart to the knowledge of the commandments of God and the stories of his saints; for he will be the inheritor of the kingdom of God” (Stinespring, *OTP*).

be saved. So cleanse your heart of *double-mindedness* (διψυχίας) and put on faith.... Beware of this *double-mindedness* (διψυχίαν), for it is evil and senseless, and has uprooted many from the faith, even those who are very faithful and strong. For this *double-mindedness* (διψυχία) is indeed a daughter of the devil, and does much evil to God's servants. So despise *double-mindedness* (διψυχίας) and gain mastery over it in everything by clothing yourself with faith that is strong and powerful.... But *double-mindedness* (διψυχία) is an earthly spirit from the devil. (Herm. Mand. 9.4–10 [39.4–11])¹⁵⁸

Each of these texts suggests that doubt is a sign of moral or psychological instability (διψυχία).¹⁵⁹ As we will see in Chapter 5, this idea is important for the gnostic understanding of doubt. The fact that both *1 Clement* and *2 Clement* derive their views from a (now lost) prophetic scripture suggests that the harsh assessment of doubt in early Christianity is rooted primarily in Jewish thought.¹⁶⁰

A softer attitude towards the doubter is reflected in Jude 22–23: “*Have mercy on those who doubt* (διακρινομένων); save some by snatching them out of the fire; on some show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.”¹⁶¹ But this command of Jude is really an exception that proves the rule, because it presupposes a situation in which doubt is condemned as a sin and so calls the reader to treat the doubter with mercy rather than with

¹⁵⁸ Trans. Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 533–35, slightly modified.

¹⁵⁹ Douglas Moo calls it “spiritual schizophrenia” (*The Letter of James* [PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 63).

¹⁶⁰ On Jewish antecedents, see James Hardy Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James* (ICC; New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1916), 88; Oscar J. F. Seitz, “Two Spirits in Man: An Essay in Biblical Exegesis,” *NTS* 6 (1959): 82–95; idem, “Antecedents and Signification of the Term ΔΙΨΥΧΟΣ,” *JBL* 66 (1947): 211–19; idem, “Afterthoughts on the Term ‘Dipsychos,’” *NTS* 4 (1958): 327–34. Seitz argues that James, *Shepherd of Hermas*, *1 Clement*, and *2 Clement* all derive their teaching on double-mindedness from the lost apocryphon *Eldad and Modad*. This seems plausible, especially for *1* and *2 Clement*, but it is impossible to prove. The passages from James and *Hermas* both prohibit doubting in the context of prayer, which is paralleled in the Jesus tradition, e.g., Mark 11:23–24. Despite the similarities, Carolyn Osiek is probably correct to conclude that “no certain literary relationship can be established” between James and *Hermas*. They reflect instead “a common background of Jewish-Christian instruction against doubt” (*The Shepherd of Hermas* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999], 134; similarly Allison, *James*, 167–69).

Although the influence of Jewish thought seems to be primary, it is worth observing that religious doubt was sometimes condemned by pagans as well. According to Cicero, Protagoras was banished from Athens for his “mere expression of doubt (*dubitatio*)” about the existence of the gods (*Nat. D.* 1.23.63).

¹⁶¹ This may not actually be an exception. Richard Bauckham has made a plausible case that διακρινομένων is in this context best translated not “those who doubt” but “those who dispute” (*Jude, 2 Peter* [WBC 50; Waco, Tex.: Word, 1983], 108–15).

judgment.¹⁶² In other early Christian texts, Jesus is said to be merciful to those who have doubt, but normally the point is that this mercy is undeserved.¹⁶³

The second way the ancient church's view of doubt differs from that of the modern world has to do with the underlying causes of unbelief. In some of the passages quoted above, doubt is attributed to an impurity in the heart or soul that requires cleansing. Whereas modern thought generally assumes that people doubt because they lack the requisite evidence, early Christian literature repeatedly depicts unbelief as the result of stubbornness or hardheartedness. When Paul preaches about Christ to his fellow Jews, "some became stubborn and continued in unbelief" (Acts 19:9). Others "disbelieved" because their hearts had "grown dull" as Isaiah had predicted (Acts 28:24, 27; cf. Isa 6:9–10).¹⁶⁴ So Paul can attribute their "unbelief" to a "hardening" (Rom 11:17–24).¹⁶⁵ Similarly, when the apostles disbelieve the resurrection message, Jesus rebukes their "unbelief and hardness of heart" (Mark 16:14). And in the Emmaus pericope, Jesus calls Cleopas and his unnamed companion "slow of heart to believe" (Luke 24:25).¹⁶⁶

According to Paul, people "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" and so become "futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts are darkened" (Rom 1:18–21). Thus, for "*unbelievers* nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled" (Titus 1:15). With "unbelief" the mind is darkened by vain lusts (2 *Clem.* 19.2). Not surprisingly, then, Christians are warned against the inevitable apostasy of an "evil, unbelieving heart" (Heb 3:12). Otherwise they may fall to the same fate as the wilderness generation who "hardened" their hearts and were unable to enter the promise land because of their "unbelief" (Heb 3:8–19). In the NT, sin in the human heart distorts human

¹⁶² The phrase "snatching them out of the fire" evokes an OT image of salvation from judgment (e.g., Amos 4:11; Zech 2:3).

¹⁶³ E.g., 1 Tim 1:13; *AJ* 81.10–20; *Acts Pet.* 7.11–15; 10.13–18; cf. *Ps.-Clem. Ep. Jas.* 11.1–2: "Lay aside the *doubt* (διχόνοιαν) from which comes evil-doing, and welcome eagerly the doing of good. But if any one of you *doubts* (ἀμφιβάλλει) whether what has been said will happen, let him confess it without shame, if he is concerned for his soul, and he will be fully convinced by the leader. *If however he has believed correctly, let him live his life with confidence, as escaping the great fire of judgment and entering into the eternal good kingdom of God*" (Wilson, *NTApoc*, emphasis added).

¹⁶⁴ Cf. the quotation of Hab 1:5 in Acts 13:41: "Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish; for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will *not believe*, even if one tells it to you."

¹⁶⁵ The term for "hardening," πώρωσις, could also be translated "dullness, insensibility, obstinacy" (BDAG, s.v. "πώρωσις"). John says that the Jews were "unable to believe" because "he has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart" (12:36–40). Cf. Justin, *Dial.* 27: "But you are a people *hard-hearted* and without understanding, both blind and lame, children in whom is *no faith*" (*ANF* 1:208, emphasis added).

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Homer, *Od.* 23.70–172, where Penelope's skepticism about Odysseus's identity is rebuked because it is attributed to a stubborn heart.

perception, resulting in “foolish” thinking which rejects the truth regardless of the evidence presented.¹⁶⁷ The early church’s perspective is here worlds apart from the post-Enlightenment view in which doubt is esteemed as an intellectual virtue, indeed as the key to all knowledge.¹⁶⁸

This leads to the third contrast between ancient and modern views of unbelief. Doubt and skepticism are honored in the post-Enlightenment world as a sign of wisdom and maturity, but in ancient Christian literature they are a sign of foolishness. The unbelief of the Emmaus disciples is “foolish” (Luke 24:25). And as we have seen, “doubters” are likewise rebuked as “fools” in *1 Clem.* 24.3–4; *2 Clem.* 11.2–3. Doubt and double-mindedness are “senseless” (*Herm. Mand.* 9.9 [39.9]). Similarly, [Ps.-]Athenagoras divides the world into two types of people: those of “good sense who accept the truth gladly” and those who are “skeptics and doubters” (*Res.* 1) – the contrast implying that the latter lack the “good sense” of the former. Likewise, a lack of faith is the result of being “deprived of intelligence (*exsensatus*)” (*Acts Pet.* 7.15). It is also attributed to “madness.”¹⁶⁹ For Clement of Alexandria, disbelief, foolishness, and hard-heartedness all go hand-in-hand: “The advent of the Savior did not make people foolish, and hard of heart, and unbelieving, but made them understanding, amenable to persuasion, and believing. But those that would not believe ... were proved to be without understanding, unbelievers, and fools.”¹⁷⁰

2.2.6 The Shame of Unbelief

Given how negatively doubt and disbelief are portrayed, it is no surprise that unbelief is also seen as a source of shame in the early church. Three NT passages quote the following words from Isa 28:16 LXX: “Whoever *believes* in him will not be put to *shame*” (Rom 9:33; 10:11; 1 Pet 2:6–8). In each case the implication is that “those who do not believe” will be subjected to eschatological shame.¹⁷¹ This idea is later made explicit by two early second-century Christian interpolations in *T. Benj.* 10.8–9:

And as many as believe on Him on the earth will rejoice with Him. Then also all people will rise, some to glory and others to *shame*. And the Lord will first judge Israel for its unrighteousness; [*for when God appeared in the flesh as a liberator, they did not believe Him*]. And

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Wis 3:9: “those who trust in him will understand truth.”

¹⁶⁸ Ironically, whereas in Cartesian thinking doubt is employed methodically to *remove* bias, early Christians understood doubt to be the *result* of bias.

¹⁶⁹ *AJ* 84.6–7. Similarly, Josephus, *A.J.* 2.270, reports Moses as saying, “To *disbelieve* your power, O Lord ... I consider a *madness* greater than I can comprehend.”

¹⁷⁰ *Strom.* 1.18 [88.7–8] (*ANF* 2:320).

¹⁷¹ This is especially true of 1 Pet 2:7, which explicitly contrasts believers and disbelievers.

then He will judge all the nations, [as many as did not believe Him when He appeared upon earth].¹⁷²

Again, unbelief is the cause of divine judgment. Those who rise “to shame” (cf. Dan 12:2), whether from Israel or from the nations, do so because “they did not believe.” Similarly, though he does not speak of an eschatological shaming, Clement of Alexandria exhorts pagans who doubt the incarnation as follows: “And now the Word himself clearly speaks to you, *shaming your unbelief*.”¹⁷³

While these last two texts refer to disbelief in response to the incarnation, Paul applies the Isaianic promise to those who believe in Jesus’s resurrection:

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and *believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead*, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, “*Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.*” (Rom 10:9–11)

Presumably, then, disbelief in Jesus’s resurrection will lead to shame.¹⁷⁴ In 1 Cor 15:34–36 Paul explicitly states that his opponents who “say there is no resurrection” are “foolish” and deserve “shame.” And one later Christian writer goes so far as to say that those who refuse, despite much evidence, to believe in the resurrection of the flesh are “deserving of *great shame*.”¹⁷⁵

2.2.7 “Unbeliever” as a Term of Abuse

At some point in the history of the early church, the word “unbeliever” (ἄπιστος) became a pejorative label for Christian heretics. The shift in meaning may be illustrated by contrasting Paul’s usage in the first century with that of Ignatius of Antioch early in the second. On the one hand, ἄπιστος already has negative connotations for Paul; he aligns it with unrighteousness, darkness, blindness, and unholiness (1 Cor 6:1–6; 7:14; 2 Cor 4:4; 6:14). On the other hand, Paul’s attitude towards the ἄπιστοι differs radically from that of Ignatius. Whereas for Paul ἄπιστοι refers to non-Christians, those outside of the church (e.g., 1 Cor 6:6), for Ignatius it is an offensive label that he pins on his adversaries within the church (*Trall.* 10.1; *Smyrn.* 2.1).¹⁷⁶ According to Ignatius the

¹⁷² On the origin and dating of the Christian interpolations set in brackets above, see H. C. Kee, “The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols.; ed. James H. Charlesworth; Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1983), 1:777.

¹⁷³ *Protr.* 1.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. *m. Sanh.* 10:1, which states that those who deny that the resurrection is a doctrine of Torah will have no share in the world to come.

¹⁷⁵ [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 5.16. See further Chapter 6.

¹⁷⁶ According to some exegetes (J.-F. Collange, *Enigmes de la deuxième épître de Paul aux Corinthiens: Étude exégétique de 2 Cor 2:14–7:4* [SNTSMS 18; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972], 305–6; James M. Scott, *2 Corinthians* [NIBCNT 8; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1998], 152–53), ἄπιστοι in 2 Cor 6:14 refers to Paul’s opponents within the

ἄπιστοι are like poison, and church members are not to associate with them or listen to their false teaching (*Trall.* 9.1–11.1). By contrast, Paul calls Christians to seek peace in their relationships with the ἄπιστοι, to eat with them, and to ensure that their worship services are understandable to them. Paul’s missionary goal is that the unbelievers become believers, that the outsiders become insiders (1 Cor 7:12–15; 10:27; 14:22–24). Ignatius’s decision to apply a term for outsiders to insiders is polemical. Ignatius calls his docetist opponents “unbelievers” in order to shame them by implying that they should not even be considered Christians, let alone have a voice of authority in the church (cf. 1 Cor. 6:4–6). In other words, for Ignatius ἄπιστος is a term of abuse.

A precedent for the kind of shaming rhetoric used by Ignatius appears in 1 Tim 5:8, which contends that anyone who does not provide for widows in his own family “has denied the faith and is worse than an *unbeliever* (ἀπίστου).” Similarly, in the mid to late second century, [Ps.-]Justin pejoratively characterizes his opponents as “unbelievers.”¹⁷⁷ Because they claim to be Christians but deny the resurrection, [Ps.-]Justin goes so far as to accuse them of being “more unbelieving than unbelievers (τῶν ἀπίστων ἀπιστοτέρους)” (*Res.* 5.2).

Most importantly, this rhetorical tactic of shaming someone by calling him or her an “unbeliever” was sometimes directed against the apostles themselves. The apocryphal *Acts of Peter* provides an entertaining account of Peter’s conflicts with the arch-heretic Simon Magus in Rome. In *Acts Pet.* 10.13, a Christian disciple reports the following to the apostle: “But Peter, this Simon called you an *unbeliever* (*infidelem* = ἄπιστον), since you doubted (*dubitantem* = διατάζοντα) when (you were) on the water.”¹⁷⁸ The allusion is to Matt 14:31: “O you of little faith, why did you doubt (ἐδίστασας)?”¹⁷⁹ Given his otherwise unabashedly pro-Peter stance, it is implausible the author of the *Acts of Peter* invented the accusation that Peter was an unbeliever. This criticism probably originated in second-century gnostic circles and was placed on the lips of Peter’s first-century opponent because of Simon’s reputation as the fountainhead of gnostic thought. In any case, Matthew’s depiction of Peter’s doubt seems to have become the source of a scandal that threatened the reputation of Peter.

Nor was this scandal limited to the time (ca. 200 CE) and place (probably Asia Minor) in which the *Acts of Peter* was written. Approximately fifty years

church, i.e., the false apostles repudiated in 2 Cor 10–12. If so, then the term is polemically charged even before the Gospels were written. Though see the refutations of this reading in William J. Webb, “Unequally Yoked together with Unbelievers – Part 1 (of 2 Parts): Who are the Unbelievers (ἄπιστοι) in 2 Corinthians 6:14?” *BSac* 149 (1992): 27–44; David Starling, “The ἄπιστοι of 2 Cor 6:14: Beyond the Impasse,” *NovT* 55 (2013): 45–60.

¹⁷⁷ ἄπιστοι or close cognates, e.g., *Res.* 3.18; 5.2, 4, 12, 15; 8.6; 10.6.

¹⁷⁸ All references to the *Acts of Peter* follow the numbering system in Robert F. Stoops, Jr., *The Acts of Peter* (Early Christian Apocrypha 4; Salem, Oreg.: Polebridge, 2012). Translations and Greek retroversions are my own.

¹⁷⁹ Further allusions to the same pericope appear in *Acts Pet.* 7.9; 10.15.

later in Palestine, Origen defends Peter against the same accusation. Origen exhorts readers of Matt 14:31 to “observe that he [Jesus] did not say, ‘O you unbeliever (ἄπιστε),’ but, ‘O you of little faith (ὀλιγόπιστε),’ and that it was said, ‘Why did you doubt,’ as he had still a measure of faith, but also had a tendency towards that which was opposed to faith.”¹⁸⁰

Similarly, in his commentary on John, written in part to counter gnostics, Origen voices his objection to interpretations of John 13:19 that “condemned (κατηγοροῦντες)” the apostles “as unbelievers (ὡς ἀπίστον)” (32.174). John 13:19 does not explicitly condemn the apostles or call them unbelievers. Nonetheless, because the wording (“I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe”) is being taken by some to imply a lack of belief on the part of the apostles, Origen feels compelled to offer a lengthy apologetic response (sections 170–196 of Book 32). He wants to reassure his readers that the verse can be understood in a way that avoids “condemning such great disciples of Jesus as having still not yet believed (ὡς οὐδέπω πεπιστευκότων)” at so late a juncture in Jesus’s ministry (32.171).

2.2.8 Doubt as an Apologetic Device?

The texts surveyed above stand in tension with modern theories that the post-resurrection doubt motif is meant to portray the apostles favorably by demonstrating their lack of gullibility. Early Christian literature consistently depicts doubt and disbelief in negative terms, i.e., as sins worthy of divine condemnation and shame and/or as signs of foolishness, hardheartedness, mental instability, or satanic influence. Comparable negative portrayals appear in Luke’s and John’s Gospels. Both attribute unbelief to stubborn, unreceptive hearts (Luke 24:25; Acts 19:9; 28:24, 27; John 12:37–41), associate it with the devil’s work (Luke 8:12; 22:31–32; Acts 26:18; John 6:64–71; 8:43–47), and portray it as worthy of punishment/condemnation (Luke 1:20; 12:46; Acts 13:41; John 3:18). To overturn these negative assessments elsewhere in Luke and John and justify a positive reading of the doubt in Luke 24 and John 20 would require either significant counterexamples from the broader historical context and/or compelling evidence from the immediately literary context. But Christian literature before 250 CE offers no clear counterexamples.¹⁸¹ And nothing in Luke 24 or John 20 necessitates a positive assessment of the apostles’ doubt. All of this leads me to suspect that the doubt-as-apologetic-device theory is an

¹⁸⁰ *Comm. Matt.* 11.6; cf. *Ep. Apos.* 24.3–4: when the apostles deny that they are like “unbelievers,” Jesus responds, “O you of little faith.”

¹⁸¹ There are, to be sure, three instances of the command “do not believe” in the NT, but the objects of disbelief in these cases are the claims of false prophets (Matt 24:23–24; Mark 13:21–22; 1 John 4:1). In each case, the NT author elsewhere exhibits a negative portrayal of doubt/disbelief, e.g., Matt 13:58; 14:31; 17:17–20; 21:31–32; Mark 4:40; 6:5–6; 9:19; 11:30; 1 John 5:10.

anachronistic imposition of a post-Enlightenment value system onto the ancient texts of Luke and John.

The reception of the resurrection narratives in the early church seems to confirm this suspicion. In the chapters that follow, I examine how proto-orthodox apologists and antidocetic writers in the second and early third centuries respond to the doubt of the apostles. None treat the doubt as if it had a positive apologetic value. Rather, all either suppress the doubt motif or soften it by describing the doubt as short-lived and/or by portraying the apostles more positively through re-characterization.

2.2.9 EXCURSUS: Philo's Suppression and Softening of Abraham's Doubt

Before discussing instances in which early Christians omit or soften the doubt of the apostles, it will be useful to examine some non-Christian precedents in the writings of Philo. Philo's view of faith and doubt is similar to that of early Christian writers. For Philo, "faith in God is the only sure and infallible good"; it is the "queen of the virtues" (*Abr.* 268, 270). By contrast, disbelief is something of which to be "ashamed" (*Abr.* 111–112).¹⁸² And as in Paul, Philo's model of ideal faith is Abraham because he "believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Gen 15:16).

Philo is nevertheless acutely aware of at least one passage in which Abraham's faith seriously falters, or at least seems to. Abraham's response to God's promise in Gen 17 differs significantly from his initial response in Gen 15:16:

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and spoke in his mind saying, "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" And Abraham said to God, "Let Ishmael live before you!" (Gen 17:17–18 LXX)

According to Philo, the great man of faith here "seems to doubt" (*Mut.* 177). Judging from the number, length, and variety of Philo's attempts to resolve this inconsistency, either Philo was himself truly vexed by Abraham's doubt or his students/readers frequently pressed him for explanations.¹⁸³

While Philo admits in *Abr.* 111 that Abraham and Sarah found the promise so "incredible (*ἀπίστου*)" that they "despair of the birth of a son," in *Mut.* 218 he makes a contrary assertion that Abraham did not actually despair but truly

¹⁸² In *Abr.* 111–12, Sarah denies her laughter because she is "ashamed (*καταιδεσθεῖσσαν*)" of her incredulous response to God's promise.

¹⁸³ *Mut.* 175–218; *QG* 3.55–58; 4.17; *Abr.* 111–13; cf. *Leg.* 3.85, 217–18, where Philo first interprets Abraham's laughter as an indication of a lack of hope and then later as an indication of joy. I have chosen Philo's treatment of Gen 17:17–18 because his diverse writings allow me to illustrate a fuller range of apologetic tactics. Similar procedures may be observed in Josephus's re-characterization of Moses, e.g., *A.J.* 2.270–276 (cf. Exod 3–4); 3.298 (cf. Num 11:21–22); 4.85 (cf. Num 20:2–12). Despite his promise to not to omit or add anything in his retelling of the biblical narrative (*A.J.* 1.17), Josephus removes all trace of Abraham's doubt from his account of Gen 17:17–18 (1.192–193).

trusted God. In *QG* 3.57, Philo adds to the story by placing this denial directly on Abraham's lips: "We do not despair, O Lord, of a better generation, but I have faith in Thy promises."¹⁸⁴ Philo then has God himself emphatically affirm Abraham's claim: "And thy faith (πίστις) is not ambiguous but is unhesitating (οὐκ ἀμφίβολος ἀλλ' ἀνενδοίαστος), and partakes of modesty and reverence."¹⁸⁵ As we will see, one second-century Christian author invents a similar dialogical interaction in which apostles deny their unbelief and the risen Jesus affirms their whole-hearted faith.¹⁸⁶

Philo next claims that Abraham had an "unswerving and inflexible conviction of faith" because "all uncertainty is alien" to the one "who has faith in God."¹⁸⁷ The fact that Paul also claims that Abraham "did not doubt" suggests that the both he and Philo were influenced by a common interpretive tradition that attempted to address the apparent inconsistency in Abraham's responses to the divine promise. In any case, Philo takes a story in which Abraham seems to doubt and boldly retells it by adding statements that instead explicitly affirm Abraham's faith. In Chapters 3, 4, 6, and 8, we will examine a number of proto-orthodox writers that employ a nearly identical procedure when they retell the canonical resurrection stories: they replace statements in which the apostles doubt with statements that unambiguously confirm their faith.

In other passages, Philo's approach is less drastic. Instead of rejecting Abraham's doubt, he concedes its existence but finds ways to minimize it. In *QG* 3.56, Philo acknowledges that Abraham "disbelieves" but holds Abraham guiltless of any real transgression. Philo reasons that some thoughts that arise in the mind are involuntary. Therefore, because Abraham spoke the doubting words not aloud but only "in his mind" – an interpretive gloss added by the LXX translators – Philo concludes that Abraham is not blameworthy. Similarly, in *Mut.* 178 Philo claims that "Moses has represented the doubt (ἐνδοιασμόν) not as long-lived, or prolonged to reach the mouth and tongue, but staying where it was with the swiftly moving mind." As we will see in Chapter 6, one early Christian apologist makes an analogous attempt to re-characterize the apostles' doubts as short-lived. Philo further contends that it is unreasonable to expect Abraham to believe without "any trace or shadow or breath of unbelief (ἀπιστίας) whatsoever" because Abraham is, after all, a man, and not perfect like God (*Mut.* 181–82).¹⁸⁸ The *Acts of John*, examined in Chapter 7, offers a similar rationale for the disbelief of the apostles.

¹⁸⁴ Marcus, LCL.

¹⁸⁵ *QG* 3.58 (Marcus, LCL).

¹⁸⁶ See discussion of *Ep. Apos.* 24–25 in Chapter 8.

¹⁸⁷ *QG* 4.17 (Marcus, LCL).

¹⁸⁸ As reasonable as this explanation may sound to modern ears, Philo is not fully satisfied with it. He later suggests that "perhaps ... [Abraham's] utterance does not even indicate any disbelief, but a prayer" (188).

Part II

The Reception of the Resurrection Narratives

Chapter 3

Two Early Readings of Luke 24: Docetic and Antidocetic

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a window on how some of the earliest docetists and their proto-orthodox adversaries understood the resurrection appearance narratives in Luke 24. If Luke were writing against docetists or gnostics, we might expect them to view Luke as an enemy rather than an ally. And conversely, we might expect antidocetic writers to find in Luke 24 a ready-made defense against their opponents. The following examination of two early second-century texts, one docetic/gnostic (summarized in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30) and one antidocetic (Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3–5), will show that neither of these expectations are fulfilled. In fact, quite the opposite seems to have occurred. The Gnostic author appeals to Luke 24 as authoritative proof of his docetic view of the resurrection, and the antidocetic author finds it necessary to edit substantially the group appearance story preserved in Luke 24 before it can be usefully employed in antidocetic polemic.

3.1 Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3–5

3.1.1 Introduction

Ignatius, bishop of Syrian Antioch, was arrested for his faith and transported under armed guard to Rome for execution (*Rom.* 5.1). His fateful trip began in late summer (*Rom.* 10.3), sometime between 105 and 135 CE but probably no later than 118 CE.¹ Along the way his convoy stopped at Smyrna and Troas,

¹ Similarly Charles Munier, “Où en est la question d’Ignace d’Antioche? Bilan d’un siècle de recherches 1870–1998,” *ANRW* 27.1 380; William R. Schoedel, “Polycarp of Smyrna and Ignatius of Antioch,” *ANRW* 27.1 274, 349; Michael W. Holmes, “Polycarp of Smyrna, Letter to the Philippians,” *ExpTim* 118 (2006): 62. Ignatius’s letters and martyrdom have traditionally been dated to the tenth year of Trajan (ca. 107/108 CE) on the basis of notices in Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 3.32; 3.36.2–15; *Chron.* 2.276), but commentators since J. B. Lightfoot have observed ambiguity in Eusebius’s references and suggested that Eusebius was providing only a rough estimate (J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers. Part II: S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp* [3 vols.; 2nd ed.; London: MacMillan, 1889], 2:449–72; C. H. Turner, *Studies in Early Church History: Collected Papers* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1912], 138; Paul Hartog, *Polycarp and the New Testament: The Occasion, Rhetoric, Theme, and Unity of the Epistle to*

and during these brief layovers he pens letters to several churches in Asia Minor and one to Rome as well.² Among the various issues that he addresses in

the Philippians and Its Allusions to New Testament Literature [WUNT 2/134; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002], 58; Paul Foster, “The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch [Part 1],” *ExpTim* 117 [2006]: 490–91). After listing a number of precisely dated events in the first ten years of Trajan’s reign, Eusebius includes Ignatius’s martyrdom within a group of possibly undated events associated with Trajan’s reign (98–117 CE). Consequently, many argue that the date range should be expanded to anytime during the first two decades of the second century (so Robert M. Grant, *Ignatius of Antioch* [The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary 4; Camden, N.J.: Nelson, 1966], 48; William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* [Hermeneia; trans. Helmut Koester; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985], 5; Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* [WUNT 166; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004], 630–31).

Others reject Eusebius’s testimony as unreliable and conclude that any time up to the death of Polycarp (ca. 155–160 CE) is possible. However, even if Eusebius is inaccurate on some other points, his early date for Ignatius is confirmed by Origen, who refers to Ignatius as the *second* bishop of Antioch (*Hom. Luc.* 6; cf. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.3.3 and Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.31–32, which identify Clement, dated in the first century, as the *third* bishop of Rome and yet still an eyewitness of the apostles). Origen’s testimony, because it is independent of Eusebius and because Origen himself had spent time in Antioch, makes a date after the reign of Trajan improbable, and any date after Hadrian implausible. Harnack notes that Ignatius wrote at a time when Polycarp, who was later martyred at age eighty-six, was still young enough to be addressed by Ignatius in a paternal manner as if he were a much younger man. Harnack dated Ignatius’s letters to the latter half of Trajan’s reign but remained open to a date as late as 125 CE (*Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius. Zweiter Theil: Die Chronologie* [2 vols.; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897], 1:388–406). Moreover, a third patristic testimony, from John Malalas, dates Ignatius’s martyrdom to the reign of Trajan but provides a different date (115–116 CE) from that of Eusebius’s *Chronicon*. While Malalas is late and often accused of being unreliable, Klaus-Gunther Essig has demonstrated that Malalas’ dating of Ignatius cannot be so easily dismissed (“Mutmassungen über den Anlass des Martyriums von Ignatius von Antiochien,” *VC* 40 [1986]: 105–17).

Later dates for Ignatius’s letters have been proposed on the basis of forgery theories (see note below).

² Three forms of the letters are extant today: (i) the (original) middle recension of seven letters; (ii) the long recension, which includes numerous interpolations and six additional (spurious) letters; and (iii) the short recension, which offers an abridged Syriac version of three letters. While most judge the middle recension to be the original letters of Ignatius, a few have argued against their authenticity, e.g., Robert Joly, *Le dossier d’Ignace d’Antioche* (Brussels: Editions de l’Université de Bruxelles, 1979); Josep Rius-Camps, *The Four Authentic Letters of Ignatius, the Martyr: A Critical Study Based on the Anomalies Contained in the Textus Receptus* (XPICTIANICMOC 2; Roma: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1979); Reinhard M. Hübner, “Thesen zur Echtheit und Datierung der sieben Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochien,” *ZAC* 1 (1997): 44–72. These forgery theories have been widely rejected, e.g., C. P. Hammond Bammel, “Ignatian Problems,” *JTS* NS 33 (1982): 62–97; Christine Trevett, “Anomaly and Consistency: Josep Rius-Camps on Ignatius and Matthew,” *VC* 38 (1984): 165–71; Henning Paulsen, *Die Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochia und der Brief des Polykarp von Smyrna* (HNT 18; 2nd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985), 4;

these letters is docetic Christology.³ To be sure, Ignatius does not explicitly call his opponents “Docetists.” In fact, he emphatically denies them further

Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 5–7; idem, “Polycarp and Ignatius,” *ANRW* 27.1: 286–92; Christine Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia* (Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 29; Lewiston: E. Mellen, 1992), 12–14; Andreas Lindemann, “Antwort auf die ‘Thesen zur Echtheit und Datierung der sieben Briefe des Ignatius von Antiochien,’” *ZAC* 1 (1997): 185–94; Mark J. Edwards, “Ignatius and the Second Century: An Answer to R. Hübner,” *ZAC* 2 (1998): 214–26; idem, “Markus Vinzent on the Resurrection,” in *‘If Christ has not been raised’: Studies on the Reception of the Resurrection Stories and the Belief in the Resurrection in the Early Church* (eds. Joseph Verheyden, Andreas Merkt, and Tobias Nicklas; NTOA 115; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 130–33; Georg Schöllgen, “Die Ignatianen als pseudepigraphisches Briefcorpus: Anmerkung zu den Thesen von Reinhard M. Hübner,” *ZAC* 2 (1998): 16–25; Hermann J. Vogt, “Bemerkungen zur Echtheit der Ignatiusbriefe,” *ZAC* 3 (1999): 50–63; Brent, *Martyr Bishop*, 95–143. To these Paul Trebilco (*Early Christians*, 631–32) adds that “it seems highly unlikely that a pseudepigrapher would choose such an unknown figure as the supposed author of the letters, since he would not have the prior authority required for a pseudepigraphic writing to be convincing.” I find it telling that Bart Ehrman, who detects the work of forgers in a wide variety of ancient Christian texts, nevertheless accepts the middle recension as authentic (Bart D. Ehrman, *Forgery and Counterforgery: The Use of Literary Deceit in Early Christian Polemics* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2013], 5–6; idem, *The Apostolic Fathers* [2 vols.; LCL; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003], 1:212–13).

One recent argument for a later date is that of Timothy D. Barnes, who, on the basis of a parallel between Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.6.1 and Ignatius, *Poly.* 3.2, argues that Ignatius shows familiarity with the teachings of the Valentinian Ptolemaeus (“The Date of Ignatius,” *ExpTim* 120 [2008]: 123–25). The parallel, which describes the Savior as becoming visible, touchable, and passible, is certainly striking, but it by no means proves that Ignatius is, as Barnes avers, “quoting, answering and contradicting Ptolemaeus.” First, it is not clear that Irenaeus is quoting Ptolemaeus in this passage (so Christoph Marksches, “New Research on Ptolemaeus Gnosticus,” *ZAC* 4 [2000]: 249–52). Second, Barnes’s argument depends on his speculative emendation of Ignatius’s text. He adds a phrase, τὸν δι’ ἡμᾶς ψηλαφητόν, absent from all manuscripts of the middle recension. Despite Hübner’s insistence (“Echtheit und Datierung,” 55–57), the emendation is not necessary (see already Grant, *Ignatius*, 132). Third, even if we grant both the emendation and that Ignatius is responding to Ptolemaeus, the former is not “contradicting” the latter. On the contrary, the emendation would imply that both agree that Savor became visible, touchable, and passible (similarly Timothy L. Carter, “Marcion’s Christology and Its Possible Influence on Codex Bezae,” *JTS* NS 61 [2010]: 562 n. 37). If Ignatius were attempting to counter the Ptolemaean teaching preserved in *Haer.* 1.6.1, his point of departure would surely have been instead the comments, found in the same sentence, about Achamoth and the Demiurge. Ignatius says nothing about either. Finally, Barnes neglects the possibility that the verbal overlap may be the result of influence in the opposite direction, i.e., from Ignatius to Ptolemaeus. Indeed *Haer.* 1.6.1 reads more like a gnostic reinterpretation of the thoroughly traditional notions that Jesus was visible, touchable, and passible. See further the critiques in Sebastian Moll, *The Arch-Heretic Marcion* (WUNT 250; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 136 n. 2; Edwards, “Vinzent,” 131–33.

³ On the possibility that Ignatius addresses in his letters opponents other than docetists, see surveys in C. K. Barrett, “Jews and Judaizers in the Epistles of Ignatius,” in *Jews, Greeks*

publicity by refusing to put their names in print (*Smyrn.* 5.3), thus consigning all modern attempts to identify them with a specific heretic or sect to exercises in historical speculation.⁴ Nevertheless, the label “docetic” is justified insofar as the false teachers being addressed are quoted as saying that Christ suffered “in appearance (τὸ δοκεῖν) only” (*Trall.* 10.1; *Smyrn.* 2.1).⁵ They also refused to confess that the “Lord bore flesh” (*Smyrn.* 5.2). This implies that they also rejected the reality of the incarnation and bodily resurrection, and so their docetism is best classified as proto-monophysite.⁶

and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity: Essays in Honor of William David Davies (eds. Robert Hamerton-Kelly and Robin Scroggs; SJLA 21; Leiden: Brill, 1976), 220–44; Schoedel, “Polycarp and Ignatius,” 301–4; Matti Myllykoski, “Wild Beasts and Rapid Dogs: The Riddle of the Heretics in the Letters of Ignatius,” in *The Formation of the Early Church* (ed. Jostein Ådna; WUNT 183; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 245–50.

⁴ So Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 155; Trevett, *Study*, 167–68. Numerous possibilities have been suggested, e.g., Saturninus (Theodor Zahn, *Ignatius von Antiochien* [Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1873], 393–94; Robert M. Grant, “The Earliest Christian Gnosticism,” *CH* 22 [1953]: 81–98), the schismatics from the Johannine epistles (Uebele, *Viele Verführer*), Ebionites (Michael D. Goulder, “Ignatius’ ‘Docetists,’” *VC* 53 [1999]: 16–30), Marcion (Markus Vinzent, “Ich bin kein körperloses Geistwesen’: Zum Verhältnis von κήρυγμα Πέτρον, ‘Doctrina Petri,’ διδασκαλία Πέτρον und IgnSm 3,” in *Der paradox Eine: Antignostischer Monarchianismus im zweiten Jahrhundert* [ed. Reinhard M. Hübner; VCSup 50; Leiden: Brill, 1999], 265–73; idem, *Resurrection*, 106–7), the Valentinians (Thomas Lechner, *Ignatius adversus Valentinianos? Chronologische und theologiegeschichtliche Studien zu den Briefen des Ignatius von Antiochien* [VCSup 47; Leiden: Brill, 1999]). Bammel (“Problems,” 86) suggests that Ignatius attacks Cerinthian separationists in *Ephesians* but Saturninus-like docetists in *Smyrnaeans*. The editor/author of the long recension of Ignatius’s letters names many opponents including Simon Magus, Menander, Basilides, the Ebionites, and the Nicolaitans (*Trall.* 11, long recension). No consensus has been reached, but with respect to *Smyrnaeans*, Saturninus is the closest match in terms of Christology. Pace Vinzent and Lechner, neither Marcion nor the Valentinians can be identified as the opponents in *Smyrnaeans*. Whereas Ignatius’s opponents explicitly deny Jesus’s suffering, both Marcion and the Valentinians, despite their docetism with respect to Jesus’s humanity, find a way to affirm his suffering (see Chapters 2 and 6).

⁵ Ignatius is more explicitly antidocetic than 1 and 2 John in this regard. While the schismatics in 1 and 2 John “deny” that Christ came “in the flesh,” there is no evidence of their use of “docetic” terminology as we find in Ignatius.

⁶ On the different types of Docetism, see Chapter 2. The proto-monophysite classification is confirmed by Ignatius’s frequent use of “truly” (ἀληθῶς) when listing the events of Christ’s life (*Magn.* 11.1; *Trall.* 9.1–2; *Smyrn.* 1.1–2), and especially by the plural ταῦτα in 4.2: “For if these things were done (ταῦτα ἐπράχθη) by our Lord in appearance only (τὸ δοκεῖν) ...” (cf. *πραχθέντα ἀληθῶς* in *Magn.* 11.1). The reference to more than one event means that their docetism is not limited to the crucifixion but applies also to the resurrection, and probably to the entirety of Christ’s life on earth. Contra Goulder (“Docetists,” 16–30), Myllykoski (“Wild Beasts,” 353–74) and Kinlaw (*Metamorphosis*, 90–92), the opponents addressed in *Smyrn.* 2–7 are not separationists influenced by Ebionite Christology. Though this may be a possibility for the opponents addressed in the *Letter to the Ephesians* (Bammel, “Problems,” 86), it is not for the those addressed in the *Letter to the Trallians* (Kinlaw,

In his *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, Ignatius appeals to a resurrection appearance tradition in order to counter the docetic claims of his opponents:

For I know and believe that he was in the flesh even after the resurrection. And when he came to Peter and those with him, he said to them: “Take, handle me and see, for I am not a bodiless daimon.” And immediately they touched him and believed, having intermingled with his flesh and spirit. For this reason, they despised even death. Indeed, they were found greater than death. And after his resurrection he ate and drank with them as [does] one who is in the flesh, although spiritually he was united with the Father. (*Smyrn.* 3.1–3)⁷

This passage is the primary prooftext for those who claim that the parallel resurrection account in Luke 24:36–43 was crafted for the purposes of antidocetic apologetic.⁸ Because Ignatius appeals to demonstrations of touching and eating against docetists, similar elements in Luke’s account are judged to be antidocetic as well. At first glance, this argument is so plausible that some interpreters simply assume without argument that Luke’s account is directed against docetism.⁹ However, this theory falls apart under further scrutiny. While scholars rightly note the similarities between Luke and Ignatius, they often do not account adequately for the differences. It is my contention that *Smyrn.* 3.2, if it proves anything about Luke 24, proves quite the opposite, namely, that Luke 24 was *not* designed to counter docetism. Or to put it more cautiously, the differences that result from Ignatius’s redactional activity indicate that Ignatius either did not or would not have found Luke’s account suitable for antidocetic polemic.

3.1.2 Ignatius’s Sources and Antidocetic Redaction

In order to evaluate the character and extent of Ignatius’s redaction it is necessary first to identify Ignatius’s source(s). Although a number of commentators conclude that Ignatius is paraphrasing Luke 24:36–43, most maintain that Luke

Metamorphosis, 90). Ignatius’s opponents at Smyrna reject the notion that “the Lord bore flesh” (*Smyrn.* 5.2), yet the Ebionites, as Goulder himself notes (“Docetists,” 25), believed that “Christ clothed himself with Jesus” (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.3.6). Additionally, the early separationist Christology of Cerinthus did not reject a physical resurrection (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.26.1), and so Ignatius’s insistence that the apostles touched the risen Jesus makes little sense as anti-separationist polemic.

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, all translations are based on the critical text in Karl Bihlmeyer, *Die Apostolischen Väter: Neubearbeitung der Funkschen Ausgabe* (SAQ 2; 3rd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1970).

⁸ E.g., Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 71, 89; Campenhausen, *Tradition*, 52 n. 42; Evans, *Resurrection*, 109; Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 147; Hall, “Docetism,” 173; Goulder, “Baseless Fabric,” 56–67; Matson, *John*, 120; Brent, *Martyr Bishop*, 140; Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger, *Message*, 2:274 n. 211; Bovon, *Luke*, 3:389; Vinson, *Luke*, 753; Novakovic, “Resurrection,” 926–27.

⁹ E.g., Alsup, *Appearance Stories*, 75, 169–72; Hoffmann, *Marcion*, 119; Goulder, “Baseless Fabric,” 55–57; Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Christ*, 109; Vinson, *Luke*, 753;

and Ignatius both follow a common tradition, whether oral or written.¹⁰ If the former is true, then discerning Ignatian redaction is a relatively straightforward process of highlighting where Ignatius differs from Luke. The latter requires first reconstructing a common tradition by comparing the two accounts and then discerning how Ignatius differs from the common tradition. I argue below that the paraphrase theory is more plausible, but that the common-tradition theory yields similar results with respect to Ignatian redaction.

The differences between Luke and Ignatius are best understood after a consideration of the similarities. Luke 24:33–44 and *Smyrn.* 3.1–5.1 follow a similar sequence and exhibit some close conceptual and verbal parallels. First, both introduce what appears to be the same group of participants (“the eleven and those with them . . . Simon,” Luke 24:33–34; “those around Peter,” *Smyrn.* 3.2). Second, each relates a saying of the risen Jesus that includes the same five-word sequence (ψηλαφήσατέ με καὶ ἴδετε ὅτι) followed by a clause with the negation οὐκ (“handle me and see, for . . . not,” Luke 24:39; *Smyrn.* 3.2).¹¹ Third, both describe the response of the apostles with a verb from the πιστ- word group (“they still disbelieved [ἀπιστούντων] for joy and wondered,” Luke 24:41; “immediately they touched him and believed [ἐπίστευσαν],” *Smyrn.* 3.2).¹²

Next, each says that Jesus ate. In Luke, “He ate in their presence (ἐνώπιον αὐτῶν ἔφαγεν)” (24:43). Ignatius has “after his resurrection he ate and drank with them (μετὰ δὲ τὴν ἀνάστασιν συνέφαγεν αὐτοῖς καὶ συνέπιεν)” (*Smyrn.* 3.3). While Luke 24 lacks any mention of Jesus drinking, Ignatius’s wording is very close to that of Luke in Acts 10:41: “We ate and drank with him after

¹⁰ Paraphrase theory: Philipp Vielhauer and Georg Strecker, “Jewish-Christian Gospels,” *NTApoc* 1: 144–45; Frans Neirynck, “Lc 24, 36–43: Un récit lucanien,” in *À cause de l'évangile* (LD 123; Paris: Cerf, 1985), 672–77; Goulder, “Docetists,” 19, 26, 28; Charles E. Hill, “Ignatius, ‘the Gospel,’ and the Gospels,” in *Trajectories through the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers* (eds. Andrew Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett; The New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers; Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 278–79.

Common tradition theory: Koester, *Überlieferung*, 45–56; Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 266–67; Charles Thomas Brown, *The Gospel and Ignatius of Antioch* (StBibLit 12; New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 38–39; Bovon, *Luke*, 3:388–89; Gregory, *Reception*, 69–74; Bellinzoni, “Luke in the Apostolic Fathers,” 57–58. Even Massaux doubts dependence on Luke (*First Ecclesiastical Writers*, 1:98–99). James R. Edwards argues that both Ignatius and Luke depend on a Hebrew Gospel known to Jerome (*The Hebrew Gospel and the Development of the Synoptic Tradition* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 45–55).

¹¹ Most commentators limit the parallel to ψηλαφήσατέ με καὶ ἴδετε. However, the verbatim wording includes ὅτι as well. Moreover, the negation (οὐκ) in the second part of each saying must also be considered (so Smith, “Apologetic Interests,” 757 n. 22).

¹² It may be significant that Ignatius, like the so-called Western text of Luke, has nothing equivalent to Luke 24:40 and so moves directly from the saying in Luke 24:39 to the response of the apostles in Luke 24:41.

he rose (συνεφάγομεν καὶ συνεπίομεν αὐτῷ μετὰ τὸ ἀναστῆναι αὐτόν) from the dead.”¹³ It seems that Ignatius has conflated Luke 24:41–43 with Acts 10:41. Making Jesus, instead of the apostles, the subject of *συνεσθίω* and *συμπίνω* is a minor change, but it is one that strengthens Ignatius’s antidocetic polemic. The combination of terms, *συνεσθίω* + *καὶ* + *συμπίνω* + *μετὰ* + *ἀνάστασιν/ἀναστῆναι* is unique to Acts 10:41 and *Smyrn.* 3.3 and texts that are clearly dependent on Acts 10:41.¹⁴ Ignatius’s dependence on a source here is signaled by the phrase *μετὰ δὲ τὴν ἀνάστασιν* in *Smyrn.* 3.3. This phrase is superfluous in context. The story has already been introduced by nearly the same phrase in *Smyrn.* 3.1, whereas its equivalent in Acts 10:41 provides a necessary clarification.

I propose one additional similarity that seems to have been overlooked in previous scholarship: both authors claim scriptural support from the “law of Moses” and the prophets (Luke 24:44; *Smyrn.* 5.1), and both do so without citing any specific OT passages. While it might be argued that Ignatius’s use of his source ends at 3.3, two factors suggest that Ignatius has returned to it here in 5.1. First, at the end of 3.2, Ignatius inserts an authorial aside on the martyrdom of the apostles before returning to the resurrection appearance tradition in 3.3. Therefore, it would not be out of character, if after another aside that includes a reference to his own martyrdom in 4.1–2, Ignatius returns again to his source in 5.1.¹⁵ Indeed, immediately following the scriptural proof in 5.1 Ignatius alludes to martyrdom again.¹⁶

Second, and more importantly, Ignatius’s reference to the Law of Moses and the prophets in 5.1 is arguably influenced by Lukan redaction. When discussing the OT, Ignatius consistently refers to the prophets alone and never mentions either Moses or the “law of Moses” elsewhere (*Mag.* 8.2; 9.2; *Phila.* 5.2; 9.1,

¹³ The differences in wording between Ignatius and Acts are only slight. The change from first to third person is expected given Ignatius’s point of view. It may also be motivated by Ignatius’s antidocetic polemic and/or the conflation with Luke 24:43. Whereas in Acts 10:41, the apostles are the subject of the verbs for eating and drinking, in Ignatius the subject is Jesus. The shift in order, placing the prepositional phrase prior to verbs, may be to accommodate for Ignatius’s antidocetic gloss, *ὡς σαρκικός*, that follows.

¹⁴ E.g., *Acts Thad.* 6.8; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.12.7. The next closest parallel is Justin, *Dial.* 51.2, which may also depend on Acts 10:41; it has *συνεσθίω* and *συμπίνω* but lacks *μετὰ* + *ἀνάστασιν/ἀναστῆναι*. If Acts 10:41 reflects a kerygmatic tradition, Ignatius’s version of it seems to depend on Luke’s wording.

¹⁵ In the aside of *Smyrn.* 4.1–2 Ignatius is still discussing the appearance tradition. This can be seen from his statement: “For if these things were done by our Lord in appearance only, then I am in chains in appearance only.”

¹⁶ A pattern thus emerges in which Ignatius alternates between traditional material and his own asides: (i) touch proof + apostles’ martyrdoms; (ii) eating and drinking proof + Ignatius’s martyrdom; (iii) scriptural proof + “our sufferings.”

2; *Smyrn.* 7.2). The deviation in *Smyrn.* 5.1 suggests the influence a source.¹⁷ While the combination “the law and the prophets” is relatively common, the linking of the specific phrase “the Law of Moses” with the prophets by means of a coordinating conjunction appears to be unique to *Smyrn.* 5.1 and Luke-Acts. Prior to Irenaeus’s quotation of Luke 24:44 in *Haer.* 3.16.5, it occurs nowhere else in extant Greek literature, Jewish or Christian, canonical or apocryphal, nor does an equivalent appear in the Hebrew Bible or the Dead Sea Scrolls.¹⁸ This particular combination seems to be Luke’s coinage, showing up

¹⁷ The only other time Ignatius deviates from his normal practice is *Phila.* 8.2, in which he refers to the “archives.” In that context, it is clear that he is using not his own term but that of his opponents.

¹⁸ A number of early texts have the phrase “the law and the prophets” but do not mention Moses’s name (Sir pref. 5, 20; 2 Macc 15:9; 4 Macc 18:10; Matt 5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Rom 3:21). One of these texts, 4 Macc 18:10, may be especially relevant because Luke 24:44 seems to be alluding to it:

While he was still with you

(ἔτι ὄν σὺν ὑμῖν),

he taught you

the Law and the Prophets

(τὸν νόμον καὶ τοὺς προφήτας).

(4 Macc 18:10)

These are my words that I spoke to you

while I was still with you

(ἔτι ὄν σὺν ὑμῖν),

that everything written about me

in the Law of Moses and the Prophets

(τῷ νόμῳ Μωϋσέως καὶ τοῖς προφήταις)

and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

(Luke 24:44)

In context, both texts appeal to the Law and the Prophets as referring to the themes of suffering and resurrection. The string of OT references that follows in 4 Macc 18:11–19 includes a quotation of Ps 34:19, which may have influenced Luke to supplement the usual formula by adding “and the Psalms.” More importantly, the allusion helps to confirm that Luke’s modifier “of Moses” – absent from 4 Macc 18:10 – is indeed redactional. Other possible allusions to 4 Maccabees are listed in Lee Martin McDonald, *Forgotten Scriptures: The Selection and Rejection of Early Religious Writings* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 149.

The combination “Moses” + “prophets” – but without “the Law” – is also fairly rare and characteristic of Luke. In the NT it occurs only 7 times, six of which are in Luke-Acts (Luke 16:29, 31; 24:27; 22:24; Acts 26:22; 28:23). The closest parallels that use all three terms are John 1:45 (“the one of whom Moses in the law and the prophets wrote”), 4 Ezra 14.22 (“to restore all the sayings of the prophets who had gone before, and to restore to the people the law given by Moses”), and 1QS VIII, 15–16 (“This is the study of the Law which he commanded through the hand of Moses, in order to act in compliance with all that has been revealed from age to age, and according to what the prophets have revealed through his holy spirit,” trans. Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* [2 vols.; 2nd ed.; Leiden: Brill, 2000], 1:89–91). It is telling that none of these has the actual phrase “Law of Moses” found in Luke and *Smyrn.* 5. Finally, it is worth noting that Ignatius did not draw this reference to “the Law of Moses” and the “prophecies” from the parallel in the *Preaching of Peter*, which reads, “We opened the books of the prophets” (frag. 9, Clement, *Strom.* 6.15 [128.1–2]).

in both Luke 24:44 and Acts 28:23, both of which are commonly understood to reflect Lukan composition or redaction.¹⁹

There is one more aspect of Ignatius’s appeal to the Law of Moses and the prophets that points to the influence of Luke 24. When Ignatius says that “neither the prophecies nor the law of Moses have persuaded them,” he has in mind a specific notion of what these Scriptures should convince them about, namely, Christ’s suffering (*Smyrn.* 2.1; 5.1–3).²⁰ This is precisely what we find in Luke 24:25–27 and 44–47; the risen Jesus convinces the disciples that the Law of Moses and the prophets speak of Christ’s suffering. No other NT text aside from Acts 26:22–23 – nor any other second-century Christian text besides those clearly dependent on Luke – employs any combination of law/Moses + prophets/prophecies in reference to Christ’s suffering.²¹

Finally, although it appears to have gone unnoticed as a parallel in previous scholarship, *Smyrn.* 5.1 is verbally even closer to Acts 28:23 because of its use of *πειθω*:

οὐκ οὐκ ἐπεισαν αἱ προφητεῖαι οὐδὲ ὁ νόμος Μωϋσέως (“neither the prophecies nor the law of Moses have persuaded them”). (*Smyrn.* 5.1)²²

πειθῶν τε αὐτοὺς ... ἀπό τε τοῦ νόμου Μωϋσέως καὶ τῶν προφητῶν (“trying to persuade them ... from the law of Moses and the prophets”). (Acts 28:23)

Not only is *πειθω* another characteristically Lukan term, but the resulting combination of terms is unique to Acts 28:23 and Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 5.1.²³ It is

¹⁹ E.g., Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1580–81; idem, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB 31; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1998; repr., New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010), 88, 794. Similarly Joachim Jeremias, *Die Sprache des Lukasevangeliums: Redaktion und Tradition im Nicht-Markusstoff des dritten Evangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 90, 321; Frans Neirynck, “Le texte des Actes des Apôtres et les caractéristiques stylistiques lucaniennes,” *ETL* 61 (1985): 325.

²⁰ In light of *Smyrn.* 3, *Magn.* 11.1, and *Phld.* 8.2, we could also include here Christ’s resurrection, but this too would point to Luke (24:47).

²¹ The next closest parallels are 1 Peter 1:11 and *Pre. Pet.*, frag. 9, which refer to the prophets only. In Irenaeus’s *Against Heresies*, this combination only appears in a quotation of Luke (*Haer.* 3.16.5). Justin, though he emphasizes the fulfillment of scripture, mentions only the prophets when following Luke (*I Apol.* 50.12; *Dial.* 53.5–6; 106.1) and on one other occasion loosely connects “Moses” and “the other prophets” with Christ’s suffering (*I Apol.* 63).

²² Ignatius’s *προφητεῖαι* in place of Luke’s *προφήται* may be explained in two ways. It may be a stylistic improvement. The “prophecies” is probably a reference to the writings themselves and therefore considered a more appropriate parallel to the “Law of Moses” than Luke’s “prophets,” which, if taken literally, refers to people rather than books. Alternatively, Ignatius here may have been influenced by the terminology of his opponents. According to Irenaeus, Saturninus accused OT “prophecies (*προφητείας*)” of being the sayings of Satan and the angels who created the world (*Haer.* 1.24.2).

²³ The term *πειθω* occurs four times in Luke and seventeen times in Acts but only three times in Matthew and never in Mark or John. It also appears in Lukan redaction, e.g., Luke

probably also significant that the next sentence in each text has similar terminology to describe those who are not persuaded (ἠπίστουν, Acts 28:24; ἄπιστα, *Smyrn.* 5.3).²⁴ If Ignatius was influenced by Acts 10:41 in *Smyrn.* 3.3, the influence of Acts 28:23 here becomes more probable.

The similarities in both sequence and wording between Luke and Ignatius can be summarized as follows:

	Luke-Acts	Ignatius
1. Introduction of Participants	τοὺς ἕνδεκα καὶ τοὺς σὺν αὐτοῖς ... Σίμωνι” (Luke 24:33–34)	τοὺς περὶ Πέτρον (<i>Smyrn.</i> 3.1)
2. Touch Invitation	<u>ψηλαφήσατέ με</u> καὶ ἴδετε ὅτι... <u>οὐκ</u> ... (Luke 24:39)	<u>ψηλαφήσατέ με</u> καὶ ἴδετε ὅτι... <u>οὐκ</u> ... (<i>Smyrn.</i> 3.2)
3. Response of Participants	<u>ἀπιστούντων</u> (Luke 24:41)	<u>ἐπίστειψαν</u> (<i>Smyrn.</i> 3.2)
4. Meal	ἐνώπιον <u>αὐτῶν</u> <u>ἔφαγεν</u> (Luke 24:43)	<u>μετὰ δὲ τὴν ἀνάστασιν</u> <u>συνέφαγεν αὐτοῖς</u> καὶ <u>συνέπιεν</u> (<i>Smyrn.</i> 3.3)
5. Scriptural Proof	<u>τῷ νόμῳ Μωϋσέως</u> καὶ τοῖς <u>προφήταις</u> (Luke 24:44)	<u>πεῖθων</u> τε αὐτοὺς ... ἀπὸ τε <u>τοῦ νόμου Μωϋσέως</u> καὶ <u>τῶν προφητῶν</u> (Acts 28:23)
		<u>οὓς οὐκ ἐπεισαν αἱ προφητεῖαι</u> οὐδὲ ὁ <u>νόμος Μωϋσέως</u> (<i>Smyrn.</i> 5.1)

These correspondences are most plausibly explained by Ignatius’s use of both Luke and Acts.²⁵ There is, nevertheless, one significant difference that has led

20:6 (cf. Mark 11:32; Matt 21:26), Luke 11:22 (cf. Matt 12:29; Mark 3:27; *Gos. Thom.* 35). Its occurrence in Luke 18:9 is probably Lukan composition.

The presence of *πειθῶν* in *Smyrn.* 5.1 could also be influenced by Luke 16:31: “If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets (Μωϋσέως καὶ τῶν προφητῶν), neither (οὐδὲ) will they be convinced (πεισθήσονται) if someone should rise from the dead.” If so, Luke 16:30 may help explain Ignatius’s assessment of how difficult it will be for the docetists to “repent” (*Smyrn.* 4.1).

²⁴ It is possible that Ignatius deliberately chose to allude to Acts 28. Throughout his letters, Ignatius repeatedly alludes to Paul as the model after which he seeks to pattern his own suffering and impending martyrdom, a topic which he alludes to both before and after the Acts 28 parallel. In other words, just as Ignatius mimics Paul’s letters, here he may be mimicking the Paul of Acts 28. While in Roman chains both Ignatius and Paul attempt to persuade people about Christ from the Law of Moses and the Prophets.

²⁵ Pace James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 730–31.

the majority of scholars to conclude that Ignatius depends not on Luke but on a common tradition that is also utilized by Luke. With respect to the saying of Jesus, although both texts begin with the exact same words, they end quite differently:

...handle me and see, for
(ψηλαφήσατέ με και ἴδετε ὅτι)
a spirit does not (οὐκ) have flesh and
bones as you see me having.
(Luke 24:39)

...handle me and see, for
(ψηλαφήσατέ με και ἴδετε ὅτι)
I am not (οὐκ) a bodiless daimon.

(Smyrn. 3.2)²⁶

The argument that Ignatius has made use of a shared tradition rather than paraphrased Luke 24:39 rests on three main points, each of which is problematic. First, the statement “I am no bodiless daimon” is reported to have appeared in other lost apocryphal works, i.e., the *Gospel of the Hebrews* (Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 16) and the *Doctrina Petri* (Origen, *Princ.* pref. 8), and so Ignatius could be dependent on one of these texts or an independent tradition also used by these texts. As promising as this may sound, these lost texts are only available in late fragments and are especially difficult to date. Some argue that they are dependent on Ignatius rather than vice versa.²⁷ Moreover, even if Ignatius is dependent on one of these texts, the indirect influence of Luke cannot necessarily be ruled out because either of these apocryphal texts may themselves be a paraphrase of Luke.²⁸

²⁶ In Ignatius (though not in Luke) Jesus begins his statement with the imperative λάβετε. Schoedel (*Ignatius*, 228–29) cites a late parallel in Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 8.12 (λαβοῦ μου ... ἀπτόμενον), but Ignatius’s use of the term may have been influenced by its connection with the Eucharist. Given that Ignatius complains that the docetists refuse the Eucharist on account of their denial of Jesus’s suffering and resurrection in the flesh (*Smyrn.* 6.2), Ignatius may either consciously or unconsciously have added λάβετε because of its appearance in the last supper tradition, e.g., “Take (λάβετε), this is my body (σῶμα)” (Mark 14:22; cf. Matt 26:26; Luke 22:17–19; so Edwards, *Hebrew Gospel*, 47). Because both traditions are about Christ’s body, this conflation is perhaps natural (cf. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.2.3, where Luke 24:39 is linked with the Eucharist). If Holmes’s text-critical view, that *Smyrn.* 3.2 should read “flesh and blood” rather than “flesh and spirit,” is correct, the link with the Eucharist has further contextual support.

²⁷ Vielhauer and Strecker, “Jewish-Christian Gospels,” 144; Neiryneck, “Récit,” 674.

²⁸ Quotations of the *Gospel of the Hebrews* among patristic authors do exhibit some distinctly Lukan features, and so dependence on Luke remains a real possibility. Edwards (*Hebrew Gospel*, 112–53) contends that the direction of influence is reversed and that Luke is dependent on the *Gospel of the Hebrews*. Edwards aptly defends the reliability of Jerome’s testimony to a Hebrew gospel that contained the saying “I am no bodiless daimon (*Hebrew Gospel*, 48–55). Edwards could also be correct in arguing that many passages unique to Luke were drawn from a Hebrew gospel source. His argument, however, does not hold for Luke 24. As I argue below, Luke 24:39b contravenes a number of clear patterns in Lukan redaction and so cannot represent Luke’s own paraphrase of the saying “I am no bodiless daimon.” In other words, Luke’s source was certainly closer to Luke 24:39b than to the parallel saying

In the judgment of some scholars, the fact that neither Eusebius nor Jerome identifies Luke as Ignatius's source tells against the paraphrase theory. It is true that Jerome suggests that Ignatius is quoting the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, and that Eusebius says that he does not know Ignatius's source.²⁹ However, there is one other patristic testimony that has been often overlooked, namely, that of the editor of the long recension of Ignatius's letters. This fourth-century writer detected some sort of relationship between Ignatius's source and Luke, for he adds a quotation of Luke 24:39b immediately following the statement "I am no bodiless daimon": "When ... He came to those who were with Peter, He said to them, "Lay hold, handle Me, and see that I am not a bodiless daimon. *For a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have*" (Ign. *Smyrn.* 3, long recension).³⁰ If we had no knowledge of the middle recension, we might readily conclude that Ignatius had conflated Luke with an alternate source. In any case, the editor of the long recension perceived a connection with Luke 24:39 and inserted the remainder of the verse. The same editor also seems to have perceived a relationship between Ignatius's phrase "he ate and drank with them" and Acts:

Nor was this all; but also after He had shown Himself to them, that He had risen indeed, and not in appearance only, He both ate and drank with them *during forty entire days*. And thus was He, with the flesh, *received up in their sight* unto Him that sent Him, being with that same flesh to come again, accompanied by glory and power. For, say the [holy] oracles, "This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen Him go unto heaven. (*Smyrn.* 3, long recension)³¹

The echoes of Acts 1 are clear. None of this proves that Ignatius used Luke and/or Acts, but it does disprove the claim that no patristic writer connected Ignatius's source with Luke, and so reduces the weight that should be given to the evidence of Eusebius and Jerome.

Schoedel has raised a second objection to the paraphrase theory. He observes that the terms ἀσώματος and δαιμονικός are uncharacteristic of Ignatius and claims that Ignatius's argument would be weakened if he did not use the

in Jerome's *Gospel of the Hebrews*. If Luke made use of a Hebrew Gospel known to Jerome, he did not do so here.

The same logic applies to the *Doctrina Petri*: Luke 24:39b is traditional rather than redactional for Luke and so does not depend on the *Doctrina Petri*. As for the possibility that the latter is dependent on Luke, Origen unfortunately provides no context for the saying on which to make any judgments. The probability of Lukan influence would increase greatly if it could be proven that the *Doctrina Petri* is the same document as the *Preaching of Peter*, which does appear to be dependent on Luke, but the identity of these two texts is speculative at best (see further Chapter 4).

²⁹ Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 16; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.36.11.

³⁰ *ANF* 1:87, emphasis added.

³¹ *ANF* 1:87, emphasis added.

saying in its familiar “traditional form.”³² This, of course, presupposes that the traditional form is well known. Nevertheless, even if this is the case, whatever persuasive power is lost in the divergence from the traditional wording is arguably gained by the rhetorical effect of the paraphrase in context. Ignatius has just said that his opponents think of Jesus as ἀσώματος and δαιμονικός (*Smyrn.* 2.1). Thus, by paraphrasing Luke 24:39b to say οὐκ εἰμι δαιμόνιον ἀσώματος, Ignatius makes the risen Jesus deny docetism using the docetists’ own vocabulary. This technique of turning an opponent’s words against the opponents themselves is common in Ignatius’s letters, e.g., *Smyrn.* 2.1; 4.2; *Trall.* 10.1; *Phila.* 8.2.³³ Thus, while the terminology in *Smyrn.* 3.2 is unusual for Ignatius, it can be explained by Ignatius’s rhetorical tactics.

Third, some find it unrealistic that the docetists, who apparently understood themselves to be Christians, would characterize Jesus as “demonic” (*Smyrn.* 2.1). For this reason, it has sometimes been suggested that the docetists referred to Christ as ἀσώματος and πνευματικός, but that Ignatius altered the latter term to δαιμονικός so as to vilify his opponents.³⁴ However, in the Hellenistic world, terms like δαίμων, δαιμόνιον and δαιμονικός, were not in themselves negative in connotation like the English words “demon” or “demonic.” The adjective could simply mean “like a spirit or phantom,” and the nouns would often be modified by adjectives such as ἀγαθός, καλός, κακός, or ἀκάθαρτος to denote whether the being was good or evil.³⁵ The Hermetic literature describes the δαίμονες as “being good and evil according to their natures (ἀγαθοὶ καὶ κακοὶ ὄντες τὰς φύσεις)” (*Corp. herm.* 16.13). According to Josephus, the souls of soldiers who die bravely in battle become δαίμονες ἀγαθοὶ (*B.J.* 6.47). Philo considered δαίμων the philosophical equivalent of the biblical ἄγγελος (*Somm.* 1.141), and that they could be either good or bad. At one point he even says that Moses himself wrote the Law under the direction of a δαίμων (*Hypoth.* 6.9). Likewise, Origen knows of Christians who speak of δαίμονας ἀγαθοῦς (*Cels.* 3.37) and recognized its equivalence with “angels of God” (4.24). In the Platonic tradition, the terms can carry a positive sense even without a modifier, the most famous example of which is the δαιμόνιον of Socrates (Plato, *Apol.* 24b, 40a).³⁶ In Acts 17:18, after hearing Paul preaching the gospel of Jesus and the resurrection (τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν εὐηγγελίζετο),

³² Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 226.

³³ Bart D. Ehrman suggests that δαιμόνιον ἀσώματος in *Smyrn.* 3.2 and ἀνθρωπομόρφων in 4.1 are “sarcastic uses of the opponent’s own slogans” (*Orthodox Corruption*, 201 n. 73).

³⁴ Vielhauer and Strecker, “Jewish-Christian Gospels,” 145; F.-M. Braun, *Jean le Théologien et son évangile dans l’Église ancienne* (EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1959), 281.

³⁵ Werner Foerster, “δαίμων, δαιμόνιον,” *TDNT* 2:1–20. It is presumably for this reason that Ehrman translates δαιμονικοῖς “like the daimons” rather than “demonic” in *Smyrn.* 2.1 and δαιμόνιον “daimon” rather than “demon” in *Smyrn.* 3.2 (*Apostolic Fathers*, 1:296–299). In my own renderings of the passage I have followed Ehrman’s lead here.

³⁶ Similarly Gregory J. Riley, “Demon Δαίμων, Δαιμόνιον,” *DDD*: 235–40.

Epicurean and Stoic philosophers conclude that Paul is referring to ξένων δαιμονίων (“foreign divinities”). And so it is quite plausible that some ancient converts to Christianity would have been comfortable referring to Jesus as a δαιμόνιον without necessarily intending any negative, derogatory meaning. In fact, there is evidence that some gnostic sects understood δαίμων neutrally or positively. The Basilideans claimed that Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle pilfered from the OT prophets when they teach that all men are given *daimons* to attend them while in the body (Clement, *Strom.* 6.6 [53.2–3]). Eusebius also notes that the Carpocratians “boasted ... of certain δαίμονες that sent them dreams and lent them their protection” (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.7.9).³⁷

Alternatively, even if we assume that the terms in *Smyrn.* 2–3 did indeed carry a negative connotation, as they do in much ancient Jewish and Christian literature, we cannot rule out the possibility that Ignatius’s docetists applied a negative term to Jesus. It must be remembered that when Ignatius attributes the terms ἀσώματος and δαιμονικός to his opponents, he is referring not to their understanding of Jesus’s resurrection but of his crucifixion: “Not, as certain unbelievers say, that he suffered in appearance (τὸ δοκεῖν) only. It is they who exist in appearance (τὸ δοκεῖν) only. Indeed, just as they think, so it will happen to them: they will become bodiless and daimon-like (ἀσώματος καὶ δαιμονικοῦς)” (*Smyrn.* 2.1).

This is significant because at least one ancient group of gnostics applied the terms δαίμων and ἀσώματος to Jesus in their docetic retelling of the crucifixion scene:

I saw him *apparently being seized* by them. And I said, “What am I seeing, O Lord? Is it you yourself whom they take? ... Who is this one above the cross, who is glad and laughing? And is it another person whose feet and hands they are hammering?” The Savior said to me, “He whom you see above the cross, glad and laughing, is the living Jesus. But he into whose hands and feet they are driving the nails is his fleshly part, which is the substitute. They are putting to shame that which is in his likeness. But look at him and me.... Be strong! For you are the one to whom these mysteries have been given, to know through revelation, that he whom they crucified is the first-born, and the home of *demons* (ΝΙΛΔΑΙΜΩΝ = δαίμονες), and the clay vessel in which they dwell, belonging to Elohim, and belonging to the cross which is under the law. But he who stands near him is the living Savior, the primal part in him whom they seized. And he has been released. He stands joyfully looking at those who persecuted him. They are divided among themselves. Therefore he laughs at their lack of perception, and he knows that they are born blind. Indeed, therefore, the suffering one must

³⁷ Similarly Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.25.3. That Eusebius is faithfully representing the Carpocratian view can be seen by the way he comments on it in *Hist. eccl.* 4.7.10. While the Carpocratians refer to δαίμονες in a positive sense, Eusebius in his own comments sees fit to add a negative modifier, saying that a “*malignant daimon* (ἐπιχαιρεσκάκων δαίμονα)” had influenced the heretics. Moreover, a practice similar to that of the Carpocratians seems to be criticized in *Apoc. Pet.* (NHC VII,3) 75.2–6: “And if they say that a dream came from a daimon (οὐδαίμων = δαίμων) that is worthy of their error, then they will be given destruction instead of immortality” (trans. Brashler, “Apocalypse,” 229).

remain, since the body is the substitute. But that which was released was *my incorporeal body* (πασσῶμα πε ἄσῶμα σαῶμα = σῶμα ἀσώματον).” (NHC VII,3 *Apoc. Pet.* 82.21–83.8)³⁸

While the Coptic *Apocalypse of Peter* was probably composed decades after Ignatius’s martyrdom, it is possible that it represents a more advanced form of the docetism that Ignatius originally opposed.³⁹ Ignatius’s docetists may have argued that Christ was “bodiless” because they viewed the flesh and/or suffering as “demonic.”⁴⁰ This is, of course, speculation; we simply do not know precisely what they said. But there is nothing historically implausible about Ignatius’s claim that the docetists used δαιμονικός or a related term to describe Jesus or his suffering. It is therefore unwarranted to accuse Ignatius of slanderously projecting the word into the mouths of his opponents.

In short, none of the three major objections to the paraphrase theory is compelling. I would further argue that the paraphrase theory is much more plausible than the common tradition theory. The latter must presuppose that it is more

³⁸ Trans. Brashler, “Apocalypse,” 241–45. The paradoxical notion that Christ had a bodiless body is also attested among the Manichaeans (*Keph.* 12.20–25).

³⁹ Lalleman, following Weigandt, suggests the popularity of proto-monophysite forms of docetism waned after 150 CE in favor of more sophisticated separationist Christologies (Weigandt, “Doketismus,” 107, 125, 131–34; Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 207). My suggestion fits well into this schema. The Smyrnaean docetists deny that Christ “bore flesh” (5.2) whereas the later Coptic *Apocalypse of Peter* seems to admit that at one point the Lord did have a “fleshly part.” Still, the Coptic *Apocalypse of Peter* does not appear to be separationist in the Cerinthian sense either. For Cerinthus Christ descends on the human Jesus at his baptism only to leave him at the crucifixion. The Coptic *Apocalypse of Peter*, however, seems to describe Christ as the heavenly Son of Man who simply appeared on earth in the flesh (71.6–29). It may therefore represent something of a *tertium quid* between the proto-monophysite and the separationist models. Riley labels it “body-double docetism” (“Introduction to VII,2: Second Treatise of the Great Seth,” in *Nag Hammadi Codex VII* [ed. Birger A. Pearson; NHMS 30; Leiden: Brill, 1996], 136).

More similar to the Christology of Ignatius’s opponents is that of *AJ* 87–93, a docetic text that probably originated in Smyrna not long after Ignatius’s martyrdom (see discussion in Chapter 7). While it does not explicitly call Jesus δαιμονικός, it does call him πολυμόρφος (“polymorphous”, 82.1), the same term it employs to describe Satan (70.1). Additionally, Jesus’s “bodiless (ἀσώματον)” polymorphy is called “a different glory (ἐτέραν ... δόξαν)” (*AJ* 92.3), which is precisely the same phrase used to describe the polymorphic abilities of a δαιμόνιον in *Test. Sol.* 16.4. Consequently, it would not be inaccurate to say that the docetic Christology of the *Acts of John* is δαιμονικός (“daimon-like”). Ignatius may be again echoing the language of his opponents when refers to them as “those who hold to different kind of doctrine (τοὺς ἑτεροδοξοῦντας)” (*Smyrn.* 6.2).

⁴⁰ Many gnostics believed that Adam’s body was created by angelic/demonic beings. This may help explain the phrase “first-born and a house of demons” in the Coptic *Apocalypse of Peter*. Brashler observes in early Judaism and Christianity a “connection between δαίμονες and πάθη” on the basis of interpretive traditions about Gen 6:1–4 (“The Coptic Apocalypse of Peter: A Genre Analysis and Interpretation” [PhD diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1977], 170–71).

likely for Luke to have replaced “I am not a bodiless daimon” with “A spirit has not flesh and bones as you see me having” than for Ignatius to have done the reverse. Gregory J. Riley reasons that Luke would have found the former “potentially offensive.”⁴¹ However, to make this replacement would require Luke to have reversed completely his consistent patterns of redaction. First, in his redaction of Mark, Luke regularly replaces πνεῦμα with δαιμόνιον, but *never* does the reverse.⁴² In other words, Luke clearly prefers the “potentially offensive” term.⁴³ Moreover, given the Beelzebub controversy in Luke 11, I see no reason to conclude that Luke found offensive Jesus’s *denial* that he was a demon. Second, despite Luke’s well-known emphasis on the Spirit, the use of πνεῦμα in Luke 24:39 is decidedly *un-Lukan*.⁴⁴ As virtually all commentators have noted, πνεῦμα never means “ghost” in Luke’s Gospel outside of this pericope.⁴⁵ Additionally, Luke’s tendency is to emphasize a more concrete conception of πνεῦμα, e.g., the addition of σωματικῶ (“bodily”) to describe the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus at his baptism (3:22; cf. Mark 1:10).⁴⁶ Yet Luke 24:39 appears to move in precisely the opposite direction by denying πνεῦμα a concrete embodiment.⁴⁷ Most importantly, Luke consistently adds πνεῦμα to Synoptic stories in order to emphasize a positive association between Christ and the Spirit, but in Luke 24:39 Christ himself emphatically denies a

⁴¹ Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered*, 96.

⁴² Luke replaces πνεῦμα with δαιμόνιον in 4:33 (cf. Mark 1:23); 4:35 (cf. Mark 1:26); 8:27 (cf. Mark 5:2); 8:23 (cf. Mark 5:13); 9:1 (cf. Mark 6:7); 9:42 (cf. Mark 9:20). See further Henry Joel Cadbury, *The Style and Literary Method of Luke* (HTS 6; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920; repr., New York: Kraus, 1969), 2:190.

⁴³ Similarly, Jason D. BeDuhn finds bodiless *daimon* “more consistent with the terminology of Luke” (*The First New Testament: Marcion’s Scriptural Canon* [Salem, Oreg.: Polebridge, 2013], 197).

⁴⁴ Also not Lukan in 24:39 are “flesh” and “bones.”

⁴⁵ E.g., Alsup, *Appearance Stories*, 165–70; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1575–1576; Bovon, *Luke*, 3:386. Daniel A. Smith questions whether “ghost” is a legitimate translation by arguing that this definition of πνεῦμα was a “lexical singularity” not just for Luke but for Luke’s contemporaries as well (“Apologetic Interests,” 755–57). In the end, however, Smith (772) recognizes that the literary context makes it difficult to avoid the conclusion that πνεῦμα in v. 37 means “ghost.” That this is the natural contextual reading is confirmed by the early reception history, in which πνεῦμα is often replaced by another term for ghost, e.g., φάντασμα, φαντασία, or δαίμων.

⁴⁶ Further examples in James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity* (3rd ed.; London: SCM, 2006), 195–99. Elsewhere in Luke, the σῶμα- word group never refers to anything but a physical body.

⁴⁷ A redactional insertion in Luke 8:55 (cf. Mark 5:42) indicates that Luke’s own conception of resurrection involves the return of πνεῦμα to the body. See also the connection between spirit and flesh in Luke’s programmatic quotation of Joel 3:1 (“I will pour out my πνεῦμα on all σάρξ”) in Acts 2:17.

connection with πνεῦμα.⁴⁸ All of this is not to say that Luke is contradicting himself but rather that he has preserved in 24:39b a tradition that uses πνεῦμα in a radically different way than he himself employs the term.⁴⁹

While it is highly improbable that Luke chose “A spirit has not flesh and bones as you see me having” over “I am no bodiless daimon,” it is not difficult to imagine Ignatius preferring the latter to the former. Suggestions otherwise, that Ignatius would not have wanted to paraphrase Luke 24:39, are problematic at best. I have already noted the speciousness of Schoedel’s claim that Ignatius would have considered the “traditional form” of the saying to be more persuasive. From what we know of Ignatius’s argumentation techniques, he regularly turns his opponent’s own words against them, and “I am no bodiless daimon” offers the perfect rhetorical rebuke of those who claimed Christ’s crucifixion was “bodiless and daimon-like.”

I must also disagree with Andrew Gregory’s argument against the paraphrase theory:

If Ignatius knew the text of *Luke* as it is found in P⁷⁵ it is difficult to see why Ignatius would have substituted δαιμόνιον ἀσώματον for the Lukan πνεῦμα and σάρξ, for elsewhere Ignatius uses σαρκικός τε καὶ πνευματικός, and the expression σάρξ καὶ πνεῦμα is one of which he is fond.⁵⁰

While Gregory is correct to identify πνεῦμα and σάρξ as favorite terms of Ignatius, his conclusion depends on a fundamental misunderstanding of the different ways that Luke and Ignatius use these terms. The saying in Luke 24:39 posits a strong dichotomy between πνεῦμα and σάρξ that is at odds with

⁴⁸ E.g., Luke 3:22 (addition of “Holy”); 4:1 (addition of “full of the Holy Spirit”; change from Mark’s τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτὸν ἐκβάλλει εἰς τὴν ἐρημον [“the spirit cast him out into the wilderness”] to ἦγετο ἐν τῷ πνεύματι ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ [“he was led by the spirit in the wilderness”]); 4:14 (addition of “in the power of the Spirit”); 4:18 (addition of the Scripture reading “The Spirit of the Lord is on me”); 10:21 (compared to Matt 11:25, Luke adds “he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit”). Additionally, Luke 12:10 omits the explanatory comment in Mark 3:30 (“For they had said, ‘He has an unclean spirit’”) and so removes any negative association between Jesus and πνεῦμα, even though Luke’s omission makes the saying about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit less clear.

Perhaps even more significant is the fact that when the Pharisees suggest the possibility that the risen Jesus was a πνεῦμα in Acts 23:9, Luke does not even offer a hint of disapproval. In light of the contrast with the Sadducees in 23:8, one might even suspect – if it were not for Luke 24:39 – that Luke approves of the Pharisees’ suggestion. Furthermore, given that Luke is careful to provide in Acts 23:8 a narrative aside clarifying theological differences between the Sadducees and Pharisees, Luke’s silence demonstrates that he is not worried about readers being misled by docetic Christology, angelomorphic or otherwise. All of this confirms Luke 24:39b is traditional rather than redactional.

⁴⁹ In my opinion the traditional nature of Luke 24:39, recognized by most commentators, is devastating for the common tradition theory and virtually requires Ignatius to have been influenced at least indirectly by Luke’s Gospel.

⁵⁰ Gregory, *Reception*, 72.

Ignatius's own view. Ignatius insists throughout his corpus that πνεῦμα and σάρξ are not antithetical.⁵¹ The denial that Jesus is a πνεῦμα in Luke 24:39 could easily be construed as a rejection of the spiritual nature of Jesus's resurrection, yet in his *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* Ignatius repeatedly stresses through redactional glosses (noted below in italics) that Christ's resurrection is both fleshly and spiritual:

And immediately they touched him and believed, *having mingled with his flesh and spirit.* (*Smyrn.* 3.2)⁵²

And after his resurrection he ate and drank with them *as [does] one who is in the flesh, although spiritually he was united with the Father.* (*Smyrn.* 3.3)

...his suffering and resurrection, *which was both fleshly and spiritual* (*Smyrn.* 12.1)⁵³

As Robert M. Grant once observed, "If Ignatius was going to say that they were 'mingled' with Jesus's flesh and spirit, he could not quote Luke's words about 'spirit.'" ⁵⁴

In sum, both the immediate context in *Smyrnaeans* and the rest of Ignatius's corpus demonstrate that Ignatius had ample motivation to paraphrase Luke 24:39b. By doing so he not only avoids a potential misreading of the tradition that would deny the spiritual nature of the risen Christ, he also constructs an ideal rebuke against his opponents. Given the redactional tendencies of both writers, it is much easier to imagine Ignatius editing Luke 24:39b than Luke preferring Luke 24:39b to "I am no bodiless daimon." The implication is that Luke's version of the saying is more original, which further suggests that Jerome's version of the *Gospel of the Hebrews* is dependent on Luke.⁵⁵ Consequently, even if Ignatius is not directly dependent on Luke, he is probably still influenced by Luke indirectly through a source such as the *Gospel of the*

⁵¹ So Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 23. Examples appear in *Eph.* 7.2; 8.2; 10.3; *Magn.* 1.2; 13.1; 13.2; *Trall.* inscr.; 12.1; *Rom.* inscr.; *Smyrn.* 1.1; 3.2; 3.3; 12.1; 13.2; *Poly.* 1.2; 2.2; 5.1.

⁵² There is a significant text-critical question here. While most manuscripts read "flesh and spirit," the Armenian version reads "flesh and blood." Ehrman follows the former and Holmes the latter (Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, 1:298; Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*). It is difficult on internal grounds to determine the *lectio difficilior* since Ignatius elsewhere uses both "flesh and blood" and "flesh and spirit" (cf. *Smyrn.* 12.2 where Ignatius has both "flesh and blood" and "fleshly and spiritual"). Since the internal evidence is ambiguous, I consider the weight external evidence, which favors "flesh and spirit," determinative (so Bihlmeyer, *Die Apostolischen Väter*, 106).

⁵³ On the Ignatian character of these glosses, see Koester, *Überlieferung*, 47; Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 227.

⁵⁴ Grant, *Ignatius*, 116. Additionally, in light of the way Marcion appears to have turned Luke 24:39b to his own docetic purposes (see Chapter 6), it may be that "I am no bodiless daimon" offered a simpler statement that could not be twisted towards docetic ends.

⁵⁵ The same may be true of *Doctrina Petri*, though Origen does not provide enough context to confirm this.

Hebrews. Nevertheless, as the above analysis has shown, there is no compelling reason why Ignatius could not have used Luke, and some of the language, especially that found in *Smyrn. 5*, strongly favors the theory that he did so.

Remarkably, Helmut Koester, whose work has greatly influenced the popularity of the common tradition theory, himself concludes (i) that Ignatius is dependent on neither the *Doctrina Petri* nor the *Gospel of the Hebrews*; (ii) that Luke’s version of the saying is more original; and (iii) that “I am no bodiless daimon” represents an antidocetic change.⁵⁶ Despite all this, Koester denies that Ignatius could have used Luke and made this antidocetic change himself. His reasoning is that the terms ἀσώματος and δαιμόνιον are not characteristic of Ignatius’s language.⁵⁷ But this is irrelevant if Ignatius is reusing the vocabulary of his opponents. On the one hand, Koester asserts that Ignatius has placed the words ἀσώματος and δαιμονικός on the lips of his opponents on the basis of the saying “I am no bodiless daimon.” On the other hand, he says that “I am no bodiless daimon” was not original to the tradition but inserted specifically for the purpose of antidocetic polemic.⁵⁸ If someone changed the tradition to combat the docetists, why not Ignatius?⁵⁹

Finally, I propose one other possibility that would account for both the similarities with Luke and the differences: Ignatius may have conflated Luke with another source. Scholarship has tended to presuppose a single source theory. It is surprising that a conflation model does not seem to have been seriously considered, especially since the conflation of texts and traditions is a common and

⁵⁶ Koester, *Überlieferung*, 50; similarly Stephen E. Young, *Jesus Tradition in the Apostolic Fathers: Their Explicit Appeals to the Words of Jesus in Light of Orality Studies* (WUNT 2/311; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 231–32.

⁵⁷ Koester, *Überlieferung*, 48.

⁵⁸ Koester here seems to have resorted to logical acrobatics to avoid the conclusion that Ignatius used Luke’s Gospel. At one point Koester seems to appeal to the practice of taking special care to preserve the words of the Lord. But this too is irrelevant since Koester argues that “I am no bodiless daimon” is an antidocetic interpolation (*Überlieferung*, 50–56). He thus admits that a change has been made but does not seriously consider the possibility that Ignatius himself made it. Schoedel (*Ignatius*, 226–29) goes so far as to admit that Ignatius has “refashioned” his source “for antidocetic purposes,” but still denies that this could apply to the saying, “I am no bodiless daimon.” Ignatius does not regularly quote the words of Jesus, and so we have little evidence of Ignatius’s own practice. However, the evidence for Ignatius’s use of Matthew shows that he does not always follow Matthew’s version of Jesus’s words very closely. Ignatius is writing while en route to Rome and therefore cannot be expected to quote Jesus traditions verbatim, regardless of whether he knew them from written gospels.

⁵⁹ After all, Ignatius fits the profile of the interpolator that Koester posits: he writes against docetists, and his date is sufficiently early to fall within Koester’s period of the “free” transmission of the Jesus tradition.

widespread practice among early Christian writers.⁶⁰ Ignatius may have been following the structure of Luke's account (as noted above), but integrated a parallel source, whether oral or written, either because it offered a more powerful rhetorical resonance or because it didn't conflict with his understanding of the relationship between πνεῦμα and σάρξ. Conflation would also help to account for the language in *Smyrn.* 3–5 that is otherwise unique to Acts 10:41 and 28:23. Additionally, Ignatius's circumstances, being in transit and undoubtedly relying on memory, may have led to unintentional conflation.

Whatever the case may have been, Ignatius's source, if not Luke, is close enough to Luke to warrant the identification of a number of redactional elements in *Smyrn.* 3. Perhaps the most substantial way that Ignatius modifies this source is his omission of the doubts of the apostles. The invitation to touch Jesus in Luke 24:39 is part of Jesus's response to the apostles' initial doubts upon seeing him (24:37–38). By contrast, the equivalent saying in *Smyrn.* 3.2 is unmotivated by any expression of doubt.⁶¹ The similar phenomenon in John 20:20 is usually explained by saying that John is working from the same tradition as Luke but has postponed employing the doubt motif until the Thomas pericope for theological purposes.⁶² Analogous logic would lead to the conclusion that Ignatius's source also included the doubt. Furthermore, the latter half of Jesus's statement in *Smyrn.* 3.2 is given in the form of a negation (“I am not a bodiless daimon”), which suggests that it is a response to a previously expressed or implied viewpoint mentioned in Ignatius's source.⁶³

Corroboration for this previously expressed viewpoint can be found in two of the three potential sources for Ignatius: Luke, which has already been mentioned, and Jerome's version of the *Gospel of the Hebrews*. In the preface to the eighteenth book of his *Commentary on Isaiah*, Jerome says:

For since the apostles thought him to be a spirit, or according to the Gospel, which is of the Hebrews and read by the Nazoreans, a bodiless demon (*incorporale daemonium*), he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and (why) do thoughts arise in your hearts? See my hands and

⁶⁰ Conflation is not even mentioned as a possibility by Koester, Massaux, Schoedel, Paulsen, or Gregory.

⁶¹ So Koester, *Überlieferung*, 47.

⁶² E.g., Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (2 vols.; AB 29–29A; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), 2:1032; Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:322, 329–330.

⁶³ Similarly Hug, *La finale*, 74. Though Hug follows Koester in maintaining that Ignatius is not dependent on Luke, he concludes that Ignatius's source probably included the initial doubts of the apostles. Hug then illogically cites Ignatius's hypothetical source as proof that the doubt motif was employed for antidocetic apologetic. This gives priority to pure speculation over actual evidence. Hug simply presupposes without evidence that Ignatius's source was written for antidocetic purposes and then ignores the fact that Ignatius, whom we know for certain to be antidocetic, omitted the doubt. The latter suggests precisely the opposite of Hug's view: antidocetic redaction consists not in employing but in omitting the doubt motif.

feet, that it is I myself: Handle and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see that I have.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet.

In contrast to the parallel citation in *Vir. ill.* 16, where Jerome makes no mention of Luke, Jerome here cites Luke and the *Gospel of the Hebrews* as parallel texts. More importantly, Jerome cites the parallel not with Luke 24:39 (as we might expect from *Vir. ill.* 16) but with Luke 24:37. Taking the two quotations together, we may conclude that “I am not a bodiless daimon” in the *Gospel of the Hebrews* followed and responded to an earlier statement where the disciples were said to have thought the Risen One to be “a bodiless daimon.” Thus, regardless of whether Ignatius depends on Luke or on a common tradition found in an apocryphal text like the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, we can be confident that Ignatius’s source mentioned some initial doubt akin to that of Luke 24:37–38.

Taken by itself, Ignatius’s omission of this initial doubt on the part of the apostles might be considered insignificant. However, this is not the only instance where Ignatius appears to edit out the doubt. In Ignatius’s retelling, the apostles respond to Jesus’s invitation to touch his body by actually doing so. Ignatius says, “immediately they touched him and believed” (3.2). Yet in the next verse, Ignatius relates an additional proof stating that Jesus also “ate and drank with them” (3.3). If the invitation to touch in *Smyrn.* 3.2 seems odd without an initial expression of doubt on the part of the apostles, then the eating proof appears completely out of place. What need is there for additional proof if the apostles had already “touched ... and believed”? The second proof undermines Ignatius’s assertion that the apostles “immediately” came to faith. Luke’s account is more coherent.⁶⁴ Instead of saying that the apostle’s “touched and believed,” Luke has “they were still disbelieving” (24:41). And it is these lingering doubts that prompt Jesus to eat in their presence (24:42–43). Ignatius’s use of a second proof strongly suggests that his source mentioned continuing doubt on the part of the apostles and that Ignatius chose to omit it.⁶⁵

Ignatius’s motivation for suppressing the apostles’ disbelief can be explained by his antidocetic apologetic. As will be shown in the following chapters, many who advocate docetic views of the resurrection exploit the doubt motif either to criticize the apostles or to promote a docetic Christology. There is evidence within *Smyrnaeans* to suggest that Ignatius may be responding to or anticipating either or both practices.

⁶⁴ Similarly Koester, *Überlieferung*, 47.

⁶⁵ Philipp Vielhauer and Georg Strecker argue that “the absence of any reference to doubt on the part of the disciples” shows that “from the point of view of tradition-history [Ignatius’s account] is secondary as compared with Luke” (“Jewish-Christian Gospels,” 145). Vielhauer and Strecker do not mention specific verses in Luke containing the doubt motif, but the phrase “the absence of any reference to doubt” suggests that they would concur with my assessment that Ignatius has omitted both the initial doubts in Luke 24:37–38 and the continuing disbelief in Luke 24:41.

According to Schoedel, “Ignatius’ statement that he believes Christ to be in the flesh ‘even’ (καί) after the resurrection (3.1) suggests that his opponents could have found support for their Docetism especially in the mysterious coming and going of the resurrected Christ.”⁶⁶ While it is difficult to identify with certainty the resurrection appearance traditions known to Ignatius’s opponents, the ascensive καί (“even”) implies that Ignatius recognized the resurrection appearance tradition to be more susceptible to docetic interpretation than other aspects of the Jesus tradition.⁶⁷ Did Ignatius perceive the appearance tradition as a (or the) weak link that needed to be reinforced? The only trace of “the mysterious coming and going of the resurrected Christ” that remains in Ignatius’s account is Jesus’s rejection of the notion that he is a bodiless daimon. In Ignatius’s retelling, Jesus doesn’t abruptly “stand in their midst” and offer a reassuring “peace to you” to frightened disciples as he does in Luke 24:36–37 or John 20:19. Rather, Ignatius states only that Jesus “came to those around Peter.”⁶⁸ Ignatius probably omitted the abrupt appearance from the tradition in order to strengthen his antidocetic argument. More importantly, Luke’s account of the apostles “still disbelieving” after being invited to “touch” Jesus might also be considered open to docetic interpretation: a docetist could object, “If they had really touched him and confirmed his flesh, why did they ‘still disbelieve’?”

Ignatius’s letter offers two further indications that the opponents had been interpreting the resurrection appearance story in a docetic manner. The first comes in his treatment of Christ’s post-resurrection meal with the disciples: “And after his resurrection he ate and drank with them *as one who is composed*

⁶⁶ Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 225–26 n. 4.

⁶⁷ Smith astutely observes that Ignatius refers to the resurrection narrative in order to defend the reality of Jesus’s suffering against the docetists, but he incorrectly infers from this that Ignatius is not interested in establishing “the nature of the resurrection appearances” themselves (“Apologetic Interests,” 761). On the contrary, Ignatius is interested in the latter precisely because of its susceptibility to docetic interpretation. The argument that Smith rightly attributes to Ignatius presupposes the idea that, of all the traditions about Jesus, the resurrection narratives would be most easily interpreted in a docetic fashion. The logic is as follows: if even the risen Jesus is in the flesh, how much more must the crucified Jesus have been? Perhaps more tellingly, Smith’s argument does not account for Ignatius’s redaction of the story, i.e., Ignatius’s explicit confirmation that the apostles touched Jesus and his two glosses insisting that the risen Christ is both fleshly and spiritual (*Smyrn.* 3.2–3). These glosses surely show Ignatius’s concern “to establish the nature of the resurrection appearances” and no doubt combat the notion that the risen Jesus was only spiritual (so A. H. C. van Eijk, “Only That Can Rise Which Has Previously Fallen: The History of a Formula,” *JTS NS* 22 [1971]: 520).

⁶⁸ Ignatius’s wording (τοὺς περὶ Πέτρον) resembles the so-called Intermediate Ending to Mark (τοὺς περὶ τὸν Πέτρον). If Ignatius knew this ending or the tradition on which it was based, he may have chosen to use it instead of Luke 24:33–36 because it was less susceptible to docetic interpretation.

of flesh, although spiritually he was united with the Father” (Smyrn. 3.3). As noted above, the second half of the sentence is an Ignatian gloss that exhibits Ignatius’s characteristic dual emphasis on *sarx* and *pneuma*. The first part of the gloss is antidocetic in that it points to Jesus’s flesh. The second guards against potential misunderstanding of the first – and possibly also of Luke 24:39b – ensuring that the reader will not conclude Christ was only flesh and not also spiritual. The most remarkable thing about Ignatius’s gloss is its very existence. Today the idea that the risen Jesus ate and drank is often assumed to be antidocetic in and of itself. But if so, why would Ignatius feel the need to add a gloss? Ignatius’s opponents were probably familiar with Jesus’s post-resurrection meal but interpreted it in their own terms, τὸ δοκεῖν (“in appearance only”).⁶⁹

What Ignatius writes in the next paragraph seems to confirm that this was in fact the case: “For if these things (ταῦτα) were done by our Lord in appearance only (τὸ δοκεῖν), I am in chains in appearance only” (4.2). In context, the plural ταῦτα cannot refer only to the crucifixion. Minimally, it must also cover the resurrection story, which includes the appearance itself and Jesus’s act of eating and drinking – these are the two most immediate antecedents for “these things done by our Lord in appearance only.” This suggests that the adversaries were already advocating a docetic interpretation of the same group appearance story, including Jesus’s post-resurrection meal.⁷⁰

Ignatius frames the position of his opponents within a hypothetical statement (εἰ γὰρ τὸ δοκεῖν ταῦτα...), and so it is possible to argue that Ignatius is merely theorizing how his opponents would docetize the resurrection appearance tradition if given the opportunity. However, it is improbable that Ignatius

⁶⁹ The docetists may have been interpreting Jesus’s resurrection along the lines of an angelic *phantasia* (cf. how Josephus explains away the meal of Abraham’s visitors in Gen 18: “but they presented an appearance (δόξαν) of eating” [A.J. 1.197]). On the possible angelomorphic Christology of Ignatius’s opponents, see John W. Marshall, “The Objects of Ignatius’ Wrath and Jewish Angelic Mediators,” *JEH* 56 (2005): 1–23. Later docetists do in fact interpret Jesus’s meal in Luke 24:42–43 as a mere “show-eating” and sometimes appeal to angelophanies as a precedent (see further Chapters 6 and 9).

⁷⁰ The fact that Ignatius complains that “neither the prophecies nor the law of Moses, nor up until now the gospel” have persuaded his opponents (Smyrn. 5.1) also seems to presuppose that the docetists have previously been exposed to the same “gospel” that Ignatius has just been discussing but found it unconvincing. This may be why Ignatius decides to edit the tradition. That at least some of Ignatius’s opponents know the same gospel is clear from their own protest: “If I do not find it in the archives, I do not believe it in the gospel” (*Phld.* 8.2). The fact that “gospel” is set in parallel to written documents in both *Smyrn.* 5.1 and *Phld.* 8.2 suggests that Ignatius is referring to a written gospel in both passages (Hill, “Ignatius and the Gospels,” 269–74, 277–79). If so, the various glosses emphasizing Jesus’s flesh in *Smyrn.* 3 may be Ignatius’s response to docetist claims (whether actual or anticipated by Ignatius) that the things done by Jesus in Luke 24 “were done ... in appearance only (τὸ δοκεῖν)” (*Smyrn.* 4.2).

is being purely hypothetical here. In a parallel statement warning his readers, Ignatius seems to presuppose that his opponents have, in their attempts to convince others, already docetized Christ's resurrection along with the incarnation and passion: "I want to be on guard lest you *get snagged on the hooks of vain opinion* (κενοδοξία) but instead to be fully assured about the birth and the suffering and *the resurrection* that happened in the time of the governorship of Pontius Pilate. *These things were truly and certainly done by Jesus Christ*" (*Magn.* 11.1).

There is also some evidence to suggest that Ignatius eliminates references to the doubt of the apostles in order to defend their reputation against criticism. Ignatius praises the Smyrnaeans for their "unshakable faith (ἀκινήτω πίστει)" (*Smyrn.* 1.1–2) but attacks his opponents for their lack of faith. Immediately before the resurrection account, Ignatius labels the docetists "unbelievers" (ἄπιστοι, 2.1), and afterward refers to their names as "unbelieving" (ἄπιστα, 5.3). Ignatius clearly uses ἄπιστοι as a derogatory term (cf. *Trall.* 10.1).⁷¹ To portray the apostles as "still unbelieving" (ἔτι ... ἀπιστούντων), as in Luke 24:41, can only have been detrimental to his argument against the docetists. Apart from a desire to address preemptively potential criticisms from his docetic opponents, it is unclear why Ignatius finds it necessary even to mention that the disciples "believed." If left out, the text reads: "And immediately they touched him, being closely united with his flesh."⁷² This adequately addresses the stated point of the pericope: "that he was in the flesh even after the resurrection." If, however, the doubts of the apostles in Luke 24:41 were perceived as a liability in an antidocetic argument, then Ignatius's assertion that they "believed" makes good sense.

After insisting against his source that the apostles "immediately ... believed," Ignatius adds, "For this reason, they despised even death. Indeed, they were found to be greater than death." In the Hellenistic world "despising death" was the language of heroism and so Ignatius portrays the apostles as heroic martyrs.⁷³ But Ignatius goes even further by saying the apostles "were found

⁷¹ Similarly Mikael Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter: Structure, Themes, and Rhetorical Strategies in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* (ConBNT 42; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2004), 165. See further Chapter 2.

⁷² The sentence reads more smoothly this way; the phrase "having intermingled with his flesh" goes more naturally with "they touched him" than with "they believed."

⁷³ So Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 227–28 (cf. Origen, *Cels.* 2.56). Schoedel suggests that Ignatius had already found the theme of "despising death ... associated with the resurrection tradition." Although the canonical narratives do not use this terminology, John 21:18–19 associates a resurrection appearance narrative with Peter's martyrdom. Additionally, if Ignatius is dependent on Luke it is quite possible that the martyrdom theme is drawn from Luke 24:48, where the apostles are called μάρτυρες. While this term does not mean "martyr" in Luke 24:48, by Ignatius's day it had already in at least some circles taken on this connotation (Acts 22:20; Rev 2:13; 17:6).

greater than death,” and so seems to attribute to the apostles a *quasi*-divine characteristic.⁷⁴ Thus at the very point where the tradition might have been embarrassing to the apostles, Ignatius lavishes praise upon them. That these praises are directed against the docetists is suggested by the fact he describes the apostles as “despising death” but portrays the docetists as “advocates of death” (5.1). Ignatius may have appealed to the martyrdom of the apostles in a previous altercation with the docetists. In 5.1, Ignatius complains that the docetists have not been convinced by “our own sufferings.” As the apostles are the only other sufferers mentioned in context, the plural includes their martyrdoms along with the impending martyrdom of Ignatius.

There is one final aspect of Ignatius’s redaction that needs to be considered: Did Ignatius know a version of the group appearance story that, unlike Luke’s version, explicitly confirmed that the apostles “touched (ἥψαντο)” the risen Jesus? Or did Ignatius add this confirmation as part of his antidocetic apologetic? While absolute certainty is not possible, the latter is more probable. Ignatius here has a word for touching (ἄπτομαι) that is different from the one that appears in the traditional saying (ψηλαφάω) that he quotes.⁷⁵ More importantly, as with Luke 24, the group appearance stories in John 20:19–29 do *not* explicitly state that the apostles touched Jesus. This suggests that the tradition shared by Luke and John probably did not include the touch confirmation.⁷⁶ Otherwise, both Luke and John have intentionally removed it! This is certainly possible, but if so, the evangelists can hardly be accused of antidocetic embellishment. In any case, the absence of the confirmation in Luke and John makes it improbable that it was present in Ignatius’s source, whether it be Luke or a common tradition. I therefore conclude that Ignatius added it to strengthen his case against docetism.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ignatius appears to give quasi-divine status to the apostles elsewhere (*Magn.* 6.1; *Trall.* 3.1; 12.2; *Smyrn.* 8.1), though see the hesitation of Schoedel (*Ignatius*, 112–14).

⁷⁵ Cf. ἥψαντο in *Rom.* 5.2.

⁷⁶ Some have taken “our hands have *touched* (ἐψηλάφησαν)” in 1 John 1:1 to be a reference to a post-resurrection experience (so Alfred Plummer, *The Epistles of St. John* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911], 73; John Christopher Thomas, *The Pentecostal Commentary on 1 John, 2 John, 3 John* [The Pentecostal Commentary; New York: T&T Clark International, 2003], 65; Matthew D. Jensen, *Affirming the Resurrection of the Incarnate Christ: A Reading of 1 John* [SNTSMS 153; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012], 47–72). If so, it might provide evidence that an appearance tradition with an explicit touch confirmation was circulating prior to Ignatius. But again, because Ignatius’s confirmation has a different verb (ἄπτομαι), Ignatius does not appear to depend on this same tradition.

⁷⁷ Alternatively, if, as I have suggested above, Ignatius is following Luke’s account but has conflated it with another source, it is possible that Ignatius inserted the touch confirmation from this second source. Either way, Ignatius has for antidocetic purposes supplemented Luke’s version of the story.

3.1.3 Conclusion

In summary, all agree that Ignatius's source, if not Luke, was at least very similar to Luke 24:36–43. If the above analysis is correct, Ignatius's antidocetic redaction involved omitting the initial doubts of the apostles (i.e., Luke 24:37–38 or equivalent), transforming their continuing doubts (i.e., Luke 24:41 or equivalent) into an affirmation of their faith, and adding an explicit confirmation that the apostles touched the risen Jesus. Ignatius also inserted explanatory comments to guard against docetic readings of the touch invitation and of Christ's post-resurrection meal. Additionally, Ignatius does not include any hints, such as we find in Luke 24:36 and John 20:19, 26, of the idea that Jesus appeared suddenly to the apostles. Overall, Ignatius's redactional changes imply that he either found or would have found Luke 24:36–43 ill-suited to antidocetic apologetic. He has retold the story by removing elements that might have been embarrassing to the apostles or vulnerable to docetic interpretation and by inserting comments that elevate the status of the apostles and guard against docetic readings of the tradition.

If, on the other hand, my reconstruction is incorrect and Ignatius is faithfully reproducing Luke's source, then Lukan redaction becomes most peculiar. In this case, Luke has, contrary to his redactional tendency to soften Mark's depictions of the apostles' failures, transformed a tradition in which the apostles "immediately" believe Jesus into one in which they are persistently disbelieving (ἔτι ... ἀπιστούντων).⁷⁸ More importantly, if Luke's source looks more like Ignatius's version of the story, it means that Luke has added elements that are liable to docetic interpretation, e.g., Jesus's abrupt appearance, and removed what is perhaps the strongest antidocetic element, i.e., the apostles touching the risen Jesus to verify his physicality. If so, Lukan redaction begins to look more docetic than antidocetic.⁷⁹

In short, whatever source theory is adopted, *Smyrn.* 3 is not to be used as a proof-text to support the theory that Luke 24:36–43 is antidocetic. If anything, *Smyrn.* 3 offers a proof-text that Luke is *not* antidocetic. The comparison with Ignatius suggests that Luke has, against his own redactional tendencies, faithfully preserved a resurrection narrative that originated independently of the controversy over docetic Christology.

⁷⁸ See further Chapter 9.

⁷⁹ Of course, Luke 24:36–43 does not really work as a docetic account – a point that is made emphatically by Tertullian in his refutation of Marcion (*Marc.* 4.43).

3.2 The “Ophites” of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30

3.2.1 Introduction

In *Haer.* 1.29–31 Irenaeus summarizes written accounts of an early second-century sect (or family of sects) whom he refers to as the “Gnostics” (1.29.1).⁸⁰ The following analysis is limited to *Haer.* 1.30, which later heresiologists identify as the teaching of the “Ophites.”⁸¹ Though the name “Ophite” is no doubt already anachronistic, many modern scholars have adopted it as a convenient way to distinguish this group from various other sects that today are typically labeled “Gnostic.”⁸² For this reason I too reluctantly adopt the term “Ophite.” But the “Ophite” label involves another significant risk: this little-known term may give today’s readers the false impression that the Ophites were an obscure, insignificant sect. Yet precisely the opposite seems to have been the case. For Irenaeus the Ophites were among the original Gnostics – perhaps the first to be called “Gnostics” – and their myths stimulated the thinking of later heretics.⁸³ Modern analyses have confirmed that Ophite mythology had a significant influence on two of the most prominent schools of gnostic thought in the second half of the second century: Sethianism and Valentinianism.⁸⁴ Although the

⁸⁰ That Irenaeus’s sources were written can be inferred from the complexity of the myths and from Irenaeus’s comment about collecting written materials in *Haer.* 1.31.2.

⁸¹ On the name “Ophites,” see Ps.-Tertullian, *Haer.* 2.1–4, “Ophites (*Ophitae*)”; Origen, *Cels.* 6.24, “Ophians (*Oφιανοί*)”; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 37, “Ophites (*Oφίται*)”; Philastrius, *Div. her.* 1, “Ophites (*Oφίται*)”; Theodoret, *Haer. fab. comp.* 1.14, “The Sethians, whom some call Ophians or Ophites (οἱ δὲ Σεθιανοί, οὓς Oφιανούς ἢ Oφίτας τινὲς ὀνομάζουσιν).”

⁸² Tuomas Rasimus provides a basic introduction to Ophitism in “Ophite Gnosticism, Sethianism, and the Nag Hammadi Library,” *VC* 59 (2005): 235–63. See also his more comprehensive discussion in *Paradise Reconsidered*. Other recent studies of the Ophites include P. F. M. Fontaine, *The Light and the Dark: A Cultural History of Dualism* (21 vols.; Amsterdam: Gieben, 1993), 8:134–180; Nicola Denzey, “Stalking those Elusive Ophites: The Ophite Diagrams Reconsidered,” *ARC* 33 (2005): 89–122; Fred Ledegang, “The Ophites and the “Ophite” Diagram in Celsus and Origen,” *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 60 (2008): 51–83.

⁸³ *Haer.* 1.11.1, 3, 5; 1.29.1; 1.30.15; 1.31.3; 2.13.8, 10. Of all the second-century heretics, the Ophites and related sects in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.29–31 are probably some of the only sects for whom the proper name “Gnostic” is historically accurate. Although Irenaeus sometimes uses the term gnostic in a broad sense, the groups of 1.29–31 are the only ones for whom he uses “Gnostic” in a way that approximates a proper name. Despite Williams protest that Irenaeus never reveals the term “Gnostic” as a “self-designation” for those described in 1.29–31 (*Rethinking “Gnosticism,”* 33–37), Irenaeus’ addition of qualifiers (“so called,” “false,” etc.), is probably a reaction against their use of “Gnostic” as a self-designation.

⁸⁴ On the influence of the Ophite myth on Sethian Gnosticism, see Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 203–4, 220; Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 1–69; Rasimus, “Ophite Gnosticism,” 235–63; idem, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 10–27, 51–61, 283–93; Frederik Wisse, “The Nag Hammadi Library and the Heresiologists,” *VC* 25 (1971): 218.

Gnostics of *Haer.* 1.30 were eventually overtaken by the Valentinians in both popularity and numbers (Tertullian, *Val.* 39), they were still popular enough in the middle of the second century that Valentinians found it useful to employ the propagandistic slogan, “More gnostic than the Gnostics” (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.11.5).⁸⁵

According to Irenaeus, or an earlier heresiologist (probably Justin) on whom Irenaeus depended, Valentinus himself was the first of many to draw upon the Ophite myth and modify it for his own purposes (1.11.1).⁸⁶ While this is difficult to verify, the limited evidence available from the extant fragments of Valentinus’s writings and from the brief comments of other church fathers corroborates Irenaeus’s claim.⁸⁷ In any case, the influence of the Ophite myth can be

On the influence of the Gnostics on Valentinus and Valentinianism, see the extensive analysis in McGuire, “Valentinus.” Similar conclusions have been reached in Perkins, “Irenaeus,” 197–200; Greer, “Mushrooms,” 1:170; Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, xv–xvi, 217–22; Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism*, 56; Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 104–5, 240 n. 66–68; Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 292–93; Brakke, *Gnostics*, 99. Pétremont (*Separate God*, 351–86) argues instead for Valentinian influence on the Ophites and Sethians, but see Logan’s decisive rebuttal (*Gnostic Truth*, 7–27). Logan concedes possible Valentinian influence on later Sethian literature but demonstrates the priority of the Ophite account.

⁸⁵ See further Chapter 2.

⁸⁶ Irenaeus’s dependence on an earlier heresiologist is affirmed by Thomassen (*Seed*, 19–22). Thomassen builds on the work of Adolf Hilgenfeld, who argued that Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.11.1–3 depends on the lost *Syntagma* of Justin (*Die Ketzergeschichte des Urchristentums, urkundlich dargestellt* [Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1884; repr., 1966], 9, 51–56). Irenaeus’s dependence on Justin for his account of Valentinus has also been accepted by Gilles Quispel (“Valentinian Gnosticism and the *Apocryphon of John*,” in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* [2 vols.; ed. Bentley Layton; SHR 41; Leiden: Brill, 1980], 1:123).

⁸⁷ Thomassen and others have shown that Valentinus presupposed “an anthropogonic myth that is related to, but probably less elaborate than, the one found in the *Ap. John*” (*Seed*, 450; similarly Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 49–51; Quispel, “*Apocryphon*,” 120). The account of the creation of Adam in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30 is just such a myth (Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 35–55; Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 93–94, 138–40, 203–4, 217, 220, 257–58; Rasimus, “Ophite Gnosticism,” 246–53; idem, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 10–11). Moreover, significant thematic correspondences between the extant fragments of Valentinus and the Ophite account make it highly probable that Valentinus did indeed make use of an Ophite source. First, the Ophite identification of “Abyss” with the “Father,” who generates various divine beings, aligns with the βουός that brings forth fruits in Valentinus’s hymn, “Summer Harvest” (frag. 8, Hippolytus, *Haer.* 6.37.7). Outside of the Valentinians, the Ophites are the only gnostics to emphasize this term. And some of Valentinus’s earliest disciples boasted that they were “more gnostic than the Gnostics” precisely because they claimed to know of aeons that existed prior to Abyss (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.11.5). This prima facie suggests that the Ophite account is prior to the Valentinian one. Second, according to Tertullian, Ptolemy broke with Valentinus in claiming that these aeons originally existed outside of God (*Val.* 4.2) rather than simply as attributes of God, e.g., as “his thoughts.” Thomassen (*Seed*, 485–90) argues that Tertullian’s assessment is supported by frag. 8 of Valentinus (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 6.37.7) and that for Valentinus the Abyss/Father “initially encompasses the aeons and

safely traced back to Valentinus’s earliest followers in Rome.⁸⁸ Irenaeus’s source for *Haer.* 1.30 should therefore be dated no later than the (mid?) 140s, i.e., when Valentinus rose to prominence in Rome.⁸⁹ It was probably composed one generation prior to rise of Valentinus and Marcion. This, at least, is the impression given by Irenaeus’s description of the Ophites as “fathers” to Valentinus and his school (*Haer.* 1.31.3; 2.13.8,10) and from Tertullian’s statement that Valentinus drew on an “old/ancient (*vetus*)” myth (*Val.* 4.2).⁹⁰ Modern consensus places the composition of the Ophite account in the first half the

then brings them forth.” This contrast between the earlier view of Valentinus and that of Ptolemaeus can be illustrated by the differing pleromatologies of the Ophites (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30), on whom Irenaeus claims Valentinus depends (1.11.1), and the Ptolemean system described in *Haer.* 1.1. In *Haer.* 1.30, Thought (*Ennoea*) is an attribute of the Father/Abyss, i.e., “his thought” that “comes forth” from him and produces/becomes the Son, whereas in *Haer.* 1.1, Thought (*Ennoea*) coexists eternally along “with” the Father/Abyss.

There are other correspondences between what can be known of Valentinus’s myth and that of the Ophites, but those just mentioned are significant in that they suggest a direct link between the Ophites and Valentinus and that the latter is dependent on the former as Irenaeus claimed. The direction of dependence is confirmed by other church fathers. Tertullian says that Valentinus’s teaching was derived from a certain “ancient theory (*veteris opinionis*)” about the Aeons (*Val.* 4.2). Similarly, Hippolytus quotes from a vision account written by Valentinus himself and then indicates that Valentinus had incorporated into this account “a certain tragic myth from which (*τραγικόν τινα μῦθον, ἐκ τούτου*)” he attempted to derive his system of doctrine and that his disciple Marcus produced a similar myth explaining the origin of the Aeons (*Haer.* 6.42.2–8). Although neither Tertullian nor Hippolytus explicitly identifies the source of Valentinus’s teaching with the Ophite account of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30, both confirm that Valentinus made use of an earlier gnostic myth (contra Christoph Marksches, *Valentinus Gnosticus? Untersuchungen zur valentinianischen Gnosis mit einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten Valentins* [WUNT 65; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992], 405; see also the critiques of Marksches in Gilles Quispel, “Valentinus and the Gnostikoi,” *VC* 50 [1996]: 1–4; Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 47–48).

⁸⁸ Thomassen argues that Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.11.1 describes not the teaching of Valentinus himself but that of one of the earliest representatives of Western Valentinianism. He also maintains that the fault for this misidentification lies not with Irenaeus but with the earlier heresiologist on whom he depends (*Seed*, 19–22). Given that Irenaeus writes no more than twenty years after Valentinus’s death, I find it relatively improbable that a heresiologist who wrote either during Valentinus’s lifetime or very shortly after his death would make this mistake. More likely, the account in *Haer.* 1.11.1 does more or less derive from Valentinus. Nevertheless, even if Thomassen is correct, the Valentinian view in 1.11.1 must be especially early, as Thomassen himself admits.

⁸⁹ Irenaeus indicates that Valentinus rose to prominence during episcopate of Pius (ca. 140–155) (*Haer.* 3.4.3). Corroboration can be found in *Dial.* 35 (c. 155–160), in which Justin mentions self-proclaimed “Valentinians.”

⁹⁰ It is worth noting that Tertullian here repeatedly refers to this ancient gnostic myth as a “path.” This metaphor was probably chosen because the Gnostics themselves used it. The Naassene psalm quoted by Hippolytus speaks of imparting “the secrets of the saintly *path*, styled ‘Gnosis’” (*Haer.* 5.10.2 [*ANF* 5:58, emphasis added]).

second century, and this can probably be narrowed to sometime between 110 and 140 CE.⁹¹

The Ophite account, like some other gnostic texts, e.g., the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, *On the Origin of the World*, and the *Apocalypse of Adam*, is another example of “rewritten Bible” such as is commonly found in Second Temple literature.⁹² It generally follows the sequence of the biblical narrative but creatively rewrites it with various changes, omissions, and expansions, including implicit, and on rare occasions explicit, commentary.⁹³ The striking thing about the Ophite myth is the scope of the biblical narrative covered. While most acknowledged instances of rewritten Bible focus on a particular book and/or OT character, the Ophite account spans almost the entire biblical narrative, including not only the creation, the flood, Abraham, Moses, and the prophets, but also the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. These biblical stories are all interpretively retold in light of the Ophite view of the spiritual world – creating in effect a gnostic version of salvation history. The term salvation history is perhaps especially appropriate because, as I will argue below, the Ophite version of the life of Jesus depends almost exclusively on Luke’s Gospel.

3.2.2 A Cumulative Case for the Ophite use of Luke

Scholarship on the Ophite account has focused almost exclusively on its relationship to the myths of Sethianism and Valentinianism and their rewritten versions of Genesis. The use of Luke has seldom been noticed and has never been examined at any length.⁹⁴ Even Gregory, whose coverage of the second century

⁹¹ Rasmus argues for the Ophite influence on Valentinianism and cautiously posits the middle of the second century as the *terminus ad quem* for the Ophite account (*Paradise Reconsidered*, 286, 292–93; similarly Francis T. Fallon, *The Enthronement of Sabaoth: Jewish Elements in Gnostic Creation Myths* [NHMS 10; Leiden: Brill, 1978], 87). Turner’s magisterial tradition history of Sethian Gnosticism dates the composition of Irenaeus’s Ophite source ca. 120 CE (*Sethian Gnosticism*, 203–4, 220). Similarly, Logan (*Gnostic Truth*, 29) dates the Ophite account “around the second and third decades of the second century.”

⁹² So Birger A. Pearson, “Use, Authority and Exegesis of Mikra in Gnostic Literature,” in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. Martin Jan Mulder; CRINT 2.1; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 635–652, esp. 651. On the phenomenon of rewritten Bible in gnostic texts, see also Painchaud (“The Use of Scripture in Gnostic Literature,” *J ECS* 4 [1996]: 129–46), who describes it as a “compositional use” of Scripture.

⁹³ On the phenomenon of rewritten Bible, see already George W. E. Nickelsburg, “The Bible Rewritten and Expanded,” in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* (ed. Michael E. Stone; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 89–156.

⁹⁴ The few who do detect the influence of Luke offer no commentary on the phenomenon, e.g., Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Early Church Fathers; London: Routledge, 1996), 78; Bovon, *Luke*, 1:392.

is relatively comprehensive, never discusses the Ophite use of Luke in his influential study, *The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period before Irenaeus*. Therefore, before discussing the Ophite interpretation of Luke 24, it is necessary to establish that Irenaeus’s Ophite source did indeed make use of Luke’s Gospel. Two methodological issues must be addressed here.

First, Irenaeus’s Greek for this chapter is no longer extant, and so we must depend on a Latin translation. Fortunately, enough of Irenaeus’s book is available in both Greek and in Latin to allow us to identify with confidence many of the original Greek terms behind the Latin of *Haer.* 1.30. Below, I make use of the lexicon compiled by Bruno Reynders, which correlates all the Latin and Greek terms in extant manuscripts of Irenaeus.⁹⁵ In each of the side-by-side quotations below I employ a dotted underline in the instances where the verbal correspondences between the Greek and Latin are highly probable in light of the habits of the Latin translator. I employ a solid underline in cases where the correspondence is probably verbatim.

The second methodological matter is the criteria for identifying the use of Luke. As discussed in Chapter 1, Koester’s redaction criterion is generally the most reliable way to establish the use of Luke. Nonetheless, in certain scenarios the demonstration of multiple instances of the use of material that is unique to Luke (but not necessarily redactional) can be just as reliable, particularly if the instances come from different sections of Luke. In conjunction with these kinds of arguments, I also employ below my Irenaeus-witness criterion, which can demonstrate, with reasonable certainty, dependence on Luke in cases where a second-century author shows knowledge of material that Irenaeus identifies as unique to Luke among early Christian texts.⁹⁶

Aside from Marcion and Justin Martyr, most potential instances of the reception of Luke’s Gospel prior to Irenaeus exhibit no more than a few isolated Lukan or Luke-like features. By contrast, Irenaeus’s Ophite source entails a sustained, mostly sequential, interpretation of the Gospel of Luke as whole, including passages both present in and absent from Irenaeus’s list of uniquely Lukan material, as well as passages that exhibit signs of Lukan redaction. Though the genre of the Ophite account is probably best described as “rewritten Bible,” it might not be too much of an exaggeration to call the Ophite account the earliest known commentary on Luke’s Gospel. In what follows, then, I offer a cumulative case for the Ophite use of Luke.

⁹⁵ Bruno Reynders, *Lexique comparé du texte grec et des versions latine, arménienne et syriaque de l’“Adversus haereses” de Saint Irénée* (2 vols.; CSCO 141–42; Leuven: Durbecq, 1954).

⁹⁶ On this criterion, see Chapter 1.

First, the Ophite source includes an account of two interconnected miraculous births, one through “barren Elizabeth” and another through the “virgin Mary.”⁹⁷

Prounikos [Wisdom] functioned through
Jaldabaoth – though he was ignorant of what
she was doing – and emitted two men,
the one from the *barren Elizabeth*
(*sterili Elisabeth*),

But they had no child because
Elizabeth was barren
(ἦν ἡ Ἐλισάβετ στειρᾶ)...
(Luke 1:7)

the other from the *virgin Mary*
(*Maria virgine*).
(*Haer.* 1.30.11)⁹⁸

And the name of the *virgin* was *Mary*
(παρθένου Μαρίας).
(Luke 1:27)

The verbal correspondences are clear, and the sequence of births also follows Luke. The characters of Elizabeth and Mary are referred to without introduction, as if their stories are well known. This material appears in Irenaeus’s list of what was unique to Luke in the second century.⁹⁹

Next, the Ophite source mentions Jesus’s impressive wisdom during the period between his birth and his baptism. Irenaeus’s list does not specifically mention Jesus’s wisdom, but it includes a story that Luke uses to illustrate it, namely, the story of Jesus’s stay in Jerusalem when he was twelve years old. Furthermore, there are structural similarities between the Ophite description of Jesus and Luke 2:52:

⁹⁷ The influence of Luke’s infancy narrative is detected in Charles E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 23; François Bovon, “The Reception and Use of the Gospel of Luke in the Second Century,” in *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation* (eds. Craig G. Bartholomew, Joel B. Green, and Anthony C. Thiselton; Scripture and Hermeneutic Series 6; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 392.

⁹⁸ English translations of Irenaeus in this chapter follow, with minor modifications, Unger and Dillon, *Irenaeus 1*. Significant deviations are noted below. Latin texts follow Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, *Irenée de Lyon, Contre les hérésies, livre I* (2 vols.; SC 263–64; Paris: Cerf, 1979).

⁹⁹ Luke’s account of the virgin birth, especially Luke 1:35, plays a significant but controversial role in later Valentinian Christologies (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.15.3; Hippolytus, *Haer.* 6.35.2–7; Clement, *Exc.* 60.1; *Gos. Phil.* [NHC II,3] 55.23–36). According to Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.26.8–9, Basilides also drew on Luke 1:35.

Now *Jesus* (Ιησους),
inasmuch as he was begotten of the
Virgin, God’s action,
was wiser and purer and more righteous
(*sapientiore[m] et mundiore[m] et iustiore[m]*)
than all men (*hominibus omnibus*)
(Haer. 1.30.12)¹⁰⁰

And *Jesus* (Ιησοῦς)
increased in wisdom and stature and grace
(ἐν τῇ σοφίᾳ καὶ ἡλικίᾳ καὶ χάριτι)
with God and men (*ἀνθρώποις*).
(Luke 2:52)

Corroboration of the probable influence of Luke here can be found in Clement, *Exc.* 59.1–62.3. This later Valentinian account, which includes a more developed version of the Ophite myth, quotes Luke 2:52 verbatim at precisely this point in the narrative.¹⁰¹

Third, the Ophite account echoes Luke’s description of John preaching a baptism of repentance:

Wisdom...announced (*adnuntiasse*) his
coming through John (*per Iohannem*),
and prepared (*praeparasse*)
a baptism of repentance
(*baptismum paenitentiae*).

(Haer. 1.30.12)¹⁰²

The word of God
came to John (ἐπὶ Ιωάννην)....
And he went...proclaiming (*κηρύσσων*)
a baptism of repentance
(βάπτισμα μετανοίας). As it is
written..., ‘Prepare (ἐτοιμάσατε) the way....’
(Luke 3:2–4)

On the one hand, there is little in the wording of the Ophite account that is unique to Luke’s Gospel.¹⁰³ Luke has taken over the phrase “baptism of repentance” from Mark’s account. There is nevertheless one aspect of the Ophite account that could be construed as an interpretation of a redactional element in Luke’s description of John the Baptist. Luke alone introduces John’s message as inspired. He does so by introducing it with standard OT formula for the introduction of a prophet: “the word of God came to John” (Luke 3:2). The

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Luke 2:47: “All (πάντες) ... were amazed at his understanding and answers.”

¹⁰¹ See also the related myth of Justin the Gnostic and the *Book of Baruch*, which refers to Jesus “a child of twelve years” (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.26.29).

¹⁰² Whenever the Greek is extant in Irenaeus, the Latin *paenitentia* is always a translation of μετανοία or a close cognate (Reynders, *Lexique*, 2:225). The Vulgate also renders μετανοία in Luke 3:3 *paenitentia*.

¹⁰³ The wording of the Ophite account is in some ways closer to Acts:

<i>adnuntiasse</i>	<i>praedicante Iohanne</i>	προκηρύξαντος <u>Ιωάννου</u>
	<i>ante faciem</i>	πρὸ προσώπου
<i>eius adventum</i>	<i>adventus eius</i>	τῆς εἰσόδου <u>αὐτοῦ</u>
<i>per Iohannem et praeparasse</i>		
<i>baptismum paenitentiae.</i>	<i>baptismum paenitentiae.</i>	<u>βάπτισμα μετανοίας.</u>
(Haer. 1.30.12)	(Acts 13:24, Vulg.)	(Acts 13:24, NA ²⁸)

Because the Ophite author counts eighteen months rather than Luke’s forty days (Acts 1:3) between Jesus resurrection and ascension, direct dependence on Acts 13:24 is perhaps less likely – though it remains possible that the Ophite author rejected or reinterpreted Acts 1:3 (cf. *Ap. Jas.* [NHC I,2] 2.17–24, 33–39).

Ophite account does something analogous when it says, “Wisdom ... announced his coming through John.” This echoes the phraseology used earlier to describe Wisdom’s inspiration of the OT prophets: “Wisdom spoke much through them [the prophets] ... about Christ” (1.30.11). This link between personified Wisdom and the prophets is probably also Lukan. In Luke 11:49, Jesus says, “Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles.’” In the NT, this idea is unique to Luke.¹⁰⁴ These correspondences do not necessarily prove dependence on Luke, but they do add to the cumulative case.

Fourth, there are some indications that the Ophite author is responding to Luke’s account of Jesus’s baptism. The Ophite author refers to a descent of Christ and Wisdom onto Jesus at his baptism:

<p>On him Christ, united with Wisdom, descended; and thus was formed Jesus Christ. Many of Jesus’s disciples, they assert, did not realize that Christ had descended on him (<i>descensionem in eum</i>). (<i>Haer.</i> 1.30.12–13)</p>	<p>and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him (<i>καταβῆναι...ἐπ’ αὐτόν</i>) (Luke 3:21–22)¹⁰⁵</p>
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While the Ophite account differs from the canonical gospels, which say that it is the Holy Spirit who descended, this difference is to be expected. Gnostic sects often associated Wisdom and the Holy Spirit so closely that they were sometimes identified with one another.¹⁰⁶ The additional idea, that Christ descended on Jesus, reflects the separationist Christology of the author, who apparently found it necessary to defend his divergence from his source, i.e., Luke, by explaining that “many of Jesus’s disciples ... did not realize that Christ had descended on him.”

Now, it must be admitted that none of the wording here is particular to Luke, but neither is there anything specifically Matthean or Markan. There is nevertheless another aspect of the Ophite account of Jesus’s baptism that points specifically to Luke. The Ophite author emphasizes Jesus’s baptism as the *beginning* of his ministry of healing and preaching:

¹⁰⁴ The parallel in Matt 23:34 does not mention Wisdom. The next closest parallel is Wis 7:27 (“Although she [Wisdom] is one, she can do all things ... in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God and prophets”).

¹⁰⁵ Luke 3:22 in Bezae has εἰς for ἐπί. The Vulgate, like the Ophite account, has *in*.

¹⁰⁶ See, e.g., Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.4.1 (Valentinians); 1.29.4 (“Gnostics”); Epiphanius, *Pan.* 21.214 (Simonians). Certain church fathers also seem to identify Wisdom and the Holy Spirit, e.g., Irenaeus, *Epid.* 5; *Haer.* 4.20.1; Theophilus, *Autol.* 1.7, 2.15.

When Christ descended into

Jesus,
then he *began* (*coepisse*)
to perform miracles, to heal, to announce
the unknown Father and to proclaim
himself the Son of the First Man.

Jesus,
when he *began* (*ἀρχόμενος*)
[his ministry],

was about thirty years old.

(Haer. 1.30.13)

(Luke 3:23)

Luke is known for his emphasis on Christ’s baptism as the *beginning* of Jesus’s ministry, e.g., Acts 1:21–22; Acts 10:37–38.¹⁰⁷ The verbal similarity between the accounts is limited but clear; wherever Irenaeus’s Greek is extant, the Latin verb *coepi* is always a translation of ἀρχομαι.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, this one word is more significant than it might first appear. Not only does it represent a redactional emphasis in Luke, ἀρχόμενος also stands out in Luke 3:23 on account of its awkwardness. Luke does not specify what exactly Jesus began doing. The reader must infer from the context that it is a reference to his ministry. English translations today attempt to smooth over the issue by adding “his ministry,” and manuscript variants suggests that some ancient scribes also found it awkward.¹⁰⁹

The word also plays a heightened role in the Ophite account because it supports the author’s separationist Christology. They argue that it is only after Christ descends on Jesus at his baptism that Jesus *begins* to perform miracles (1.30.13). As Irenaeus later complains:

[The Ophites] wish to prove that Christ descended on Jesus and ascended from him by the fact that neither before his baptism nor after his resurrection from the dead did Jesus perform any great deeds according to the statements of his disciples, who however were ignorant of the fact that Jesus had been united with Christ. (1.30.14)¹¹⁰

This sentence nicely illustrates the complex relationship between the Ophite author and his gospel source. On the one hand, the author appeals to his source

¹⁰⁷ So already Jeremias, *Sprache*, 114; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC 3; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 162.

¹⁰⁸ Reynders, *Lexique*, 2:54.

¹⁰⁹ A number of manuscripts (Θ 13 69 124 346 788 f¹³) complement the participle by supplying the infinitive εἶναι. Another (700) has ερχομενος in place of ἀρξάμενος. Additionally, it is worth noting that Luke 3:23 is not a good candidate for the pleonastic ἀρχομαι as has sometimes been alleged, for example, for Acts 1:1.

¹¹⁰ The idea that Jesus’s baptism marks the beginning of his healing miracles appears in Acts 10:37–38: “You yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, *beginning* (ἀρξάμενος) from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.” This statement would have been especially susceptible to Ophite interpretation. On the basis of this verse, they could argue that Jesus “began” performing miracles only at his baptism because it was only after that point that “God was with him.”

as an accurate representation of the events of the life of Jesus that is based on “the statements of his disciples.” On the other hand, he criticizes these same disciples for being “ignorant of the fact that Jesus had been united with Christ.”

The characteristics of the gospel source that can be deduced from the passage above also point to Luke. The source mentions miracles that Jesus performed after his baptism and depicts events both prior to Jesus’s baptism and subsequent to Jesus’s resurrection that do not involve Jesus performing miracles. Mark narrates nothing of Jesus’s actions prior to baptism or after his resurrection. John’s Gospel, which mentions Jesus’s baptism only in a flashback and includes a post-resurrection miracle (1:19–34; 21:1–14), can also be eliminated. Matthew remains a possibility, but the author elsewhere exhibits no knowledge of Matthew. Additionally, Luke’s appeal to “those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning” (Luke 1:1–4) coheres better with the Ophite author’s presupposition that the entire narrative from birth to resurrection represents “the statements of his disciples.”¹¹¹

Fifth, there is other evidence to suggest that Irenaeus’s Ophite source mentioned Luke 3:23. In 3.10.4, Irenaeus refutes a group of “Gnostics” who explicitly interpret the angelophany of Luke 2:8, 11–14 and allude to the “thirty years” in Luke 3:23:

The falsifying Gnostics (*falsarii Gnostici*) claim that these angels came from the Ogdoad and revealed the descent of the Christ on high. But they fall into error when they assert that this Christ and Savior who is from on high was not born, but descended as a dove upon the Jesus of the economy after his baptism. So the angels of their Ogdoad are liars, when they say, *For there is born to you today a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David.* For according to them, neither Christ nor the Savior was born then, but Jesus of the economy, who belongs to the Demiurge of the world, upon whom they claim the Savior from on high descended after he was baptized – that is, after *thirty years*.

These “falsifying Gnostics” should probably be identified with the Ophites of *Haer.* 1.30. While Valentinians also appealed to Luke 3:23 – further attesting to the popularity of this verse – the group in 3.10.4 cannot be the Valentinians, whom Irenaeus in distinguishes from the “Gnostics” both before and after this passage (3.4.3; 3.11.2).¹¹² The separationist Christology described is consistent with that of the Ophites, and the derogatory reference to them as *falsarii Gnostici* is reminiscent of Irenaeus’s two other descriptions of the Ophites as

¹¹¹ Matthew’s Gospel by this time had a reputation for being written by one of Jesus’s disciples (Papius *apud* Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.15–16), but the Ophite author appeals to a plurality of “disciples,” much like Luke’s preface.

¹¹² The allusion to the “thirty years” in Luke 3:23, because it lacks the typical reference to the thirty aeons (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.1.3; 1.3.1; 2.12.1; 2.22.1–6; cf. 2.10.2; 2.12.8; Tertullian, *Praesc.* 33.8; *Val. Exp.* [NHC IX,2] 30.20), also tells against identification with the Valentinians.

ψευδωνύμως Γνωστικοῖς (1.11.1) and *falso nomine Gnostici* (2.35.2).¹¹³ Thus, in *Haer.* 3.10.4 Irenaeus is probably refuting a specific detail of the Ophite source document that he broadly summarized in *Haer.* 1.30. If so, it would confirm the use of Luke in the Ophite account. If not, then this passage bears witness to another non-Valentinian sect that reinterpreted the Lukan narratives of Jesus’s birth and baptism in light of an early gnostic myth.¹¹⁴

The sixth correspondence with Luke’s Gospel is the Ophite claim that Jesus began to “proclaim the unknown father (*incognitum Patrem*) and publicly to acknowledge that he himself is the Son (*Filium*) of the First-Man [i.e., the Father]” (1.30.13).¹¹⁵ There is no way to be certain, but this is probably an interpretive allusion to the double tradition material in Luke 10:22–24:

“All things have been handed over to me by *my Father* (τοῦ πατρός μου), and *no one knows* (οὐδείς γινώσκει) who the Son is except the Father, or who the *Father* (πατήρ) is except the *Son* (ὁ υἱός) and anyone to whom he chooses to reveal him.” Then, turning to the disciples, he said *privately*, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”

The verbal connections between Luke and the Ophite account here are not extensive, but Jesus does speak of an unknown Father and himself as the Son. More importantly, both Marcionites and Valentinians explicitly appealed to this dominical saying about the Father and the Son as a fundamental proof-text for their distinction between the creator God and a higher unknown Father.¹¹⁶ The saying also appears in Matthew, but Luke’s text is the more probable source. Aside from the fact, already mentioned, that the Ophite account elsewhere exhibits no knowledge of Matthean material, the context of Luke’s account is more conducive to a gnostic interpretation. In Luke, unlike Matthew, the saying about the unknown Father is immediately followed by a contrast with what was revealed to the kings and prophets in the OT.¹¹⁷ In other words,

¹¹³ Contra Williams (*Rethinking “Gnosticism,”* 36), the mention of prophets who are inspired by different gods makes clear that 2.35.2 cannot be not a reference to gnostics in general but must be an allusion to 1.30.10–11 (similarly Adelin Rousseau, *Irénée de Lyon, Contre les hérésies, livre IV* [2 vols.; SC 100; Paris: Cerf, 1965], 1:349–50).

¹¹⁴ The reference to the “Ogdoad” in 3.4.10, absent in 1.30, might suggest identification with the so-called Barbelo-Gnostics of *Haer.* 1.29.4. The account in 1.29 does not refer to the infancy narratives – Irenaeus’s summary breaks off prior to that point and begins anew at 1.30 – but one could infer that since the sect of 1.29 is related to that of 1.30, they may also have interpreted Luke’s Gospel in a similar way.

¹¹⁵ In the Ophite account, “First-Man” is another name for the Father (1.30.1).

¹¹⁶ E.g., Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.20.3; 4.6.1–4.7.4; Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.25; Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 19.27; Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 38.

¹¹⁷ The Ophite account’s reference to a “public” declaration may also be picking up the public-private contrast in Luke’s account: the public saying about the Father and the Son (10:22) is followed by what Jesus says “privately (κατ’ ἰδίαν)” to his disciples (10:23).

it is much easier to support the distinction, foundational for both gnostic and Marcionite theology, between an unknown Father and the God of the Jews from Luke's text than from Matthew's.¹¹⁸ This suggests that Luke's Gospel may have been a much more important authority for gnostic theology than has usually been assumed. It also casts serious doubt on all theories that the final form Luke's Gospel was written or redacted to counter Marcion or early gnostics.¹¹⁹ For these theories must posit an implausible scenario in which an anti-gnostic or anti-Marcionite redactor has allowed Luke 10:22–24 to stand as it now does in our canonical Luke.

The seventh and eighth correspondences come from the passion narrative:

At these things
the *Rulers* (*principes*) and the Father of
Jesus [Jaldabaoth] were indignant and
conspired to kill him.

Pilate...called together the chief priests and
the *rulers* (ἄρχοντας) and the people.
(Luke 23:13)

And as he was being led to that [end]
(*et in eo cum adduceretur*),
they say, Christ himself, together with
Wisdom, departed into the incorruptible
Aeon, but Jesus was *crucified* (*cruxifixum*).
(*Haer.* 1.30.13)¹²⁰

And as they led him away
(καὶ ὡς ἀπήγαγον αὐτόν)...
(Luke 23:26)

...they *crucified* (ἐσταύρωσαν) him...
(Luke 23:33)

The Ophite account refers to a group of *principes* (“Rulers”) who conspired to bring about Jesus’s crucifixion. There can be little doubt that ἄρχοντες lies behind *principes*. Wherever else Irenaeus’s Greek is extant, the Latin *principis* is almost always a translation of the Greek ἄρχων or a close cognate.¹²¹ Among the canonical gospels, references to ἄρχοντες in the passion narrative are unique to Luke and widely recognized as Lukan redaction (23:16, 35; 24:20;

¹¹⁸ This could also be one of the reasons why Marcion was attracted to Luke’s Gospel. Luke 10:22–24 probably furnished him with the “exegetical” proof he needed to make a sharp distinction between his unknown God and the God of the OT prophets. It is plausible that these three verses furnished the criterion (or *regula*; see Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.19–20; 4.4, 25) that controlled Marcion’s entire theological and text-critical enterprise.

¹¹⁹ E.g., Joseph B. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts: A Defining Struggle* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2006); Talbert, *Luke and the Gnostics*.

¹²⁰ I have here made the translation of Unger and Dillon more literal so that the correspondences between the Ophite account and Luke 23:24 are more readily recognizable.

¹²¹ Reynders, *Lexique*, 2:253. Basilides appears to involve the archons in the crucifixion, but he also knows Luke (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.26.8–7.27.13; Clement, *Strom.* 1.21 [146.1–3]; Hegemonius, *Acta Archelai* 67.4–5). Similarly, *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth* (NHC VII,2), which may reflect Basilidean influence, describes in detail the role of the “Archons” in the crucifixion.

Acts 4:26; 13:27–28).¹²² This therefore constitutes strong evidence for the use of Luke.

Immediately following the reference to the rulers, the Ophite author includes another phrase in his passion narrative (“and *as* he was led to that end [*et in eo cum adduceretur*]”) that may reflect the influence of Lukan redaction. The Latin *cum* probably represents the *ὡς* of Luke 23:26 (“and *as* they led him away [καὶ ὡς ἀπήγαγον αὐτόν]”; cf. Vulg., *et cum ducerent eum*).¹²³ Luke inserted this adverb into Mark’s account, which simply says “and they led him out (καὶ ἐξάγουσιν αὐτόν)” (Mark 15:20). *ὡς* is also absent from Matt 27:31 (καὶ ἐξάγουσιν αὐτόν). While we must be careful not to make too much of a single word, its proximity to the reference to the “rulers” increases its contribution to the cumulative case.¹²⁴

The ninth correspondence with Luke’s Gospel appears in the Ophite account of Jesus’s resurrection. In this case, the Ophite author alludes to Luke’s

¹²² Compare especially Luke 23:35 with Matt 27:41 and Mark 15:31. On *ἄρχων* as redactional, see Marshall, *Luke*, 869; Jeremias, *Sprache*, 303, 306; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:110, 2:1500, 1556; Bovon, *Luke*, 3:296. The reference to the “anger” (*irascentes*) of the rulers in the Ophite account probably derives from the scoffing found in Luke 23:35 and/or from the “rage” (*ἐφρόαξαν*) of Ps 2:1–2 (quoted by Luke in Acts 4:25–26). Cf. *Gos. Truth* [NHC I,3] 18.22–24, in which Error (=Yahweh?) gets “angry” with Jesus and has him crucified, and Clement, who notes that Valentinus said that death is the work of the creator of the world (*Strom.* 4.13 [89.4]). From these Quispel (“The Original Doctrine of Valentinus the Gnostic,” *VC* 50 [1996]: 333) concludes that Valentinus “must have said that the demiurge murdered Jesus.” If so, this may be further evidence of Valentinus’s dependence on the Ophite account.

It is possible that *principes ... operatos ad occidendum eum* (“the rulers worked to kill him”) was influenced by Luke 19:47, where the *οἱ πρῶτοι* (“rulers”) – also redactional – are said to be “seeking to destroy him (*ἐξήτουν αὐτόν ἀπολέσαι*).” The Vulgate translates *οἱ πρῶτοι* in Luke 19:47 *principes*. Paul’s reference to “rulers” in 1 Cor 2:8 could also be considered. But it is implausible that the Ophite author, who insists that Christ departed prior to the crucifixion and that only the human Jesus was crucified, is here dependent on a verse which refers to the crucifixion of the “Lord of Glory.” Additionally, in the Ophite account and in Luke, the rulers are responding to the teaching of Jesus, whereas this is not mentioned in 1 Cor 2.

¹²³ Irenaeus’s Latin translator normally has *adduco* for *ἄγω* (Reynders, *Lexique*, 2:7).

¹²⁴ Immediately following this, the Ophite account says, “Christ himself, together with Wisdom, departed into the incorruptible Aeon, but Jesus was crucified.” It is impossible to be certain, but in light of later accounts, e.g., Clement, *Exc.* 1.1, this statement may be an interpretation of Luke 23:46 (“Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!’ And having said this he breathed his last”). Hippolytus, in summarizing the account of Justin the Gnostic (or his source, the *Book of Baruch*), which offers an alternative version of the Ophite myth, alludes more clearly to Luke 23:46 at this point (*Haer.* 5.26.32)

Emmaus pericope, another passage included on Irenaeus's list of stories unique to Luke:¹²⁵

And Jesus himself (καὶ αὐτὸς Ἰησοῦς; cf. Vulg., et ipse Iesus) drew near...but their eyes were restrained that they might not to recognize him (τοῦ μὴ ἐπιγινῶναι αὐτόν; cf. Vulg., ne eum agnoscerent). (Luke 24:15–16)

But the disciples seeing him risen, *did not recognize him (non eum cognouerunt), no not even Jesus himself (ne ipsum quidem Iesum). (Haer. 1.30.13)¹²⁶.*

The verbal correspondences are relatively clear.¹²⁷ Especially noteworthy is the emphatic *ipsum*, which echoes αὐτός in Luke 24:15. The employment of καὶ αὐτός to refer to Jesus in Luke 24:15 is another well-known and distinctive characteristic of Lukan style and redaction.¹²⁸ It would have been natural for Luke's αὐτός to stand out to early readers. And that it did so is confirmed by Tertullian, who in his refutation of Marcion comments on these verses noting that "it did not appear that it was he *himself (ipse)*" (*Marc. 4.43.3*).¹²⁹ Modern translators of Irenaeus have struggled to make sense of the awkward redundancy of inserting the phrase *ne ipsum quidem Iesum* after *non eum cognouerunt*.¹³⁰ Yet this awkwardness itself may be an indication that the Ophite author is alluding to Luke. As Painchaud has observed, "a word or a group of words intended as an allusion must show some degree of strangeness or peculiarity in their context; they must appear as incomprehensible, or at least unexpected, their very strangeness being a hint, a signal directed toward the reader."¹³¹

The articular infinitive construction, τοῦ μὴ ἐπιγινῶναι αὐτόν, in Luke 24:16 is also characteristically Lukan.¹³² Admittedly, the Latin (*non eum*

¹²⁵ Similarly Outi Lehtipuu, "'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God': The Transformation of the Flesh in the Early Christian Debates Concerning Resurrection," in *Metamorphoses: Resurrection, Body and Transformative Practices in Early Christianity* (eds. T. K. Seim and J. Økland; Ekstasis 1; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 162 n. 97.

¹²⁶ I have added "himself" to the translation of Unger and Dillon to reflect the presence of *ipsum* in the Latin text.

¹²⁷ The Ophite account is much closer to Luke 24:15–16 than to the next nearest parallel, John 21:4: "Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus (ἔστη Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὸν αἰγιαλόν, οὐ μέντοι ᾔδεισαν οἱ μαθηταὶ ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἔστιν)."

¹²⁸ So already Jeremias, *Sprache*, 37–38, 314; Wilhelm Michaelis, "Das unbetonte καὶ αὐτός bei Lukas," *ST 4* (1950): 86–93; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:120, 2:1555; and more recently, Adelbert Denaux and Rita Corstjens, *The Vocabulary of Luke: An Alphabetical Presentation and a Survey of Characteristic and Noteworthy Words and Word Groups in Luke's Gospel* (BTS 10; Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 95.

¹²⁹ Incidentally, this is another place where Marcion's text appears to be dependent on Lukan redaction.

¹³⁰ See, e.g., the discussion in Unger and Dillon, *Irenaeus 1*, 266–67 n. 31.

¹³¹ Painchaud, "Use of Scripture," 136.

¹³² Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:108.

cognouerunt) of the Ophite account does not mimic this Lukan construction, but its similarity to the Vulgate’s translation (*ne eum agnoscerent*), along with the fact that Irenaeus’s Latin translator often renders ἐπιγινώσκω with *cognosco*, shows that the Ophite account probably reflects Luke’s Greek.¹³³

Finally, as in Luke, the Ophite account ends with Jesus’s ascension into heaven. The wording used to describe the ascension, however, appears depend on the Longer Ending of Mark (LE) rather than on Luke:

He taught these things to a few of his disciples, whom he knew could grasp such great mysteries, And he was <i>taken up into heaven, where Jesus sits at the right hand (sic receptus est in caelum, Iesu sedente ad dexteram) of his father Ialdabaoth. (Haer. 1.30.14)</i> ¹³⁴	So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, <i>was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand (ἀνελήμθη εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ ἐκάθισεν ἐκ δεξιῶν) of God. (Mark 16:19)</i>	Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures While he blessed them, he parted from them and <i>was carried up into heaven (ἀνεφέρετο εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν).</i> (Luke 24:45, 51)
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The wording of the OL of Mark 16:19 (*receptus est in caelis et sedit ad dexteram*) is a nearly verbatim match with the Latin of *Haer.* 1.30.14. Although it now sounds traditional/creedal to the modern ear, this sequence of words and combination of themes is otherwise unique to the LE in the period before Irenaeus: all other early parallels include either Christ’s ascension or his heavenly session, but not both. Given the exclusive use of Luke in the rest of the Ophite account, it appears that the Ophite author has conflated Luke’s ending with the LE of Mark.¹³⁵ The sudden change in source is odd, but potential explanations are readily available. If the Ophite author relied on a manuscript of Luke that did not include καὶ ἀνεφέρετο εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, e.g., ⲛ* D it sy^s, he or she may have felt the need to supplement this otherwise Lukan account of Jesus’s life with material from the LE. In any case, the author probably drew on the LE at this point because the LE, unlike Luke, mentions Jesus’s heavenly session – an aspect of the narrative on which the Ophite author comments extensively (1.30.14).

If isolated from the others, any one of the above correspondences between Luke and Irenaeus’s Ophite source might be attributed to Ophite dependence on a free-floating oral tradition or to mere coincidence. Yet when all nine or so

¹³³ Reynders, *Lexique*, 1:66, 2:55. Additionally, wherever the Greek is extant the Latin translator never has *cognosco* for εἶδω/οἶδα, the verb in John 21:4 (*Lexique*, 1:62, 2:55). Rousseau and Doutreleau (*Irénée I*, 1:309), retrovert *non eum cognouerunt* to οὐκ αὐτὸν ἔγνωσαν.

¹³⁴ I have modified the translation of Unger and Dillon so that the verbal and conceptual correspondences with Luke and the LE are more easily recognizable for English readers.

¹³⁵ If so, the Ophite account is one of the earliest extant witnesses to the LE.

correspondences are taken together, such explanations become implausible. The Ophite account follows the overall sequence of Luke's Gospel closely. It exhibits knowledge of passages that are unique to Luke, some of which were already considered so in the second century. At a number of points the Ophite account also exhibits dependence on Lukan redaction. The various correspondences are not limited to one section of Luke's Gospel, e.g., the infancy narratives, but come from throughout Luke's text – from the beginning, the middle, and the end. Nor are they limited to a single strand of Luke's sources, but come from single, double, and triple tradition passages. We can therefore be confident that the Ophite author made use of a gospel text that was for all practical purposes indistinguishable from the final form of Luke.¹³⁶

3.2.3 The Ophite Response to Luke 24 and Its Implications

Because the Ophite account is both early and influential, its response to Luke's resurrection narrative may be especially significant. It includes a pointed criticism of Jesus's disciples and appears to do so on the basis of both Luke's Gospel and Paul's first letter to the Corinthians:

Christ, however, did not forget about him [Jesus] but sent down on him a certain power that raised him up again in his body. This body they call *ensouled* and *spiritual*, because he left the worldly elements [of the body] in the world. But when the disciples saw that he had risen from the dead, *they did not recognize him*; no, not even *Jesus himself* [did they recognize], namely, in what manner he rose from the dead. This they claim was a very great error among the disciples: they [the disciples] thought he had risen in a worldly body, since they were ignorant of the fact that *Flesh and blood do not inherit the kingdom of heaven*. They [the Gnostics] wish to prove that Christ descended on Jesus and ascended from him by the fact that neither before his baptism nor after his resurrection from the dead did Jesus perform any great deeds according to the statements of his disciples, who however were ignorant of the fact that Jesus had been united with Christ, and the incorruptible Aeon with the Hebdomad. They [the disciples] say that the *ensouled* body is a worldly body. (*Haer.* 1.30.13–14)¹³⁷

In this text, the doubt motif – or more specifically, the non-recognition motif in Luke 24:16 – is directly linked to what the Ophite author considered the “very great error” of the disciples: they thought Jesus rose in a “worldly body,” i.e., in the flesh. The context suggests that the Ophite author interprets Luke's statement that the disciples “did not recognize him” to mean that they failed to recognize the kind of body in which Jesus rose.¹³⁸ For the Ophite author, Jesus rose in a body that was *animale* (= ψυχικόν) and *spiritale* (= πνευματικόν), but

¹³⁶ I leave open the possibility that the Ophite author may depend on a Western text form.

¹³⁷ I have modified Unger and Dillon's translation of this last sentence on the basis of Rousseau and Doutreleau, *Irénée I*, 1:310. Other modifications have been made for the sake of clarity or have already been discussed above.

¹³⁸ The Latin of this sentence is awkward, not least because of the allusion to Luke 24:15–16. See further the discussion of the syntax in Unger and Dillon, *Irenaeus I*, 266–267 n. 31.

the "ignorant" disciples of Jesus "say that the *animale* (= ψυχικόν) body was a worldly body."¹³⁹ The Ophite author says that this failure to recognize the true nature of Jesus's resurrection body is because the disciples did not know Paul's teaching that "flesh and blood do not inherit the kingdom of heaven" (cf. 1 Cor 15:50).¹⁴⁰ This bold claim is a strong indication that modern materializing-trajectory theories have it backwards: Luke 24 reflects not a materializing tendency but early testimony that is later spiritualized in light of 1 Cor 15.

The Ophite author finds in Luke's appearance narrative an opportunity not only to criticize Jesus's disciples but also to argue for a docetic understanding of Jesus's resurrection. This then offers at least a partial confirmation of my reconstruction of Ignatius's situation. Ignatius, it will be recalled, seems to have edited Luke's resurrection appearance tradition for fear that it was vulnerable to docetic interpretation and for fear of criticism of the apostles for their doubt. Although Ignatius and Irenaeus seem to be responding to two different types of docetists, one anthropomorphosist and one separationist, it is noteworthy that Ignatius's opponents and the Ophites are roughly contemporary.¹⁴¹ In any case, two of the earliest known readers, one proto-orthodox and the other gnostic, considered Luke's resurrection narratives susceptible to (or compatible with) docetic interpretation. Not long after, Marcion also found Luke 24 amenable to his criticism of the apostles and to his docetic Christology (see Chapter 6).

The significance of the Ophite use of Luke 24 should not be underestimated. These early gnostics, though they wished to deny that Jesus rose in the flesh, nevertheless traced this belief back to those whom they considered the original eyewitnesses of the resurrection appearances. They do not reject the authenticity of the tradition that claims that the idea of the resurrection of the flesh goes back to the apostles themselves. Rather they argue that the apostles were wrong.¹⁴² In other words, the Ophite author, though he or she would no doubt protest the labels, would admit that "orthodoxy" preceded "heresy." This is a remarkable admission in an ancient cultural context where older views were by

¹³⁹ Given the author's interest in 1 Cor 15, the insistence that Christ's body was both psychic and spiritual may be influenced by 1 Cor 15:44: "if there is a ψυχικόν body, there is also a πνευματικόν body."

¹⁴⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:50 reads "kingdom of God" rather than "kingdom of heaven." Since there do not appear to be any manuscripts of 1 Corinthians that reflect the latter, the difference is perhaps due to an unconscious conflation with Matthew at some point during the transmission the Ophite account.

¹⁴¹ Logan (*Gnostic Truth*, 30) suggests the possibility that the Ophites be equated with (some of) the opponents of Ignatius. However, Irenaeus seems to imply that the sects of *Haer.* 1.29–31 derive not from the various sects described in 1.23.5–1.28.2 but are rather an offshoot from a group of Simonians, described in 1.23.3–4, who venerated Simon Magus. If so, Rome is a more likely provenance than Antioch or Asia Minor.

¹⁴² Contra, Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 179.

default privileged as trustworthy and anything new was regarded with suspicion.¹⁴³

In light of this, the Ophite author must walk a very fine line in order to justify his rejection of traditional views of resurrection and Christology. This challenging task is most easily understood if we employ the concept of rewritten Bible. In the Ophite account, Luke's narrative is interpretively rewritten in precisely the same way as the OT narratives, illustrating the typical creative tension that exists between the authority of the biblical text and its rewritten counterpart. The biblical narratives, both the OT and Luke, are treated as authoritative and historically reliable, yet the meaning is subverted.¹⁴⁴ Sometimes individual biblical statements are used as prooftexts. At other times the details of the biblical narrative are radically reinterpreted and supplemented, so that they can be made to fit within a gnostic system that is at odds with the ostensible meaning of the biblical text itself.

A few examples of the Ophite use of Luke are sufficient to illustrate this. Luke's infancy narratives are taken to be historical but are understood in accordance with the author's separationist Christology: the virgin birth guarantees that when Christ eventually descended onto Jesus he would "find a pure vessel." Similarly, the descent of the Spirit at Jesus's baptism is supplemented and reinterpreted to be a descent of Wisdom (= the Spirit) *and* Christ. This change is justified by stating that, "many of his disciples did not realize ... that Christ descended on him." Next, to support its separationist account of the crucifixion, the Ophite account appeals to the fact that Jesus did no miracles before his baptism or after his resurrection, "according to the statements of his disciples, who ... were ignorant of the fact that Jesus had been united with Christ."¹⁴⁵ In other words, the Ophite author assumes that Luke's Gospel is historically reliable in that it is based on the eyewitness testimony of Jesus's disciples, but thinks it needs supplementation and reinterpretation because the eyewitnesses were ignorant of events occurring on the spiritual plane. Finally, Luke's account of the resurrection is treated in much the same way. For the Ophite author, Luke 24:15–16 accurately reports that Jesus's disciples "did not recognize him," not even "Jesus himself," but this is used to demonstrate that the disciples were wrong to conclude that Jesus rose in the flesh. Luke 24:15–16 serves as a prooftext that the disciples were ignorant, and 1 Cor 15:50 is cited as confirmation of this.

¹⁴³ So Tertullian, *Marc.* 5.19; *Praescr.* 35.

¹⁴⁴ Similarly, Hippolytus notes that the Docetae affirm that Jesus did "all things as it has been written in the Gospels" (*Haer.* 8.10.7; similarly 7.26.8). He then illustrates how every detail is reinterpreted in accordance with their mythology.

¹⁴⁵ According to Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.35.1–2, Theodotus of Byzantium, who was influenced by the "school of Gnostics," made a similar argument.

Not surprisingly, Irenaeus, referring to the Ophites and other gnostics, later complains that they “indeed recognize the Scriptures [both OT and NT] but they pervert their interpretation, as we have shown in the first book” (*Haer.* 3.12.12). However, these radical reinterpretations are justified in an ingenious way, by an appeal to additional, secret revelation by the risen Jesus to a select few disciples: “After this resurrection he tarried yet for eighteen months. When sentient knowledge came upon him, he learned what the truth was. He taught these things to a few of his disciples, whom he knew could grasp such great mysteries” (*Haer.* 1.30.14). By allowing a few of the apostles to receive gnosis while the rest remained in error and ignorance, the Ophite author can appeal to the authority of the apostolic tradition preserved in Luke while simultaneously criticizing and correcting what he finds problematic with it.

This strategy is similar to what we find in other instances of “rewritten Bible.” The closest analog from the Second Temple period is the retelling of Genesis-Exodus in *Jubilees*. The Law of Moses is cited and quoted as authoritative but modified by additional, angelic revelation that represents the “correct” interpretation.¹⁴⁶ The strategy of appealing to a secret post-resurrection revelation of gnostic teaching is common among gnostic authors, a number of whom creatively expand this notion into full-blown dialogues between the risen Christ and one or more disciples.¹⁴⁷ While the Ophite account itself does not participate in the post-resurrection dialogue genre, it may have helped inspire (or set a precedent for) its creation by marking the resurrection appearances as the setting wherein gnosis was first revealed. If, as Irenaeus seems to suggest, the Ophites were among the original Gnostics, this theory is certainly plausible. And there is at least one important gnostic dialogue that could be cited as possible support for this theory. The *Apocryphon of John*, which all agree shares a close relationship with Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.29–30, includes a rewritten version of Genesis that is strikingly similar to – but more developed than – the Ophite myth and frames it within a post-resurrection dialogue between the apostle John and Christ.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Anders Klostergaard Petersen, “Textual Fidelity, Elaboration, Supersession or Enrichment? Typological Reflections on the Phenomenon of Rewritten Scripture,” in *Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years: Texts, Terms, or Techniques? A Last Dialogue with Geza Vermes* (ed. József Zsengellér; JSJSup 166; Leiden: Brill, 2014) 33–35.

¹⁴⁷ On the gnostic use of this genre, see the seminal studies of Kurt Rudolph, “Der gnostische ‘Dialog’ als literarisches Genus,” in *Probleme der koptischen Literatur* (ed. Peter Nagel; Halle-Wittenberg: Wissenschaftliche Beiträge der Martin-Luther-Universität, 1968), 85–107; PHEME PERKINS, *The Gnostic Dialogue: The Early Church and the Crisis of Gnosticism* (New York: Paulist, 1980). See also the summary of recent research in Judith Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre: Erscheinungen des Auferstandenen als Rahmenerzählungen frühchristlicher Dialoge* (TU 146; Berlin: Akademie, 2000), 1–19.

¹⁴⁸ See further Chapter 5. The post-resurrection dialogue in the *Apocryphon of James* (NHC I,2) may also have been inspired in part by the Ophite account. Jesus appears to all

3.2.4 Marcion and the Ophites: Luke's Text and the Biblical Canon

It is worth exploring some further implications of the Ophite account for the status and authority of Luke's Gospel in the first half of the second century. As already mentioned, the Ophite account, like other gnostic texts and examples of rewritten Bible, offers creatively interpreted and expanded versions of certain stories from Genesis. However, whereas other accounts seldom include more than the creation or flood narratives, the Ophite author takes an interest in the OT as a whole and in Luke's Gospel as well.

the apostles, but takes Peter and James aside to provide them a secret revelation before ascending to heaven. Like the Ophite account, the *Apocryphon of James* indicates that this secret teaching and ascension took place five hundred and fifty days (= eighteen months) after Jesus's resurrection. While it is not possible to provide a full argument here, the *Apocryphon of James* reads as if it is attempting to harmonize the forty days of Acts 1:3 with the five hundred fifty days of the Ophite account:

The Savior appeared,
after departing from us
while we gazed after him.

And when he had said these things,
as they were looking on, he was lifted up,
and a cloud took him out of their sight. And
while they were gazing into heaven
as he went....
(Acts 1:9–10)

And five hundred and fifty days
since he had risen from the dead,
we said to him, "Have you departed and
removed yourself from us?" And Jesus
said, "No, but I shall go to the place
from whence I came"....

After his resurrection,
he tarried yet for eighteen months...

"Leave James and Peter to me that I may
Fill them." And having called these two,
he drew them aside and....

He taught these things to those few disciples
of his who knew he could grasp such great
mysteries.

(*Ap. Jas.* 2.17–24, 33–39, trans. Francis E. Williams, "The Apocryphon of James," in *Nag Hammadi Codex I [The Jung Codex]* [2 vols.; ed. Harold W. Attridge; NHS 22–23; Leiden: Brill, 1985], 1:30–31)

(Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30.14)

The question, "Have you departed and removed yourself from us?" is telling. This question is asked in response to a matter-of-fact statement, which echoes Acts 1:9–10, that the apostles had already seen Jesus depart from them. The account is trying to reconcile a tension between two ascension traditions, one like the Ophite account in which Jesus gives secret teaching to a select few and ascends to heaven about a year and a half after his resurrection, and one like Acts 1:9–10, in which Jesus ascends considerably earlier while the apostles were "gazing" after him. The author seems to accept the account in Acts but supplements it with a later post-ascension appearance. Key phrases, "as they were looking on" and "while they were gazing" in Acts 1:9–10, are Lukan, making dependence on Acts highly probable.

One of the more remarkable aspects of the Ophite account is that its transition from the OT material to Luke's narrative is completely seamless.¹⁴⁹ In fact, without prior knowledge of the OT and of Luke as a separate book, there is nothing at all in the Ophite account to indicate to the reader that such a transition has taken place. The OT and Luke are treated not as separate narratives but as a single narrative of salvation history that began in Genesis. The Ophite author presupposes, without argument, that Luke's narrative is simply a continuation of the OT story.¹⁵⁰ In other words, the Ophite author appears to be unaware of Marcion's distinction between the Gospel on the one hand and the Law and the Prophets on the other. Rather, the Ophite author reads Luke as if it is part of a single, unified corpus of books that includes the Law and the Prophets. The Ophite account presupposes rather than argues for Luke's presence in this scriptural corpus, which suggests that Luke's Gospel had enjoyed this status for some time past.¹⁵¹ The Ophite account may therefore constitute early evidence for a Christian Bible, i.e., a corpus of Scripture that includes both Jewish and Christian writings. This is not to say that it contained the entire NT, but as we have seen, it also quotes 1 Corinthians as authoritative. So we can conclude that Ophite biblical corpus included the Law, the Prophets, the Gospel of Luke, and at least one letter of Paul.

¹⁴⁹ See Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30.11: "They arrange the prophets in the following order: To Jaladabaoth belong Moses, Joshua son of Nun, Amos, and Habakkuk; to the previously mentioned Jao belong Samuel, Nathan, Jonah, and Michah; to Sabaoth, Elijah, Joel, and Zechariah; to Adonai, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Daniel; to Eloï, Tobit and Haggai; to Horeus, Michah and Nahum; to Astaphaeus, Ezra and Zephaniah. Each one of these, then, glorified his own Father and God. Wisdom [Prounikos] herself spoke much through them about First-Man and the incorruptible Aeon and about Christ on high: She admonished and reminded them of the incorruptible light of First-Man and of the descent of Christ from on high. The Rulers were terrified by these things, and, while they were marveling at the novelty of the things announced by the Prophets, Prounikos functioned through Jaldabaoth – though he was ignorant of what she was doing – and emitted two men, the one from the sterile Elizabeth, the other from the Virgin Mary." Jesus is here introduced as a new character, but he is not necessarily the principal character. Throughout the Ophite account, the principal characters are the Holy Spirit and Wisdom, and the story of Jesus is merely the last in a series of stories in which Wisdom and the Holy Spirit act behind the scenes of human history to undermine the Creator God.

¹⁵⁰ Possibly the author was influenced by Luke's imitation of the style of the Septuagint in his infancy narratives.

¹⁵¹ According to Nickelsburg, the "tendency" in cases of rewritten Bible "to follow the ancient texts more closely may be seen as a reflection of their developing canonical status" ("Bible Rewritten," 89). While Nickelsburg is here referring to Second Temple texts, it seems to be an apt description of the Ophite view of the Law, the prophets and Luke. The idea that Luke's Gospel had already achieved Scriptural status at an early date is also suggested by 1 Tim 5:18, which quotes Luke as Scripture (so John P. Meier, "The Inspiration of Scripture: But What Counts as Scripture?" *Mid-Stream* 38 [1999]: 76–78).

What other books, if any, this early corpus included is unknown.¹⁵² But the apparent limitation to Luke and Paul emboldens me to hazard a bit of speculation about the possible influence of the Ophites on Marcion. Perhaps Marcion's limitation to Luke and Paul may not have been all that novel after all. He may have started with a corpus like that of the Ophites, but then rejected the OT books as belonging to a different God.¹⁵³ This coheres quite well with Tertullian's description of Marcion's lost work, the *Antitheses*, which seems to indicate that Marcion's text-critical enterprise was criticizing an earlier movement to combine the Gospel along with the Law and the prophets into one corpus:

If that gospel which among us is ascribed to Luke ... is the same that Marcion by his *Antitheses* accuses of *having been falsified by the upholders of Judaism with a view to its being so combined into one corpus with the Law and the prophets (interpolatum a protectoribus Iudaismi ad concorporationem legis et prophetarum)* that they might also pretend that Christ had that origin.... (Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.4.4)¹⁵⁴

If my readings of Marcion and the Ophite account are correct, then both Marcion and the Ophites attest to an early second-century Christian canon that included the Law, the prophets, Luke and Paul.

It is plausible that Marcion was at one point influenced by the Ophites, whose account appears to have circulated in Rome in the middle of the second century. Not only does Marcion complain about the kind of integration between the Gospel and the OT that we find assumed by the Ophite account, he also shares certain characteristics with the Ophites: he uses only Luke, takes up Luke's doubt motif to criticize the apostles, and interprets Luke 24 in a docetic

¹⁵² It is possible that the Ophite canon at some point also included Matthew, Mark, and John. As I have noted, the ascension narrative appears to be based on Mark 16:19. An alternative Ophite account summarized by Ps.-Tertullian explicitly quotes John 3:14 as a proof-text from the "Gospel of the Lord" (*Haer.* 2.2). Epiphanius later points out the same appeal to John 3:14 in his account of the Ophites, but in Epiphanius's account John 3:14 is quoted in conjunction with Matt 10:16 (*Pan.* 37.7.1–6). Whether the earliest Ophite Bible contained only Luke or some or all of these other gospels cannot be determined with certainty. Ps.-Tertullian's Ophite source is similar to but probably different from, and probably later than, that of Irenaeus.

¹⁵³ This theory does not require Marcion to have known and rejected the other gospels.

¹⁵⁴ I follow here the translation of Evans but modify it on the basis of Matthias Klinghardt, "Markion vs. Lukas: Plädoyer für die Wiederaufnahme eines alten Falles," *NTS* 52 (2006): 485. The latter argues that *concorporationem* is to be understood as a reference to the creation of a literary corpus. See the varying responses to Klinghardt in Christopher M. Hays, "Marcion vs Luke: A Response to the Plädoyer of Matthias Klinghardt," *ZNW* 99 (2008): 219; Moll, *Arch-Heretic*, 102 n. 118. In support of Klinghardt's reading, we may also compare Tertullian, *Praescr.* 30.9: "For since Marcion separated the New Testament from the Old, he is (necessarily) subsequent to that which he separated, inasmuch as it was only in his power to separate what was (previously) united" (*ANF* 3:257). Tertullian here seems to envision a single biblical corpus divided into two testaments by Marcion (cf. Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.19, which depicts Marcion separating Law and Gospel).

manner (see Chapter 6). Even the way that Marcion pits Paul against the disciples of Jesus can be paralleled with the way the Ophite account quotes 1 Cor 15:50 to demonstrate that the disciples were in error. These tantalizing connections between Marcion and the Ophites do not necessarily prove a direct relationship between the two, but they do make it probable. If the relationship did exist, it is almost certainly Marcion who was dependent on the Ophites rather than vice versa. Not only does the Ophite account appear to predate Marcion, but the Ophites' non-polemical assumption of the unity of the OT and Luke's Gospel betrays no concerns about Marcion's rejection of this unity.

Finally, the Ophite use of Luke's infancy narratives is an important witness to the early textual history of Luke's Gospel. We can now safely conclude that the infancy narratives were already a part of Luke's Gospel in the early second century. The Ophite author unapologetically presupposes that the infancy narratives are part of unified, authoritative account of Jesus's life that can be interpreted in a way that is supportive of separationist Christology. Indeed, the author assumes that the whole narrative, including events prior to Jesus's baptism and after his resurrection, is based on "the statements of [Jesus's] disciples." The Ophite author views the infancy narratives as original to and not a later addition to Luke. Thus, even if the Ophite account is dated as late as the 140s, it shows that the infancy narratives must have been an established part of Luke well before Marcion published his own gospel. While this does not prove that the infancy narratives are original to Luke's Gospel, it does demonstrate that they were not, as John Knox, Joseph B. Tyson, and Markus Vinzent have claimed, added in response to Marcion.¹⁵⁵ Though the possibility still remains that Marcion knew of an older version of Luke without the infancy narratives, the Ophite account does in part corroborate the testimony of early church fathers that Marcion removed them. Similarly, we can also safely reject Talbert's suggestion that the infancy narratives were added to counter early gnostics.¹⁵⁶ The Ophite account shows, to the contrary, that early gnostics found the infancy narratives quite compatible with their system of thought. In fact, Luke's infancy narratives are a foundational given for the Christology of many second-century gnostic sects.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ John Knox, *Marcion and the New Testament: An Essay in the Early History of the Canon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), 87; Tyson, *Defining Struggle*, 90–100; Markus Vinzent, *Marcion and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels* (Studia Patristica Supplements 2; Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 106.

¹⁵⁶ *Luke and the Gnostics*, 111.

¹⁵⁷ E.g., the Basilideans (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.26.8–9), the Docetae (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 8.10.6–7), and both Eastern and Western Valentinians (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.15.3; Hippolytus, *Haer.* 6.35.2–7; Clement, *Exc.* 60.1).

3.3 Conclusion

If the original purpose of Luke 24 was to counter incipient docetism, it is reasonable to expect the earliest readers, whether docetists or antidocetists, to exhibit some cognizance of this fact. Yet a very different assessment has emerged from our examination of the way the stories of Luke 24 were understood and retold by Ignatius of Antioch and by the Ophites. Each are arguably representative of the some of the earliest readers of Luke 24. And while their accounts are not directly related to one another, they represent opposing views of Jesus's resurrection, antidocetic and docetic, respectively. Far from discovering a ready-made apologetic against docetism, Ignatius's response to the Lukan (or Luke-like) group appearance story known to him shows that he feared the story might be overly susceptible to docetic interpretation. Ignatius therefore edited the story substantially in order to render it useful to his antidocetic polemic. The Ophites, for their part, interpret Luke 24 along docetic lines, and so seem to confirm Ignatius's fears. Central also to both responses is the characterization of the disciples with respect to the doubt and non-recognition motifs. The Ophites appeal to the non-recognition in order to criticize the disciples and to prove that Jesus did not rise in the flesh. Ignatius removes the doubt motif in its entirety and portrays the apostles as heroic martyrs. By so doing, he protects the reputation of the apostles and at the same time guards against docetic interpretation of the touch proof by claiming, *contra* Luke, that it was successful.

The fact that both Ignatius and the Ophites viewed Luke 24 as susceptible to docetic interpretation *prima facie* indicates that Luke's redaction of the appearance stories is not *anti*-docetic but *ante*-docetic. Moreover, neither side, proto-orthodox or gnostic, construed the doubt as an indication that the apostles lacked gullibility, as if their skepticism would thereby render their subsequent belief in the resurrection of the flesh more secure. In fact, the evidence from Ignatius and the Ophites suggests that quite the opposite was the case: Ignatius's omission of the doubt and the Ophite author's appeal to it imply that the doubts of the disciples were more of a liability than an asset in antidocetic apologetic.

A number of the modifications exhibited in these early retellings of Luke 24 will reappear with variations in later authors. Among docetists and gnostics, the doubt motif will provide an opportunity either to criticize the apostles as inferior and/or to support a docetic view of the resurrection (see Chapters 5, 6, 7). Conversely, a pattern of suppression of the doubt motif can be observed in proto-orthodox apologetics (Chapter 4). Like Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3, other proto-orthodox writings that are directed specifically against docetism change the story so as (i) to avoid the impression of a sudden appearance of Jesus; (ii) to confirm that the apostles actually touched Jesus's body; and (iii) to indicate that they believed rather than disbelieved as a result (Chapters 6 and 8).

Chapter 4

The Great Omissions in Proto-Orthodox Apologetics: Doubts, Proofs, and the Resurrection of Jesus

In the previous chapter, I examined two early responses to the post-resurrection appearance stories, one proto-orthodox and the other gnostic. This chapter and the next explore further examples of each. As in the previous chapter, the goal will be to understand what each author is *doing* with the story. For each text, I seek to identify to the extent possible (i) the source(s) known to each author; (ii) any significant changes the author makes to the story; (iii) the motivations for the changes; and (iv) when applicable, potential implications for exegesis of the canonical narratives. The approach in this chapter, however, differs in two important ways. First, because I survey *many* texts in an attempt to demonstrate some larger patterns, the discussion of each text will necessarily be briefer than in Chapter 3. For the most part, detailed source analysis has been restricted to the earlier texts, and I have relied on scholarly consensus for later texts whenever possible.¹

The second difference is more substantial. While some proto-orthodox authors follow a procedure similar to Ignatius and edit the appearance narratives to fit their polemical purposes, others do not mention the appearance tradition at all, or make only the briefest of allusions to it. Although some instances of omission are insignificant because Jesus's resurrection is irrelevant to the topic of discussion, there are a remarkable number of cases in which proto-orthodox authors seem to have made a deliberate choice *not* to appeal to the appearance narratives when defending the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh in general or even when defending Jesus's own resurrection. It will therefore be necessary in this chapter to examine a set of texts in which there is little or no discernable use of a post-resurrection appearance narrative. In these cases, the goal will be to determine if the non-use was the result of a deliberate omission, and if so, to identify the motivation(s) for the omission. Identifying motivations is necessarily a more speculative enterprise, but I have made every attempt to anchor my proposals in the statements of the author himself and/or in relevant historical parallels.

¹ I have also devoted less space to introductory matters, especially for well-known authors.

I draw attention to four main tendencies and apologetic situations. The first is the avoidance of the appearance narratives in arguments that defend the proto-orthodox doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh. This trend is noteworthy because most of these authors maintain that Jesus's resurrection is paradigmatic for the future resurrection of believers. The second pattern is related to the first, and in some ways makes it all the more remarkable. Despite the alleged emphasis on the physicality of Jesus's resurrection body in Luke's and John's accounts, the apologists rarely appeal to the so-called physical proofs of touching and eating in their defenses of the resurrection of the flesh. The third tendency might be considered a corollary to the second. In resurrection apologetics, appeals to the fulfillment of prophecy occur far more frequently than references to the physical proofs.

The fourth trend is that when the apologists do discuss or allude to the appearance narratives, they consistently omit all references to the post-resurrection doubts of the apostles. Given the frequency with which this motif appears in the canonical resurrection narratives (Matt 28:17; Luke 24:11, 38, 41; John 20:25, 27), it has often been judged an essential element of the appearance tradition. Yet the doubts of the apostles are mentioned only on the rarest of occasions among proto-orthodox authors before Origen. Chapters 6 and 8 will explore some of those rare instances in which the doubt is explicitly addressed. Examples in the present chapter are limited to those for which there is evidence to suggest that proto-orthodox authors intentionally suppressed the doubt motif. Chapters 5 and 7 discuss the opposite tendency, i.e., to emphasize the doubt motif, among docetist and gnostic authors.

4.1 *1 Clement*

This deliberative letter, written from Rome to Corinth sometime during the last two decades of first century CE, is one of the earliest extra-canonical witnesses to Christian belief in the resurrection of the flesh.² Though a specific author is

² The traditional date of composition is 95–96 CE (J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers. Part I: S. Clement of Rome* [2 vols.; 2nd ed.; London: MacMillan, 1890], 2:346–58; Annie Jaubert, *Clement de Rome, Epître aux Corinthiens* [SC 167; Paris: Cerf, 1971; repr., corrected ed., 2000], 20). While still maintained as the most plausible by some (Donald A. Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome* [NovTSup 34; Leiden: Brill, 1973], 1–6; Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, 1:24–25; Andreas Lindemann, “The First Epistle of Clement,” in *The Apostolic Fathers: An Introduction* [ed. Wilhelm Pratscher; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2010]), the reliability of its precision has increasingly been brought into question. Extreme dates, as early as 70 (Thomas J. Herron, “The Most Probable Date of the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians,” *StPatr* 21 [1989]: 106–21) and as late as 140 (Lawrence L. Welborn, “On the Date of First Clement,” *BR* 29 [1984]: 35–54), have also been proposed, but the most recent scholarship rejects these as

not named – the salutation designates the sender as “the Church of God sojourning in Rome” – tradition attributes authorship to Clement of Rome.³ For convenience I will refer to the author as Clement. The primary purpose of the letter is to encourage the reinstatement of a group of presbyters whom Clement believes have been improperly removed from office at the instigation of a group of young troublemakers.

Clement says little directly about the “matters of dispute” between the young men and the elders, but the content of the letter implies that the topics of resurrection and eschatology were, at least in Clement’s view, part of, if not central to, the debate.⁴ Aside from 1 Cor 15, 1 Clement offers the most extended Christian apologetic for resurrection prior to 150 CE, significantly longer, in fact, than other authors in this period who more explicitly address opponents who deny the resurrection.⁵ Clement exhorts the Corinthians not to be “double-minded” or to let the “soul indulge in false ideas about his [God’s] excellent and glorious gifts” like “those who doubt (οἱ δισταύοντες) in their soul” (23.3). These doubts and false ideas are related to an eschatological framework, similar to that of 1 Cor 15:23–24, that includes the delay of the parousia (23.3–4), the “coming” resurrection (24–27), and the coming judgment (28). Clement later says that the schism has “plunged many into doubt (δισταγμόν)” (46.9). This language echoes 23.2, suggesting that the “doubts” about the parousia and resurrection addressed in 23–27 arose in response to the false teachings of the young, self-appointed leaders in Corinth. This is confirmed when in 50.2–4 Clement opposes “human factiousness” with a scriptural argument for the resurrection and the coming kingdom of Christ. Moreover, Clement directly links Jesus’s resurrection to the authority of the bishops and deacons who have been deposed (42): it is the resurrected Christ that gives the apostles the assurance that they needed to preach “the good news that the kingdom of God was about to come” – an eschatologically oriented gospel – and to appoint the bishops and deacons who preceded those who have recently been unseated.⁶ In short, Clement seems to be addressing the following situation: the deposed leadership in Corinth had been teaching a traditional eschatological schema that included

implausible. It is probably best to allow for a range from the late 70s to the late 90s (Andrew Gregory, “1 Clement: An Introduction,” *ExpTim* 117 [2006]: 227–28; Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 36).

³ Eusebius, *Eccl. hist.* 3.4.8–9; 3.15.1–3.16.1; 4.22.1–3; 4.23.11; Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 6.36.

⁴ Contra Lindemann (“Clement,” 63–64), doubts arising from the delay of the parousia are still an issue even as late as the middle of the second century (see, e.g., 2 *Clem.* 11–12). And if the resurrection was a point of contention in Corinth in Paul’s day, it could again become an issue after he died.

⁵ E.g., Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 2–4; Polycarp, *Phil.* 7.1; 2 *Clem.* 9.1–4.

⁶ The “coming” kingdom of God in 42.3 recalls the future eschatology of 23.3–24.1, where the delay of the parousia is said to cause doubts about the “coming” resurrection.

a resurrection of the dead, but some have been calling this schema into question and sowing seeds of doubt in the congregation.⁷

Clement's resurrection apologetic focuses on analogies from nature, e.g., night and day, the decay and growth of buried seeds, and the legend of the phoenix (*1 Clem.* 24–27). Because of its novelty, this is the most frequently noted aspect of Clement's argument. Indeed, aside from the seed illustration, which has a precedent in 1 Cor 15:36–37, Clement's apologetic proves to be well ahead of his time; similar analogies do not appear again until the latter half of the second century.⁸ There is, however, another aspect of Clement's argument that is equally significant, though it has received less attention. Clement begins with Paul's image of Christ as the "first fruits (*ἀπαρχή*)" of the coming resurrection (*1 Clem.* 24.1; cf. 1 Cor 15:20), but then he departs from Paul by making an argument for a future resurrection that is not at all based on Jesus's resurrection.⁹ Clement agrees with Paul that God has made Christ's resurrection the guarantee and model of the future resurrection, but Christ's resurrection plays no real role in Clement's defense.

This absence is all the more striking given that Clement seems to have known a tradition in which an appearance of the risen Jesus led the apostles to "become fully convinced":

The apostles received the gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus the Christ was sent forth from God. So then Christ is from God, and the apostles are from Christ. Both, therefore, came of the will of God in good order. Having therefore received their orders and *having become fully convinced by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and persuaded to believe by the word of God*, they went forth with the firm assurance that the Holy Spirit gives, preaching the good news that the kingdom of God was about to come. So, preaching both in the country and in the towns, they appointed their first fruits, when they had tested them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons for the future believers. And this was no new thing they did, for indeed something had been written about bishops and deacons many years ago; for somewhere thus says the scripture: "I will appoint their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith." (*1 Clem.* 42)¹⁰

It is clear from this account that Clement has knowledge of an appearance tradition independent of Paul's list in 1 Cor 15:5–8. While it is uncertain whether Clement, who may have written as early as 80 CE, had read Matt 28, Luke 24, or John 20, the tradition he relates is similar to the canonical appearance

⁷ It is impossible to know whether Clement had detailed knowledge of the situation in Corinth or merely extrapolated from his reading of 1 Corinthians.

⁸ E.g., Theophilus, *Autol.* 1.13; Tertullian, *Res.* 12–13; Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 34.

⁹ Clement's dependence on 1 Cor 15 is demonstrated in Andrew Gregory, "1 Clement and the Writings that Later Formed the New Testament," in *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* (eds. Andrew Gregory and Christopher Tuckett; The New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 144–48.

¹⁰ All translations of *1 Clement* follow, with slight modifications, Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 45–131.

stories.¹¹ The sequence closely resembles that of Luke-Acts: (i) the apostles are “fully convinced by the resurrection” (cf. Luke 24:36–43); (ii) they are “persuaded to believe by the word of God” (cf. Luke 24:44–47); (iii) “they went forth with the firm assurance that the Holy Spirit gives preaching the good news of the kingdom” (cf. Luke 24:49; Acts 1:3–8; 8:12); and (iv) “preaching in the country and in the towns, they appointed first fruits ... to be bishops and deacons” (cf. Acts 6:1–6; 14:23).¹² Like Luke, Clement knows that the risen Jesus commissioned the apostles, giving them “orders” (cf. Luke 24:49; Acts 1:2). The key difference between Luke and Clement is that Luke never explicitly states that the apostles were fully convinced. Whether Clement is summarizing Luke’s narrative or the traditions behind it, his claim of threefold assurance (“*fully convinced* by the resurrection ... *persuaded to believe* by the word of God ... the *firm assurance* that the Holy Spirit gives”) demonstrates that in Clement’s view the apostles do not automatically believe but need to be convinced. Indeed, it is hard not to wonder why they still need to be “persuaded by the word of God” if they had already been “fully convinced by the resurrection.” The implication is that Clement must have known an appearance tradition, like that of Luke 24:36–41, in which the apostles had difficulty believing Jesus’s resurrection, but that Clement chose to pass over this part of the story. The triple confirmation of the apostles’ faith suggests that Clement was eager to assure his readers that the apostles had no lingering doubts.¹³

If we inquire as to why Clement chose to omit the apostles’ doubt and include instead a strong affirmation of their faith, the letter itself supplies a plausible explanation: the doubt would have undercut his defense of the rightful authority of the deposed presbyters in Corinth. In the passage quoted above, the apostles are an integral part of a divinely appointed chain of succession linking God and the risen Christ to church leadership. Clement’s argument depends on his portrayal of the authority and integrity of the apostles who appointed the predecessors of the deposed presbyters. Given that the chain of authority begins with the resurrection of Jesus, mentioning the post-

¹¹ Similarly Robert M. Grant and Holt H. Graham, *First and Second Clement* (vol. 2 of *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary*; New York: Nelson, 1965), 71–72.

¹² In the past, some have proposed a connection with the resurrection account in John 20, noting the theme of sending in John 20:21 and *1 Clem.* 42.1 (Jaubert, *Clement*, 55; Hagner, *Clement*, 264). More recently, Nicholas P. Lunn has argued for the influence of the Longer Ending of Mark on *1 Clem.* 42 (*The Original Ending of Mark: A New Case for the Authenticity of Mark 16:9–20* [Eugene, Oreg.: Pickwick, 2014], 65–68). This too is possible, perhaps even probable. But in my view the degree of verbatim overlap is insufficient, and the shared vocabulary too commonplace, to prove dependence in this case.

¹³ If Lunn is correct to posit Clement’s dependence on the Longer Ending of Mark (*Original Ending*, 66–68), then Clement’s threefold confirmation of faith may be an attempt to compensate for the three times that the apostles are said to disbelieve in Mark 16:9–14.

resurrection doubts of the apostles would have had the potential to render the whole line of succession suspect.

That Clement understood faith to be a vital aspect of this succession is corroborated by his substitution of πίστει for δικαιοσύνη (or ειρήνη) in the scriptural proof-text he quotes:

I will appoint your rulers in peace and your bishops in righteousness (δώσω τοὺς ἄρχοντας σου ἐν ειρήνῃ καὶ τοὺς ἐπισκόπους σου ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ). (Isa 60:17 LXX)

I will appoint their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith (καταστήσω τοὺς ἐπισκόπους αὐτῶν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ τοὺς διακόνους αὐτῶν ἐν πίστει). (1 Clem. 42.5)

If Clement is quoting from memory minor differences in wording are to be expected.¹⁴ The term “faith,” however, is foreign to Isa 60:17, and so represents Clement’s special concern.¹⁵ The faith motif appears again in Clement’s next statement, which draws an analogy between the apostles’ appointment of church leaders and the “faithful” (πιστός, cf. Num 12:7 LXX) Moses, who was the first in a succession of prophets (1 Clem. 43.1; cf. 17.5).

The importance that Clement attaches to the faith of the apostles is best understood in light of his view of faith and doubt. Much like Heb 12, Clement heroicizes biblical characters that exhibit “faith” even when the OT itself does not use the term (1 Clem. 10.7; 12.1, 8; 55.6; cf. 26.1).¹⁶ He counts the apostles among these as “noble examples” and “righteous pillars” who carried out “God’s will” and won “glory” for their “faith” (1 Clem. 5.1–5; 42.2). At the same time, Clement characterizes “those who doubt (οἱ διστάζοντες)” as

¹⁴ Cf. the more accurate quotation in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.26.5. Clement’s vague introductory formula “somewhere thus says the Scripture” could be an indication that he is quoting from memory (so Hagner, *Clement*, 67), but similar expressions in other ancient texts (e.g., Heb 2:6; 4:4; 5:6; Philo, *Plant.* 90; *Deus.* 74) suggest that the formula reflects a rhetorical convention used by sophisticated authors who are intimately familiar with their source material (Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989], 70–71). If so, Clement is aware of the changes he makes.

¹⁵ πίστει is not a known variant in the LXX (Joseph Ziegler, *Isaias* [Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Göttingensis editum 14; 3rd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983], 347). The theme of “faith” is also absent from the MT. A number of Clement’s divergences from Isa 60:17 may derive from Acts 6:1–6 (Craig A. Evans, “The Citation of Isaiah 60:17 in 1 Clement,” *VC* 36 [1982]: 105–7). In Acts, the apostles say they will “appoint” (καταστήσομεν, 6:3; cf. καταστήσω, 1 Clem. 42.5; δώσω, Isa 60:17 LXX) men “to serve” (διακονεῖν, Acts 6:2; cf. διακόνους, 1 Clem. 42.5; ἄρχοντας, Isa 60:17 LXX). Stephen, the first appointee, is said to be full of “faith” (πίστεως, Acts 6:5; cf. πίστει, 1 Clem. 42.5; ειρήνῃ, Isa 60:17 LXX). Moreover, in both Acts and 1 Clement, the Spirit is determinative for the selection of leaders (Acts 6:3, 5; 1 Clem. 42.4). Given the other parallels with other parts of Acts mentioned above, the influence of the text of Acts on Clement seems probable. If so, the re-employment of πίστις from Acts 6:5 in the quotation of Isa 60:17 reflects Clement’s interest in this character trait.

¹⁶ On Clement’s probable dependence on Heb 11, see Hagner, *Clement*, 184–88.

“wretched people” and addresses them as “O foolish ones (ὧ ἄνοητοι)” (23.3–4). They have no justification for thinking the resurrection a “marvel (θαυμαστόν)” (26.1). Those who doubt (οἱ δισταζόντες) are worthy of God’s judgment as was Lot’s wife, who was turned into a pillar of salt as a warning to all future doubters (11.2). When read against Clement’s standards of evaluation, the disciples in Matthew’s and Luke’s resurrection narratives do not measure up. Indeed, these Gospel accounts characterize the disciples using precisely the same terms that Clement employs to denounce doubters. Matthew says that “they/some doubted (οἱ δὲ ἐδίστασαν)” (28:17). In Luke, the Emmaus disciples are addressed as “O foolish ones (ὧ ἄνοητοι) and slow to believe,” and the apostles are depicted as disbelieving and “marveling (θαυμαζόντων)” even after they see the risen Jesus (24:25; 41). In light of Clement’s lofty view of faith, his harsh condemnation of doubters, and his appeal to the authority conferred on the apostles by the risen Christ, any mention of the post-resurrection doubt motif would have undermined the central argument of his letter. It is therefore not surprising that he chose to omit the doubt and affirm instead that the apostles believed.

Clement’s aversion to the doubt motif could also account for his strange silence in chs. 24–27 with respect to the appearance tradition. Given that Clement understood Christ’s resurrection as paradigmatic for the resurrection of believers (24.1) and claims that the apostles were “fully convinced by the resurrection” (42.3), we might expect the appearance tradition to be the centerpiece of Clement’s defense of the future resurrection. Yet, aside from a passing reference, it is entirely absent from chs. 24–27. Some aspect of the appearance tradition must have rendered it unsuitable. While there is no way to be certain, the context points to the doubt motif. The defense of the resurrection in chs. 24–27 is immediately preceded by Clement’s reproach of doubters in ch. 23.

Because *1 Clement* was written around the same time as or shortly after the Gospels, it provides an important window into early Christian views of doubt, especially as it is expressed in Matthew. *1 Clement* is the only first-century Christian text besides Matthew in which δισταζω occurs, and prior to the second century it hardly ever appears in Jewish texts.¹⁷ Since the term is so rare, *1 Clement* is a valuable witness to how Christians understood the term in Matthew’s day. Clement’s use of δισταζω is also rooted in earlier Jewish usage. The occurrence in *1 Clem.* 23 mentioned above is part of Clement’s quotation of an unknown Scripture: “Let this Scripture be far from us where it says,

¹⁷ I have found only two other occurrences (*Let. Aris.* 53; Josephus, *B.J.* 2.182). A possible third instance occurs in the OT Pseudepigraphon known as “The Heartless Rich Man and the Precious Stone” (Georgius Monachus Hamartolus, *Chron.* 4.11 [PG 121.228]), but the dating of this text is uncertain (William Adler, “The Heartless Rich Man and the Precious Stone,” in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures* [eds. Richard Bauckham, James R. Davila, and Alexander Panayotov; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013], 360–66).

‘Wretched are the double-minded, those who doubt (διστάζοντες) in their soul.’¹⁸ διστάζω also occurs in Clement’s interpretation of Lot’s wife: “she became a pillar of salt to this day, that it might be known to all that those who are double-minded and doubt (διστάζοντες) the power of God fall under judgment” (11.2). This assessment of Lot’s wife is not found in Genesis itself.

Clement probably depends here on a traditional interpretation also found in the Wisdom of Solomon, a text Clement quotes elsewhere (27.5). Wisdom 10:6–8 interprets Genesis 19 in the following way:

Wisdom rescued a righteous man when the ungodly were perishing; he escaped the fire that descended on the Five Cities. Evidence of their wickedness still remains: a continually smoking wasteland, plants bearing fruit that does not ripen, and a pillar of salt standing as a monument to an *unbelieving* (ἀπιστούσης) soul. For because they passed wisdom by, they not only were hindered from recognizing the good, but also left for humankind a reminder of their folly, so that their failures could never go unnoticed. (NRSV)

If Clement’s understanding of Lot’s wife is derived from this passage, then Clement sees διστάζω as equivalent to ἀπιστέω.¹⁹ Neither term appears in Genesis; both are interpretative additions. For Wis 10:7 and *1 Clem.* 11.2, the story of Lot’s wife is *the* narrative embodiment of God’s judgment on “doubt” and “disbelief.”²⁰ Both *1 Clem.* 11.2 and 23.3 pair οἱ διστάζοντες (“those who doubt”) with οἱ δίψυχοι (“those who are double-minded”), a category of person that is denounced in Jas 1:5–8; 4:8–9. As we have seen in Chapter 2, Clement’s condemnatory view of doubt appears to have been widespread at the time Matthew and Luke were written. The evangelists appear to have included the doubt motif despite how damaging it may have been to the reputation of the apostles.

4.2 The *Preaching of Peter*

The pseudepigraphal *Preaching of Peter* was composed sometime in the opening decades of the second century, probably in Egypt.²¹ It is often judged to be

¹⁸ This same text is quoted in *2 Clem.* 11.2 (see further Chapter 2).

¹⁹ These terms are explicitly equated in Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 4.25 [157.2–3]. See further Chapter 2.

²⁰ *Targum Neofiti* on Gen 19:26 says that Lot’s wife will remain as a pillar of salt “until the time when the dead live again,” implying that Lot’s wife prefigures a post-resurrection, final judgment.

²¹ The earliest explicit attestation of the *Preaching of Peter* is Heraclion’s commentary on John, but detailed verbal correspondences suggest that it influenced both Justin Martyr (Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr’s Proof-Text Tradition: Text-Type, Provenance, Theological Profile* [NovTSup 56; Leiden: Brill, 1987], 72–73, 228–34) and the *Apology* of Aristides of Athens (J. Rendel Harris and J. Armitage Robinson, *The Apology of Aristides on Behalf of the Christians* [TS 1; 2nd ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893], 86–99; Reinhold Seeberg, *Die Apologie des Aristides*

a precursor to the Christian apologetic tradition represented by Justin, Theophilus, Irenaeus, et al.²² The genre is difficult to determine because the text is extant only in fragments.²³ The fragments, most of which are preserved by Clement of Alexandria, consist primarily of sermonic material (frags. 1–5, 8, 10) and sayings of the risen Jesus to the apostles (frags. 6–7).²⁴ It also includes a fascinating paragraph (frag. 9) wherein the apostles are said to unroll the scrolls of OT prophetic books and find predictions of Christ's suffering, resurrection, and ascension. I shall argue that at least three of the fragments, including the one just mentioned, exhibit distinctly Lukan features, and that one also

[Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons und der altkirchlichen Literatur 5.2; Leipzig: Deichert, 1893]; Joseph Nicholas Reagan, *The Preaching of Peter: The Beginning of Christian Apologetic* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1923], 78; Robert M. Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988], 34–43; Graham N. Stanton, "Aspects of Early Christian and Jewish Worship: Pliny and the *Kerygma Petrou*," in *Studies in Matthew and Early Christianity* [eds. Markus Bockmuehl and David Lincicum; WUNT 309; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013], 414 n. 28). Aristides's *Apology* was written between 124 and 140 CE. Therefore, if the consensus that the *Preaching* originated in Egypt is correct – and both internal and external evidence support this conclusion (Michel Cambe, *Kerygma Petri: Textus et commentarius* [Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum 15; Turnhout: Brepols, 2003], 382; Wilhelm Schneemelcher, "Kerygma Petri," *NTApoc* 2: 34) – then the *Preaching* should probably be dated no later than 135. Most place the composition earlier. Ernst von Dobschütz posits the first quarter of the second century, and Henning Paulsen narrows this to the first two decades (*Das Kerygma Petri kritisch untersucht* [TU 11; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1893], 67; idem, "Das Kerygma Petri und die urchristliche Apologetik," *ZKG* 88 [1977]: 13). Stanton connects the *Preaching* to the time of Pliny's letters to Trajan (ca. 111–112 CE) ("Aspects," 414–17). Cambe makes a case for a slightly earlier date, 100–110, by arguing that an Egyptian provenance suggests a date prior to the Jewish uprising in 115–117 (*Kerygma Petri*, 382–83). Still others posit ca. 100 (Reagan, *Preaching of Peter*, 77–80; Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament* [2 vols.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995], 2:168).

²² Dobschütz, *Kerygma Petri*, 66; Reagan, *Preaching of Peter*, 8–59; Abraham J. Malherbe, "The Apologetic Theology of the Preaching of Peter," *ResQ* 13 (1970): 205–23.

²³ Unless otherwise noted, I follow the critical text and numbering in Cambe, *Kerygma Petri*, 150–61. English translations are my own. Pace Vinzent ("Körperloses Geistwesen," 242–60), the *Preaching* probably did not include the saying, "I am no bodiless daimon," that Origen attributes to a *Doctrina Petri* in Rufinus's Latin translation of *Princ.* pref. 8. The same saying appears in Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3.2, and, according to Jerome, in the *Gospel of the Hebrews*. While it is possible that *Doctrina Petri* is a translation of Πιέτρου κήρυγμα (*Comm. Jo.* 13.17), most doubt that the two titles refer to the same work because Origen offers different assessments of the canonical status of each (so D. A. Bertrand, "Doctrine de Pierre," in *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens* [2 vols.; eds. François Bovon and Pierre Geoltrain; Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 442, 506; Paris: Gallimard, 1997–2005], 1:463; Cambe, *Kerygma Petri*, 28–30; Schneemelcher, "Kerygma Petri," 2:36–37). Additionally, there is nothing in the other fragments of the *Preaching* to indicate a debate over Christology.

²⁴ The post-resurrection scene was probably included as a flashback within, and perhaps near the beginning of, the sermonic material.

closely parallels statements from the Longer Ending of Mark.²⁵ A comparison with the canonical accounts will also show that the author of the *Preaching* has rewritten parts of Luke 24 and Mark 16 so as to remove the doubt motif and portray the apostles in a more positive light.

Fragment 6 (Clement, *Strom.* 6.5 [43.3]) relates a saying of the risen Christ that contains echoes of Luke 24:46–47:²⁶

Therefore, Peter says that
the Lord said to the apostles,
“If, then, any of Israel,
having repented (μετανοήσας)
through my name (διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματός μου),
are willing to believe in God,
his *sins* (ἁμαρτίαι)
will be *forgiven* (ἀφεθήσονται)
And after twelve years
go out into the world,
lest any say, ‘We did not hear.’”
(*Pre. Pet.* frag. 6)

and he said to them, “Thus it is written:
The Christ should suffer, and ... that
in his name (ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ)
repentance (μετάνοιαν)
for the *forgiveness* (ἄφεσιν)
of *sins* (ἁμαρτιῶν)
should be proclaimed to all nations,
beginning from Jerusalem.
(Luke 24:46–47)

The *Preaching*’s dependence, whether direct or indirect, on Luke is difficult to deny here.²⁷ There is a nearly unanimous consensus that Luke 24:46–47, consists largely, if not entirely, of Lukan redaction or composition.²⁸ In the NT, only Luke connects the repentance and the forgiveness of sins with Jesus’s *name* (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38), and all three themes are favorites of Luke.²⁹

²⁵ Pace Bellinzoni, who finds no evidence for the use of Luke (“The Gospel of Luke in the Second Century C.E.,” in *Literary Studies in Luke-Acts* [Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press, 1998], 60 n. 5). In addition to the arguments below, see Skarsaune (*Proof*, 361–62), who detects Lukan features.

²⁶ The post-resurrection setting of frag. 6 can be deduced from its affinities to frag. 7, which Clement explicitly situates “after the resurrection” (similarly Cambe, *Kerygma Petri*, 316, 384–85).

²⁷ Contra Cambe (*Kerygma Petri*, 316–17). Cambe understands this fragment to be part of a post-resurrection appearance scene and admits that its features are “very Lukan,” but still appeals to oral tradition. However, an explicit verbatim quotation is not necessary to prove dependence, and the combination of the themes of repentance, forgiveness, and Jesus’s name, though commonplace in modern Christianity, is in fact too rare in the late first and early second century to appeal to oral tradition.

²⁸ If the various similarities with Luke 24 are to be accounted for by positing a common source, then this consensus would need to be overturned.

²⁹ The next closest parallel is Acts 10:43, to be discussed below. Other possible parallels are 1 John 2:12, in which one’s sins are forgiven “on account of his name,” and *Barn.* 16.8, which connects “forgiveness of sins” with “hoping on the Name,” but the idea of repentance found in Luke and the *Preaching* is absent. Surprisingly, even the basic link between repentance (μετανοέω/μετάνοια) and forgiveness is, with one exception (Mark 1:4), limited to Luke-Acts in the NT (Luke 3:3; 17:3; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 26:18–20). The motif of repentance for forgiveness appears also in *Pre. Pet.* frag. 8, where, as in Acts 3:17–19, it

Moreover, Luke depicts the teaching as something that the risen Jesus communicated to the apostles, and this attribution is carefully maintained in the *Preaching* despite the fact that it is embedded within the framework of Peter's words ("Peter says that the Lord said to the apostles").³⁰ Additionally, as in Luke the proclamation of forgiveness begins with Israel before it moves to the nations (frags. 6 and 7; Luke 24:47).³¹

Finally, certain differences, i.e., the use of *διά* and the addition of *πιστεύειν*, may be the result of conflation with a parallel statement in another characteristically Lukan passage: "To him all the prophets bear witness that *everyone who believes* (πάντα τὸν πιστεύοντα) in him receives *forgiveness of sins* (ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν) *through his name* (διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ)" (Acts 10:43). The fact that this statement appears in Peter's first evangelistic sermon to a Gentile audience and quite literally fulfills the prophetic commission of Luke 24:47 makes Acts 10 an appropriate source for the *Preaching of Peter*.

Fragment 9 (Clement, *Strom.* 6.15 [128.1–2]) touches on another Lukan emphasis, Christ's death and resurrection as the fulfillment of prophecy. We may note several verbal, thematic, and structural correspondences with details in Luke's Gospel. First, the opening statement echoes the distinctive language of Luke 4:17:

<p>And, <i>having unrolled the books</i> (ἀναπτύξαντες τὰς βίβλους) <i>of the prophets</i> (τῶν προφητῶν)... <i>we found</i> (εὑρομεν)...</p> <p>(<i>Pre. Pet.</i> frag. 9)</p>	<p>The <i>book of the prophet</i> (βιβλίον τοῦ προφήτου) Isaiah was given to him and <i>having unrolled the book</i> (ἀναπτύξας τὸ βιβλίον), <i>he found</i> (εὑρεν) the place where it was written. (Luke 4:17)</p>
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While it is possible that the combination ἀναπτύσσω + book + εὑρίσκω is idiomatic, it is rare in ancient literature. Luke 4:17 and *Pre. Pet.* frag. 9 are the only two instances of ἀναπτύσσω in Christian literature prior to Irenaeus.³²

specifically addresses the idea of past sins committed in ignorance. Both repentance and the forgiveness of sins also appear in Lukan redaction, e.g., Luke 5:32 (cf. Mark 2:17; Matt 9:13); Luke 11:4 (cf. Mark 11:25; Matt 6:12; *Did.* 8.2). The emphasis on Jesus's name is important to Luke (Luke 9:48, 49; 10:17; 21:8, 12, 17; 24:27; Acts 2:38; 3:6, 16; 4:10, 12, 17–18, 30; 5:28, 40–41; 8:12; 9:16, 21, 27; 15:16; 16:18; 18:13, 17; 21:13; 22:16; 26:9). On redaction in Luke 24:47, see also Jeremias, *Sprache*, 322; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1581.

³⁰ Elsewhere in the *Preaching*, Peter's words are communicated in the first person.

³¹ If the tradition in Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 5.18.14 is rightly connected with the *Preaching of Peter*, then in both it and Luke 24:49 Jesus instructs the apostles "to stay in Jerusalem."

³² On the possible idiom, see the parallel in *Test. Ab.* [B] 10.11. The term ἀναπτύσσω appears in other Hellenistic-Jewish texts, but not frequently, and rarely to describe the unrolling of a scroll. Josephus has the term once in reference to the opening of a letter (*Vita*

Both also employ this construction with reference to Christ fulfilling prophecy. This could be an extraordinary coincidence, but the same fragment includes further echoes of Luke.

The *Preaching*'s statement about the necessity of Christ's suffering as a fulfillment of Scripture has both structural and verbal similarities to Luke 24:26:

... just as had been written	
all <i>these things</i> that it was necessary	<i>Was it not necessary</i>
for him to suffer	for the Christ to suffer these things
and	and
things that shall be after <i>him</i> .	to enter <i>his</i> glory?
... καθὼς ἐγγέγραπτο	
<u>ταῦτα πάντα</u> , ἃ <u>ἔδει</u> αὐτὸν <u>παθεῖν</u>	οὐχὶ <u>ταῦτα ἔδει παθεῖν</u> τὸν χριστὸν
<u>καὶ</u>	<u>καὶ</u>
μετ' αὐτὸν ἃ ἔσται.	εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ.
(<i>Pre. Pet. frag. 9</i>)	(Luke 24:26)

The construction δεῖ + παθεῖν is a favorite of Luke, and its combination here with ταῦτα is unique to Luke 24:26, indicating that the *Preaching* has most likely been influenced by Lukan redaction.³³ The citation formula καθὼς ἐγγέγραπτο indicates a written source, but what follows is not a direct quotation of the OT. Rather, the words immediately following the citation formula refer to Christ's suffering as past event ("it was necessary [ἔδει] for him to suffer"), which suggests that the author is citing a text written from a post-resurrection perspective. This again points to influence of Luke 24:26.³⁴

223). Philo employs this verb only five times in his extensive corpus, and never in reference to a book (*Leg.* 1.99; *Gig.* 36; *Agr.* 136; *Congr.* 20; *Somn.* 1:91). ἀναπτύσσω occurs five times in the LXX, but only once for unrolling a scroll (2 Kgs 19:14; cf. Deut 22:17; Judg 8:25; Ezek 41:16, 21).

³³ Luke takes over δεῖ + παθεῖν from Mark 8:31 (Luke 9:22) and repeats it in other contexts, e.g., Luke 17:25; 24:26; Acts 9:16; 17:3. On Lukan style and redaction here, see Bovon, *Luke*, 3:368–69; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1558, 1565–66; Denaux and Corstjens, *Vocabulary*, 488. On the special significance of δεῖ in Luke, see also Claire K. Rothschild, *Luke-Acts and the Rhetoric of History* (WUNT 2/175; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 185–212.

Dobschütz posits that this sentence in the *Preaching* is derived from 1 Pet 1:11: τὰ εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα καὶ τὰς μετὰ ταῦτα δόξας (*Kerygma Petri*, 68). This is a valid parallel, and τὰς μετὰ ταῦτα δόξας in 1 Pet 1:1 could possibly account for the mysterious μετ' αὐτὸν ἃ ἔσται in the second half of the statement. But the *Preaching* exhibits no other parallels with 1 Peter as it does with Luke, and ταῦτα ἔδει ... παθεῖν in the first half of the sentence is distinctively Lukan. Consequently, any potential influence from 1 Peter, which remains uncertain, must have been in addition to Luke 24:26. Moreover, the emphasis on future things in the *Preaching* is probably redactional (see note below).

³⁴ The imperfect ἔδει makes sense in the context of Luke 24:46, but it is awkward for the author of the *Preaching* to cite explicitly an OT prediction of the future and then cast that prediction in words that refer to Christ's suffering as a past event (cf. the forward-looking passion predictions in the Gospels that employ the present tense δεῖ – a practice that is

Dependence on Luke 24:26 is further supported by other contextual and verbal similarities. In both texts, the reference to the necessity of Christ's suffering is preceded by a summary of events in Jesus's life:

the name *Jesus* Christ,
both his coming

and

his death and the cross
(τὸν θάνατον καὶ τὸν σταυρόν)
and all the other torments which
the *Jews* inflicted on him,
and his *resurrection*

and his ascension into the heavens.
(*Pre. Pet.* frag. 9)

Concerning *Jesus* of Nazareth,
a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and
word before God and all the people,
and how our chief priests and rulers delivered
him up
to be condemned to *death*, and *crucified* him
(εἰς κρίμα θανάτου καὶ ἐσταύρωσαν αὐτόν).
But we had hoped that he was the one to
redeem *Israel*. Yes, and besides all this,
it is now the *third day*...Moreover, some
women of our company amazed us...saying
that they had even seen a vision of angels,
who said that he was *alive*.

(Luke 24:19–23)

The form is different in each: whereas the Emmaus travelers provide a narrative summary, the *Preaching* gives a more condensed, creed-like list. This difference leads to a certain oddity in the *Preaching's* sequence. Strikingly, both texts mention Jesus's death before mentioning his crucifixion.³⁵ In Luke's

maintained even when the angels and Jesus quote these earlier predictions in Luke 24:7, 44). The *Preaching's* use of ἔδει is therefore better explained by the influence of Luke 24:26.

Cambe rejects the possibility that καθὼς ἐγγράπτο is introducing a quotation and argues that the author is instead making global reference to OT prophecy in general (*Kerygma Petri*, 130–31). This view has some merit. Citation formulas are on rare occasions employed without a clear quotation. Luke 24:46 offers a particularly relevant parallel: “Thus it is written: The Christ is to suffer and rise again (οὕτως γέγραπται παθεῖν τὸν χριστὸν καὶ ἀναστῆναι).” However, if the author of the *Preaching* does not intend to quote Luke, he or she may be imitating Luke's unconventional use of a citation formula. In this case, the author, by explaining that the prophets predicted Christ's life in a mysterious way, i.e., “sometimes expressed through parables, sometimes through riddles,” avoids the dissonance caused by the lack of a clear quotation after Luke's γέγραπται.

On the other hand, Cambe has, in my view, prematurely rejected the possibility καθὼς ἐγγράπτο introduces a quotation. Cambe appeals to the fact that the pluperfect ἐγγράπτο stands in contrast to the expected γέγραπται. Yet ἐγγράπτο can be employed for quotations, e.g., 1 Kgs 20:9 LXX, 1 Macc 15:15. More importantly, the two possibilities that Cambe considers, the introduction of a quotation and a generic OT reference, need not be mutually exclusive. If, as I have argued, the *Preaching* quotes Luke 24:26, both are true because Luke 24:26 is itself a global reference to OT prophecy. Given the potential echo of 1 Pet 1:11 (see above note), a conflated quotation of Luke and 1 Peter is also possible.

³⁵ In this respect, the *Preaching* is closer to Luke 24 than to the parallel in Justin, *1 Apol.* 31.7, which Skarsaune (*Proof*, 233) argues is dependent on the *Preaching*. Justin probably corrected the sequence.

account this sequence is natural because of the way it is narrated. The lack of narration in the *Preaching*, however, renders it incongruous in an otherwise chronological sequence. This discrepancy probably arose in the process of condensing the narrative summary of Luke 24:19–23. The *Preaching* also adds Christ’s ascension into heaven to the list. While this is not mentioned in the Emmaus pericope, the reference to Christ’s ascension after his resurrection may be further evidence of the author’s dependence on Luke.³⁶

Finally, assuming for the moment the author’s familiarity with Luke, frag. 9 presents a complete reversal of Luke’s characterization of the disciples:

And, having unrolled the books of
the prophets (τῶν προφητῶν),
 which we had, we found,
 sometimes expressed through parables,
 sometimes through riddles, and
 sometimes clearly and literally
 the name Jesus Christ, his coming and his
 death and his cross...and his resurrection
 ...just as had been written all
*these things that it was necessary for him
 to suffer and*
 (ἃ ἔδει αὐτὸν παθεῖν καί)
 the things that shall be after him.

Therefore, having recognized these
 things, *we believed*
 (ἐπιστεύσαμεν) in God because
 of the things that had been written of him.
 (*Pre. Pet.* frag. 9)

And beginning with Moses and all
the prophets (τῶν προφητῶν),
 he interpreted to them
 in all the Scriptures

the things concerning himself.
 (Luke 24:27)

“*Was it not necessary for the Christ
 to suffer these things and*
 (ταῦτα ἔδει παθεῖν τὸν χριστὸν καί)
 enter into his glory?”
 (Luke 24:26)

And he said to them, “O foolish ones,
 and *slow of heart to believe*
 (βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ τοῦ πιστεύειν)
 all that the prophets have spoken!
 (Luke 24:25)

³⁶ The term for Christ’s ascension, ἀνάλημψις, occurs in the NT only at Luke 9:51. The closest verbal parallels to the *Preaching*’s description of the ascension (τὴν εἰς οὐρανοῦς ἀνάληψιν) are Acts 1:11 (ἀναλημφθεὶς ἀφ’ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν) and Mark 16:19 (ἀνελήμφθη εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν). Given the author’s apparent knowledge of the LE of Mark (see below), Mark 16:19 may be the most likely source. In this case, indirect dependence on Luke cannot be ruled out since the LE of Mark may here depend on Luke and/or Acts.

The *Preaching* refers to the ascension as happening πρὸ τοῦ Ἱεροσόλυμα κτισθῆναι. This phrase is usually translated “before the foundation of Jerusalem.” To overcome the inconsistency of Jesus ascending before Jerusalem was built, κτισθῆναι might be emended to κριθῆναι, so that it would read “before the judgment of Jerusalem” (so Dobschütz, *Kerygma Petri*, 24–25, 62–64). But Cambe, who provides a survey of alternative theories, argues that the *Preaching* refers to the foundation of a new Jerusalem, either the church or an eschatological Jerusalem such as in Rev 21 (*Kerygma Petri*, 360–69). In the former case, dependence on Luke helps explain the sense. While Luke 24 does not mention the “founding (κτισθῆναι)” of Jerusalem, it does say that the apostles will be witnesses “beginning (ἀρξάμενοι)” at Jerusalem (24:47–48).

Whereas in Luke the disciples are unable to recognize Christ and are depicted as “foolish ones” who need Christ to interpret the Scriptures for them, the *Preaching* portrays the apostles as wise scholars who search Scriptures for themselves – using their own scrolls! – and are able to interpret them by means of a sophisticated, allegorical method.³⁷ Given the Egyptian provenance, this change may reflect a desire to conform the apostles to the image of an Alexandrian sage.³⁸ Additionally, the disciples are not “*slow of heart to believe* all that the prophets have spoken,” as in Luke 24:25. Instead, they “recognized” Christ in the Scriptures and “*believed...on account of the things written about him*” (*Pre. Pet.* frag. 9). All of this gives the impression that the author of the *Preaching* has removed the doubt/non-recognition motif for apologetic reasons, i.e., to ensure a more positive characterization of the disciples.³⁹

This impression is supported by frag. 7, which offers an especially positive characterization of the apostles:

In the *Preaching of Peter*, the Lord says to the disciples after the resurrection, “*I chose (ἐξελεξάμην) you twelve disciples (δώδεκα μαθητάς), judging you worthy (ἀξιούς) of me, whom the Lord willed. And having considered you to be faithful apostles (ἀποστόλους πιστούς), I am sending you into the world to preach the gospel to people throughout the world, that they should know that there is one God, and to declare by faith in me, the Christ, the things to be, so that those who have heard and believed may be saved, and that those who have not believed may hear and bear witness, not having any excuse so as to say, ‘We did not hear.’*” (frag. 7, Clement, *Strom.* 6.6 [48.1–2])⁴⁰

In the opening lines, the risen Christ alludes to his initial appointment of the Twelve. The combination of ἐκλέγομαι, ἀπόστολος, δώδεκα, and μαθητής indicates the influence of Luke’s version of the story. Luke 6:13 is the only verse in the NT (or any other early Christian text) in which all four of these terms appear together, and ἐκλέγομαι in this verse reflects Lukan redaction in a triple

³⁷ Cf. *Ep. Paul Sen.* 13, where Paul is commended for his ability to write allegorically and enigmatically.

³⁸ Clement chose this quotation precisely because its implied hermeneutic aligned with his own. In fact, Clement seems deliberately to quote the *Preaching* instead of Luke 24. Just prior to the quotation, Clement alludes to the Emmaus pericope: he refers to “the Scriptures being opened up (διανοιχθεῖσαι δὲ αἱ γραφαί)” (*Strom.* 6.15 [127.2]; cf. Luke 24:31: ὡς διήνοιγεν ἡμῖν τὰς γραφάς), and then writes that “all the prophets (οἱ προφῆται πάντες)” spoke of Christ, who “interpreted the Scriptures to them (διασαφήσας αὐτοῖς τὰς γραφάς)” (*Strom.* 6.15 [127.5]; cf. Luke 24:27: ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν προφητῶν διερμήνευσεν αὐτοῖς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς γραφαῖς). Clement perceived a parallel between Luke 24 and the *Preaching* but chose to quote the latter.

³⁹ A comparison with Luke’s group appearance narrative (24:36–53), with which the author seems to be familiar (see comments on frag. 6 above), yields similar results. Luke portrays the apostles as persistent in their disbelief (24:41), such that Christ must open “their minds to understand the Scriptures” (24:45).

⁴⁰ My translation “I am sending” follows the original editors’ suggestion to emend πέμπων, which in context is awkward, to πέμπω (see Cambe, *Kerygma Petri*, 157).

tradition passage (cf. Mark 3:13; Matt 10:1).⁴¹ Given the other Lukan features exhibited in the *Preaching*, it would require special pleading to judge this a mere coincidence.

In addition to the Lukan ἐκλέγομαι, the author includes a feature unique to Mark's version of the story: the phrase "those whom the Lord desired" (οὓς ὁ κύριος ἠθέλησεν) is a relatively clear echo of "those whom he desired (οὓς ἠθέληεν [ἠθέλησεν, 13 69 124 346 788 f¹³] αὐτός)" in Mark 3:13.⁴² The author therefore seems to have selected those details from Luke and Mark that stress Christ's approval of the apostles.⁴³ More importantly, the *Preaching* includes two additional characterizations of the Twelve that do not appear in any of the NT accounts: the risen Lord judges them to be "worthy" and "believing / faithful (πιστούς)" apostles who are to preach "by faith (διὰ ... πίστεως)."⁴⁴ This provides a contrast to the canonical resurrection narratives. While the canonical narratives consistently refer to the apostles' doubts and/or disbelief, a problem that elicits a rebuke from the risen Jesus, the *Preaching* instead has Jesus affirm their faith and praise them as worthy disciples.

⁴¹ On ἐκλέγομαι as Lukan see, e.g., Marshall, *Luke*, 238; John Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20* (WBC 35A; Dallas: Word, 1989), 269; Denaux and Corstjens, *Vocabulary*, 201–2.

⁴² Cambe (*Kerygma Petri*, 116–17) and others (e.g., Schneemelcher, "Kerygma Petri," 40 n. 20) have proposed that this phrase is a gloss added by Clement. This is possible, but a number of other factors speak against an interpolation here. First, Clement's quotations from the Gospels, like most early Christian authors and scribes, exhibit a strong preference for Matthew. According to a recent study, Clement quotes Matthew nearly twice as often as either Luke or John and far more often than Mark (Carl P. Cosaert, *The Text of the Gospels in Clement of Alexandria* [The New Testament in the Greek Fathers 9; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008], 225). It is also telling that Clement elsewhere quotes only from chs. 8–10 of Mark, whereas he quotes from all parts of the other Gospels (Cosaert, *Text*, 57–250, esp. 118–130, 234–36). Second, when Clement formally introduces a quotation – especially when he employs phrases such as φησὶν ὁ κύριος, as he does here – his tendency is to reproduce the quotation with a high degree of accuracy (Cosaert, *Text*, 26–27). Third, and most importantly, there is little in the context of the Clement's argument, which is about the universality of the Christian faith, to prompt this kind of addition. By contrast, the author of the *Preaching* seems to have had a desire to portray the apostles in the most positive light. Consequently, it is much more probable that this "gloss" was inserted by the original author. If Clement made any contribution, it was probably limited to the insertion of ὁ κύριος, a title favored by Clement. This addition reduces the awkwardness of Christ suddenly referring to himself to the third person.

⁴³ In light of the *Preaching*'s strict monotheism, the title κύριος, if original (see previous note), could indicate God's approval rather than Christ's. But aside from this instance, κύριος appears only in Clement's introductions to the fragments and always in reference to Christ.

⁴⁴ The comment about being "worthy of me" may be derived from the dominical saying in Matt 10:37–38. If so, the author of the *Preaching* has determined that the apostles have met the criteria, i.e., loving Jesus more than their families and taking up their crosses to follow him. Alternatively, the phrase also echoes 1 Tim 1:12.

Despite the presence of certain Lukan features, the revisionist portrayal of the apostles in frag. 7 seems to be responding primarily to the Longer Ending of Mark (LE) and its negative characterization of the apostles as hardhearted unbelievers:

I chose you twelve disciples,
judging you worthy of me, those whom
the Lord desired, and having considered
you to be *faithful* (πιστῶν) apostles,

I am sending you
into the world (ἐπὶ τὸν κόσμον)
to *preach the gospel* (εὐαγγελίσασθαι)
to people throughout the world, that the
should know that there is one God, and to
declare by faith in me, the Christ, the things
to be, so that
those who have heard and believed
(οἱ ... πιστεύσαντες)
may be saved (σωθῶσιν),
but that those who have not believed
(οἱ δὲ μὴ πιστεύσαντες)
may hear and bear witness, not having any
excuse so as to say, “We did not hear.”
(*Pre. Pet. frag. 7*)

Afterward he appeared to the eleven...
and he rebuked their *unbelief* (ἀπιστίαν)
and hardness of heart because
they had *not believed* (οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν)
those who saw him after he had risen.
And he said to them,
“Going
into all the world (εἰς τὸν κόσμον),
proclaim the gospel (κηρύξατε τὸ εὐαγγέλιον)
to the whole creation.

The one who has believed
(ὁ πιστεύσας) and been baptized
will be saved (σωθήσεται),
but the one who has disbelieved
(ὁ δὲ ἀπιστήσας)
will be condemned.
(Mark 16:14–16)

While there are some differences in the words of commission, the extensive correspondences in the structure, ideas, and wording require some sort of relationship between these two accounts. Both texts date to approximately the same period, so it is difficult to determine the precise nature of their relationship: they may both be utilizing a common tradition, or one may be directly dependent on the other. There are, nevertheless, good reasons to conclude that the author of the *Preaching* was familiar with and responding to the LE.⁴⁵ First, the allusion to Mark 3:13 (“whom the Lord willed”) increases the probability that a few lines later the *Preaching* is drawing on the LE of Mark for the words of commissioning.⁴⁶ Second, the portion of the LE that parallels the *Preaching* is known for its abrupt transition from Jesus’s rebuke of the apostles’ unbelief

⁴⁵ See also James A. Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission: The Authentication of Missionaries and Their Message in the Longer Ending of Mark* (WUNT 2/112; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 196–97 n. 132. Kelhoffer postulates that the *Preaching* may have “expanded the compact formulation of Mark 16:15–16,” but refrains from pursuing this hypothesis.

⁴⁶ I agree with the judgment of Kelhoffer that the LE was originally composed as a continuation of Mark’s Gospel. Kelhoffer has shown that the older “fragment” theory, i.e., that the LE at some point existed independently of Mark’s Gospel, is untenable (*Miracle and Mission*, 157–244).

in Mark 16:14 to their commissioning in the very next sentence (16:15). It is especially jarring because of the condemnation (*κατακριθήσεται*) of any who disbelieve (*ἀπιστήσας*) in 16:16. Scribes and other early readers of the LE attempted to mitigate this awkwardness in various ways.⁴⁷ The *Preaching* has resolved the issue by completely eliminating the doubt motif, along with the attendant rebuke, and replacing both with Jesus's explicit judgment that they are worthy and believing (*πιστούς*). These changes conform precisely to the author's redaction of Luke 24 in frag. 9: the doubt and attendant rebuke are omitted, and an affirmation of the faith of the apostles is added. This consistency in redaction is further evidence of the author's knowledge of both Luke and the LE.

Other differences from Luke and the LE can also be explained on the basis of redactional patterns and emphases on the part of the author of the *Preaching*. The *Preaching*'s pairing of belief with *hearing*, rather than with *baptism* as in Mark 16:16a, coheres with the author's replacement of Mark 16:16b's "will be condemned" with "may *hear* and bear witness, not having any defense so as to say, 'We did not *hear*.'"⁴⁸ An abbreviated version of the same gloss ("lest any say, 'We did not hear'") is appended to its rewritten version of Luke 24:46–47 in frag. 6 (see above).⁴⁹ Similarly, all three fragments discussed above supplement the canonical tradition with a brief comment about belief in (one) God. Luke's "repentance in my name for the forgiveness of sins" has become "if any...will repent through my name *to believe in God*, his sins will be forgiven" (frag. 6). Likewise, the following is inserted in between the *Preaching*'s paraphrases of Mark 16:15 and 16:16: "they should know *there is one God*" (frag.7).⁵⁰ And when the apostles open the books of the prophets and learn the

⁴⁷ See Chapter 8.

⁴⁸ Cf. Paul A. Mirecki, "The Antithetic Saying in Mark 16:16: Formal and Redactional Features," in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester* (ed. Birger A. Pearson; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 234. Mirecki argues that these "hearing" glosses are redactional expansions of an oral tradition. Mirecki does not suggest direct dependence on the LE of Mark, but his analysis of the parallel is limited to Mark 16:16. When the parallel with Mark 16:15 is also taken into account, it is difficult to imagine that the *Preaching* is dependent solely on oral tradition.

The author's emphasis on the inexcusableness of unbelief may also explain one other minor difference in wording from Mark 16:15. Whereas in the LE the disciples are sent *εἰς* the world, in the *Preaching* they are sent *ἐπί* the world. The latter preposition can denote hostility or opposition (BDAG, s.v. "ἐπί"; cf. verbal parallels in Is 24:21 LXX; Josephus, *A.J.* 7.122; *Sib. Or.* 8.1).

⁴⁹ If this is indeed redactional on the part of the author of the *Preaching*, it confirms the hypothesis that the parallels in *Acts Thom.* 28 and Theophilus, *Autol.* 1.14 depend either directly or indirectly on the *Preaching* (so Dobschütz, *Kerygma Petri*, 57; Gilles Quispel and Robert M. Grant, "Note on the Petrine Apocrypha," *VC* 6 [1952]: 31–32).

⁵⁰ A similarly uncompromising monotheistic slogan ("Know, therefore, that there is one God") is prominent in the sermonic material of frag. 2.

Emmaus road lesson, that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer, they are said to “believe in God because of the things written about him” (frag. 9).⁵¹

In short, if one posits the *Preaching*'s dependence on both Luke and the LE of Mark, it is possible to demonstrate a high degree of consistency in the author's redaction of both texts. When this is combined with the fact that the *Preaching* includes features that are unique to each of these gospels, and in some cases show signs of the influence of redactional material, the result is a strong cumulative case for the use of both gospels. Consequently, since the *Preaching* is normally dated to the first quarter of the second century, and certainly no later than 140, it offers some of the earliest evidence for the existence of both Luke and the LE of Mark.⁵² With respect to Luke, it should be observed that two of the earliest known proto-orthodox readers of Luke 24, Ignatius and the author of the *Preaching of Peter*, seem to have intentionally omitted the doubts of the apostles and replaced their unbelief with belief. And just as Ignatius, in view of his own impending martyrdom, augments the appearance narrative with a positive re-characterization of the apostles as heroic martyrs (see Chapter 3), so also the author of the *Preaching*, in view of his Alexandrian milieu, re-characterizes the apostles as intellectuals skilled in allegorical interpretation.⁵³

4.3 Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr, writing in the middle of the second century, relates a post-resurrection appearance story on three separate occasions: *1 Apol.* 50.12; *Dial.*

⁵¹ One further redactional motif may be observed, namely, an emphasis on the declaration of *future things*. Whereas Luke 24:26 has “was it not necessary for the Christ suffer these things and enter into his glory?” the *Preaching* has “things that it was necessary for him to suffer and *the things that shall be after him*” (frag. 9). A similar addition is made to the *Preaching*'s version of the commissioning in Mark 16:15: “I am sending you into the world to preach the gospel to people throughout the world, *and to declare by faith in me ... the things to be*” (frag. 7). If this motif is redactional, it tells against the possible influence of 1 Pet 1:11 in frag. 9 (see note above).

⁵² With respect to Luke, it is difficult to determine the date of the *Preaching* relative to other instances of the early reception of Luke by Ignatius and the Ophites, but it is worth noting that the authors represent at least two, possibly three, different geographical locations: Ignatius (Syria-Asia); the *Preaching* (Egypt); the Ophites (Rome?). On the provenance of the Ophite account, see Chapter 3. In any case, the implication is that Luke was circulating widely already in the first half of the second century.

⁵³ Cf. Origen, *Cels.* 1.27: “For he [Celsus] admits that *among them [the Christians] are some moderate, reasonable, and intelligent people who readily interpret allegorically*” (trans. Chadwick, *Contra Celsum*, 27; emphasis in Chadwick indicates Origen's quotations of Celsus).

most easily explained by dependence on Luke, who mentions this detail in an aside that immediately follows his account of the crucifixion. Justin next inserts the words “but later (ὑστερον δέ)” to indicate that he is skipping over material to get to the appearance story, wherein Jesus teaches the apostles “to read the prophecies in which all these things were foretold” – an apt summary of Luke 24:25–27 and/or 44–46.⁶⁰ He then relates that they had “seen him going up to heaven ... and had received power sent from there from him to them and had gone to every race of human beings.” This outline derives from Luke 24:47–53 and/or Acts 1:8–9.⁶¹

Justin’s primary interest is to demonstrate the fulfillment of prophecy, and so most of the details he includes from Luke 24 are chosen because they support that argument.⁶² There is, however, one element in 1 *Apol.* 50.12 that stands out because of its absence from Luke’s account. Justin adds καὶ πιστεύσαντες (“and they had believed”) to the narrative. Luke repeatedly mentions the disbelief of the disciples (24:11, 25, 37–38, 41) but never explicitly says that they overcame their doubts. By contrast, Justin, though he is summarizing Luke’s account, never mentions the doubt but inserts instead a statement that the apostles believed. This insertion makes it difficult to avoid the impression that Justin is suppressing the doubt motif.⁶³

Also noteworthy is the location in which Justin chose to insert the comment that the apostles believed. Justin differs from Ignatius in that he does not claim that the apostles believed immediately after the risen Jesus appeared to them. Rather Justin says that they believed after Jesus “had taught them to read the prophecies ... and after they had seen him going up to heaven,” but before “they had received power” from heaven. This seemingly odd placement is probably the result of Justin’s exegesis of Luke 24. Luke says that the apostles

⁶⁰ Similarly Haenchen, *Acts*, 8; Skarsaune, *Proof*, 11, 256. It is also worth noting that the phrase ὑστερον δέ appears nowhere else in Justin’s writings and so may well be drawn from the parallel in Mark 16:14. If so, Justin has chosen not to mention the rebuke for disbelief and hardness of heart in that verse. On Justin’s knowledge of the Longer Ending of Mark, see Lunn, *Original Ending*, 76–79.

⁶¹ With Gregory (*Reception*, 317–21), I regard dependence on Acts here unproven. Nevertheless, I consider it highly probable because two aspects of Justin’s account are closer to Acts than to Luke. First, as in Acts, the apostles are explicitly said to “see” the ascension, a detail not mentioned in Luke or any other NT text. Second, while Luke 24 indicates that they will be “clothed with power,” Justin, like Acts 1:8, says they will “receive power.”

⁶² For example, the disciples’ desertion is a fulfillment of Isa 53:6 just quoted. In the next chapter, the ascension is said to fulfill another prophecy (*1 Apol.* 51.6–7).

⁶³ See also the potential allusion to Luke 24:11 (“These words seemed like nonsense [ὡσεὶ λῆρος], and they did not believe them”) at the conclusion of Justin’s argument: “And on the day after Saturday, which is Sunday, having appeared ... he taught his disciples these things which we have submitted to you for inspection. And if they seem to you to be not far from reason and truth, honor them. But if (εἰ) these things seem to you to be portentous nonsense (λῆρος), despise them as nonsensical (ὡς ληρωδῶν) matters” (*1 Apol.* 67.8–68.1).

were “still disbelieving” after the touch invitation (24:39–41) and offers no indication that Jesus’s eating of fish actually resolved their doubt (24:41–44). In fact, Luke’s statement, “Then, he opened their minds to understand the Scripture” (24:45), could be understood to mean that neither proof was fully effective. Both are omitted by Justin.⁶⁴ In Luke’s narrative, the first real hint that the doubt has been fully resolved comes in 24:52a: “and they *worshipped* him.” It is at precisely this point in the sequence, i.e., after the scriptural proof (24:44–49) and the ascension (24:51) but before Pentecost, that Justin inserts “and they had believed.” In contrast to most modern commentators, it appears that Justin understood the fulfillment of prophecy and the ascension, rather than the physical proofs, to be the things that resolved the apostles’ doubts in Luke’s account.⁶⁵

4.3.2 Justin, *Dial.* 106.1

A similar treatment of the appearance narratives can be found in two passages from Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho*. The first contains even closer verbal echoes of Luke 24 than those of 1 *Apol.* 50.12:

The rest of the psalm shows that he knew his Father would grant all his requests and would raise him from the dead. It also shows that he encourages all who fear God to praise him because, through the mystery of the crucified one, he had mercy on every race of believing men; and that he stood *in the midst of his brethren* (ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ἀδελφῶν αὐτοῦ ἔσθη; cf. Luke 24:36: ἔσθη ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν), that is, of the apostles, who, after he *arose from the dead* (ἀναστῆναι ... ἐκ νεκρῶν; cf. Luke 24:46: ἀναστῆναι ἐκ νεκρῶν) and convinced them that he had warned them before the Passion (cf. Luke 24:44) that *it was necessary for him suffer these things* (ταῦτα αὐτὸν [ἔ]δεῖ παθεῖν; cf. Luke 24:26: ταῦτα ἔδει παθεῖν τὸν χριστόν) and that this was foretold *by the prophets* (ἀπὸ τῶν προφητῶν; cf. Luke 24:27: ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν προφητῶν), repented that they had abandoned him at the crucifixion. The psalm finally shows that *he sang the praise of God* while he was with them, which actually happened, according to the *Memoirs* of the apostles. (*Dial.* 106.1)⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Both times that Jesus teaches on the fulfillment of prophecy, it is in response to doubt (Luke 24:25–27, 41–47).

⁶⁵ An important exception in modern interpretation, one that aligns well with the interpretation of Luke 24 that I am attributing to Justin, is Dillon, *Eye-Witnesses*, 166–67, 194–97.

⁶⁶ Trans. Thomas B. Falls, *St. Justin Martyr: Dialogue with Trypho* (Selections from the Fathers of the Church 3; rev. ed.; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 159, Greek text, cross references, and emphasis added. With one exception I have followed the critical text in Miroslav Marcovich, *Iustini Martyres Dialogus cum Tryphone* (PTS 47; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997), 252. Marcovich favors emending ἀπὸ τῶν προφητῶν in the text of *Parsinus gr 450* to read ὑπὸ τῶν προφητῶν. A scribal error is possible, but the emendation is unnecessary if Justin has here been influenced by Luke’s wording, which he echoes throughout the paragraph. Moreover, in early Christian literature, and Luke-Acts especially, ἀπὸ not infrequently appears in place of ὑπὸ to denote agency, e.g., Luke 6:18; 8:43; 17: 25; Acts 4:36; 10:33; 15:4 (BDF §210).

Again, there is evidence that Justin deliberately omitted the doubts and physical proofs of Luke 24:37–43. Justin first alludes to Luke 24:36, claiming that when Jesus “stood in the midst” of the apostles he fulfilled Ps 21:23 (LXX).⁶⁷ Then, skipping Luke 24:37–43, Justin alludes to Luke 24:44, where Jesus reminds the apostles of his own previous passion predictions, a detail unique to Luke’s resurrection narrative.⁶⁸ Justin seems to presuppose the doubt of the apostles when he notes that Jesus had to “convince” them. As in *I Apol.* 50.12, the apostles are convinced by prophecy and not by physical proofs. The omission of their unbelief is understandable in a context where Justin refers to God’s mercy on “every race of believing (πιστευόντων) men.” It would be counter-productive, immediately following this, to refer to the apostles as “still disbelieving (ἔτι ... ἀπιστούντων)” (Luke 24:41). Moreover, Justin adds another detail that is not found in the canonical resurrection accounts, namely, that the apostles “repented (μετενόησαν)” for abandoning Christ at his crucifixion. This repentance, whether it comes from a separate tradition or is Justin’s own gloss on μετάνοιαν in Luke 24:47, is almost certainly added as a way of defending the character of the apostles in anticipation of Justin’s next argument. In *Dial.* 107–109, Justin invokes Jesus’s saying about the “sign of Jonah” and

⁶⁷ In the next paragraph, Justin quotes the psalm verbatim from the LXX, but here Justin has adapted the wording of the LXX to Luke 24:36 by adding ἔστη and moving the reference to “brothers” after μέσῳ. John 20:19 has similar language, but both Justin and the LXX are closer to Luke. Justin appears to have been the first writer to make explicit this connection between Luke’s narrative and Ps 21.

Justin also says that Jesus sang praise to God (ὑμνησε τὸν Θεόν) while he was with them and notes that both Ps 21 LXX and “the memoirs of the apostles” agree on this. If the immediately preceding participial phrase, καὶ μετ’ αὐτῶν διάγων, is intended to indicate the time of singing, then this could be evidence of Justin’s dependence on a different source, because Luke’s Gospel does not have them sing a hymn with Jesus after his resurrection. However, it is possible that καὶ μετ’ αὐτῶν διάγων is not referring to post-resurrection time, but to the pre-crucifixion life of Jesus. This would be in keeping with the more usual use of the verb διάγω and so would be translated “while living with them.” In this case, Justin may be referring to Matt 26:30 or Mark 14:26 (καὶ ὑμνήσαντες ἐξῆλθον εἰς τὸ ὄρος τῶν ἐλαιῶν), where Jesus and the disciples sing a hymn at the end of the Passover meal.

Alternatively, Justin may be conflating these verses with a variant version of Luke 24:53. In most manuscripts (D it A C² K W Γ Δ Θ Ψ f^{1,13} 33 565 579 700 892 1241 1424 ℓ 2211 Π lat sy^{p,h} Diatessaron) the disciples are said to be praising God (αἰνοῦντες ... τὸν θεόν). Justin agrees with Luke 24:53 against the parallels in Matt 26:30 and Mark 14:26 by including the object of praise, τὸν θεόν. The difference between the verbs (αἰνέω in Luke, ὑμέω in Justin) is insignificant because in the next sentence it becomes clear that both Justin and the psalm use ὑμέω and αἰνέω as synonyms (*Dial.* 106.2; Ps 21:23–24 LXX).

⁶⁸ So Skarsaune, *Proof*, 256. At this point Justin conflates Luke 24:44 with Luke 24:26, echoing the phrase ταῦτα ἔδει παθεῖν from the latter. As we have seen, this combination is redactional for Luke (Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1558, 1565–66; Bovon, *Luke*, 3:368–69). Justin’s use of Luke here might be indirect, mediated by the parallel in *Pre. Pet.* frag. 9, which reads ταῦτα πάντα, ἃ ἔδει αὐτὸν παθεῖν (discussed above). Similarly Skarsaune, *Proof*, 361–62.

what Justin calls the “truly sincere repentance” of the Ninevites in order to accuse the Jews of refusing “to repent” in response to Jesus’s resurrection. Justin thus implicitly contrasts two responses to the resurrection of Jesus: the repentance of the apostles and the impenitence of the Jews. Justin also says that the Jews falsely accused and cursed Jesus’s disciples, giving Justin even more reason to defend the apostles, who in his view are not only authoritative but divinely inspired (*Dial.* 119.6).⁶⁹ In this case, Justin has ample motivation to omit Luke’s references to the doubts of the disciples.

4.3.3 Justin, *Dial.* 53.5–6

The verbal connections with Luke are not as strong in *Dial.* 53.5–6, and source analysis is further complicated by a parallel in Irenaeus’s *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*:

The same Zechariah foretold that Christ would be struck, and his disciples dispersed, which actually happened. For, after he was crucified, his disciples were dispersed until *he rose from the dead* (ἀνέστη ἐκ νεκρῶν; cf. ἀναστῆναι ἐκ νεκρῶν, Luke 24:46), and convinced them *that thus it had been predicted* (ὅτι οὕτως προεπεφήτετο; cf. ὅτι οὕτως γέγραπται, Luke 24:46) *concerning him* (περὶ αὐτοῦ; cf. περὶ αὐτοῦ, Luke 24:44) *that he should suffer* (παθεῖν αὐτόν; cf. παθεῖν τὸν χριστόν, Luke 24:46). When they were convinced of this, they went out to all the world teaching these things (cf. Luke 24:47–48). Thus, we too are firm in the faith and his instruction, because we also have persuasion *from the prophecies* (ἀπὸ τῶν προφητ[ει]ῶν; cf. ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν προφητῶν, Luke 24:27) and from those who, openly throughout the world, [believe] in the name of the crucified one and are worshipers of God. Indeed, Zechariah said, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man of my people, says the Lord of Hosts. Strike the shepherd and his sheep shall be dispersed” [Zech 13:7]. (Justin, *Dial.* 53.5–6)⁷⁰

And Zechariah says thus: Sword, awake against my shepherd, and against the man [that is] my companion. Smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered [Zech 13:7]. And this came to pass when He was taken by the Jews: for all the disciples forsook Him, fearing lest they should die with Him. For not yet did they steadfastly believe on Him, until they had seen Him risen from the dead. (Irenaeus, *Epid.* 76)⁷¹

⁶⁹ On Justin’s exalted view of the apostles, see Charles E. Hill, “Justin and the New Testament Writings,” *StPatr* 30 (1997): 42–48, esp. 46–48.

⁷⁰ I have slightly modified Falls’s translation (*Dialogue*, 80–81) to align more closely with the critical edition of Marcovich. Justin probably paraphrased ὅτι οὕτως γέγραπται in Luke 24:46 as ὅτι οὕτως προεπεφήτετο to avoid Luke’s unconventional use of a quotation formula without an actual OT quotation.

⁷¹ Trans. J. Armitage Robinson, *St. Irenaeus: Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* (Translations of Christian Literature: Series 4, Oriental Texts; London: S.P.C.K., 1920), 135.

Justin is concerned about depicting Christ's suffering as a fulfillment of prophecy.⁷² As in *Dial.* 106.1, the risen Christ must convince the disciples before they can embark on their worldwide mission.⁷³ Again, this seems to presuppose some doubt or lack of faith on the part of the apostles. This impression is strengthened by the parallel in Irenaeus, *Epid.* 76: "For not yet did they steadfastly believe in him." The doubts of the apostles, only implicit in Justin, are explicit in Irenaeus, who in this passage probably depends on a common source rather than on Justin.⁷⁴ If so, Irenaeus's text testifies to the presence of the doubt motif in Justin's source that is omitted by Justin.⁷⁵ Corroboration can be found in the next statement: "Thus we too (καὶ ἡμεῖς) are firm in the faith (βέβαιοι ἐν τῇ πίστει) ... because we also have persuasion from prophets (ἀπὸ τῶν προφητῶν ... τὴν πειθὸς ἔχομεν)." Justin's adjunctive καί ("too") draws a comparison between the apostles and later Christians, confirming, both here and in *I Apol.* 50.12, that in Justin's reading of Luke the apostles were *not* firm in faith until after Jesus provided scriptural proofs (Luke 24:44–47). Again, for Justin, it is not the physical proofs of the resurrection body that persuade the apostles to believe, but the fulfillment of prophecy.

Justin's omission of the doubt of the apostles in this context does not cohere with the apologetic value assigned to the doubt motif in modern scholarship. According to the latter, the doubt motif in the Gospels is an apologetic representation of the doubts of a later generation of the church: the reader is expected to identify with the apostles' doubt and then follow the apostles' example by moving from doubt to faith. If the doubt motif had this apologetic purpose, it is remarkable that Justin omitted it in his *apologetic* redaction of the story. Although Justin connects the faith of the apostles with that of the later Church, he does not, as we might expect, appeal to the doubts of the apostles by encouraging his readers that they, too, like the apostles, can move from unbelief to faith. In fact, no proto-orthodox author in the second and early-third centuries makes this kind of an appeal. The resurrection accounts in the

⁷² So William S. Kurz, "The Function of Christological Proof from Prophecy for Luke and Justin" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1976), 159–60, 179, 213–21; Skarsaune, *Proof*, 11, 256.

⁷³ Similarly *I Clem.* 42.

⁷⁴ Robinson (*Demonstration*, 6–23) judges Irenaeus dependent on Justin. But Joseph P. Smith has persuasively argued for a common source, noting, among other things, that Irenaeus's *Demonstration* and Justin's *Dialogue* consistently differ in the wording of their OT citations (*St. Irenaeus: Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* [ACW 16; Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1952], 37–38). I would add that the main source to which Irenaeus refers is the "tradition" of "the Elders, the disciples of the Apostles" (*Epid.* 3; 61; 86). Irenaeus probably had access to both Justin and Justin's source, but preferred to follow the latter because it was older.

⁷⁵ Alternatively, if Irenaeus is dependent on Justin, then Irenaeus has recognized the implicit doubt in Justin's text, and so indirectly witnesses to Justin's omission of the doubt.

Synoptics, including the LE of Mark, cannot be made to fit this paradigm because none of them ever explicitly says that the apostles “believed.” Of course, this silence posed no obstacle to Justin, who, like other proto-orthodox authors, had no qualms about adding this detail to the story. However, this only reinforces the impression that the doubt motif was a liability in proto-orthodox apologetics. Even after adding a confirmation that the apostles believed and comparing their faith to that of later believers, Justin still did not find the doubt motif amenable to his argument.⁷⁶ He retells the group appearance story three times in apologetic contexts but never mentions the doubts of the apostles.

4.3.4 Justin, *1 Apol.* 19–21

On the one hand, it could be argued that Justin omits the physical proofs in the above passages because his primary purpose is to demonstrate the fulfillment of prophecy. On the other hand, Justin also chooses not to mention the physical proofs when providing his apologetic arguments for Jesus’s resurrection in ch. 21. Rather than appealing to the appearance stories of the Gospels, Justin argues for the plausibility of Jesus’s resurrection by appealing to analogies in the legends and myths of Greek heroes. Apparently, Justin did not think Luke’s resurrection narrative, even with its physical proofs, would make an effective apologetic for “incredulous” readers who “have never seen a dead man raised” (Justin, *1 Apol.* 19.3).⁷⁷

⁷⁶ The same could be said of the parallel passage in Irenaeus, *Epid.* 76. The stated purpose of the document is to “strengthen the faith” of Irenaeus’s readers (*Epid.* 1), but Irenaeus does not connect the apostles’ move from doubt to steadfast faith with the experience of his readers.

⁷⁷ The objection, that no one has ever actually risen from the dead, was real and not merely hypothetical. Celsus’s Jew raises this objection on the basis of his reading of the Gospels and comparing Jesus’s resurrection to the Greek heroes (Origen, *Cels.* 2.55). Possibly with Justin in mind, Celsus sarcastically asks whether Christians really think their resurrection narratives were more convincing than the tall tales of Greek heroes. At some point later, Caecilius, the opponent refuted in Minucius Felix’s *Octavius* (ca. 175–248 CE), makes the same objection, that no one has ever risen from the dead, and then turns Christian appeals to analogies with Greek heroes on their head: “Countless centuries have slipped by, but in all these bygone ages I know of not one man who has left to come back from the underworld – even on the conditions of Protesilaus, granted a visit of but a few hours – if only to make this notion credible by his example. Really, you are so gullible – you have refashioned all these figments of morbid imaginations, the absurd consolations, the frivolities invented by poets to give beguiling charm to their verse, and you have applied them to your God, and to your discredit” (*Oct.* 11.8–9, trans. Graeme W. Clarke, *The Octavius of Marcus Minucius Felix* [ACW 39; New York: Newman, 2012], 69). Celsus’s Jew and Caecilius both thought that the stories of Jesus’s resurrection appearances were parallel to – even poor imitations of – the stories of Greek heroes, but it was for that very reason that they rejected any appeal to Jesus’s resurrection. Because they considered the hero stories to be inventions, they had the same assessment of the accounts of Jesus’s resurrection.

Justin provides an explicit rationale for appealing to prophecy rather than to accounts of miraculous events. Whereas miraculous events could potentially be dismissed as mere illusions performed by “magical arts,” the fulfillment of prophecy provides the “greatest and truest proof” (*1 Apol.* 30). According to Justin, “God disclosed beforehand through the prophetic Spirit that things which people supposed would be incredible and impossible were going to happen, so that when they did happen, they should not be disbelieved but should rather be believed because they had been foretold” (*1 Apol.* 33.2).⁷⁸ For Justin, Jesus’s resurrection and all the miracles he performed are convincing precisely because they were foretold by the prophets (*1 Apol.* 31).⁷⁹ In other words, Justin systematically omits the physical proofs of the resurrection in each of his summaries of Luke 24 because he does not think they will be persuasive.⁸⁰ Justin alludes to one of the so-called proofs only once, and when he does his goal is not to prove the physical reality of the resurrection but to allude to the fulfillment of prophecy. According to Justin, Jesus preached the necessity (δεῖ) not only of his suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection, but also of his reappearance “at Jerusalem to eat and to drink with the disciples” (*Dial.* 51.2). As we have seen, Justin leaves out this detail when he retells the appearance narrative just a few paragraphs later. This striking omission shows just how little apologetic value Justin assigned to the so-called physical proofs.

Justin’s caution was well founded. He also knew of Jews who attributed Jesus’s miracles, including resurrections, to “magical arts” (*Dial.* 69.5). Other church fathers report similar accusations from Jews, including the charge that Jesus was raised from the dead by means of necromancy.⁸¹ And Celsus, Justin’s

⁷⁸ Irenaeus later echoes this statement in *Epid.* 42. An alternative apologetic approach is taken by Quadratus (ca. 125 CE), who argues that Jesus’s miracles were “true” because those whom Jesus raised from the dead lived a long time, some even until his own day (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.3.2). This is presumably designed to counter the potential accusation that Jesus’s miracles were a magical illusion. Irenaeus compares the lasting benefits of the miracles of Jesus and the apostles to the “phantasms” of magicians “that instantly cease” (*Haer.* 2.32.3–4; cf. *Acts. Pet.* 31). Irenaeus also mentions Jesus’s resurrection here.

⁷⁹ Tertullian makes a similar argument, noting that while miracles can be performed by false prophets and messiahs, Jesus’s miracles are convincing because they fulfill OT types (*Marc.* 3.3).

⁸⁰ Marcion, whom Justin mentions just a few paragraphs earlier, does not find the physical proofs of Luke 24 problematic for his docetic reading of the resurrection, but he does reject Luke’s scriptural proofs. There is no evidence that Justin was aware of Marcion’s views of Luke 24, but it is striking that Justin avoids the parts of Luke 24 that were acceptable to Marcion and emphasizes those parts that Marcion rejected. Minns and Parvis (*Justin*, 163 n. 7) posit that some of Justin’s arguments from prophecy in *1 Apology* “may have been adopted from an anti-Marcionite argument” in Justin’s lost *Syntagma*. On Marcion’s treatment of Luke 24, see Chapter 6.

⁸¹ Similarly Pionius (third century), *ActaSS* (February 1) 45B; Arnobius, *Adv. nat.* 1.43; Lactantius, *Div. inst.* 4.15.1.

near contemporary and a pagan critic of Christianity, parrots Jewish accusations that both the miracle stories in the Gospels and the resurrection appearances were wonders produced by deceit; he claims that those who saw the risen Jesus's wounds were deluded by sorcery and hallucinations (Origen, *Cels.* 1.28; 2.49, 55). Celsus's Jew also acknowledges that prophetic fulfillment is more persuasive than miracles when, immediately following this accusation of sorcery, he asks his Jewish Christian opponents, "What led you to believe, except that he *foretold* that after his death he would rise again?" (*Cels.* 2.54).⁸²

Justin omits the physical proofs in apologetic arguments with both Jews (*Dial.* 53; 106) and pagans (*1 Apol.* 19–21; 50), and each time he retells the group appearance story he maintains that it was the fulfillment of prophecy that ultimately convinced the apostles to believe (*1 Apol.* 50; *Dial.* 53; 106). Furthermore, Justin holds that the same is true of subsequent generations of Christians: "we too are firm in the faith ... because we also have persuasion from the prophecies" (*Dial.* 53). The "we too" implies that Justin's understanding of the apologetic value of Luke's group appearance narrative would have in some sense been typical of other early Christian readers as well. In sum, for a variety of early readers (Jew, Christian, and pagan) the apologetic force of Luke 24 lay not in its references to Christ's physicality, but in its appeal to the fulfillment of prophecy.

4.4 Theophilus of Antioch, *Autol.* 1.13–14

Theophilus, sixth bishop of Syrian Antioch (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.20.1; Jerome, *Vir. il.* 25) wrote a trilogy of books to a skeptical pagan named Autolytus.⁸³ The final book was written some time shortly after 180 CE (*Autol.* 3.28). The dates of the first two books are unknown, but both appear to have been written a few years earlier, i.e., before 180.⁸⁴ Theophilus explicitly refers to "the Gospels" and considers them inspired in the same way as the OT (*Autol.* 3.12). Jerome says that Theophilus wrote commentaries on the Gospels and even produced a gospel harmony.⁸⁵ In *Autolytus*, Theophilus refers by name

⁸² Trans. Chadwick, *Contra Celsum*, 108, emphasis added. Given that Celsus's Jew has read the Gospels, this statement may be a response to Luke 24:44–47.

⁸³ Though the works were obviously intended for a wider audience, Autolytus was likely a real person and not simply a literary device (Rick Rogers, "Theophilus of Antioch," *ExpTim* 120 [2009]: 216–17).

⁸⁴ Similarly Robert M. Grant, "Theophilus of Antioch to Autolytus," *HTR* 40 (1947): 227–28; idem, *Greek Apologists*, 143; Rogers, "Theophilus," 217.

⁸⁵ *Vir. il.* 25; *Epist.* 121.6.15.

only to John but quotes from Matthew and alludes at various points to uniquely Lukan details.⁸⁶

Toward the end of his first book, Theophilus addresses Autolyclus's denial of the resurrection of the dead (1.8, 13–14). Theophilus's resurrection apologetic appeals primarily to analogies in nature. Precedents appear in earlier Christian literature (e.g., *1 Clem.* 24–27; Justin, *1 Apol.* 19), and so Theophilus's use of nature analogies here is not surprising. What is surprising is the absence of any reference to Jesus's resurrection (cf. *1 Cor* 15; *1 Clem.* 24.1; Justin, *1 Apol.* 21). On the one hand, Theophilus never mentions Jesus in any of his three books to Autolyclus, and so this might simply be part of Theophilus's unconventional approach to apologetics.⁸⁷ On the other hand, Theophilus seems to have been especially determined to avoid any appeal to Jesus's resurrection appearances in his defense of the Judeo-Christian claim that God will raise the dead. Theophilus's resurrection apologetic is written in response to the following request: "Show me even one person raised from the dead, so that by seeing I may believe" (*Autol.* 1.13). Theophilus knows the Gospels, and so presumably could have cited the stories of Jesus raising the dead (*Matt* 9:18–26; *Luke* 7:11–16; *John* 11) or the resurrection appearance narratives (*Matt* 28; *Luke* 24; *John* 20–21). Instead, Theophilus appeals to analogies with Greco-Roman heroes (e.g., Heracles and Asclepius) and from nature (e.g., night and day, seeds, the lunar cycle). Theophilus concludes these arguments by exhorting Autolyclus with an adaptation of Jesus's words to Thomas in *John* 20:27 (μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός): "Therefore, do not disbelieve but believe! (μὴ οὖν ἀπίσται, ἀλλὰ πίστευε)" (*Autol.* 1.14).⁸⁸ Given that Theophilus elsewhere explicitly quotes from John's Gospel and here is making an argument for the resurrection of the dead, the echo must be intentional. But Theophilus curiously chooses not to recount the Thomas pericope.

Certainly, Thomas's skepticism ("Unless I see ... I will never believe" [ἐὰν μὴ ἴδω ... οὐ μὴ πιστεύσω]) is similar to that of Autolyclus, whom Theophilus depicts as saying, "Show me even one person raised from the dead, so that seeing I may believe (ἵνα ἴδων, πιστεύσω)" (*Autol.* 1.13). Immediately after his allusion to *John* 20:27, Theophilus relates his own conversion experience, which echoes *John* 20:27 a second time:

⁸⁶ *John*: *Autol.* 2.22, quoting *John* 1:1–3. *Matthew*: *Autol.* 3.13–14, quoting from *Matt* 5:28, 32, 44, 45; 6:3. *Luke*: *Autol.* 2.10 (*Luke* 1:35); 2.13 (*Luke* 18:27); 3.3 (*Luke* 1:2–3).

⁸⁷ On Theophilus's "Jesus-less Christianity," see Robert M. Grant, *Jesus after the Gospels: The Christ of the Second Century* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 68–82; Rick Rogers, *Theophilus of Antioch: The Life and Thought of a Second-Century Bishop* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington, 2000), 156–67.

⁸⁸ So already Alfred Resch, *Aussercanonische Paralleltexzte zu den Evangelien* (5 vols.; TU 10; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1893–1897), 3:194.

Do not disbelieve, then, but believe. I too did not believe the resurrection would take place, but now that I have considered these matters, I believe. At that time I encountered the sacred writings of the holy prophets, who through the Spirit of God foretold past events in the way that they happened, present events in the way they are happening, and future events in the order in which they will be accomplished. Because I obtained proof (ἀπόδειξιν) from the events which took place after being predicted, *I do not disbelieve but believe* (οὐκ ἀπιστῶ ἀλλὰ πιστεύω), in obedience to God.... If you will, you too must read the prophetic writings. (*Autol.* 1.14)⁸⁹

Theophilus thus tacitly compares Thomas not only with Autolycus but also with himself. Like Thomas, Theophilus moved from disbelief to belief, and so also should Autolycus. These comparisons make it all the more remarkable that Theophilus does not tell Thomas's story. The Thomas pericope appears to be tailor-made for someone like Autolycus, who, like Thomas, demands to see someone raised from the dead before believing. Yet despite the implied parallel between the unbelief of Thomas and that of Autolycus, Theophilus refuses to retell Thomas's story to Autolycus.⁹⁰ Why?

Theophilus does not answer this question directly, but he does offer two reasons why he does not appeal to evidence of a miraculous event. First, in response to Autolycus's demand to see before believing Theophilus asks, "Of what significance (would it be), if after seeing the event, you should then believe?" (*Autol.* 1.13). As Grant has noted, this question is probably influenced by John 20:29: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."⁹¹ Ironically, it is Thomas's demand for physical proof that renders John 20:24–29 unusable for Theophilus's resurrection apologetic. Moreover, Theophilus attributes his own conversion to resurrection faith to his observation of the fulfillment of OT prophecy, and so he encourages Autolycus to read not John 20 but the prophetic writings. Thus, despite the echo of John 20:27, it is clear that the Thomas pericope did not lead Theophilus to believe in the resurrection of the dead. Nor did Theophilus think Thomas's story an effective apologetic for Autolycus.

The second reason Theophilus gives for refusing Autolycus the proof of an actual resurrection is that he thinks such proof would be ineffective. He says, "and perhaps if I show you a dead man raised and alive, even this you might disbelieve (ἴσως καὶ ἐπιδείξω σοι νεκρὸν ἐγερθέντα καὶ ζῶντα, καὶ τοῦτο ἀπιστήσεις)" (*Autol.* 1.13). Theophilus does not say why he thinks Autolycus would still disbelieve after seeing for himself someone risen from the dead, but

⁸⁹ Trans. Robert M. Grant, *Theophilus of Antioch: Ad Autolycum* (OECT; Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 19–20.

⁹⁰ Grant notes how unpersuasive Theophilus's arguments from nature analogies are and concludes: "Theophilus might have done better had he remained within a scriptural framework at this point" (*Greek Apologists*, 173–74).

⁹¹ Grant, "Theophilus," 233.

he may have in mind the group appearance story of Luke 24.⁹² If the apostles were still “disbelieving (ἀπιστούντων)” even after Jesus “showed (ἔδειξεν [επεδειξεν, A K W Γ Δ Θ Ψ f¹³ 565. 700. 1424 M]) them his hands and feet” (24:40–41), Theophilus might reasonably expect Autolycus to disbelieve (ἀπιστήσεις) even after he is shown (ἐπιδείξω) a dead man raised.⁹³ Theophilus’s argument also parallels a statement in Luke 16:31: “If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, *neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead* (οὐδ’ ἂν τις ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῆ [εγερθη, P⁷⁵ 579] πεισθήσονται [πιστευσοσιν, D lat sy^{s.c.p.}; Ir^{lat}]).”⁹⁴ The influence of Luke 16 and/or Luke 24 here helps explain why Theophilus in the next chapter avoids the Thomas pericope and appeals instead to the “prophetic writings.” Theophilus says that he himself was convinced only after the fulfillment of prophecy was demonstrated to him. This is consistent with Justin’s reading of Luke 24 (discussed above), where it is not the physical but the scriptural proofs that convince the apostles and future generations to believe. Therefore, while Theophilus draws on John’s resurrection narrative for the wording of his exhortation to believe, his surprising shift to the fulfillment of prophecy was probably influenced by Luke’s account. In any case, Theophilus, like Justin, finds scriptural proofs more useful for resurrection apologetic than the so-called physical proofs from the canonical narratives.

⁹² On Theophilus’s “almost certain” knowledge Luke, see Gregory, *Reception*, 83–85. Gregory does not, as I do below, discuss *Autol.* 1.13 as a possible echo of Luke 16:31 and/or 24:40–41. However, if Theophilus did know Luke, the influence of Luke on *Autol.* 1.13 must be considered probable. On the significant influence of Luke’s Gospel on Theophilus’s thought, see Grant, *Greek Apologists*, 171–72. Theophilus also seems to be familiar with both Acts and the Pauline epistles (Grant, “The Bible of Theophilus of Antioch,” *JBL* 66 [1947]: 181–84, 188).

⁹³ The potential influence of Acts 1:3 should also be considered. Both texts are about resurrection and share a sequence of three terms.

He presented himself to them alive (ζῶντα) after his suffering	Even if I were to show you a dead man raised and alive (ζῶντα), you might perhaps disbelieve this. God has given you many indications (πολλὰ τεκμήρια) for believing him.
by many proofs (πολλοῖς τεκμηρίοις).	
(Acts 1:3)	(<i>Autol.</i> 1.13)

Strictly speaking, ζῶντα is redundant in *Autol.* 1.13 after “raised” and may therefore reflect a source. ζῶντα in Acts 1:3 is Lukan and appears in Lukan redaction in Luke 24:5 (cf. Luke 24:23). If Theophilus is imitating Acts here, he is subverting it and replacing Luke’s τεκμήρια with proofs from nature.

⁹⁴ The influence of Luke 16:31 on *Autol.* 1.13 is also detected in Grant, *Greek Apologists*, 172; Stuart E. Parsons, “Coherence, Rhetoric, and Scripture in Theophilus of Antioch’s *Ad Autolycum*,” *GOTR* 53 (2008): 169. Dependence on the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man may have influenced Theophilus’s exhortation to Autolycus to believe now lest he be convinced only after he begins to endure eternal torments predicted by the prophets (*Autol.* 1.14; cf. Luke 16:23–28).

Both Justin, *1 Apol.* 19–21, and Theophilus, *Autol.* 1.13–14 respond to someone who refuses to believe without proof that someone rose from the dead. Both are aware of at least one appearance narrative in which Jesus offers physical proofs, and so could have argued something along the lines of the following: “Jesus’s disciples too were understandably incredulous, but they were convinced because they saw Jesus alive and saw his scars and even touched him to confirm he was not a ghost.” Yet neither Justin nor Theophilus does anything of the sort. For Justin, miraculous events can be too easily dismissed as magical illusion. For Theophilus, probably under the influence of Luke, even seeing does not necessarily result in faith, at least not a faith of any significance. Both apologists align with the perspective in Luke 16:31. Even if people see a man risen from the dead they will not believe. They need instead to be convinced by the fulfillment of prophecy.

4.5 [Ps.-]Athenagoras of Athens, *On the Resurrection*

While traditionally attributed to Athenagoras of Athens and dated ca. 180 CE, both the authenticity and early dating of this apologetic treatise are contested. Some have argued that it may have been composed as late as the fourth century.⁹⁵ The paucity of available evidence does not permit a decisive verdict on the matter.⁹⁶ It therefore seems prudent to consider briefly what contribution this text would make to the current discussion if the traditional attribution is correct.

In this lengthy defense of resurrection, the author never quotes or alludes to the canonical appearance narratives. He appeals instead to arguments from creation. Because the author does not quote or allude to Scripture very often, it is difficult to assess the significance of the author’s silence with respect to Jesus’s resurrection. There is nonetheless some evidence that the omission was deliberate. First, the author explicitly quotes from 1 Cor 15 as an authority on the matter, and so would have been aware of Paul’s defense of the future resurrection on the basis of Christ’s resurrection.⁹⁷ This makes the author’s choice

⁹⁵ Against authenticity: Robert M. Grant, “Athenagoras or Pseudo-Athenagoras,” *HTR* 47 (1954): 121–29; William R. Schoedel, *Athenagoras, Legatio and De resurrectione* (OECT; Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), xxviii; Nicole Zeegers-Vander Vorst, “La paternité athénagorienne du *De resurrectione*,” *RHE* 87 (1992): 333–74. For authenticity: Leslie W. Barnard, “The Authenticity of Athenagoras’ *De resurrectione*,” *StPatr* 15 (1984): 39–49; Bernard Pouderon, “L’authenticité du traité sur la résurrection attribué à l’apologiste Athénagore,” *VC* 40 (1986): 226–44.

⁹⁶ An assessment of the debate is offered in David Rankin, *Athenagoras: Philosopher and Theologian* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2009), 17–40, 177.

⁹⁷ He quotes 1 Cor 15:53 in *Res.* 18.5, and *Res.* 3.2 appears to be an allusion to the same verse. Additionally, 1 Cor 15:32 (Isa 22:13) is quoted in *Leg* 12.3 and *Res.* 19.3.

not to follow Paul in appealing to Christ's resurrection surprising. Second, the quotations and allusions to Gospel traditions in the works attributed to Athenagoras exhibit dependence on Matthew, Luke, and John, which further suggests that the author knew the appearance narratives and chose not to appeal to them.⁹⁸ Third, the introduction to *On the Resurrection* may in part provide the author's reasons for not discussing Christ's resurrection. I quote here Leslie W. Barnard's translation of the relevant lines:

It is therefore necessary, I think, to address two arguments to those who are in this perplexity, the one a defence of the truth, the other an exposition of the truth, the former being addressed to skeptics and doubters, the latter to those of good sense who receive the truth gladly ... Having regard then to the needs of the situation, we too sometimes set the defence of the truth before its exposition; and in the present case it does not seem wholly useless to have regard to this necessity when the argument is concerned with the resurrection. (*Res.* 1)⁹⁹

Barnard observes that *On the Resurrection* contains only the first argument, i.e., Athenagoras's defense of the idea of resurrection, and not his exposition of the doctrine. Whereas in the former the author never mentions Christ, Barnard argues that there is "no reason to doubt that, in the latter, [Athenagoras] would have expounded fully the resurrection of Christ and the unity of the believer with Christ in His resurrection."¹⁰⁰ If so, *On the Resurrection* is aimed at those "skeptics and doubters" who do not have the "good sense" to accept the truth of Christ's resurrection. In other words, Athenagoras omitted Christ's resurrection because he did not think it a persuasive apologetic.

Given the target audience, it is all the more striking that the author does not appeal to the canonical appearance narratives. The phrase "skeptics and doubters (τοὺς ἀπιστοῦντας ἢ τοὺς ἀμφιβάλλοντας)" would be an apt description of the apostles in the appearance narratives in the Gospels known to Athenagoras (Matt 28:17 [ἐδίστασαν]; Luke 24:11 [ἠπίστουν], 38 [διαλογισμοί], 41 [ἀπιστοῦντων]; John 20:25 [οὐ μὴ πιστεύσω]; 27 [ἄπιστος]).¹⁰¹ Despite the fact that the risen Jesus addresses the doubts of the apostles, Athenagoras chose not

⁹⁸ Athenagoras conflates Matt 5:44–45 and Luke 6:27–28 in *Leg.* 11.2, and Matt 5:39–43 and Luke 6:29–30 in *Leg.* 11.4. Numerous allusions to John's Gospel also appear in *Leg.* 10.2–3 (cf. John 1:3, 14; 10:30, 38; 14:10, 11; 17:21; see further Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 81–83). References to the Gospels in *On the Resurrection* appear to be limited to Luke (compare Luke 8:13 with *Res.* 1.3 and Luke 18:27 with *Res.* 9.1), though *Res.* 8.3 contains a possible allusion to John 11:24.

⁹⁹ Barnard, *Athenagoras: A Study in Second Century Christian Apologetic* (Théologie historique 18; Paris: Beauchesne, 1972), 128.

¹⁰⁰ Barnard, *Athenagoras*, 128.

¹⁰¹ The expression, τοὺς ἀμφιβάλλοντας, because of its semantic range, would be an especially appropriate way to refer to the apostles in the resurrection narratives. In the context of Athenagoras's treatise it must be taken to mean "those who doubt," but by itself the phrase can also be translated "those who cast nets," i.e., fishermen (e.g., Mark 1:16; see also *PGL*, s.v. "ἀμφιβάλλω").

to appeal to these narratives when addressing the doubts of his readers. In short, this treatise joins *1 Clem.* 24–27, Justin, *1 Apol.* 19–21, and Theophilus, *Autol.* 1.13–14, as another example of the avoidance of the canonical appearance narratives in early resurrection apologetics.

4.6 Irenaeus

4.6.1 Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.7.1 and 5.31.2

Despite the fact that all four gospels considered authoritative by Irenaeus report the post-resurrection doubt of the apostles, the bishop of Lyons almost never refers to this theme in his massive treatise *Against Heresies*.¹⁰² The only possible exception is his summary of the Ophite account, which, as we have seen in Chapter 3, criticizes the disciples because they did not “recognize” the risen Jesus (1.30.13).¹⁰³ Given Irenaeus’s frequent complaint about his opponents’ criticisms of the apostles (*Haer.* 1.13.6; 1.25.2; 1.27.2; 3.1.1–2; 3.2.2), it should not be surprising that he does not mention doubt on the five other occasions he draws from the group appearance narratives (*Haer.* 1.18.3; 2.32.3; 5.2.3; 5.7.1; 5.31.2).

In the first three instances, *Haer.* 1.18.3, 2.32.3, and 5.2.3, there is no indication that Irenaeus intentionally omits the doubt.¹⁰⁴ The next two instances (5.7.1; 5.31.2) may be more significant. In bk. 5 Irenaeus is for the most part defending the salvation of the physical body and the resurrection of the flesh. It is noteworthy that his defense is composed almost entirely of arguments from passages of Scripture other than the post-resurrection appearance narratives. His resurrection apologetic refers to the latter twice, but only briefly:

In the same manner, therefore, as Christ did rise in the substance of flesh, and showed to His disciples the mark of the nails and the opening in His side (*et ostendit discipulis figuras clavorum et apertionem lateris* = καὶ ἔδειξε τοῖς μαθηταῖς τοὺς τύπους τῶν ἥλων καὶ τὸ

¹⁰² I include here the LE of Mark, which was known to Irenaeus (see Chapter 8).

¹⁰³ Irenaeus does quote Luke 24:25, where Jesus rebukes not the Twelve but Cleopas and his unnamed companion for being “slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken” (*Haer.* 3.16.4). In this case, the doubt motif is included only because it is part of the quotation, which is cited primarily as a prooftext for the idea that Christ fulfilled prophecy.

¹⁰⁴ In *Haer.* 1.18.3, Irenaeus relates how the Marcosians use Thomas’s absence in John 20:24 to bolster their numerological theory about an invisible Decad. In *Haer.* 5.2.3, Irenaeus quotes the proverb-like saying in Luke 24:39b (“for a spirit does not have bones or flesh”) as a prooftext against a docetic view of the pre-resurrection body of Jesus (see also Smith, “Apologetic Interests.” 761). Because Irenaeus is quoting out of context only a portion of Luke 24:39, there is no reason to suggest a deliberate omission of the doubt. The remaining instance, 2.32.3, will be discussed below.

ἄνοιγμα τῆς πλευρᾶς), now these are proofs of that flesh which rose from the dead, so “shall He also,” it is said, “raise us up by His own power.” (5.7.1)

... and on His rising again the third day, He said to Mary, who was the first to see and to worship Him, “Touch Me not, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to the disciples, and say to them, I ascend to My Father, and to your Father.” If, then, the Lord observed the law of the dead, that He might become the first-begotten from the dead, and tarried until the third day “in the lower parts of the earth,” then afterwards rising in the flesh, *so that He even showed the print of the nails to His disciples (ut etiam fixuras clavorum ostenderet discipulis* = ὥστε καὶ τοὺς τύπους τῶν ἥλων δεῖξαι τοῖς μαθηταῖς). He thus ascended to the Father; – [if all these things occurred, I say], how must these men not be put to confusion, who allege that “the lower parts” refer to this world of ours, but that their inner man, leaving the body here, ascends into the super-celestial place? For as the Lord “went away in the midst of the shadow of death,” where the souls of the dead were, yet afterwards arose in the body, and after the resurrection was taken up [into heaven], it is manifest that the souls of His disciples also, upon whose account the Lord underwent these things, shall go away into the invisible place allotted to them by God, and there remain until the resurrection, awaiting that event; then receiving their bodies, and rising in their entirety, that is bodily, just as the Lord arose. (5.31.1–2)¹⁰⁵

Irenaeus is drawing on John 20 in both passages. In 5.7.1, he appeals to the group appearance narrative to interpret 1 Cor 6:13–14 as referring to a resurrection of the “flesh.” On the one hand, Irenaeus is citing one detail from John as a proof-text for his argument, and so it may be speculative to assign any significance to the absence of the doubt. On the other hand, the fact that he uses “the print of the nails” (John 20:25) rather than simply “his hands and his side” (20:20) shows that Irenaeus has imported language from the Thomas pericope into the initial group appearance narrative.¹⁰⁶ Thomas’s doubt is therefore in the background but unexpressed.¹⁰⁷

In the next passage (5.31.1–2), it is even clearer that Irenaeus is following the narrative of John 20, beginning with the appearance to Mary and continuing with the appearance to the apostles. Again, a conflation of John 20:20 and John 20:25 is present. Had Irenaeus found Thomas’s doubt useful for his apologetic for the resurrection of the flesh, this would have been an ideal place for him to tell the story in detail, but he does not. Irenaeus is probably reluctant to mention it because he knows docetists and gnostics who criticized Jesus’s disciples for their doubts.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ ANF 1:532, 560. Greek retroversions and Latin text in Adelin Rousseau, *Irénée de Lyon, Contre les hérésies, livre V* (2 vols.; SC 152–53; Paris: Cerf, 1969), 2: 85, 398.

¹⁰⁶ A similar conflation appears in [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 9.6, on which Irenaeus may be dependent (see further Chapter 6).

¹⁰⁷ Irenaeus also adds τὸ ἄνοιγμα (“the opening”) to describe Jesus’s side. While not explicitly present in John 20:24–29, this additional graphic detail seems to presuppose the Thomas pericope.

¹⁰⁸ Irenaeus may here have in mind the Ophites’ criticism of the disciples (*Haer.* 1.30.13–14). In 5.31.1–2, Irenaeus is refuting a view of the resurrection that resembles that of the

Although Irenaeus appeals to John's resurrection stories to demonstrate the resurrection of the "flesh," it is worth noting that the latter term does not, in fact, occur in John 20. Irenaeus must therefore augment the account by inserting interpretive glosses that include the term:

...Christ did rise *in the substance of flesh* (*in carnis substantia* = ἐν τῇ τῆς σαρκὸς ὑποστάσει), and showed to his disciples the mark of the nails and the opening in his side – now these are proofs of that flesh (*carnis* = σαρκός) which rose from the dead. (*Haer.* 5.7.1; cf. John 20:20, 25)

...then afterwards rising *in the flesh* (*in carne* = ἐνσαρκος), so that he even showed the print of the nails to His disciples.... (*Haer.* 5.31.2; cf. John 20:20, 25)

Strictly speaking, the showing of the stigmata does not prove that Jesus has risen in the "flesh" as Irenaeus's glosses suggest. Even bodiless ghosts can be identified by their scars. This makes it all the more significant that Irenaeus relates Jesus's command to Mary *not* to "touch" him, and yet omits Jesus's invitation to Thomas (or to the other apostles in Luke) to touch his body. Irenaeus evidently did not think the touch motif from Luke 24:39 or John 20:27 was worth mentioning in his defense of the resurrection of the flesh. Irenaeus's silence here may, in part, be because he knows that his opponents are under the influence of heterodox teaching that acknowledged that Jesus could be touched but docetized the tradition by claiming that his body was made of a mysterious psychic substance instead of flesh.¹⁰⁹ Irenaeus never speaks of the apostles touching the risen Jesus.¹¹⁰ Nor, it is worth noting, does Irenaeus ever appeal to Jesus's post-resurrection meal in Luke 24:42–43 to defend the reality of the

Ophites. The opponent's contention that Jesus "left his body here," i.e., "in this world of ours" is similar to the Ophite claim that he "left the worldly elements [of the body] in the world" (*Haer.* 1.30.13).

Irenaeus may also be thinking of Valentinians who criticized the apostles for their doubt (see Chapter 5). The view of resurrection opposed in *Haer.* 5.31.1–2 also resembles that of *Treatise on the Resurrection* (NHC I,4): "But there are some (who) wish to understand ... whether he who is saved, if he *leaves his body behind*, will be saved immediately. *Let no one doubt concerning this ... indeed, the visible members which are dead shall not be saved, for (only) the living [members] which exist within them would arise*" (47.30–48.3, trans. Malcolm L. Peel, "The Treatise on the Resurrection," in *Nag Hammadi Codex I [The Jung Codex]* [2 vols.; ed. Harold W. Attridge; NHS 22–23; Leiden: Brill, 1985], 1:153, emphasis added).

¹⁰⁹ Irenaeus's direct opponents in this context are "orthodox" Christians who "entertain heretical opinions" but do not realize the implications of doing so (5.31.1). On the docetization of the Jesus tradition, see Chapters 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7.

¹¹⁰ The only possible exception appears in a fragment attributed to Irenaeus in a fifth-century florilegium (frag. 52 in *ANF* 1:576). The fragment, extant in Syriac and Armenian manuscripts, says that Jesus could be "handled and touched" but could also "pass through the midst of those who sought to injure Him" and "through closed doors" (cf. Luke 4:30; 8:45; 24:39; John 20:19, 26–27).

resurrection. Like Justin and Theophilus, Irenaeus's lack of interest in these two physical demonstrations may be because he thinks them less persuasive for resurrection apologetic than the fulfillment of prophecy. In response to those who docetized Jesus's miracles, including his resurrection appearances to the disciples, and claimed that Jesus performed these things "in appearance only (φαντασιωδῶς)," Irenaeus does not appeal to physical proofs of touching or eating. Rather, he argues that the miracles and the resurrection really happened because they were foretold in the prophetic writings (*Haer.* 2.32.3–4).

Echoing Justin's words from 1 *Apol.* 33.2 (quoted above), Irenaeus later explains why prophetic fulfillment is such a powerful argument for those elements of the apostolic tradition that are difficult to believe:

That all these things would come to pass was foretold by the Spirit of God through the prophets, that those who served God in truth might believe firmly in them; for what was quite impossible to our nature, and therefore likely to be little believed in by men, God caused to be announced in advance by the prophets, that from the prediction made long beforehand, when at last the event took place just as had been foretold, we might know that it was God, who had revealed to us in advance our redemption.¹¹¹

Most prominent among the various "impossible" things that Irenaeus thinks are unlikely to be believed are Christ's bodily resurrection and the future resurrection of the dead. It would seem that for Irenaeus Jesus's resurrection is, by itself, too incredible. Proofs that he could eat or be touched are of little help. Only the fulfillment of prophecy can demonstrate its plausibility.

4.6.2 Irenaeus, *Epid.* 76

Next, we must return to *Epid.* 76, the passage from Irenaeus's *Demonstration* already quoted in our discussion of Justin, *Dial.* 53. Contrary to Irenaeus's normal practice, this passage does mention a doubt motif. A number of factors indicate that Irenaeus's source for the doubt motif is Matt 28:17. First, Irenaeus's statement includes both verbal and conceptual connections with that of Matthew:

For not yet did they firmly believe in Him, until they had seen Him (տեսիլն զնս, Armenian) risen from the dead. (Irenaeus, *Epid.* 76)¹¹²

And when they saw him (ἰδόντες αὐτόν; տեսիլն զնս, Armenian) they worshiped him, but some doubted. (Matt 28:17)

The *Demonstration* is extant only in Armenian, but Armenian manuscripts render ἰδόντες αὐτόν ("they saw him") in Matt 28:17 տեսիլն զնս, which is precisely

¹¹¹ *Epid.* 42, trans. Smith, *Proof*, 75.

¹¹² Armenian text in Karapet Ter Merkertschian and S. G. Wilson, eds., *The Proof of the Apostolic Preaching, with Seven Fragments* (PO 12.5; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1919), 716. I am grateful to Basil Lourié for guiding me through the Armenian text.

the phrase found in Irenaeus, *Epid.* 76.¹¹³ Second, the influence of Matthew's Gospel is supported by the fact that Irenaeus's description of the flight of the disciples in the previous sentence also comes from Matthew's version of the story. Irenaeus says, "all the *disciples* forsook him." The presence of the term "disciples" is an unambiguous element of Matthean redaction in the arrest scene (Matt 26:56; cf. Mark 14:50).¹¹⁴ Additionally, Irenaeus's quotation of Zech 13:7 in the same passage agrees with Matthew against Mark, the MT, and the LXX by including the additional phrase "of the flock."

Given Irenaeus's avoidance of the doubt elsewhere, we must ask why Irenaeus did not also omit the doubt in *Epid.* 76. Its presence here is striking because elsewhere in the *Demonstration* Irenaeus stresses the centrality of faith and predicts condemnation for all who disbelieve after Christ's appearance.¹¹⁵ Although he has not omitted it entirely, I would argue that Irenaeus, or his source, has altered the doubt motif so as to defend the character of the apostles and to minimize potential embarrassment. It is important to appreciate the dilemma that Irenaeus is presented with in this chapter of the *Demonstration*. On the one hand, he wants to claim the fulfillment of prophecy because, as the title of his work suggests, he wants to demonstrate the truth of the preaching of the apostles (*Epid.* 1–2, 86, 99). On the other hand, this particular instance of fulfillment undermines the reputation of the very apostles whose testimony he wishes to defend.¹¹⁶ In order to claim the fulfillment of Zech 13:7, Irenaeus is forced to admit that the apostles faithlessly abandoned Christ at the time of his arrest. Irenaeus's solution is to present their doubt as an excuse for their desertion by stressing that it was only temporary: "For *not yet* did they firmly believe in Him, *until* they had seen Him risen from the dead" (*Epid.* 76). Irenaeus has introduced a small but substantial change to the tradition in Matt 28:17. Whereas *Epid.* 76 states that the apostles did not "firmly believe . . . *until* they had seen him," Matt 28:17 indicates the opposite: they "doubted" *after* they "saw him." By rewording the tradition, Irenaeus transfers the infirm faith of the apostles to the *pre*-resurrection period and in effect eliminates the *post*-resurrection doubts altogether.¹¹⁷ The next chapter of this study will reveal that

¹¹³ Given that the Armenian translation of the *Demonstration* is a "close rendering of the original Greek" (Robinson, *Demonstration*, v, 5–6), it is reasonable to expect that this verbal connection with Matt 28:17 appeared in Irenaeus's original text.

¹¹⁴ Similarly Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 540; cf. also Matt 26:35 and Mark 14:31. Luke omits all traces of the flight of the disciples.

¹¹⁵ E.g., chs. 1–3, 27, 35, 41, 56, 61, 99.

¹¹⁶ On the exclusive importance of the apostles as guarantors of true doctrine, see, e.g., *Haer.* 3.1.

¹¹⁷ Given Irenaeus's high regard for Matthew and the way that he accuses his opponents of modifying the Gospels, it is possible that much of this apologetic reshaping of the tradition is better attributed to Irenaeus's source than to Irenaeus himself. This kind of editing is easier

some heterodox sects capitalize on the doubts of Matt 28:17 to criticize the apostles or to promote their own alternative views of resurrection. Because he is writing to strengthen the confidence of his readers in the apostolic tradition over against opponents, who, among other things, deny the resurrection (*Epid.* 1–3; 37–39; 99), Irenaeus probably chose to relocate the apostles' doubt to an earlier point in time to avoid further confusion and/or scandal.¹¹⁸

4.7 3 Corinthians¹¹⁹

The title *3 Corinthians* refers to a set of mid-to-late second-century pseudepigraphical letters, one purporting to be written by group of Corinthian elders to Paul (*3 Cor.* 1), the other Paul's alleged response (*3 Cor.* 2).¹²⁰ The Corinthians ask Paul to address the false teaching of a pair of ancient heretics, Simon (Magus) and Cleobius. These two names together are commonly reckoned a cipher for second-century heresies in general, though Marcionites and certain gnostic sects who claimed the support of Paul, e.g., the Ophites, are probably the

to explain in an earlier period, but it would be a mistake to assume that Irenaeus was wholly incapable of the same tactics.

¹¹⁸ Similar methods employed by other proto-orthodox writers and scribes are discussed in Chapters 6 and 8.

¹¹⁹ Quotations of *3 Corinthians* below are based on the critical text in Michel Testuz, *Papyrus Bodmer X–XII* (Cologny-Genève: Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, 1959), 9–45. I follow the chapter and verse numbering in Vahan Hovhannessian, *Third Corinthians: Reclaiming Paul for Christian Orthodoxy* (StBibLit 18; New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 77–79. English translations are my own. To aid comparison with NT parallels, my quotations of the Greek text (i) incorporate the orthographic corrections of Testuz; (ii) expand abbreviated terms in P.Bodm. X; and (iii) include accentuation as appropriate.

¹²⁰ See the survey of past scholarship in Hovhannessian, *Third Corinthians*, 16–32, 36–61, 126–29. Although an early second-century date has been proposed (Willy Rordorf, “Hérésie et orthodoxie selon la correspondance apocryphe entre les Corinthiens et l’apôtre Paul,” in *Orthodoxie et hérésie dans l’Église ancienne* [Cahiers de la Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie 17; Lausanne: Faculté de Théologie de Lausanne, 1993], 21–63), a solid consensus dates the correspondence to the second half of the second century (Testuz, *Bodmer X–XII*, 23–25; Martin Rist, “III Corinthians as a Pseudepigraphic Refutation of Marcionism,” *Ilfiff Review* 26 [1969]: 49; Hovhannessian, *Third Corinthians*, 137; Richard I. Pervo, *The Acts of Paul* [Eugene, Oreg.: Cascade, 2014], 257; Benjamin L. White, *Remembering Paul: Ancient and Modern Contests over the Image of the Apostle* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014], 108–34). A slightly later date is also possible; the earliest manuscript, P.Bodm. X, dates to the third century. *Papyrus Bodmer X* is the only Greek text extant. Variant versions exist in Coptic, Latin, and Armenian, but the Greek has been shown, on the whole, to be the most reliable/original (Hovhannessian, *Third Corinthians*, 35–79). At some point later, the letters were incorporated into the *Acts of Paul*.

primary targets.¹²¹ Because it shares a similar set of opponents, *3 Corinthians* fits nicely in between the apologetic works of Irenaeus and Tertullian.¹²² Unlike these church fathers, however, *3 Corinthians* does not engage in direct exegetical debate with the heretics over how to read Paul properly. The author chose instead to devise a letter wherein Paul himself unambiguously repudiates later false teachings. Most prominent among these are the denial of the incarnation and the rejection of the resurrection of the flesh. The polemic of the letter is therefore appropriately labeled antidocetic.¹²³

In defense of the resurrection of the flesh, the author frequently employs the Pauline notion that Jesus's resurrection is the model for the future resurrection of believers:

For I myself delivered to you in the beginning that which I also received from those who were apostles before me, those who were with Jesus Christ the whole time, that our Lord Christ Jesus was born of Mary, of the seed of David, when the Holy Spirit was sent from heaven by the Father into her, in order that he might come into the world and set free all flesh through his own flesh and *in order that he might raise us from the dead in the flesh as he showed himself as an example.* (*3 Cor.* 2.4–6)

And those who say to you that there is no resurrection of the flesh, there is no resurrection for them, for those who disbelieve him who had, in this manner, risen. For indeed they do not know, O Corinthian men, about the sowing of wheat, and of other seeds, which you cast naked into the earth and after having perished below is raised by God's will in a body and

¹²¹ Attempts to limit the identity of the opponents to a single sect, e.g., Marcionites (Rist, "III Corinthians," 49–58), Saturninians (Rordorf, "Hérésie," 35–44, 57), Simonians (A. F. J. Klijn, "Apocryphal Correspondence between Paul and the Corinthians," *VC* 17 [1963]: 22), have not proven persuasive because no one group perfectly accounts for all of the false teachings enumerated (Glenn E. Snyder, *Acts of Paul: The Formation of a Pauline Corpus* [WUNT 2/352; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013], 156–61; Hovhannessian, *Third Corinthians*, 126–30). The accusation that the opponents "have the faith of the serpent" (*3 Cor.* 2.20) recently led Hovhannessian to propose tentatively the Ophites (*Third Corinthians*, 130–31). Although promising given other similarities, the Ophites are not a perfect fit either. The opponents in *3 Corinthians* reject the OT prophets whereas the Ophites of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30 do not. It is probably better to conclude that the author of *3 Corinthians* attempts to do implicitly what Irenaeus does explicitly, namely, to knock down multiple opponents simultaneously (Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, "The Apocryphal Correspondence with the Corinthians and the Acts of Paul," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla* [ed. Jan N. Bremmer; SAAA 2; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996], 91; Caleb Webster, "Trapped in a Forgerer's Rhetoric: *3 Corinthians*, Pseudepigraphy, and the Legacy of Ancient Polemics," in "*Non-canonical*" *Religious Texts in Early Judaism and Early Christianity* [eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James H. Charlesworth; Jewish and Christian Texts 14; New York: T&T Clark, 2012], 153–61; Snyder, *Acts of Paul*, 161–68; Pervo, *Acts of Paul*, 254).

¹²² White (*Remembering Paul*, 108–34) offers a detailed comparison with Irenaeus.

¹²³ So Pervo, *Acts of Paul*, 254. The denial of Christ's flesh centers on the incarnation. The rejection of the reality of the crucifixion is only implicit in *3 Corinthians* itself, but a docetic interpretation is explicitly mentioned in the narrative introduction provided by the *Acts of Paul*: "nor has Jesus Christ been crucified but only in appearance."

clothed. Therefore, not only is the body that was cast out raised up, it is blessed abundantly. But if we must not make a parable from the seeds, you know about Jonah the son of Amathios, that when he would not preach in Nineveh, he was thrown to a sea monster. And after three days and three nights, from the lowest part of Hades, God heard the prayer of Jonah, and nothing of him was destroyed, neither hair nor eyelids. *How much more, O you of little faith, will he raise you, the believers in Christ Jesus, as he himself was raised?* Also when (the body) of a dead man from the sons of Israel was thrown onto the bones of Elijah the prophet, the body of the man was raised up. *So also you, having been thrown onto the body and the bones and the spirit of Christ, shall rise up on that day having healthy flesh.* (3 Cor. 2.24–32)

Despite the repeated appeals to the analogy with Jesus's resurrection, the author's apologetic elaborates not on the stories of Jesus's post-resurrection appearances but on Paul's "parable" of the seed and on two OT examples.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, there is evidence that the author was aware of at least one of the NT resurrection narratives. In fact, the author appears to allude to one of these stories in the statement "that he might raise us from the dead in the flesh as he showed (ἔδειξε) himself as an example" (3 Cor. 2.6). The fact that no details (time, place, manner, etc.) are provided here suggests that the author is alluding to a well-known story in which the risen Jesus "showed (ἔδειξε)" himself to be in the flesh. The most obvious candidates are Luke and John, whose group appearance narratives say that Jesus "showed (ἔδειξεν)" his hands and feet (or side) to the apostles (Luke 24:40; John 20:22).¹²⁵

Of the two, Luke is the more probable source of the allusion.¹²⁶ The "Paul" of 3 Corinthians presents this statement as a tradition that was passed on "from those who were apostles before me, those who were with Jesus Christ *the whole time* (τὸν πάντα χρόνον)." This otherwise extraneous detail is almost certainly an allusion to Acts 1:1–22: "So one of the men who have accompanied us *during the whole time* (ἐν παντὶ χρόνῳ) that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us ... one of these must become with us a witness to his resurrection."¹²⁷ Moreover, there are further contacts with Lukan material in 3 Corinthians: (i) "Theophilus" is named as one of the Corinthian elders (3 Cor. 1.1; cf. Luke 1:3;

¹²⁴ The author may here be following the example of Clement of Rome, who echoes Paul's reference to Christ's resurrection as "firstfruits," appeals to the seed analogy, and then quotes two passages as OT verses as prooftexts (*1 Clem.* 24.1, 4–5; 26.2–3). The similarities, however, may be coincidental. There is little verbal overlap, and different OT passages are quoted.

¹²⁵ Although the appeal to Jesus's resurrection as paradigmatic is Pauline, the verb δείκνυμι to describe the actions of the risen Jesus is not.

¹²⁶ Alternatively, Testuz (*Bodmer X–XII*, 10, 36) notes that P.Bodm. X originally included the ungrammatical ἐν τῷπῶν, which was subsequently erased by a corrector. If this phrase is original, the author may have been alluding specifically to John 20:25 where Thomas insists and touching "the mark (τὸν τύπον) of the nails" in Jesus's hands.

¹²⁷ Contra Snyder, who claims that references to Acts are "entirely absent" (*Acts of Paul*, 172).

Acts 1:1); (ii) the references to Jesus's birth include echoes of Luke's infancy narrative;¹²⁸ and (iii) the author's final argument for the resurrection of the flesh reads like an artificial attempt to force vocabulary from Luke 24:39 into a poorly conceived analogy with the 2 Kgs 13:21:

Also, when (the body) of a dead man from the sons of Israel was thrown on the bones of Elijah the prophet, the body of the man was raised up. So also you, having been thrown on the body and *the bones and the spirit* (τὰ ὀστᾶ καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα) of Christ, shall rise up on that day *having* (ἔχοντες) *healthy flesh* (σάρκα). (3 Cor. 2.32)¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Pace Alberto D'Anna, "The New Testament and the *Third Epistle to the Corinthians*," in *Receptions of the New Testament in Ancient Christian Apocrypha* (eds. Jean-Michel Roessli and Tobias Nicklas; Novum Testamentum Patristicum 26; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 136. Several verbal and conceptual correspondences with Luke 1:26–35 may be observed:

...our Lord Christ Jesus was born of

Mary (Μαριάμ) of the seed of David (Δαβίδ), when the Holy Spirit (πνεῦμα τοῦ ἁγίου) was sent (ἀποσταλέντος) from (ἀπὸ) heaven by the Father

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent (ἀπεστάλη) from (ἀπὸ) God

[cf. 3 Cor. 2.13: "sent down the Spirit... into Mary (Μαρείαν) the Galilean (Γαλιλαίαν)"]

to a city of Galilee (Γαλιλαίας) named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David (Δαβίδ), and the virgin's name was Mary (Μαριάμ). And he came in, to her (εἰσελθὼν πρὸς αὐτήν) and.... "The Holy Spirit (πνεῦμα ἁγίου) will come upon you (ἐπὶ σέ)." (Luke 1:26–35)

into her (εἰς αὐτήν).

(3 Cor. 2.5)

The parallel in Matthew is significantly different. Only Luke mentions "Galilee" in connection with the conception. And Luke, unlike Matthew, refers to the direct action of the Holy Spirit on Mary. Additionally, the awkward εἰσελθὼν πρὸς αὐτήν in Luke 1:28 may help explain the otherwise unusual εἰς αὐτήν in 3 Cor. 2.5. The author may here be influenced by gnostic interpretation. Irenaeus, in his discussion of Luke's infancy narrative, observes that Gnostics who refer to Christ's descent "into her (εἰς αὐτήν)" do so superfluously since they claim that he "took nothing from her" (*Haer.* 3.22.2). Cf. *Ep. Apos.* 14.6, which interprets this passage to mean that Christ took the form of the angel Gabriel and entered Mary.

¹²⁹ The muddled logic of this analogy stands in contrast to the more coherent analogical inferences that both ancient and modern authors have drawn from the same OT text. Irenaeus, for example, asks, "If the dead body of Elisha raised a dead man, how much more easily will God, who makes the dead bodies of men live, lead them to the judgement?" (frag. 34 in Robert M. Grant, "Fragments of the Greek Apologists and Irenaeus," in *Biblical and Patristic Studies in Memory of Robert Pierce Casey* [Freiburg: Herder, 1963], 216). Similarly, Pinchas Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective* (trans. Wilhelm C. Linss; Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 131: "If God's power which was active in Elisha is great enough to resuscitate even a dead person who was thrown into the tomb of the

Touch me and see, for a *spirit* (πνεῦμα) does not *have* (ἔχει) *flesh and bones* (σάρκα και ὀστέα) as you see me *having* (ἔχοντα). (Luke 24:39b)¹³⁰

It is significant that three of the terms shared by Luke 24:39 and 3 *Cor.* 2.32, πνεῦμα, ἔχω, and σάρξ, are absent from 2 Kgs 13:21. πνεῦμα stands out as particularly bizarre and unnecessary in 3 *Cor.* 2.32, and so probably indicates the influence of a source text. The terms ἔχω and σάρξ are employed together in conceptually the same way as in Luke 24:39: just as Christ demonstrates himself as “having (flesh)” so also the believer is said to rise up “having ... flesh.” The remaining shared term, ὀστέον, provides the catchword linking the resurrection stories of 2 Kgs 13 and Luke 24.

The author thus presupposes the reader’s knowledge of the appearance story in Luke 24:36–43 but alludes to it in a strange and unexpected manner. Particularly striking in a defense of the resurrection of the flesh is the author’s choice not to make use of the physical proofs of touching and eating. Two explanations are readily available. First, the author, attempting to counter Marcionite or Ophite teaching, avoided Luke’s appearance narratives because these sects appealed to Luke 24 in support of their docetic views of the resurrection.¹³¹ The fact that the author utilizes the language of Luke 24:39 to draw an analogy with the OT suggests that Marcion is probably the primary target in 3 *Cor.* 2.32.¹³²

Second, both Marcionites and Ophites criticized the apostles on account of the doubt motif in Luke’s narrative. In light of the author’s condemnation of disbelievers, on the one hand, and the appeal to the authority of the apostolic tradition, on the other, Luke 24:40–41 might have proven especially troublesome:

he *showed* (ἔδειξε) himself
as an example. (3 *Cor.* 2.6)

he *showed* (ἔδειξε) them
his hands and his feet

there is no resurrection for...
those who disbelieve (ἀπιστοῦσι)
him who had, in this manner, risen.
(3 *Cor.* 2.24–25)

but
they were still *disbelieving* (ἀπιστοῦντων)...
(Luke 24:40–41a)

prophet (2 Kings 13:20ff.), then the bodily resurrection of a crucified Jew also would not be inconceivable.” My thanks to D. Stephen Long for recommending Lapide’s book to me.

¹³⁰ Prior to the discovery of P.Bodm. X, Harnack had already noted a possible allusion to Luke 24:39 on the basis of his own reconstruction of the Greek text underlying the Latin, Coptic, and Armenian versions (*Die apokryphen Briefe des Paulus an die Laodicener und Korinther* [Apocrypha 4; Bonn: Marcus und Weber, 1905], 19).

¹³¹ See Chapters 3 and 6.

¹³² Unlike the Ophites who appealed to the OT, Marcion’s primary concern was to deny Christ’s association with the God of the OT. And as we will see in Chapter 6, Marcion docetized Luke 24:39.

Given the negative judgment on disbelief, telling this part of Luke's story runs the risk of condemning the apostles to whose authority the author, in the person of "Paul," had just appealed in 2.4. In short, the muffled echoes of Luke 24 were probably the author's way of evading the parts of Luke's story that were problematic for the author's antidocetic apologetic.¹³³

4.8 Tertullian

4.8.1 Tertullian, *Apol.* 21 and 48–50

In his *Apology*, written in 197 CE, Tertullian offers brief defenses of both Jesus's resurrection and the expectation of a general resurrection of the dead. The latter, in chs. 48–50, is in no way linked to the former, which is found in ch. 21. This may seem strange given that so many early Christians, including Tertullian himself, understood Jesus's resurrection as the basis and model for the general resurrection.¹³⁴ However, as we have seen in *1 Clement*, Justin, Theophilus, and Athenagoras, it was not unusual in early resurrection apologetics to treat these topics separately and independently. The most peculiar aspect of the *Apology* is that Tertullian defends Jesus's resurrection without ever mentioning the appearance narratives in the canonical gospels. This is surprising because he retells the empty tomb narrative of Matt 28:1–15 and then, instead of relating the group appearance story of Matt 28:16–20, offers an apologetic aside and skips to the narrative of Acts 1:1–11, where the risen Jesus spends "forty days" with the disciples and then ascends into heaven:

Summary of
Matt 28:1–15

He was taken down from the cross and laid in a tomb; the Jews with supreme care surrounded it with a great military guard, lest, since he had foretold his rising from death on the third day, his disciples by stealth should get the dead body away and trick them for all their suspicions. But, look you! on the third day, there was a sudden earthquake; the structure that blocked the tomb was shaken down; the guard was scattered in terror; but though no disciples appeared on the scene, nothing was found in the tomb but the cloths in which he was

¹³³ The author's awareness of the doubt motif in the Gospels is also indicated by his employment of the term ὀλιγόπιστοι ("little faith") found in Matt 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20; Luke 12:28. Though this word is absent from the Coptic and from one Latin manuscript, its presence in the Greek text represents the more difficult reading. A later copyist probably omitted the word because of its apparent conflict with the words that immediately follow (τοὺς πιστεύσαντας ["those who have believed"]).

¹³⁴ Tertullian's defense of the general resurrection includes a passionate appeal to Christian martyrdom. He also appeals to the martyrdom of the apostles in his account of Jesus's resurrection. For this reason, it all the more surprising that Tertullian does not link his defense of the general resurrection to Christ's resurrection appearances. The two defenses are linked thematically but not explicitly or logically.

buried. None the less, the chief men of the Jews – it was to their interest to tell a false tale and to recapture from the faith a people to pay them tribute and yield them service; so they spread the story about that the disciples had stolen him.

Apologetic Aside
(in place of Matt
28:16–20?)

For he did not display himself to the common gaze, lest the wicked should be set free from their misjudgment; and that faith, with that supreme prize set before it, should not be too easy.

Summary of
Acts 1:1–11

With certain disciples he spent forty days in Galilee, a region of Judaea, teaching them what they should teach. Then he appointed them to the duty of preaching throughout the world, and, with a cloud cast about him, he was caught up to heaven – far more truly than any Romulus of yours in the tale of Proculus.
(*Apol.* 21.20–23)¹³⁵

Tertullian includes in the last portion of this passage a detail from Matt 28:16 that confirms that he still had Matthew’s account in mind while summarizing the material from Acts 1:1–11. In his rendering of Acts 1:3, Tertullian says: “With certain disciples he spent forty days *in Galilee*.”¹³⁶ Matthew 28:16–20 is the only canonical appearance story that explicitly names Galilee as the location.¹³⁷ All of this leads to the conclusion that Tertullian has intentionally passed over Matt 28:16–20.

Why does Tertullian not include a group appearance narrative from Matthew or Luke or John? What about these narratives made them unsuitable for Tertullian’s apologetic? I submit that it is the doubt of the apostles. At the very location in which we would expect to find a summary of a group appearance narrative from either Matthew or Luke, Tertullian makes the following aside: “For he did not display himself to the common gaze, lest the wicked should be set free from their misjudgment; and that faith, with that supreme prize set before it, should not be too easy.” The aside addresses the scandal of the limited scope of the resurrection appearances, an issue raised by critics of the Gospels such as Celsus (Origen, *Cels.* 2.63), but Tertullian’s response is telling. He argues that if Christ had made himself visible to everyone, including wicked people, it would have been too easy to believe.¹³⁸ This offers a marked contrast to Matt 28:17 and Luke 24:37–38, 41, where the disciples have doubts *after* they see the risen Jesus. Certainly, Matthew and Luke do not think that Jesus’s

¹³⁵ All translations of Tertullian’s *Apology* follow Glover (LCL).

¹³⁶ Emphasis added.

¹³⁷ The appearance account of John 21 is in the same region, but the location is designated as “by the Sea of Tiberius” (v. 1). Luke 24 and Acts 1 only mention appearances in Jerusalem.

¹³⁸ This recalls Theophilus’s question, “Of what significance (would it be) if, after seeing the event, you should then believe?” (*Autol.* 1.13).

appearance itself removed all difficulty. The doubt motif in these Gospels can only have undermined Tertullian's argument.

The omission may also have been motivated by a desire to rescue the apostles from embarrassment. In the following paragraph, Tertullian offers an apologetic re-characterization of Jesus's disciples:

His disciples, also, were scattered through the world, in obedience to the precept of God their teacher; they suffered much from Jewish persecution – but gladly enough because of their faith in the truth; finally at Rome, through the cruelty of Nero, they sowed the seed of Christian blood. (*Apol.* 21.25)

The seams between tradition and redaction here are easy to detect: the passive “scattered” is hardly compatible with the phrase “in obedience.” Tertullian has therefore glossed over the tradition that the followers of Jesus were “scattered” on account of “Jewish persecution” (cf. Acts 8:1–4; 11:19) by adding a comment that the disciples were acting “in obedience.” He also indicates that they “suffered gladly” (cf. Acts 5:41) and adds that it was “because of their *faith*.” In this way, Tertullian's treatment of the group appearance tradition resembles that of Ignatius; he omits the doubt, inserts a comment about the “faith” of the apostles, and emphasizes their heroism in martyrdom.¹³⁹ Moreover, as we will see in Chapter 5, such characterizations of the apostles stand in sharp contrast to the *Gospel of Mary*, which portrays the apostles as reluctant to carry out their commission for fear of persecution.

4.8.2 Tertullian, *Res.* 34

In his later apologetic treatise, *The Resurrection of the Flesh*, Tertullian frequently extracts data from the Gospels as ammunition against the views of thoroughgoing docetists like Marcion and Basilides and those of special-flesh docetists such as Valentinus and Apelles. However, Tertullian's *Resurrection* never appeals to the physical demonstrations in Luke 24:39–41 or John 20:25, 27. When discussing 1 Cor 15, Tertullian asks, “Then how did Christ rise again? In the flesh, or not?” (*Res.* 48).¹⁴⁰ Curiously, in answering this question Tertullian bypasses the appearance narratives and appeals instead to the resurrection of Lazarus and to the Transfiguration (*Res.* 53; 55)! Lazarus, not Christ, is cited as the “preeminent instance of the resurrection.” Tertullian's choice of the Lazarus story over the appearances of the risen Christ is astonishing for two reasons. First, Tertullian repeatedly depicts Christ's resurrection as the proof, guarantee, and model of the future resurrection of the flesh (*Res.* 2, 24,

¹³⁹ *I Clement* does the same but includes the martyrdom of the Peter and Paul separately from the appearance account.

¹⁴⁰ With slight modifications, translations of this text follow Ernest Evans, *Tertullian's Treatise on the Resurrection* (London: S.P.C.K., 1960).

44, 46–47, 57).¹⁴¹ Second, before he appeals to Lazarus, Tertullian insists that the stories of Jesus raising others from the dead were not true precedents for the end-time resurrection because “those persons were raised up not for glory nor for incorruptibility, but so as to die once more” – precisely why Jesus is, according to Tertullian, the “strongest precedent” and only true model (*Res.* 2; 38). Tertullian seems to have gone out of his way, even to the point of contradicting himself, to avoid discussing the appearance stories in Luke 24 and John 20.

There is a reasonable explanation for Tertullian’s inconsistency. Tertullian probably believed the appearance narratives to be especially susceptible to perversion by his opponents. At the end of the treatise, Tertullian says that new life is given to the “struggling faith of the resurrection of the flesh” when the Spirit has “purged the original documents [i.e., the OT and NT] of all darkness of ambiguity. For ... heresies could have had no boldness apart from a few opportunities of the Scriptures,” which “are seen to have furnished them certain materials” (*Res.* 63).¹⁴² This last point coheres well with the multitude of docetic and gnostic texts that make use of the post-resurrection appearance stories of the Gospels.¹⁴³ It also coheres with Marcion’s treatment of Luke 24. Tertullian’s argument with Marcion over Luke 24 will be discussed in the next chapter. For now, it is sufficient to note that Tertullian realized that Marcion had found a way to make Luke 24 amenable to his docetic Christology (*Marc.* 4.43). For these reasons, Tertullian’s avoidance of Luke 24 in *Resurrection* is understandable.

Tertullian implicitly provides an example of how John’s resurrection narrative “furnished” the heretics with “certain materials.” In *Res.* 34 Tertullian briefly refers to a single statement in John 20:

When he adds further, *This is the Father’s will, that every one that looks upon the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and that I should raise him up at the last day*, he builds up a resurrection with nothing left out: for to each substance by means of its functions he assigns its proper mead of salvation – to the flesh by means of which the Son was looked upon, and to the soul by means of which he was believed in. In that case, you will say, the promise was made to those persons by whom Christ was <actually> seen. Clearly let it be so, provided the same hope has seeped down to us from them. For if at that time the acts of flesh and soul were fruitful to those who saw and consequently believed, much more so for us – for, *More blessed are they who do not see, and (yet) will believe (feliciores enim qui*

¹⁴¹ He even indicates that his opponents are aware that the Christ’s resurrection in the flesh is “the strongest precedent” for a future resurrection of the flesh. Tertullian then claims to have defended this position in his work *On the Flesh of Christ*. However, in that work he makes only a brief remark about Luke 24:39 in response to Marcion. The rest of the document never even alludes to the resurrection narratives of the Gospels.

¹⁴² Tertullian says much the same in *Val.* 1; *Praescr.* 17, 38–39; similarly Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.3.6; 3.2.1; 3.15.2; Clement, *Strom.* 7.16 [94.1–105.5].

¹⁴³ See Chapters 2, 3, 5, and 7.

non vident et credent) – since even if to those the resurrection of the flesh were denied, it would certainly have been granted to such as are more blessed: for how could they be blessed if they were partly to perish?

Tertullian draws a connection between John 6:40 and the beatitude from John 20:29b because both texts speak of “seeing” and “believing” Jesus. In his quotation of the latter, Tertullian uses the comparative adjective *feliciores* (“more blessed”) instead of the simple adjective *felices* (= μακάριοι [“blessed”]) found in John 20:29b. As no Greek manuscript of John 20:29 attests to the comparative form μακαριώτεροι, Tertullian’s *feliciores* probably represents an interpretive paraphrase.¹⁴⁴ However, it was probably not Tertullian’s own interpretation, but that of his opponents. Origen, in his *Commentary on John* – written in part as a response to Heracleon’s commentary on the same – refutes the same interpretation of John 20:29b.¹⁴⁵ Origen’s opponents quote John 20:29b accurately, i.e., with μακάριοι, but use it as a proof-text for their belief that they are “more blessed (μακαριώτεροι) than the apostles”¹⁴⁶ This interpretation serves to denigrate the apostles so as to exalt those who come “after” them.¹⁴⁷

The same may be true for Tertullian’s opponents, who are also Valentinians. In the next sentence, Tertullian seems to grant hypothetically the position of his opponents when he says “since *even if* to those [the apostles] the resurrection of the flesh were denied, it would certainly have been granted to such as are more blessed: for how could they be blessed if they were partly to perish?”¹⁴⁸ Tertullian appears to be attempting to circumvent his opponents’ criticism of the apostles by saying that “even if” it were true, the Valentinians are still wrong about the resurrection. It is also important to recognize that “more blessed” necessarily presupposes that the beatitude in John 20:29 was intended as a rebuke. In other words, Thomas’s doubt has provided the Valentinians with an opportunity to criticize all the apostles, who have been grouped with Thomas as “those who saw and [therefore] believed” (Tertullian, *Res.* 34; Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 10.27). It should not be overlooked that the goal of this

¹⁴⁴ Neither the OL nor the Vulg. take it as a comparative; both have *beati*. However, the adjective μακάριος can in certain contexts imply a comparison, and so Tertullian’s use of the comparative in Latin could be considered a translation rather than a paraphrase. In either case, an interpretive decision has been made. The comparative interpretation is advocated in Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (2nd ed.; London: Faber and Faber, 1947; repr., 1967), 548.

¹⁴⁵ Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 10.43.301–302.

¹⁴⁶ Though he does not quote John 20:29, Irenaeus makes similar complaints about the Valentinians who claimed that they were “greater” than the apostles (*Haer.* 1.13.6; 3.1.1; 3.2.2; 3.12.7, 12).

¹⁴⁷ Even more disparaging of the apostles are the two revisions of the saying in *Ap. Jas.* (NHC I,2) 3.17–24; 12.35–13.1.

¹⁴⁸ Emphasis added. Tertullian, like Irenaeus, adds the term “flesh” to his commentary on John 20.

Valentinian criticism of the apostles was to undermine the doctrine of the resurrection (of the flesh) taught by the apostles. The Valentinians agreed with the Ophites (see Chapter 3) that the apostles themselves preached a resurrection of the flesh but accused them of being mistaken. Again, the heretics themselves concur: the proto-orthodox view of resurrection represents the original doctrine of the apostles.

Unlike Origen, Tertullian does not attempt to refute the interpretation and its implicit criticism of the apostles. Rather, he concedes it and then circumvents its implications by means of an a priori argument. Tertullian probably gives in because he also understands John 20:29 as a rebuke of Thomas, and by extension, of the apostles as well.¹⁴⁹ Tertullian apparently has no adequate defense for the apostles' doubt, a fact that will become clear when we examine his response to Marcion in Chapter 6.¹⁵⁰

Finally, one other possible motivation for Tertullian's avoidance of the physical proofs may be considered. In some later situations, the stigmata of the risen Christ and his post-resurrection meal proved controversial for the concept of an eschatological resurrection. One unnamed pagan critic, probably Porphyry, is reported as saying:

Furthermore, if after the resurrection, the situation will be a blissful one, or without injuries suffered by the body, and without the necessity of being hungry, then what should this mean, that Christ dined after the resurrection and revealed his wounds? If he did this it is not believable, or he pretended to do so, or if he really showed his wounds, then we must assume that wounds will remain after the resurrection.¹⁵¹

Tertullian replies to heretics who similarly object that the resurrection of the flesh necessitates a body that retains wounds and requires food (*Res.* 4, 57–62). Tertullian does not explicitly indicate whether or not his opponents' objections, like the one in the quotation above, are tied to the descriptions of the risen Christ in the Gospels. It would be surprising if they were not. Either way, Tertullian probably refrains from appealing to the physical demonstrations in Luke 24:39–43 and John 20:20, 27 because he anticipates that they would only lead to further objections. Tertullian's actual reply to his opponents is telling: he says that injuries will not remain but be healed in the resurrection, and that mouths will be for praising God rather than for eating. And yet in light of the above quotation, Tertullian's answer is not exactly consistent with his view

¹⁴⁹ Tertullian, *Prax.* 25, offers a negative assessment of Thomas's "incredulity." In *Res.* 63, he attacks the heretics for their disbelief.

¹⁵⁰ The same appears to be true of most or all proto-orthodox authors in this early period, whose approach to the doubt motif is to omit it or to find a way to downplay it. Examples of the latter will be discussed in Chapters 6 and 8.

¹⁵¹ Augustine, *Ep.* 102.2 (trans. Robert M. Berchman, *Porphyry Against the Christians* [Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition 1; Leiden: Brill, 2005], 171–72).

that Christ's resurrection is paradigmatic for the future resurrection.¹⁵² In all likelihood, then, Tertullian sidesteps the physical proofs so as not to draw attention to these difficulties.

In summary, Tertullian's argument in *Resurrection* is largely based on evidence from the NT. And though he often marshals support from the Gospels themselves, Tertullian chooses not to appeal to the resurrection narratives even when it means contradicting his own logic. Both internal and external (see Chapter 6) evidence suggests that Tertullian steers clear of the appearance narratives because his adversaries were invoking them to support their own arguments. The doubt motif appears to have played a significant role here by providing his opponents an opportunity to criticize the apostles, and thereby, their doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh. Additionally, Tertullian may have chosen not to appeal to the accounts where Jesus shows his wounds and eats because he was concerned this would only reinforce his opponents' objections that a resurrection of the flesh would necessitate a body that was susceptible to pain and hunger.

4.9 Conclusion

When some in the Corinthian church begin to question the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, Paul appeals to Jesus's resurrection as a proof; he uses the metaphor of the first fruits of a harvest, which implies that Jesus's resurrection is a guarantee and paradigm for a resurrection at the end of time.¹⁵³ Many proto-orthodox writers, following Paul, also believe that Jesus's resurrection is paradigmatic for the future resurrection, but when defending this doctrine they do not appeal to Jesus's resurrection or to his appearances to the apostles as Paul does in 1 Cor 15. Eight of eleven texts discussed in this chapter include a defense of the general resurrection, but only one, Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5, expressly appeals to an appearance narrative. It does so only briefly. The vast majority of Irenaeus's arguments for the resurrection do not involve the appearance narratives in any way. Athenagoras, though he quotes from 1 Cor 15, argues primarily from creation and never even mentions Jesus. Both Justin and Theophilus refuse to appeal to Jesus's resurrection when confronted with the demand that they offer just one example of someone who has risen from the dead. They refer instead to Greek heroes. Similarly, when Tertullian addresses pagans, he shies away from the appearance narratives of the Gospels not only

¹⁵² Oddly, Tertullian mentions Christ's stigmata twice in his treatise on the resurrection, but never in connection with the appearance tradition. The first is with reference to Paul's claim to bear Christ's marks in his own body (*Res.* 9); the second has to do with the fulfillment of the prophecy of Zech 12:10 at the second coming (*Res.* 51).

¹⁵³ 1 Cor 15:20–23; cf. 1 Thess 4:14–17; 2 Cor 4:14; Rom 8:11.

in his defense of the general resurrection but also in his defense of Jesus's own resurrection. Later, when Tertullian disputes the views of Christian heretics, he turns to the story of Lazarus's resurrection rather than that of Jesus – and this is despite his explicit insistence that the former is not a true precedent for the general resurrection as the latter is. In short, the apologists are surprisingly reticent to invoke the canonical appearance narratives when defending the resurrection of the flesh. Evidently, something about the resurrection narratives themselves rendered them unusable for early resurrection apologetics.

Given that historical-critical scholarship has often judged the physical demonstrations in Luke 24 and John 20 (i.e., the stigmata, the touch invitation, and the meal) to be relatively late, apologetic additions to the post-resurrection appearance tradition, it is remarkable that the apologists themselves do not appeal to them as if they were ready-made scripts that make their arguments for them. In fact, we find precisely the opposite to be the case. The apologists show almost no interest in these so-called apologetic proofs. Of the eleven documents examined in this chapter, only one explicitly refers to the stigmata. Completely absent are appeals to Christ's post-resurrection meal to defend the reality of the resurrection body. Most striking of all, none of these texts even alludes to the idea that the risen Jesus invited the apostles to touch his body! In sum, there is a telling disparity between ancient and modern assessments of the resurrection narratives: the early apologists found little-to-no use for those parts of Luke's and John's accounts that modern scholars have so often dismissed as apologetic enhancements.¹⁵⁴

If Justin, Theophilus, and Irenaeus are representative, it is because they believed that these demonstrations were far less secure than appeals to the fulfillment of prophecy.¹⁵⁵ Clement of Rome does not expressly indicate this, but he,

¹⁵⁴ One lesser-known, second-century exception, [Ps.-]Justin, *On the Resurrection*, will be discussed in Chapter 6. There are, to be sure, some special cases outside of the Apologists themselves. Though not defending the general resurrection, Ignatius does appeal to the physical proofs to defend the reality of Christ's resurrection. But as we have seen in Chapter 3, even Ignatius finds it necessary to enhance the proofs to make them useful for his antidocetic polemic. The same can be said of the author of the *Epistula Apostolorum* (see Chapter 8).

¹⁵⁵ Three additional historical factors may have encouraged the avoidance of the physical proofs. First, as we will see in subsequent chapters, Marcion and other heretics found it relatively easy to overturn the proofs in support of a docetic view of Christ's body. Second, as noted above, the wounds of the risen Christ and his consumption of food, made it more difficult in some circles argue for future resurrection body that was not subject to corruption or hunger. Given that Paul had already insisted, against objections, that the resurrection body will be incorruptible (1 Cor 15:42, 52–54) and that this continued to be a key apologetic issue in the second and third centuries (e.g., Athenagoras, *Res.* 3.2, 18.5; Tertullian, *Res.* 4, 57–60), the evangelists' references to the risen Christ's wounds seem especially naïve, apologetically speaking. This could be an indication either of a lack of apologetic interest on the part of the evangelists and/or the early character of the traditions they preserve.

like those after him, defends the resurrection of the flesh by appeals to analogies from nature and to OT prophecy rather than to the stories of Jesus's resurrection. When Clement later mentions Christ's appearance to the apostles, he specifically notes that the apostles "were persuaded to believe by the word of God." Because of the fragmentary nature of the *Preaching of Peter*, there is no way to be certain, as we can be with Justin's accounts, that the physical proofs were omitted, but the extant text agrees with Justin that it is the fulfillment of prophecy that leads the apostles to believe. *3 Corinthians* is a strange case but follows essentially the same strategy as the apologists. Although the author appears to have excerpted and rearranged various words from Luke 24:39, they no longer demonstrate the physicality of Jesus's resurrection body but serve to establish a typological link with an OT resurrection story.

Finally, there are indications that the doubts of the apostles contributed to the proto-orthodox avoidance of the appearance tradition. We can be virtually certain that all the authors discussed in this chapter knew a post-resurrection appearance tradition in which the apostles exhibit some form of doubt or unbelief. Yet they consistently omit all references to the doubt. This suppression of the doubt motif is most plausibly explained as an attempt to mitigate any potential embarrassment to the church resulting from the depiction of the apostles as doubters. The authors examined in this chapter exhibit a highly negative view of doubt and unbelief, on the one hand, and a highly positive estimation of the apostles, on the other.¹⁵⁶ Clement of Rome called doubters "wretched" and "foolish," and characterized them as under judgment. Ignatius likewise derogatorily refers to his enemies as "unbelievers." The author of the *Preaching of Peter* condemns those who "disbelieve" as "not having any excuse." Each of these authors leans heavily on the authority of the apostles. All of them not only omit the doubt but also supplant it with a confirmation that the apostles believed. The author of the *Preaching* seems to do this twice, once with Luke and probably again with the LE of Mark. And to these we may add Justin, who esteems the apostles as divinely inspired and performs a similar procedure three times, i.e., every time he retells the group appearance story.

Later writers are more varied in their approaches. Theophilus, though clearly aware of Thomas's doubt, curiously chooses not to discuss the

The third historical factor points in a similar direction: the stigmata no doubt reminded certain readers of the scandal of the crucifixion and so became a liability in proto-orthodox apologetics. Celsus, for example, refers to Christ's wounds as the "marks of his punishment," a description designed to remind the reader that that Jesus died the death of a criminal (Origen, *Cels.* 2.55, 59).

¹⁵⁶ There are two possible exceptions to the latter. The first is Theophilus, who never mentions the apostles in his extant writings, though he clearly understood John (son of Zebedee?) and the other evangelists to be inspired (*Autol.* 2.22; 3.12). The second is Athénagoras, who only mentions Paul, but it is probably safe to assume that he too had a positive view of the other apostles as well.

appearance story despite obvious similarities between Thomas and Autolycus. Similarly, both Athenagoras, who thinks that doubters do not have the “good sense” to accept the truth, and the author of *3 Corinthians* opt not to recount the appearance tradition in their resurrection apologetic. Irenaeus, whose opponents criticized the apostles on account of the doubt motif, does briefly allude to the Thomas pericope, but without mentioning Thomas’s doubt. On another occasion, Irenaeus eliminates *post*-resurrection doubt by relocating it to the time before the appearances. Tertullian also had opponents who criticized the apostles for their doubt, and so refrains from discussing the appearance narratives whenever possible in his *Resurrection*. Additionally, in his *Apology*, Tertullian combines two of the approaches discussed above in his narration of Matt 28: he (i) skips over the appearance scene in which the apostles doubt; and (ii) adds a confirmation of the apostles’ faith.

Some of the writers attempt further re-characterizations of the apostles in their retellings. In addition to replacing doubt with belief, both Ignatius and Tertullian depict the apostles as courageously facing martyrdom. The *Preaching of Peter* portrays them as sophisticated exegetes and has Jesus proclaim them “worthy.” And Justin contrasts them to the unrepentant Jews by insisting that the apostles were repentant in response to the resurrection, a detail found nowhere in the NT.

According to many modern interpretations of the canonical resurrection narratives, the doubt motif had “high apologetic value” because it would have made the proofs “all the more convincing.”¹⁵⁷ As plausible as this explanation may seem to post-Enlightenment readers who appreciate skeptical inquiry, the texts surveyed in this chapter suggest this apologetic reading of Luke 24 and John 20 is anachronistic. Early Christian apologists from Clement of Rome to Tertullian rarely appeal to the proofs and assign no apologetic value to the doubt motif. In fact, they have nothing but negative things to say about doubt and unbelief in general. There is no evidence in this early period that the doubt is seen as a virtue that ensured that the disciples were not duped by a phantom. Rather, the authors discussed in this chapter consistently pass over references to the doubt, frequently insisting – against the canonical narratives – that the apostles not only believed but did so heroically or on account of their own virtue or intelligence. Even in cases when an analogy is drawn between the apostles and the faith of the later church, the apologists are unwilling to mention the doubt. They do not point their readers to the apostles’ movement from doubt to faith as if it were a model to be followed. All of this suggests that the doubt motif had a *negative* apologetic value in the eyes of these early Christians. This conclusion will be confirmed in the next chapter, which explores how various gnostics viewed doubt and criticized the apostles for it.

¹⁵⁷Barrett, *John*, 572; Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 124.

Chapter 5

Doubt and Gnosis

In Chapter 3 I examined two different responses to the doubt motif in Luke 24. Ignatius of Antioch omitted the apostles' disbelief in order to preserve their reputations and/or to guard against docetic interpretations of Jesus's resurrection. By contrast, the early Gnostics of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30 drew attention to the disciples' inability to recognize the risen Jesus in order to criticize them and to advance a docetic understanding of the resurrection. Each of these accounts is an early representative of a distinct pattern of reception among proto-orthodox and gnostic authors, respectively. In Chapter 4 I surveyed a range of proto-orthodox apologists, who like Ignatius omitted all references to the doubt of the apostles. In this chapter explore further instances of gnostic reception of the resurrection narratives.

While the diversity of the texts examined below resists any neat and tidy arrangement, some broad groupings are possible. The first section of the chapter includes three texts that may all be characterized as post-resurrection dialogues. Each exploits the doubt motif as an opportunity to expound gnostic, or gnostic-like, doctrine that includes, but is not limited to, a docetic view of resurrection. In one case, the author also appeals to the doubt motif in order to denigrate the apostles.

The second section of the chapter includes texts from the Valentinian school of thought. Although these documents do, each in its own way, respond to the canonical resurrection narratives, their primary importance for this study lies elsewhere. The texts were selected because they reveal more explicitly the paradigmatic role that doubt plays within the gnostic worldview.

In keeping with the exegetical principles of this study, I analyze each of the passages in these first two sections individually, within its own literary context, before attempting any comparative synthesis. Indeed, comparative synthesis will be limited for the most part to the end of the chapter. The third and final section will examine some comments of Irenaeus (*Haer.* 3.1.1–3.2.2) on gnostic reception of the Gospels and attempt to reconcile them with findings from the first two sections.

5.1 Doubt as Opportunity in Gnostic Dialogues¹

5.1.1 The Apocryphon of John

The *Apocryphon of John*, a post-resurrection dialogue between the Savior and the apostle John, is known for its classic exposition of (Sethian) gnostic mythology. Detailed study of the four extant Coptic manuscripts has shown that the *Apocryphon* was published in at least two major Greek recensions, one shorter (NHC III,1 and BG 8502,2) and one longer (NHC II,1 and IV,1), before it was translated into Coptic in the late third or early fourth century.² The longer recension, which includes various improvements and expansions, is probably a later revision of the shorter recension.³

¹ I am indebted to Pheme Perkins, who suggested the phrase “doubt as opportunity” to me after hearing an early version of the argument in this chapter at the 2012 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature.

² Differences between NHC III,1 and BG 8502,2 could be the result of independent translations from the Greek or they may be based on two distinct Greek editions of the shorter recension of the *Apocryphon*. An introduction and a detailed critical synopsis of all four manuscripts are presented in Michael Waldstein and Frederik Wisse, *The Apocryphon of John: Synopsis of Nag Hammadi Codices II,1; III,1; and IV,1 with BG 8502,2* (NHMS 33; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 1–8.

³ So Waldstein and Wisse, *Apocryphon of John*, 7–8; Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 22, 141; Karen L. King, “Approaching the Variants of the Apocryphon of John,” in *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration* (eds. John D. Turner and Anne McGuire; NHMS 44; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 105–37, esp. 123; idem, *The Secret Revelation of John* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 237; Zlatko Pleše, *Poetics of the Gnostic Universe: Narrative and Cosmology in the Apocryphon of John* (NHMS 52; Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006), 2–3. The opposite view, that the longer recension is original and that the shorter recension is an abridgment, has been argued in Søren Giversen, *Apocryphon Johannis: The Coptic Text of the Apocryphon Johannis in the Nag Hammadi Codex II* (ATDan 5; Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1963), 276–82. Few have found this alternative reconstruction persuasive (see, e.g., Birger A. Pearson, “Apocryphon Johannis Revisited,” in *Apocryphon Severini: Presented to Søren Giversen* [eds. Per Bilde, Helge Kjær Nielsen, and Jørgen Podemann Sørensen; Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1993], 158). It is also possible to argue for the intentional omission of the Pronoia monologue (Michel Tardieu, *Écrits gnostiques: Codex de Berlin* [Paris: Cerf, 1984], 339–40), but this is improbable (Bernard Barc and Louis Painchaud, “La réécriture de l’Apocryphon de Jean à la lumière de l’hymne final de la version longue,” *Mus* 112 [1999]: 317–33). A variety of detailed reconstructions of the *Apocryphon*’s literary history have been attempted: Tardieu, *Écrits gnostiques*, 40–47; Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 22, 136–41; Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 35–55; Frederik Wisse, “After the *Synopsis*: Prospects and Problems in Establishing a Critical Text of the Apocryphon of John and in Defining its Historical Situation,” in *Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration* (eds. John D. Turner and Anne McGuire; NHMS 44; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 147–51; Waldstein and Wisse, *Apocryphon of John*, 4–8; see also King, “Variants,” 123–37.

Evidence from Irenaeus suggests that the shorter recension was created by combining two different mythological systems that were circulating among early Gnostics. The *Apocryphon* begins with a theogony and cosmogony that closely corresponds to that of the so-called Barbeloite Gnostics of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.29, but its anthropogony is similar to the “Ophite” account in *Haer.* 1.30.⁴ The integration of these two systems in the *Apocryphon* supports Irenaeus’s claim that both belong to the same gnostic school of thought. The fact that Irenaeus treated them as distinct accounts and shows no awareness of any association with the apostle John indicates that Irenaeus knew the *Apocryphon*’s sources rather than the *Apocryphon* itself.⁵ Taking this into consideration, the shorter recension was probably not composed until the late second or early third century, though a date in the middle of the second century, i.e., shortly after the composition of the “Barbeloite” and “Ophite” accounts, cannot be ruled out.⁶

In addition to merging the two systems, the author of the shorter recension set the exposition of the unified myth within a fictional dialogue between John the apostle and the risen Christ. This innovation required the creation of a narrative frame to place the dialogue in a post-resurrection setting. The choice of a post-resurrection setting may have been influenced by the Ophite account, which claims that its gnostic “mysteries” were revealed by the risen Jesus to a select few disciples (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30.14).⁷ In the *Apocryphon*, the “mystery” is first revealed to John, who is commissioned to teach it to his fellow disciples.⁸ As in the Ophite account, the post-resurrection doubt motif plays an important role in the *Apocryphon*, providing an opportunity to promote a

⁴ Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 35–55; Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 93–94, 138–40, 203–4, 217, 220, 257–58; idem, “The Johannine Legacy: The Gospel and Apocryphon of John,” in *The Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Tuomas Rasimus; NovTSup 132; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 107 n. 5; Rasimus, “Ophite Gnosticism,” 246–53.

⁵ See already Hans-Martin Schenke, “Nag-Hamadi Studien I: Das literarische Problem des Apokryphon Johannis,” *ZRGG* 14 (1962): 58; Wisse, “Heresiologists,” 215–18; similarly Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 11. Layton (*Gnostic Scriptures*, 24) suggests that Irenaeus may have used a different version of the *Apocryphon* when describing the “Barbeloite” account, but Irenaeus’s account does not include the narrative frame depicting Jesus’s appearance to John (so Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 72–74). This significant difference makes the *Apocryphon* as we have it today a distinctly new composition vis-à-vis Irenaeus’s source.

⁶ Similarly Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 44–45, 55; Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism*, 64. Turner (*Sethian Gnosticism*, 141) dates the shorter recension ca. 150 and the longer in the last quarter of the second century. Waldstein and Wisse place the shorter recension in the early third century, but this is because Wisse methodologically prefers the latest possible dating (*Apocryphon of John*, 1; “After the Synopsis,” 149).

⁷ See Chapter 3.

⁸ BG 75.15–20 // NHC III 39.15–18 // NHC II 31.27–31.

docetic view of the resurrection and prompting the need for the revelation of gnostic teaching.

A few further preliminary comments are necessary in light of the variations among the manuscripts. On the one hand, the major differences between the shorter and longer recensions are largely immaterial for the purposes of this study. The reason is that the analysis below is primarily concerned with the narrative frame, which is included in both recensions with only minor variations. On the other hand, some lacunae make it impossible to rely solely on the shorter recension. Moreover, in some cases the longer version is preferable because it appears to preserve the original Greek by means of loanwords that the translators of the shorter recension chose to replace with native Coptic words. Although no complete critical reconstruction of the original text has been attempted to date, Frederik Wisse has provided a convenient “critical translation” (into English) of the opening narrative frame that accounts for the variations, lacunae, and loanwords from all four manuscripts.⁹ Below, I make use of Wisse’s critical translation with recourse to individual manuscripts as needed.

The *Apocryphon* begins with a Pharisee confronting John while he is on his way up to the temple in Jerusalem.¹⁰ The Pharisee first teases John by asking him, “Where is your master whom you used to follow?” – a stinging, post-crucifixion question – and then accuses Jesus of leading John astray.¹¹ This causes John to grieve, and so he leaves the temple and goes to “the mountain” that is also a “desert” place. This unusual description appears to be a topographical allusion to the location of the feeding of the five thousand (Matt 15:29, 33), which, given other allusions to Matt 28:16–20 (see below), the author probably identifies as the same Galilean mountain where the risen Jesus appears in Matt 28:16.¹² While at the mountain, John begins to ponder in his heart many unanswered questions about the Father, the Savior, and what sort of salvation is in store for him and his fellow disciples.¹³ As a number of commentators have noted, John’s questions appear to be ones raised but not fully answered by the Fourth Gospel, and so give the impression that the *Apocryphon* (or *Secret Book*) of John is intended at least in part as a supplement to

⁹ Wisse, “After the Synopsis.” 151–52.

¹⁰ The apostle’s trip to the temple may have been influenced by Luke 24:53 and/or Acts 2:46; 3:1.

¹¹ Celsus’s Jew asks a similar question: “Where is he then, that we may see and believe?” (Origen, *Cels.* 2.77, trans. Chadwick, *Contra Celsum*, 126). The parallel suggests that this was a common Jewish retort and perhaps also that Celsus’s Jew was not entirely fictional.

¹² In BG 20.5 the term for mountain is articular. The other versions do not have the article, but the fact that this one does suggests that at least the translator of BG understood it as an allusion to a specific mountain.

¹³ BG 20.4–19 // NHC II 1.18–29.

the Gospel of John.¹⁴ It is at this point, while John is troubled by questions, that the Savior appears to him as a polymorphous figure:

Straightway, while I was contemplating these things, behold, the heavens opened and the whole creation (κτίσις) which is below heaven was illuminated by a light, and the [whole] world (κόσμος) was shaken. I was afraid and I looked, and behold, a child [who stood] by me appeared to me in the light. And (δέ) [it changed] in likeness to an old man. And it [changed its] likeness (again) to become like a servant. [As I looked] at it I did not [understand (νοεῖν) the] miracle whether there was a [likeness (ἰδέα)] with multiple forms (μορφή) in the light – (since) its forms (μορφή) appeared through each [other – or (οὐδέ)] whether it was a single [likeness (ἰδέα)] with three faces.

He said to me “John, why do you doubt (διστάζειν), and (ἢ or εἶτα) why [are you] afraid? Surely (γάρ) you are not (μή) unfamiliar with this likeness (ἰδέα)! Do not [be] faint-hearted! I am the one who is with [you (pl.)] always. I am [the Father], I am the Mother, I am the Son. I am the eternal One. I am the undefiled and incorruptible One. [Now I have come to teach you] what is [and what was] and what will come to [pass], that [you may know the] things which are not revealed [and those which are revealed, and to teach you] concerning the [unwavering race (γενεά) of] the [perfect (τέλειος) Man]. Now [therefore, lift up] your [face, that] you [may receive] the things that I [shall teach you] today, [and] may [tell them to your fellow] spirits (πνεῦμα) who [are from] the [unwavering] race (γενεά) of the perfect (τέλειος) Man.”¹⁵

This passage contains two significant allusions to Matthew’s appearance narrative:¹⁶

I looked and behold...

He said to me, “John, John, why do you
doubt (κρδισταζε = δισταζε)
(NHC II 2.9–10)¹⁷

When they saw him
they worshiped, but some/they
doubted (ἐδιστασαν).
(Matt 28:17)

¹⁴ Pheme Perkins, *Gnosticism and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 124; King, *Secret Revelation*, 237–38; Pleše, *Poetics*, 23.

¹⁵ Wisse, “After the Synopsis,” 151–52. I have made one minor change to Wisse’s translation by replacing “wonder” with “doubt.” The latter is in my opinion a more accurate translation of the Greek loan word δισταζε (= διστάζειν) and allows the modern reader to recognize more easily the verbal echo of Matt 28:17. The two Greek terms in the next clause, ἢ and εἶτα, reflect differences in the manuscripts: NHC II has η, and BG has ετα.

¹⁶ So R. McL. Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 106; Yvonne Janssens, “L’Apocryphon de Jean,” *Mus* 83 (1970): 161–62; Perkins, *Dialogue*, 55; Christopher Tuckett, *Nag Hammadi and the Gospel Tradition: Synoptic Tradition in the Nag Hammadi Library* (SNTW; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 26–27.

¹⁷ Instead of δισταζε, the shorter recension (BG 8502,2 20.15) has ρητ εναυ, which earlier in the same codex translates διστάζω (see *Gos. Mary*, BG 8502,1 9.14–17 and P.Oxy. 3525, lines 10–11; see also W. E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1939], 714). Additionally, while the post-resurrection setting points to Matt 28:17, the wording of the question, ετβε ογ [κρδι]σταζε (NHC II,1 2.10), has probably been influenced by Matt 14:31 (ετβε ογ ακδικαδζε, Sah), which has the only other occurrence of διστάζω in the NT

I am the one who is <i>with you</i> (pl.) (ἡμεῖς[τεῖς]) always. (BG 21.18–19) ¹⁸	Behold, I am <i>with you</i> (μεθ’ ὑμῶν) always. (Matt 28:20)
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The influence of Matt 28 is made certain by a combination of factors. First, these echoes occur in a post-resurrection – probably Galilean (see above) – mountain setting. Second, *δισταζῶ*, the Greek loanword in the *Apocryphon* for John’s doubt, is unique to Matthew in the NT and regularly acknowledged as a redactional term.¹⁹ Third, although John is the only one present, the author retains the second-person plural (ἡμεῖς[τεῖς]) from Matt 28:20 (μεθ’ ὑμῶν; *nmmtm*, Sah) when recounting the promise of divine presence.

Whereas Matthew’s Gospel offers no reason for the apostles’ doubts, nor, for that matter, any explicit resolution of them, the *Apocryphon* provides both. In the *Apocryphon*, the immediate cause of the apostle’s doubt is the polymorphic character of the Savior’s appearance.²⁰ The author specifies the content of the apostle’s mental wavering: he does not “understand” what he sees and is uncertain whether he is seeing “multiple forms” appearing “through each other” or “a single likeness with three faces.” The Savior responds by asking John why he doubts, and says, “Surely you are not unfamiliar with this likeness!” This statement implies that John should be able to recognize instantly who or what is before him. Though the text doesn’t explicitly say why the visage before him should be familiar, the allusion to Matt 28:20 in the statement that immediately follows is suggestive. When the Savior says, “Surely you are not unfamiliar with this likeness.... I am the one who is with you (pl.) always,” this probably in effect means, “I am the one who appeared to you previously and said, ‘I am with you (pl.) always,’” i.e., in Matt 28:16–20, “and I appeared to you then in the same polymorphous manner.”²¹ Whether or not this is the precise intent of the author, the allusions imply that a polymorphic appearance is the *Apocryphon*’s explanation as to why the apostles doubt when they see Jesus in Matt 28:17.

The *Apocryphon* thus employs the post-resurrection doubt motif in the service of a docetic view of the resurrection appearances. To be sure, the primary purpose of polymorphism need not always be the promotion of docetic Christology, but it is clearly intended to emphasize Christ’s divinity and often does

(so Giversen, *Apocryphon*, 156). A similar conflation of Matt 14:31 and Matt 28:17 appears in *Ep. Apos.* 11.5–6 (see Chapter 8). Only NHC II 2.9 repeats John’s name at this point.

¹⁸ According to the reconstruction of Waldstein and Wisse (*Apocryphon of John*, Synop-sis 4), the longer recension also has the second-person plural pronoun.

¹⁹ So also Tuckett, *Nag Hammadi*, 26 n. 76a. The identification of Matthew’s *ἐδιστασαν* as redactional does not preclude the possibility that the doubt itself is traditional. *δισταζῶ* may simply reflect Matthew’s word choice for expressing a traditional idea.

²⁰ Cf. *AJ* 88–92, where polymorphy is also directly related to John’s disbelief (see Chapter 7).

²¹ This reading removes the awkwardness of the plural pronoun.

so at the expense of his humanity. The threefold appearance in the *Apocryphon*, given that it is followed by a threefold self-identification (Father-Mother [i.e., Holy Spirit]-Son), seems to be an attempt to employ polymorphism to approximate the Trinity.²² In any case, while the *Apocryphon* is not necessarily docetic in the strict sense that explicitly denies the incarnation or suffering of Christ, the author definitively rejects the resurrection of the flesh. In addition to this polymorphic, post-resurrection appearance, the Savior responds to John's doubt and questions by teaching him (i) that the body is a "tomb" or "prison" constructed by demons (NHC II 21.10; 31.4); (ii) that the soul, after leaving the flesh, "is taken up to the repose of the aeons" (BG 68.1–12 = NHC II 26.31–32); and (iii) that souls "do not enter flesh from then on" (NHC III 36.3–4).²³ The importance of this last point is signaled by the fact that the Savior "rejoices" and calls John "blessed" when it is clear that he understands it.²⁴

The resolution of John's doubt is significant in that it is the *telos* of the entire document. The allusion to Matt 28:17 suggests that the previous appearance(s) of the risen Jesus have not been completely successful in overcoming doubt. The goal of the new revelation is "to remove John's doubt by comforting him, answering his questions, and teaching him the full truth."²⁵ The question, "Why do you doubt?" opens the dialogue, which itself is structured in response to

²² Similarly Pleše, *Poetics*, 37–40. See also Guy G. Stroumsa, "Polymorphie divine et transformations d'un mythologème: L'Apocryphon de Jean et ses sources," *VC* 35 (1981): 412–34. Stroumsa explores plausible backgrounds for the imagery and judges the Trinitarian interpretation a later development.

²³ In *Crat.* 400c, Plato employs a pun to compare the "body" (σῶμα) to a "tomb" (σῆμα), but then states his preference for the image of a "prison." The latter idea is found only in the expansions of the longer recension of the *Apocryphon*. Both the shorter and longer recensions include the tomb metaphor but employ the Greek loanword σπήλαιον rather than σῆμα.

With respect to (iii), I quote NHC III 36.3–4 for its readability. Other manuscripts offer minor variations. The only potentially significant difference is that they add the prefix κε- ("another") to the Greek loanword σαρξ ("flesh"). This modification could reflect a critical reaction to certain Valentinians who, in an attempt to reconcile their docetism with proto-orthodox tradition, argued that the resurrection involves not normal flesh but "another," i.e., spiritual, flesh (Tertullian, *Res.* 55.1–10). If so, at some point in the history of transmission a scribe or translator felt it necessary to reject this Valentinian compromise. On the possibility of Valentinian influences on the *Apocryphon of John*, see Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 7–27.

²⁴ That Jesus calls John "blessed" for not affirming the resurrection of the flesh may reflect a subtle contrast with Thomas who is not "blessed" in John 20:29. John demonstrates his understanding to Jesus with a clever allusion to John 3:4: "How does the soul become smaller and smaller and enter again into the nature of the mother?" (BG 69.15–17). The implication is that just as a man cannot enter again into his mother's womb to be born again, so also the soul cannot be cast again into flesh.

²⁵ King, *Secret Revelation*, 155. Similarly Turner, "Legacy," 120: "Christ comes in response to the doubting John, giving him the complete revelation of true knowledge in the form of the entire *Apocryphon*."

John's doubts and questions.²⁶ At the beginning of the *Apocryphon*, John's fear and doubt stand in awkward tension with the Savior's statement to the effect that John is a member of "the *unwavering* race of the perfect man."²⁷ Yet by the end of the *Apocryphon*, John no longer has any doubts or fear but, having been taught throughout the dialogue about the "mystery ... of the *unwavering* race," confidently preaches to his fellow disciples.²⁸ In other words, by answering all the important questions, the *Apocryphon* promises the reader the secret to overcoming the instability of doubt and fear. As Karen L. King so aptly puts it, "[John] models for the reader the path to spiritual development – from ignorance and doubt to secure knowledge, from disturbance of the heart to confidence, from student to teacher."²⁹

The author's attraction to the doubt motif was probably also influenced by his or her strong interest in the themes of stability and instability. Michael A. Williams has demonstrated the importance of the contrast between stability and instability in ancient thought and in the *Apocryphon of John* in particular.³⁰ In the myth of the *Apocryphon*, it is the instability of the aeon Sophia that gives rise to the passions and to the whole inferior world of matter.³¹ In other words, instability lies at the heart of the gnostic understanding of the "Fall," and consequently salvation is largely conceived of as a restoration of stability, first for Sophia and then for those of humankind who will be saved.³² Not surprisingly, then, the development of John's character in the *Apocryphon* mirrors somewhat that of the Sophia: (i) both encounter an evil adversary associated with Judaism (BG 19.6–20.3; 38.6–45.18); (ii) both turn, grieve, and pray when they recognize their deficiency (BG 20.4–21.16; 44.19–46.16);³³ and (iii) both have a divine being sent to them to "teach" them and restore them to stability (BG 21.20–22.16; 46.19–47.14; 75.14–77.5).³⁴ An additional correspondence between John and Sophia may be mentioned: just as Sophia is separated from her "fellow" twelve aeons (BG 34.14; 36.16) for a time and later rejoins them, so

²⁶ So Tardieu, *Écrits gnostiques*, 33–35, 239–46; Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 72.

²⁷ BG 21.13–16, emphasis added.

²⁸ BG 75.15–77.5.

²⁹ King, *Secret Revelation*, 155.

³⁰ Michael A. Williams, *The Immovable Race: A Gnostic Designation and the Theme of Stability in Late Antiquity* (NHS 29; Leiden: Brill, 1985), 8–34, 103–39.

³¹ See also Pleše, *Poetics*, 244–45.

³² Williams, *Immovable Race*, 8–34, 111–27.

³³ John's "prayer" is implicit in the many questions he asks "in his heart" while grieving. Sophia's turning, i.e., her repentance, and weeping are interpreted as a prayer. In *Tri. Tract.* 116.13–20; 119.28–120.11, the apostles originate from the prayer of the Logos (see below).

³⁴ The transformation of John from doubt to stability is clearest in Waldenstein and Wisse's reconstruction of NHC III 40,6–9. Whereas other manuscripts state that John "went" to his fellow disciples, NHC III states that John "stood [ἵστασθαι]" before them. In the *Apocryphon*, "standing" represents stability whereas movement represents instability (Williams, *Immovable Race*, 103–40).

also John is by himself at the beginning of the account but in the end rejoins his “fellow” disciples (BG 77.1), the full company of which is presumably also twelve in number.

Given these parallels, I would propose one further correspondence within (ii), namely, that Sophia’s “moving to and fro (ἐπιφερε = ἐπιφερε)” in her grief – which according to Williams is the key image of her instability – is in effect equivalent to John’s doubting. Williams has shown that the “moving to and fro,” though an image taken from Gen 1:2 LXX (ἐπεφέρετο), is to be understood in light of the use of the same “to and fro” image in Platonic thought to describe the instability and restlessness of the human soul. Doubt or mental wavering is not unlike the restless “to and fro” movement of the soul.³⁵ In fact, similar imagery is used to describe doubt in the NT: “for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.... He is a double-minded (δίψυχος, literally ‘double-souled’) man, unstable (ἀκατάστατος) in all his ways” (Jas 1:5–8).³⁶ In short, the doubt in Matt 28:17 probably connoted instability to the author of the *Apocryphon*, and for that reason was perceived as a fundamental problem to be resolved by the revelation of secret gnosis.

5.1.2 *The Gospel of Mary*³⁷

Another second-century text that capitalizes on the doubt motif is the *Gospel of Mary*.³⁸ Although relatively unknown in antiquity – it is never quoted or

³⁵ Williams, *Immovable Race*, 8–34, 112–22.

³⁶ This passage in James refers to a prayer for wisdom (σοφία). Williams, perhaps because his study concentrates on the term ἀσάλευτος and its cognates, does not discuss Jas 1:5–8. He does, however, examine a parallel in Philo (*Post.* 21–31) that employs the image of being storm-tossed in order to characterize the minds of foolish and worthless men who sometimes hold two contradictory opinions simultaneously (*Immovable Race*, 8–34).

³⁷ Critical editions with modern translations: Walter C. Till, *Die gnostischen Schriften des koptischen Papyrus Berolinensis 8502* (TU 60; Berlin: Akademie, 1995) [German]; R. McL. Wilson and G. W. MacRae, “The Gospel according to Mary,” in *Nag Hammadi Codices V, 2–5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502,1 and 4* (ed. Douglas M. Parrott; NHS 11; Leiden: Brill, 1979) (English, without P.Oxy. 3525); Pasquier, *Marie* [French]; Tuckett, *Mary* [English, including P.Oxy. 3525]. Unless otherwise noted, texts and translations below follow Tuckett.

³⁸ The existence of two distinct, early third-century Greek fragments requires a second-century date, but scholarship is divided over whether to place the composition in the first (so King, *Mary*, 3) or second (so Tardieu, *Écrits gnostiques*, 25; Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre*, 25) half of that century. Tuckett (*Mary*, 12) argues that the nature of the debate between Peter, Andrew, Mary, and Levi appears to reflect a date prior to 180 CE, that is, prior to the clear break between the proto-orthodox and heretical sects found in Irenaeus’s *Against Heresies*. Ismo Dunderberg (“Johannine Traditions and Apocryphal Gospels,” in *The Apocryphal Gospels within the Context of Early Christian Theology* [ed. Jens Schröter; BETL 260; Leuven: Peeters, 2013], 83) judges the philosophical preoccupation among Christians with the destruction of matter to fit best in the middle to late second century. All things

cited by early church fathers – three extant manuscripts, a partial Coptic text from the early fifth century (BG 8502) and two smaller Greek fragments from the early third century (P.Oxy. 3525 and P.Ryl. 463), indicate that the *Gospel of Mary* enjoyed a modest circulation, at least among Egyptian gnostics and perhaps among others as well.³⁹ Its “gnostic” character is debated, primarily because the extant fragments do not mention a demiurge or gnostic creation myth.⁴⁰ It is possible that the author presupposes these ideas or that one or both of them occur in the lost portions of the text.⁴¹ The *Gospel of Mary* does exhibit certain other features common to gnostic texts, e.g., a post-resurrection dialogue, a negative view of OT law, a denigration of the material world, and a description of how the soul can ascend past various hostile powers.⁴² If the *Gospel of Mary* did not, strictly speaking, originate in gnostic circles, these family resemblances may have been what attracted the scribes of the Berlin Codex to place it alongside the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*.⁴³ For these reasons, it seemed appropriate, despite hesitations about the “gnostic” label, to discuss the *Gospel of Mary* in this chapter.

Although King has called into question the longstanding consensus that the author knew the canonical gospels, Christopher M. Tuckett has reconfirmed the consensus position by demonstrating the influence of both Matthean and Lukan redaction on the *Gospel of Mary*.⁴⁴ And while absolute certainty may

considered, a mid-second century date is most likely (so Antti Marjanen, “The Mother of Jesus or the Magdalene? The Identity of Mary in the So-called Gnostic Christian Texts,” in *Which Mary? The Marys of Early Christian Tradition* [ed. F. Stanley Jones; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2002], 98).

³⁹ While the Coptic text is part of a codex with other gnostic documents, the Greek fragments are not necessarily from a gnostic setting (Boer, *Beyond a Gnostic*, 31).

⁴⁰ Although assumed by earlier scholarship, the “gnostic” label has been challenged in, e.g., King, *Mary*, 155–56; Boer, *Beyond a Gnostic*, 30–31. Antti Marjanen initially argued for the gnostic character of the document (*The Woman Jesus Loved: Mary Magdalene in the Nag Hammadi Library and Related Documents* [NHMS 40; Leiden; New York: Brill, 1996], 94 n. 1). He has since changed his mind. In his view, the absence of an “evil and/or ignorant demiurge” in the extant fragments means that the *Gospel of Mary* should not be called gnostic (“Mother,” 32).

⁴¹ Tuckett, *Mary*, 52–54. Pasquier (*Marie*, 17–22) argues that the gnostic myth is presupposed. Still, it is possible that certain elements usually thought to be gnostic are derived instead from a Platonic (King, *Mary*, 27–47) or Stoic background (Boer, *Beyond a Gnostic*, 35–59).

⁴² Similarly Marjanen, *Woman*, 94 n. 1, 121; Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre*, 133; Tuckett, *Mary*, 53–54. Cf. especially the powers in *Gos. Mary* BG 16.8–12 and *Ap. John* BG 43.6–44.4.

⁴³ Similarly Tardieu, *Écrits gnostiques*, 22–23.

⁴⁴ King, *Mary*, 93–118, esp. 117; Tuckett, *Mary*, 55–74. Oddly, King at times seems to presuppose the author’s knowledge of the canonical Gospels, stating, for example, that the *Gospel of Mary* attempts to “displace prior readings” or “replace” the message of one of the Gospels (*Mary*, 98, 108).

not be attainable, Lorne R. Zeylck has recently performed an analogous task for John, making a decisive cumulative case for the *Gospel of Mary*'s repeated use of uniquely Johannine material.⁴⁵

Tuckett's case for the use of Matthew and Luke is based primarily on "clear allusions" to Synoptic material that show the influence of Matthean or Lukan redaction. He places allusions to the resurrection narratives of Matthew, Luke, and John in the "less clear" category. However, given the post-resurrection setting of the *Gospel of Mary* and the use of Matthew and Luke elsewhere, allusions to the narratives of Matt 28 and Luke 24 (and perhaps also John 20) are to be expected and should therefore be assigned a high degree of probability. I would suggest that the author's knowledge of all three of these earlier Gospels helps contribute to a coherent reading of the *Gospel of Mary*. The *Gospel of Mary* responds to, supplements, and in some ways harmonizes different elements from Matt 28, Luke 24, and John 20.

The partial Coptic manuscript begins in the middle of a post-resurrection dialogue between the Savior and the apostles. The first indication of the influence of the resurrection narratives is when the Savior "greet" the apostles with the words, "Peace be with you" (BG 8.14–15). This is admittedly a common greeting, but the use of a source, e.g., Luke 24:36 or John 20:19, 21 (or possibly John 14:27), is signaled by the fact that it appears awkwardly at the end of this initial dialogue rather than at the beginning. The greeting is also followed by a commission, which seems to be a rewritten version of Matt 28:19–20:

⁴⁵ Zeylck, *John*, 157–67. Zeylck's conclusion has been independently confirmed in Dunderberg, "Traditions," 84–91. The use of John in the *Gospel of Mary* is now supported by a strong consensus: Pasquier, *Marie*, 57, 71; Tardieu, *Écrits gnostiques*, 226, 228, 230; Dieter Lüthmann, "Die griechischen Fragmente des Mariaevangeliums POx 3525 und PRyl 463," *NovT* 30 (1988): 326–27; Silke Petersen, 'Zerstört die Werke der Weiblichkeit!' *Maria Magdalena, Salome und andere Jüngerinnen Jesu in christlich-agnostischen Schriften* (NHMS 48; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 135, 141–42; Erika Mohri, *Maria Magdalena: Frauenbilder in Evangelientexten des 1. bis 3. Jahrhunderts* (Marburg theologische Studien 63; Marburg: Elwert, 2000), 277; Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre*, 146; Andrea Taschl-Erber, *Maria von Magdala – erste Apostolin? Joh 20,1–18: Tradition und Relecture* (HBS 51; Freiburg: Herder, 2007), 503–5; Vernon K. Robbins, *Who Do People Say I Am? Rewriting Gospel in Emerging Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 175–76. See also the dissenting view in Boer, *Beyond a Gnostic*, 207–8. De Boer contends that the high esteem for Mary makes it unlikely that the *Gospel of Mary* is dependent on the canonical gospels, which she maintains are guilty of silencing of Mary. But at most the stress on Mary's authority implies a difference in perspective. It does not require knowledge of independent traditions about Mary and does not overturn the preponderance of evidence for dependence on the Gospels.

Go therefore (βακ σε) and preach the gospel of the kingdom. Do not lay down any rules beyond what I have appointed for you, and do not give a law like the law-giver lest you be constrained by it. (BG 8.21–9.4)⁴⁶

Go therefore (πορευθέντες οὖν; βακ σε, Sah) and make disciples of all nations (ἔθνη) ... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. (Matt 28:19–20)

Matthew's words have been carefully reworked to ensure that the commands of Jesus are clearly distinguished from those of the Mosaic law, which is to be rejected.⁴⁷ That this is a redactional change on the part of the author is supported by the fact that the same prohibition against law is repeated at the conclusion of the *Gospel of Mary*.⁴⁸ Additionally, while the “nations (ἔθνη)” from Matt 28:19 are not mentioned in the initial words of commission (BG 8.21–9.4), they are presupposed in the apostles' response: “But they were grieved and wept greatly saying, ‘How shall we go to the *Gentiles* (ἠρεθῆνος = ἔθνος [P.Oxy 3525, line 8]) and preach the gospel of the kingdom of the Son of man? If they did not spare him, how will they spare us?’” (BG 9.7–12).⁴⁹

This despairing response prompts Mary to exhort the apostles with words that echo other parts of the same Matthean pericope:

⁴⁶ Tuckett detects the influence of Matt 28:19 but argues that the “preaching” of “the gospel of the kingdom” has been imported from Matt 24:14 (*Mary*, 61–62).

⁴⁷ Similarly Dieter Lüthmann, *Die apokryph gewordenen Evangelien: Studien zu neuen Texten und zu neuen Fragen* (NovTSup 112; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 45–47, 124; Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre*, 157.

⁴⁸ BG 18.15–21. Following the suggestion of Elaine H. Pagels, King (*Mary*, 56) proposes that the prohibition against law is directed against texts such as 1 Cor 15:33–35 and 1 Tim 2:1–14, which appeal to the Law to justify the practice of silencing women. This is an intriguing suggestion, but if true, I would expect Paul rather than Peter to be the one to object to Mary's gender. Moreover, the rejection of the Mosaic Law is a common theme in gnostic texts. According to Irenaeus, a variety of heretics complained that “the apostles intermingled the things of the law with the words of the Savior” (*Haer.* 3.2.2; 3.12.12). Therefore, the prohibition against law in the *Gospel of Mary* may reflect this general concern rather than the author's interest in promoting women.

⁴⁹ Similarly Tuckett, *Mary*, 62.

<p>Do not weep and do not grieve, <i>nor be irresolute</i> (ΟΥΔΕ ΠΙΠΡΕ ΖΗΤ ΣΝΑΥ),⁵⁰ for his grace <i>will be with you</i> (ΝΑΩΦΠΕ ΝΪΜΗΤΪ) wholly (ΤΗΡΣ). (BG, 9.14–17)⁵¹</p>	<p>[Do not weep or be grie]ved <i>and do not doubt</i> (μηδε διαταζεται), for his grace <i>will be with you</i> ([εσται με]θ' υμων). (P.Oxy. 3525, lines 10–11)</p>	<p><i>but some/they doubted</i> (οι δε εδιστασαν) ... “Behold, <i>I am with you</i> (μεθ' υμων εμι) always (πασας τας ημερας).” (Matt. 28:17, 20)⁵²</p>
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Mary’s first two exhortations (“Do not weep and do not grieve”) correspond exactly to the apostle’s grieving and weeping just mentioned in 9.6, but the third, “do not doubt,” is otherwise unprompted, and so appears to be a response to οἱ δὲ ἐδίστασαν in Matt 28:17.⁵³ Whereas Matthew offers no explanation nor any explicit resolution of the doubt, the Gospel of Mary implicitly explains it as hesitation on the part of (all) the apostles to fulfill their commission for fear of persecution (“How shall we ... preach? If they did not spare him, how will they will spare us?”) and explicitly locates the attempted resolution of the apostles’ doubts in the promise of the divine presence (Matt 28:20) – here spoken by Mary rather than by Jesus.⁵⁴ The apostles apparently recognize the echo and the relevance of Christ’s promise (“I will be with you always”) in Mary’s words (“His grace will be with you wholly”), for the narrator tells us that “When she had said these things, she turned their hearts to the Good, and they began to discuss the *words* of the [Savior]” (BG 9.20–24, emphasis added).

The *Gospel of Mary*’s response to the apostles’ doubt is the antithesis of what we found in Ignatius and Tertullian in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively. Whereas the *Gospel of Mary* depicts the apostles as so fearful of persecution that they weep profusely and hesitate to fulfill their commission, both Ignatius

⁵⁰ On ΖΗΤ ΣΝΑΥ as a translation of διατάζω, see Crum, *Dictionary*, 714; Pasquier, *Marie*, 68 n. 80; Marjanen, *Woman*, 107; and *Apocryphon of John* (BG,2 21.15 vs. NHC IV,1 3.2).

⁵¹ I follow here the text-critical judgment of Tuckett (*Mary*, 105). The ending of the word ΤΗΡ is illegible in the manuscript. Till and Pasquier posit ΤΗΡ<Τ>Ν (“all”) which would modify “you.” But Wilson and MacRae note that this requires positing the accidental omission of a τ, because there is only room for one letter. They therefore propose ΤΗΡΣ (“wholly” or “entirely”). The Coptic translation of πᾶσας τὰς ἡμέρας in Matt 28:20 has the same term: ΝΗΕΡΟΥ ΤΗΡΟΥ. The Greek fragment lacks an equivalent to ΤΗΡ-.

⁵² While these same two phrases from Matt 28 are echoed in the *Apocryphon of John*, also in the Berlin Codex, the earlier use of other terms and phrases from the same pericope (e.g., “Go therefore” and “nations”) indicates that the *Gospel of Mary* depends on Matthew directly, that is, independently of the *Apocryphon*.

⁵³ The allusion is detected in Lührmann, “Mariaevangeliums,” 326; Marjanen, *Woman*, 107 n. 53; Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre*, 157; Tuckett, *Mary*, 68, 71.

⁵⁴ This is one of various ways that Mary takes on the role of Jesus (King, *Mary*, 30, 32, 56, 108, 131). Additionally, the author appears to take οἱ δέ in Matt 28:17 as a reference to all rather than to some of the disciples.

and Tertullian omit the doubt and insert comments that characterize the apostles as heroic martyrs who courageously, even gladly, stood firm in the face of persecution.⁵⁵ According to Ignatius, it was their immediate response of faith that enabled them to “despise death” and even be found “greater than death” (*Smyrn.* 3.2). According to Tertullian, they went abroad “in obedience,” and “they suffered much from Jewish persecution – but gladly enough because of their faith in the truth; finally at Rome, through the cruelty of Nero, they sowed the seed of Christian blood” (*Apol.* 21.25). While there is no evidence that either of these church fathers knew the *Gospel of Mary*, the latter’s exploitation of the doubt motif in order to portray the apostles as cowards illustrates another way that the doubt could be a source of embarrassment. An accusation of this sort may explain why Ignatius and Tertullian suppress the doubt and emphasize instead the bravery of the apostles.

The unresolved doubt of the apostles in Matt 28:17 provides the author of the *Gospel of Mary* an opportunity to exalt Mary’s status over that of the apostles and to communicate esoteric teaching about the post-mortem ascent of the soul. Mary’s exhortation not to doubt and her reiteration of the divine promise in Matt 28:20 prompt Peter to ask Mary to share more words of the Savior that she remembers, specifically, those things that the apostles have not yet heard. Mary then shares her vision of the Savior, which begins with the Savior singling out Mary as “blessed.” Particularly significant in this context is the reason given for the blessing: “Blessed are you, *for you did not waver when you saw me*” (BG 10.14–15, emphasis added). As many commentators have noted, this depiction of Mary stands in contrast to the author’s portrayal of the apostles as cowardly doubters just a few lines earlier.⁵⁶ I would add that it stands in even sharper contrast to Matt 28:17:

When they had seen him they worshiped him, but some doubted. (Matt 28:17)

Blessed are you, *for you did not waver when you saw me.* (*Gos. Mary* BG 10.14–15)

Mary is thus portrayed as the exemplar of unwavering faith over against the doubting apostles.⁵⁷ The post-resurrection doubt of the apostles therefore paves the way for Mary to take on the mantle of authoritative teacher.

⁵⁵ The theme of persecution also appears in the *Apocryphon of John*, though it is a response to the recent verbal barbs of a Pharisee rather than in anticipation of violent persecution by Gentiles as in the *Gospel of Mary*. Given the *Gospel of Mary*’s use of John’s resurrection narrative (see below), it is possible that the interpretation of ἐδίστασαν in Matt 28:17 as hesitation in the face of persecution was inspired in part by the “fear of the Jews” in John 20:19.

⁵⁶ E.g., Perkins, *Gnosticism*, 183; Boer, *Beyond a Gnostic*, 77; King, *Mary*, 30, 32, 56, 63, 67, 79–80.

⁵⁷ Cf. the similar contrast in *Manich. Ps. Bk. II.187*, though Marjanen (*Woman*, 209–15) argues that the goal in this text is not necessarily to exalt Mary.

Mary next relates her vision of the post-mortem ascent of the Savior's soul past various hostile powers.⁵⁸ Although only some of the vision account has been preserved, the surrounding narrative frame is fully preserved in Coptic and mostly preserved in Greek. The author appears to have constructed this narrative frame by conflating Luke 24:8–11 and John 20:11–18.⁵⁹ When the vision account is removed, and only the narrative frame remains, the verbal and conceptual correspondences with Luke and John become clearer:

“Tell us the <i>words of the Savior</i> that	And	
<i>you remember,</i> ⲙⲡⲉϥⲙⲉⲉϥⲉ	<i>they remembered</i> ⲁϥⲣⲙⲉⲉϥⲉ (Sah) ἐμνήσθησαν	
which you know but we do not, and which we have not heard.” <i>Mary</i> answered and said: “What Is hidden from you [and	<i>his words,</i> and returning from the tomb [cf. Luke 18:34]	<i>Mary</i> Magdalene went
<i>I remember</i>], [απομνημονευσω] (P.Oxy. 3525)		
<i>I will announce</i> ⲫⲏⲁⲧⲁⲙⲁ ⲁⲡⲁ[γγⲉⲗω] (P.Oxy. 3525)	<i>they announced</i> ἀπήγγειλαν	and <i>announced</i> ⲁⲨⲧⲁⲙⲉ (Sah) ἀγγέλλουσα
to you.” And she began to speak to them these words: “I,” she said,	all <i>these things</i> (ταῦτα) to the eleven and to all the rest.	to the disciples,
“ <i>I have seen the Lord</i> ⲁⲓⲏⲁϥ ⲉⲡⲓϥ = ἐώρακα τὸν κύριον ιδ[ουση τον κυριον] (P.Oxy. 3525)		“ <i>I have seen the Lord.</i> ” ⲁⲓⲏⲁϥ ⲉⲡⲓϥⲟⲓⲥ (Sah) ἐώρακα τὸν κύριον
in a <i>vision</i> and I said to him, “Lord, I have seen you today in a vision.”’	[cf. Luke 24:23]	and
.... When <i>Mary</i> had said <i>these things</i> , ⲏⲁⲓ ⲧⲁⲩⲧ[α] (P.Ryl. 463)	Now it was <i>Mary</i> ...who said <i>these things</i> ⲏⲏⲁⲓ (Sah) ⲧⲁῦⲧⲁ	

⁵⁸ So Marjanen, *Woman*, 94; King, *Mary*, 69–81; Tuckett, *Mary*, 173–74.

⁵⁹ Robbins (*Rewriting Gospel*, 176) detects here a certain “blending of Luke with John.”

she fell silent...	to the apostles.	
But Andrew answered...	But	
“Say what you (wish to?) say about what she has said.	<i>these (ταῦτα) words seemed to them an idle tale, and</i>	
I myself		
<i>do not believe</i>	<i>they did not believe</i>	
†πιστευε αν	μπουπιστευε (Sah)	
ου πιστευω (P.Ryl. 463)	ηπιστουυ	
<i>that the Saviour said these things</i>	them.	<i>that he had said these things</i>
ναϊ		ναι (Sah)
ταῦτα (P.Ryl. 463).		ταῦτα
For <i>these teachings seem</i> to be (giving) different ideas.” (<i>Gos. Mary</i> BG 10.4–13; 17.7–15) ⁶⁰	(Luke 24:8–11)	to her. (John 20:18) ⁶¹

In addition to these verbal connections, the narrative frame reflects a sequence of events similar to that of Luke 24:8–11: (i) Mary remembers the words of the Savior; (ii) she announces them to the apostles; and (iii) they respond in disbelief.⁶² In Luke, Jesus’s words refer to his predictions of his death and resurrection “on the third day” (24:6–7), but in the *Gospel of Mary* they refer to the ascent of the Savior’s soul. This difference may help explain the otherwise unspecified reason why Andrew judged Mary’s teaching “to be different ([ε]τερογνωμονειν) from his [the Savior’s] thought” (P.Ryl. 463, lines 9–11, recto).⁶³ If so, Andrew is criticizing those who maintain a gnostic/platonic ascent of the soul (as an escape from the body) instead of a bodily resurrection.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ I have made slight modifications to Tuckett’s translation to reflect better the verbal connections between the *Gospel of Mary* and Luke and John. Additionally, I have inserted Mary’s words “and I remember” from P.Oxy. 3525, line 18, which do not occur in BG 8502. P.Oxy. 3525 does not include the corresponding words of Peter, “which you remember,” that appear in BG 10.4–5. Thus, the theme of Mary remembering Jesus’s words was included in the original composition, but whether it was initially included as part of Peter’s words or Mary’s is difficult to determine.

⁶¹ The Coptic version of the *Gospel of Mary* is written in the Subachmimic (or “Lycopolitan”) dialect. Because neither Luke 24 nor John 20 is extant in this dialect, I have included the Sahidic text for the purposes of comparison. The difference in dialect accounts for many of the differences in spelling in the above chart. Other differences, such as changes from the third to first or second person, are expected in light of the shift to the dialogue genre.

⁶² On the influence of Luke 24:11, see Robbins, *Rewriting Gospel*, 176.

⁶³ BG 17.15 has “different ideas,” but it does not specify whose ideas they differed from.

⁶⁴ Cf. King, *Mary*, 109: “Since attachment to the body is the source of suffering and death (*GMary* 3:7–11), separation from that attachment frees them: there is no promise of, or desire for a physical resurrection.”

This coheres with the consensus view that the tension between Andrew, Peter, Mary, and Levi at the end of the *Gospel of Mary* reflects a second-century debate between the proto-orthodox position and a heterodox (perhaps gnostic) alternative.⁶⁵

The author also ties the teaching on the ascent of the soul to John 20:11–18. The allusion to John’s account is clear from the verbatim echo of Mary’s testimony to the apostles, “I have seen the Lord” (BG 10.10–11 = John 20:18).⁶⁶ The use of a source is also signaled by the shift in terminology from “Savior,” the author’s normal title for Christ, to “Lord.”⁶⁷

Furthermore, John’s account of the appearance to Mary offers an ideal point of departure for the author to expand the story with esoteric teaching on the *ascent* of the soul. In the John’s Gospel, Jesus cryptically says to Mary, “Do not touch me for I have not *ascended* to my Father. Go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am *ascending* to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God’” (20:17). Then, “Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord,’ and that he had said *these things* (ταῦτα) to her” (20:18). According to the *Gospel of Mary*, the phrase “these things” refers to the ascent of the Savior’s soul rather than his body.⁶⁸ Aside from this, the conceptual

⁶⁵ On this interpretation, see Elaine H. Pagels, “Visions, Appearances, and Apostolic Authority: Gnostic and Orthodox Traditions,” in *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (ed. Barbara Aland; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 424–25; idem, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1979), 12–13, 76–81; Perkins, *Dialogue*, 131–37, esp. 133–35; Pasquier, *Marie*, 23–25; Marjanen, *Woman*, 121.

⁶⁶ So Tardieu, *Écrits gnostiques*, 231; Marjanen, *Woman*, 117; Petersen, *Zerstört*, 133, 150–54; Pasquier, *Marie*, 71 n. 96; Mohri, *Magdalena*, 277; Tuckett, *Mary*, 17, 71, 170; Taschl-Erber, *Maria*, 503–5. While the reconstructed Greek text of P.Oxy. 3525 appears to have ἰδουση, the perfect tense ἀἰναυ in the Subachmimic version of the *Gospel of Mary* may reflect John’s ἐώρακα, which is translated ἀἰναυ in the Sahidic version of John 20:18.

⁶⁷ Pace Hartenstein (*Die zweite Lehre*, 130, 153) and King (*Mary*, 175), the allusion is also signaled by the fact that the statement is repeated in the next line, even awkwardly retaining the perfect tense when the present tense would be expected: “Lord I *have seen* (ἀἰναυ) you *today*” (so Petersen, *Zerstört*, 135). Further correspondence with John 20:11–18 includes the reference to the apostles as “brothers” (BG 9.14; John 20:17) and Mary’s weeping (BG 18.1; John 20:11–15).

The plausibility of the *Gospel of Mary*’s use of John 20:11–18 is confirmed by the analogous way in which the same passage is rewritten and expanded in *Manich. Ps. Bk. II.187*. As Marjanen has observed, Mary is portrayed in the Manichaean version of the story as the “paragon of a faithful believer.” By contrast the apostles, are depicted as “lost orphans” whose “wits are gone,” and as “sheep” whom Mary must bring back into the fold (*Woman*, 203–15, esp. 212).

⁶⁸ Cf. Origen, *Or.* 23.2: “Let us seek to understand mystically the verse at the end of the Gospel according to John, ‘Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father;’ the Son’s ascent to the Father being understood by us in a sense more worthy of God with holy clearness; this ascent is made by the mind rather than the body” (trans. Harold Smith, *Ante-Nicene*

correspondence between the *Gospel of Mary* and the Fourth Gospel is precise, mimicking even the sequence of transmission: (i) Jesus appears to Mary; (ii) Jesus speaks of an ascension; (iii) Mary tells the apostles, “I have seen the Lord”; (iv) she then relates to them “these things (ταῦτα)” that Jesus said.⁶⁹ The vision account in the *Gospel of Mary* seems to be an attempt to elaborate on the ambiguous ταῦτα in John 20:18, which being plural presumably includes more than the brief mysterious statement about Jesus’s ascension in John 20:17.⁷⁰

This use of John 20 raises the question why the author also chose to utilize material from Luke 24. There are probably two, interrelated reasons for this. First, if Andrew’s objection about “different thinking ([ετε]ρογνωμονειν)” is representative of the proto-orthodox criticism of a heterodox replacement of bodily resurrection with the post-mortem ascent of the soul, Luke’s theme of “remembering” the words of Jesus allows the author of the *Gospel of Mary* to counter by implying a continuity between the teaching of Mary and that of Jesus. Second, the author was probably attracted to the expression of disbelief in Luke 24:11. John’s Gospel does not explicitly state the response of the apostles to Mary – though the fact that they stay behind closed doors for fear of the Jews at least implies that they did not put much faith in Mary’s testimony – but Luke’s account states that the disciples “disbelieve” the report of the women and later depicts them as “foolish” for doing so (24:11, 25). As with the doubt clause in Matt 28:17, the disbelief in Luke 24:11 allows the author of the *Gospel of Mary* to impugn the character of specific apostles as representatives of the proto-orthodox position and to exalt Mary’s esoteric teaching on ascent of the soul, i.e., the author’s position.⁷¹

Exegesis of the Gospels [6 vols.; Translations of Christian Literature 6; London: SPCK, 1929], 6:127).

⁶⁹ Similarly Taschl-Erber, *Maria*, 504.

⁷⁰ Similarly Robbins, *Rewriting Gospel*, 175–76, 181; Tuckett, *Mary*, 170.

⁷¹ After Peter and Andrew express their skepticism regarding Mary’s vision report, Levi defends her by scolding Peter for being “hot tempered” (*Gos. Mary* BG 18.6–10). The latter may also allude the portrayal of Peter in the Synoptic tradition (so Tuckett, *Mary*, 19, 72) and at the same time offer an implicit contrast to Mary, who does not “waver” (so King, *Mary*, 80). Cf. Dunderberg, “Traditions,” 90: “[T]he disciples’ fear of persecution functions as an illustration of the soul’s disease for which Mary’s vision then offers the cure by painting an ideal picture of a victorious soul no longer attached to ‘material’ concerns brought about by body and emotions.... [T]he disciples’ doubtful reaction ... underlines the severity of their weak mental condition: they refuse the medicine Mary offers to them.”

5.1.3 The Letter of Peter to Philip⁷²

Although the so-called *Letter of Peter to Philip* includes a pseudepigraphal letter from the apostle Peter to Philip, its overall genre is not really that of a letter. The letter is enclosed within a narrative frame that also houses (i) a post-resurrection dialogue between Jesus and the apostles; and (ii) a sermon given by Peter in the temple in Jerusalem. While the *Letter* cannot be easily assigned to any named gnostic sect, its dialogue incorporates a gnostic myth similar to those of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.29–30 and the *Apocryphon of John*.⁷³ The composition is typically dated to the late second or early third century.⁷⁴ An earlier dating is also plausible; the *Letter* appears to engage in an irenic attempt to unify gnostic and proto-orthodox viewpoints, which suggests that it was probably written prior to the sharp break exhibited in Irenaeus's writings (ca. 180 CE).⁷⁵ The *Letter* is primarily known for its ostensibly docetic protest, "Jesus

⁷² Critical editions: Jacques E. Ménard, *La Lettre de Pierre à Philippe* (BCNHT 1; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1997) [French]; Hans-Gebhard Bethge, *Der Brief des Petrus an Philippus: Ein neutestamentliches Apokryphon aus dem Fund von Nag Hammadi (NHC VIII,2)* (TU 141; Berlin: Akademie, 1997) [German]; Meyer, "Letter," 227–51 [English]. None of these earlier editions includes Codex Tchacos. Critical editions and translations of Tchacos, I are available in Rodolphe Kasser et al., "The Letter of Peter to Philip," in *The Gospel of Judas Together with the Letter of Peter to Philip, James, and a Book of Allogenes from Codex Tchacos: Critical Edition* (eds. Rodolphe Kasser and Gregor Wurst; Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2007), 79–114 [English and French]; Johanna Brankaer and Hans-Gebhard Bethge, *Codex Tchacos: Texte und Analysen* (TU 161; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 5–80 [German]. Unless otherwise noted, quotations below follow Meyer's critical text and English translation of NHC VIII,2.

⁷³ Similarly Marjanen, "Stranger," 490; Meyer, "Letter," 229–30.

⁷⁴ Marjanen, "Stranger," 489–90; Meyer, "Letter," 231; Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism*, 246.

⁷⁵ Similarly Michael Kaler, "The Letter of Peter to Philip and Its Message of Gnostic Revelation and Christian Unity," *VC* 63 (2009): 264–95, esp. 286. The emphasis on unity has also been observed in Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, "The Letter of Peter to Philip and the New Testament," in *Nag Hammadi and Gnosis* (ed. R. McL. Wilson; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 102; Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre*, 165–69; Jacques E. Ménard, "La Lettre de Pierre à Philippe," in *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (ed. Barbara Aland; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 455. See also the dissenting view in Karen L. King, "Toward a Discussion of the Category 'Gnosis/Gnosticism': The Case of the Epistle of Peter to Philip," in *Jesus in apokryphen Evangelienüberlieferungen: Beiträge zu außerkanonischen Jesusüberlieferungen aus verschiedenen Sprach- und Kulturtraditionen* (eds. Jörg Frey and Jens Schröter; WUNT 254; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 449–54. King rightly questions Hartenstein's notion that Philip and Peter represent gnostic and orthodox Christianity, respectively, but she does not adequately account for the way apostolic tradition is affirmed but then treated in revisionist fashion: "And he was [crucified] on a tree and he was buried in a tomb. And he rose from the dead. My brothers, Jesus is a stranger to this suffering. But we are the ones who have suffered through the transgression of the Mother" (139.18–23; cf. 1 Cor 15:3–5).

is a stranger to this suffering” (139.21–22).⁷⁶ The denial of the suffering of “Jesus” rather than of “Christ” suggests a proto-monophysite Christology, but its repeated distinction between the post-resurrection appearances and the time when Christ was “in the body” (133.17; 138.3; 139.11) indicates some form of hybrid Christology that denies bodily resurrection. The risen Jesus is referred to as “the appearance” (137.19).⁷⁷ The phrase “our God Jesus” in 133.7–8 rules out separationist Christology.

The *Letter* is also known for its heavy dependence on Luke-Acts.⁷⁸ Most of the echoes come from Luke 24 and Acts 1, the events of which seem to be

In any case, it is not possible to rule out a mid-second century date. Marjanen (“Stranger,” 489–90) seems to prefer a later dating because of the obvious dependence on multiple NT texts, but dependence is certainly possible in the first half of the second century. Meyer (“Letter,” 231) argues for a late second- or early third-century date on the basis of parallels with the myth of the *Apocryphon of John* and Irenaeus, but the lack of specifically Sethian characteristics suggests that the *Letter* is based on an earlier version of the myth than that of the *Apocryphon*.

⁷⁶ The *Letter*’s docetism has sometimes been called into question because elsewhere it seems to affirm Jesus’s suffering (138.15–20). Marjanen argues that the statement, “Jesus is a stranger to this suffering,” needs to be interpreted either in a Stoic manner such that “even though Jesus underwent suffering, it did not upset or disturb him” or as a way of referring to the “substitutionary character” of his suffering (“Stranger,” 494–97). Neither is the most natural way to read the sentence, “Jesus is a stranger to this suffering, but (ἀλλά) we are the ones who have suffered through the transgression of the mother.” The strong adversative ἀλλά implies a contrast between Jesus, who did not suffer, and others, who did suffer. The *Letter*’s docetism is slightly clearer in the variant, though fragmentary, text of the recently published Codex Tchacos: “Jesus is a stranger to death. But we are the ones who have died through the transgression of our Mother. [And] for this reason ... [he did] everything in a likeness (ἐν ὁμοιω[ε]ί) ... for us” (8.2–7, trans. Kasser et al., “Letter,” 107, slightly modified). Meyer (“Letter,” 230–31) reasonably suggests that the *Letter* holds docetic and non-docetic elements in tension. Overall, the author seems to be reinterpreting a traditional credo in a docetic direction (so Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, *Gnostic Revisions of Genesis Stories and Early Jesus Traditions* [NHMS 58; Leiden: Brill, 2006], 3, 119–124).

⁷⁷ The author’s Christology may be compared to that of the opponents in [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 2.14 who claim that the risen Jesus was “no longer in the flesh” but “presented the mere appearance” of the flesh.

⁷⁸ Dependence on Luke-Acts is universally acknowledged (so Terence V. Smith, *Petrine Controversies in Early Christianity: Attitudes Towards Peter in Christian Writings of the First Two Centuries* [WUNT 2/15; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985], 122 n. 46; King, “Category,” 449. Detailed demonstrations of the sustained use of Luke-Acts include Klaus Koschorke, “Eine gnostische Pfingstpredigt: Zur Auseinandersetzung zwischen gnostischem und kirchlichem Christentum am Beispiel der ‘Epistula Petri ad Philippum’ (NHC VIII,2),” *ZTK* 74 (1977): 323–43, esp. 326–27; Smith, *Controversies*, 122–24; Tuckett, *Nag Hammadi*, 112–13; Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre*, 184–85. Also detecting the use of Luke-Acts are PHEME Perkins, “Peter in Gnostic Revelation,” *SBLSP* 2 (1974): 4; idem, *Resurrection*, 346–47; Hans-Gebhard Bethge, “Der sogenannte ‘Brief des Petrus an Philippus’: Die zweite ‘Schrift’ aus Nag-Hammadi-Codex VIII eingeleitet und übersetzt vom Berliner Arbeitskreis

presupposed as having occurred in the past.⁷⁹ Because the initial setting is one in which the church is experiencing persecution (*Ep. Pet. Phil.* 134.8–9; cf. Acts 8:1) and in which Philip has been separated from the apostles (*Ep. Pet. Phil.* 133.1–5; cf. Acts 8:1, 4–8), the account as a whole appears to be an attempt to fill a narrative gap in the story of Philip in Acts 8, i.e., telling how Philip is reunited with the apostles after his travels.⁸⁰ The new story is largely constructed out of earlier material from Luke-Acts and Matthew, presumably to give the reader the impression of continuity with apostolic (or biblical?) tradition.

Upon Philip's return, the entire apostolic band gathers on the Mount of Olives, "the place where they used to gather with the blessed Christ *when he was in the body*" (133.14–17).⁸¹ Christ now appears to them *not* in the body but in a way analogous to (and apparently modeled after) the appearance to Paul in Acts: Jesus (i) appears as a "great light" (134.10; cf. Acts 22:6) and as a "voice" (134.13; cf. Acts 22:7); (ii) asks a rhetorical question ("Why are you asking me?") (134.13–17; cf. Acts 22:7); and (iii) identifies himself by saying, "I am Jesus Christ who is with you forever" (134.17–18; cf. Acts 22:8; Matt 28:20).⁸² This replacement of the apostles' experience of Jesus "in the body" with a Paul-like experience of Jesus as a light and a voice looks like an implicit rejection of the bodily nature of Christ's resurrection.

The main goal of the scene is to make room for further revelation beyond that recorded in Luke-Acts (and Matthew). In the ensuing dialogue, Christ describes to them various aspects of gnostic cosmology, anthropology, and

für koptisch-gnostische Schriften," *TLZ* 103 (1978): 161–70; Luttikhuisen, "Letter," 96; Marjanen, "Stranger," 490. Even Gregory, who normally requires clear evidence of Lukan redaction in triple tradition material to prove the use of Luke, notes that the "density of the parallels and the way in which the author of the *Letter of Peter to Philip* appears to use *Luke* and *Acts* together makes a very convincing case for direct literary dependence on *Luke* and on *Acts*" (*Reception*, 165). Meyer posits that the author has been influenced by Luke-Acts but is "not consciously using" it (*Letter*, 91). The sheer number of echoes that Meyer himself recognizes suggests otherwise. See also Kaler, who argues against Meyer for an intentional, strategic use of Acts ("Unity," 286).

⁷⁹ Peter's letter reminds Philip of the commandments and commissioning of the risen Jesus (132.16–21; cf. Luke 24:48–49; Acts 1:2–8)

⁸⁰ Kaler, "Unity," 264–95. Similarly, Koschorke ("Pfungstpredigt," 327–28) argues that the *Letter* is a rewritten version of Acts 8:4–8, 14–17.

⁸¹ This almost certainly refers to the pre-crucifixion period since Luke 22:39 refers to Jesus's "habit" of meeting with the disciples on the Mount of Olives. The next closest parallel is John 18:2, which refers to "garden" – rather than a mountain – where Jesus "often met with his disciples."

⁸² Additional parallels and discussion of the Pauline background in Kaler, "Unity," 278–85.

soteriology. This exposition is introduced by a cluster of allusions to the group appearance scene in Luke 24:⁸³

It is you yourselves who are witnesses
 ΝΤΩΤΗ ΟΥΔΑΤΤΗΥΤΗ ΕΤΡ ΜΗΤΡΕ

You are witnesses of these things.
 ΝΤΩΤΗ ΝΕΤΟ ΜΗΜΤΡΕ ΝΑΙ. (Sah)
 ΝΘΩΤΕΝ ΕΤΕΡΜΕΘΡΕ ΞΑ ΝΑΙ. (Boh)
 ὑμεῖς μάρτυρες τούτων.
 (Luke 24:48)⁸⁴

that I spoke all these things to you.
 ΧΕ ΕΙΧΕ ΝΑΙ ΤΗΡΟΥ ΝΗΤΗ

These are my words which I spoke to you...
 ΧΕ ΝΑΙ ΝΕ ΝΑΦΑΧΕ ΕΝΤΑΙΧΟΟΥ ΝΗΤΗ... (Sah)
 ΧΕ ΝΑΙ ΝΕΝΑΧΑΧΙ ΕΤΑΙΧΟΤΟΥ ΝΩΤΕΗ... (Boh)
 οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι μου οὓς ἐλάλησα πρὸς ὑμᾶς
 (Luke 24:44)

But because of your unbelief
 ἀλλ[λ]ὰ [ε]ΤΒΕ ΤΕΤΝΜΝΤΔΤΝΡΤΕ
 (οἱ ΤΕΤΝΗ[ΝΤΑΠΙΣΤΟC],
 Tchachos)⁸⁵

but while/because they were still disbelieving...
 ΕΤΙ ΔΕ ΕΥΔΠΙCΤΕΙ... (Sah)
 ΕΤΙ ΔΕ ΕΓΟΙ ΝΑΘΗΑΡΞ... (Boh)⁸⁶
 ἔτι δὲ ἀπιστούντων αὐτῶν...
 (Luke 24:41a)

I shall speak again.
 †[N]ΑΦΑΧΕ ΝΚΕCΟΠ

he said to them...
 ΠΕΧΑϞ ΝΑΥ... (Sah)
 ΠΕΧΑϞ ΝΩΟΥ... (Boh)
 εἶπεν αὐτοῖς
 (Luke 24:41b)

(*Ep. Pet. Phil.* [NHC] VIII,2 135.5–8)

The presence of an allusion is signaled by the reference to prior teaching. “These things” in Luke 24:48 is conflated with an allusion to Luke 24:44. This reference to the things that Christ spoke previously is among the canonical resurrection narratives unique to Luke, and widely recognized as Lukan

⁸³ This particular cluster of allusions has seldom if ever been noticed in previous scholarship. As far as I can tell, only a couple individual correspondences have been observed. Koshorke (“Pfingstpredigt,” 327 n. 10) sees a possible connection between the “witnesses” of *Ep. Pet. Phil.* 135.5–6 and Luke 24:48 or Acts 1:8, and Hartenstein (*Die zweite Lehre*, 184) links Jesus’s comment about what he spoke previously to Luke 24:44.

⁸⁴ Although Luke’s Greek lacks an equivalent to the *Letter*’s use of the additional pronoun ετ (“who”), the same pronoun is attested in Coptic translations of Luke 24:48.

⁸⁵ Tchacos is fragmentary at this point. Kasser and Wurst here prefer the reconstruction ΤΕΤΝΗ[ΝΤΑΤΝΑ], but they offer ΤΕΤΝΗ[ΝΤΑΠΙCΤΟC] as an alternative possibility (“Letter,” 97 n. 14–15). The meaning is the same in each case.

⁸⁶ The *Letter of Peter to Philip* is written primarily in the Sahidic dialect, but it does exhibit some influence from Bohairic (Meyer, *Letter*, 69–90, esp. 79–83; idem, “Letter,” 232). Bohairic is known for its relative lack of dependence on Greek loanwords (J. Martin Plumley, “Limitations of Coptic [Sahidic] in Representing Greek,” in *The Early Versions of the New Testament: Their Origin, Transmission, and Limitations* [ed. Bruce M. Metzger; Oxford: Clarendon, 1977], 146).

redaction.⁸⁷ The vocabulary is also uncharacteristic of the author; neither the term $\mu\eta\tau\rho\epsilon$ (“witnesses”) nor its cognates appears elsewhere in the *Letter*.⁸⁸ The reference to the apostles’ unbelief is likewise atypical; the theme of unbelief appears nowhere else in the *Letter*. The *Letter*’s overall characterization of the apostles is otherwise very positive, and the accusation of unbelief appears unexpectedly harsh in the immediate context. All of this indicates that the author is alluding to a source, i.e., Luke.⁸⁹ As we will see, the influence of Luke 24 here at the beginning of the revelatory discourse is supported by another set of allusions to Luke 24 at the end of the same discourse.⁹⁰

With respect to the significance of this first set of allusions, the disbelief in Luke 24:41 becomes the explicit reason why it is necessary to expound the gnostic system of thought: it is “because” of their “unbelief” that Jesus must “speak again” (135.7–8). The author thus implies that the previous appearance and instruction in Luke 24 has not completely resolved their doubt. Unbelief is not directly linked to the docetic view of the resurrection, but as with the Ophite account, the *Apocryphon of John*, and the *Gospel of Mary*, it is exploited as an opportunity to expound and legitimize gnostic doctrines, including the notion that salvation consists in the escape of the soul from the body (134.23–26; 137.4–13). Unlike these other texts, the *Letter of Peter to Philip* insists that *all* the apostles are direct recipients of gnosis – it is not until Philip rejoins the apostles that the revelations take place. This may be an attempt to address proto-orthodox criticisms about the secret, non-public nature of gnosis.

The author’s main concern is to emphasize continuity between gnostic thought and the apostolic tradition, presumably against accusations of heterodoxy such as we find in the *Gospel of Mary*. In the latter, Andrew criticizes Mary’s gnostic(-like) teaching for being “different ([$\epsilon\tau\epsilon$]πορευόμενοι) from what [Jesus] thought.” The author of the *Letter of Peter to Philip* alludes to Luke 24:44 in order to give the impression that the gnostic system is not a new

⁸⁷ Luke inserts a similar statement at 24:6, but the language of the *Letter* is closer to Luke 24:44.

⁸⁸ The wording of the *Letter* matches Luke 24:48 better than the parallel in Acts 1:8.

⁸⁹ The Coptic term for their unbelief ($\mu\eta\tau\rho\epsilon\mu\eta\tau\alpha\tau\eta\lambda\alpha\sigma\tau\epsilon$) in the Sahidic version Mark 16:14 is a close verbal match to the text of NHC VIII,2 – Tchacos, *I* is different – but there is no other clear evidence of the author’s knowledge of the LE of Mark (similarly Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre*, 186). The doubt of Matt 28:17 is also a possibility, especially given the author’s use of Matt 28:20. But the immediately preceding allusions to Luke 24 make Luke 24:41 the more likely source (*pace* King, “Category,” 448).

⁹⁰ In addition to this *inclusio* of allusions, the *Letter* includes other allusions to Luke 24. For example, there is a reference to Jesus’s command to stay in Jerusalem to wait for the “promise” of the “Father” (Luke 24:49) in 132.22; 137:25–29 (so Smith, *Controversies*, 122). Also, the interlude during the trip to Jerusalem is introduced in a way reminiscent of Luke’s Emmaus pericope: “And while coming up they spoke with each other on the road concerning the light which had come” (138.11–13; cf. Luke 24:13–15) (so Koschorke, “Pfungstpredigt,” 327 n. 8). The topic of discussion in both cases is Christ’s suffering.

revelation but a reiteration of what Christ had spoken to the apostles previously – presumably referring back to the period of teaching in Luke 24 and Acts 1. The allusion to Luke 24:48 ensures that the apostles themselves are named as “witnesses” to this continuity.⁹¹

It is worth observing here a striking correlation between the reception of Luke 24 in the *Letter of Peter to Philip* and in Justin’s *Dial.* 106.1 (see Chapter 4). Despite the fact that they come from very different schools of thought, both authors see the reminder about Christ’s previous teaching in Luke 24:44 as an attempt to resolve the apostles’ disbelief. In contrast to most modern commentaries, neither of these ancient authors treats Luke 24:44 as the introduction of a brand-new topic after all doubt has been removed by the physical proofs (Luke 24:39–43); rather, both treat Luke 24:44 as if Jesus is addressing apostles who still do not believe. The physical proofs themselves are omitted by both authors as – if the term may be allowed – immaterial; the persuasive aspect of the story is the assurance provided by the reminder that Christ taught the same things previously. To be sure, there are important differences. Whereas Justin identifies the content of Jesus’s prior teaching with the prophetic necessity of Christ’s suffering, the author of the *Letter of Peter to Philip* identifies it with some version of the classic gnostic myth that leads to a denial of the reality of Christ’s suffering. Yet it is precisely this radical divergence that makes their shared presupposition about the role of Luke 24:44 in resolving the doubt motif so remarkable.⁹²

We are now prepared to discuss the set of allusions to Luke 24 that occurs at the close of the revelatory discourse:

“These are my words that I spoke to you
while I was still with you”

...

he parted from them and
was carried up into heaven
And they worshiped him

and they returned to Jerusalem
with great joy, and were continually
in the temple blessing God.
(Luke 24:44, 51–52)

“As I previously [said to] you
when I was in the body”

...

and what appeared to them in that place
was taken up to heaven.
Then the apostles gave thanks to the Lord
with every blessing,
and they returned to Jerusalem.

(*Ep. Pet. Phil.* 138.2–10)⁹³

⁹¹ As with the *Gospel of Mary*, the unbelief of the apostles is symbolic of proto-orthodox skepticism toward the non-traditional nature of gnostic doctrines. There is nonetheless a key difference. Whereas in the *Gospel of Mary* the apostles are characterized negatively and represent stubborn opposition to the author’s viewpoint, in the *Letter of Peter to Philip* the apostles easily overcome their unbelief through a question-and-answer session on gnostic doctrine and so are confirmed as “witnesses” to the author’s viewpoint.

⁹² This significance of this will be discussed in Chapter 10.

⁹³ In 139.4–6, the author includes details from Luke 24:51–52 that he omits in the quotation above: “the apostles rejoiced [greatly] and came up to Jerusalem. And they came up to

This second set of allusions is important because it bears witness to the author's attempt to exploit an ambiguity in Luke's account in order to promote docetic Christology.⁹⁴ In Luke 24, the phrase "while I was still with you" gives the impression that the Jesus who just ate fish in their presence is nevertheless not actually there. As I. Howard Marshall comments, "ἔτι ὧν σὺν ὑμῖν draws a distinction between the earthly life of Jesus and his present state in which he is no longer with them; yet in a sense he is still with them, and the words sound slightly odd."⁹⁵ The author of the *Letter* has replaced Luke's ambiguous "while I was still with you" with his own docetic paraphrase: "when I was still in the body." Immediately following this, the author docetizes the ascension account as well. Whereas in Luke the risen Jesus himself is "carried up into heaven," in the *Letter* it is only his *appearance* that ascends: "what appeared (μπεταφογωνε) to them in that place was taken up to heaven" (138.6–7). As with the author of the Ophite account, here again is an example of a docetist who appeals in some sense to the authority of Luke's account but reinterprets it along docetic lines.

5.2 Doubt as Paradigm: Valentinian Readings

In the post-resurrection dialogues discussed above, the authors draw on material from the canonical narratives in order to establish a traditional setting and then supplement the stories with gnostic (or gnostic-like) content. In these rewritten stories, it is the doubt motif from the Gospels that provides the author the opportunity to insert new teaching material. In one case, the *Gospel of Mary*, it also allows the author to belittle the apostles. The three texts discussed below have been chosen not because they respond to the doubt motif from the canonical stories – though, to a limited extent, they do just that – but because they provide a broader window into gnostic thinking about doubt and unbelief in general. They also do not belong to the dialogue genre. Two are theological treatises, and one is a commentary. And while they share certain doctrinal content with the dialogues, the texts in this section all appear to come from the distinct school of gnostic thought known as Valentinianism.

The Valentinians are known for their adherence to a tiered ontology and corresponding anthropology that distinguishes between three incorporeal elements: the spiritual, the psychic, and the hylic. According to Valentinian speculation, which probably derives from earlier gnostic speculation, all three of these elements reside in the first man, Adam, who was clothed with a fourth

the *temple*" (emphasis added; similarly Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre*, 184–85). This combination is unique to Luke and is widely recognized as Lukan redaction.

⁹⁴ On the gnostic use of ambiguous Scriptures, see Chapter 2.

⁹⁵ Marshall, *Luke*, 904–5, emphasis original.

element, i.e., the earthly body.⁹⁶ The three incorporeal elements were distributed among Adam's progeny – Cain receiving the hylic, Abel the psychic, and Seth the spiritual. All of humanity is thereby divided, though disproportionately, according to this basic taxonomy; most people are hylic, some are psychic, but a select few are spiritual.⁹⁷ The Valentinians identify themselves as belonging to this final, elite group.⁹⁸

Although the precise criteria for classifying individuals into these three classes vary somewhat from text to text, faith and doubt often play a prominent and in some cases decisive role in distinguishing one class from another. One Valentinian teacher described the taxonomy as follows: “The spiritual is saved by nature, but the psychic, having free will, has a propensity toward *faith* and incorruption and also toward *unbelief* and corruption, according to its own choice; but the hylic perishes by nature.”⁹⁹ The psychic person, representing something in between a spiritual and a hylic, has the ability to move in either direction. He or she can become spiritual and be saved or can become like a hylic and perish. At the core of this choice, and thus also fundamental to the structure of the taxonomy itself, is the opposition between faith and unbelief. This dichotomy not only determines the way Valentinians and other gnostics construct their own identity, it also influences their interpretation of the resurrection narratives and the apostles' doubt.

5.2.1 *Treatise on the Resurrection (a.k.a., Epistle to Rheginos)*

The *Treatise on the Resurrection*, originally composed in Greek sometime in the mid-to-late second century, is extant only in a third-century Coptic translation.¹⁰⁰ It is written in the form of a letter from an anonymous, probably Valentinian, gnostic teacher to his disciple Rheginos.¹⁰¹ Some have proposed that

⁹⁶ Clement, *Exc.* 54–55. On earlier gnostic speculation, see Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30.13; Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.27.2–3.

⁹⁷ Clement, *Exc.* 56; similarly *Teach. Silv.* [NHC VII,4] 92.15–33.

⁹⁸ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.6.1.

⁹⁹ Clement, *Exc.* 56.

¹⁰⁰ Critical editions: Michel Malinine, Henri-Charles Puech, and Gilles Quispel, *De Resurrectione (Epistula ad Rheginum): Codex Jung F. XXIIr–F.XXVv (p. 43–50)* (Zurich: Rascher, 1963) [French and German]; Jacques E. Ménard, *Le Traité sur la Résurrection (NH I,4)* (BCNHT12; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1983) [French]; Peel, “Treatise,” 1:123–57 [English]. Unless otherwise stated I follow the critical edition and English translation of Peel.

¹⁰¹ So Peel, “Treatise,” 1:133–35, 145–46; Thomassen, *Seed*, 83. The Valentinian origin has been questioned in Hans-Martin Schenke, “‘Der Brief an Rheginus’ (NHC 1,4) (Die Abhandlung über die Auferstehung),” in *Nag Hammadi Deutsch, Band 1: NHC I,1–V,1* (eds. Hans-Gebhard Bethge and Ursula Ulrike Kaiser; Koptisch-gnostische Schriften 2; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), 48–49. The gnostic character of the text is clear from the way it

the unnamed author was Valentinus himself, but the evidence is inconclusive.¹⁰² The *Treatise* is best known for the fact that its teaching (“already you have the resurrection,” 49.15–24) seems similar to the one refuted in 2 Tim 2:18 (“the resurrection has already happened”).¹⁰³ Ironically, this aspect of the *Treatise*’s teaching is essentially orthodox and Pauline: the resurrection is something that has *already* occurred proleptically through union with Christ (45.25–29; cf. Eph 2:5–6; Col 2:12; 3:1), but the author still expects a future actualization in the case of individual believers (45.29–40; cf. 2 Cor 4:14).

More controversial is what the author means by resurrection. The *Treatise* teaches that the resurrection consists in the ascent of the invisible, inner man immediately upon death, the physical body being completely left behind (47.30–48.3).¹⁰⁴ Whether or not this ascent involves any sort of re-embodiment in a new, spiritual flesh is debated.¹⁰⁵ If a re-embodiment is envisioned, it is a replacement for the earthly body that is destroyed and not the transformation of it as in Paul’s view (Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:51–53).¹⁰⁶ In this case, Tertullian justifiably complains that his Valentinian opponents are duplicitous when they

presupposes the myth of the degeneration and restoration of the Pleroma (44.30–33; 46.35–47.1; 49.4–5).

¹⁰² Malinine, Puech, and Quispel, *Resurrectione*, xx–xxiii, xxxi–xxxiii; Peel, “Treatise,” 145.

¹⁰³ According to Tertullian, the Valentinians here repeat an error that Paul had already condemned (*Praescr.* 33.7).

¹⁰⁴ Epiphanius attributes this view to the Valentinians: “They deny the resurrection of the dead, and make some mythological, silly claim that it is not this body which rises, but another which comes out of it, the one they call ‘spiritual’” (*Pan.* 31.7.6).

¹⁰⁵ See the early debate between Peel (*Rheginos*; Peel, “Treatise,” 1:142–43, 2:178), who argues for re-embodiment, and Layton (*The Gnostic Treatise on Resurrection from Nag Hammadi* [HDR 12; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1979]; idem, “Vision and Revision: A Gnostic View of Resurrection,” in *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi [Québec, 22–25 août 1978]* [ed. Bernard Barc; BCNHE 1; Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1981], 190–217), who argues against it. See also the more recent studies of Hugo Lundhaug (“‘These are the Symbols and Likenesses of the Resurrection’: Conceptualizations of Death and Transformation in the *Treatise on the Resurrection* [NHC I,4],” in *Metamorphoses: Resurrection, Body and Transformative Practices in Early Christianity* [eds. Turid Karlsen Seim and Jorunn Økland; Ekstasis 1; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009], 187–205, esp. 190–93), who updates the argument of Peel, and Thomassen (*Seed*, esp. 83–85), who comes to a similar conclusion to that of Layton but for different reasons. Decisive in this debate is how one interprets the question: “Why will you not receive the flesh when you ascend into the Aeon?” (*Treat. Res.* 47.6–8). Peel maintains that this question presupposes that there is no reason why one should not receive a new, spiritual flesh. This interpretation coheres with the preceding sentence (and also with Tertullian, *Carn. Chr.* 24: “they affirm also their own resurrection into other flesh”), but the statement that immediately follows (“That which is better than the flesh is that which is for it [the] cause of life”) seems to answer the question as if one will not receive flesh because flesh is inferior.

¹⁰⁶ Peel, *Rheginos*, 149.

use the biblical language of transformation to describe the resurrection, because what they really mean is not the transformation of the flesh but its destruction and replacement by “another,” i.e., spiritual, flesh (*Res.* 55.1–10; cf. 19.6). Thus, while the *Treatise* seems to affirm a real incarnation and a real suffering (*Treat. Res.* 44.14–15; 45.25), the incarnation is only temporary.¹⁰⁷ The author does therefore hold a docetic view of Christ’s resurrection.

An important question for this study is whether the author makes use of the canonical resurrection narratives. Although the evidence is limited, there are three possible allusions to the group appearance accounts in Matthew and Luke, all of which involve the doubt motif:

Never *doubt* (ΔΙΣΤΑΖΕ = δισταζε) concerning the resurrection, my son Rheginos! (47.1–3)

But there are some (who) wish to understand...whether he who is saved, if he leaves his body behind, will be saved immediately. Let no one *doubt* (ΔΙΣΤΑΖΕ = δισταζε) concerning this... indeed, the visible members which are dead shall not be saved for (only) the living [members] which exist within them would arise. (47.30–48.3)

Do not think (ἴπῳρ ἀμεγε ἀτ = μὴ δόκει) the resurrection is an *illusion* (οὐφάντασια = φαντασία). It is no *illusion* (οὐφάντασια = φαντασία), but it is truth! Indeed, it is more fitting to say that the world is an *illusion* (οὐφάντασια = φαντασία). (48.10–15)

The use of the Greek loanword ΔΙΣΤΑΖΕ in the initial exhortation not to doubt the resurrection has been recognized as an allusion to οἱ δὲ ἐδίστασαν in Matt 28:17 and is supported by other probable allusions to Matthew in the *Treatise*.¹⁰⁸ If the echo is intentional, the author is implicitly warning Rheginos *not*

¹⁰⁷ Peel, *Rheginos*, 112–13, 165, 172–73; idem, “Treatise,” 2:147; Thomassen, *Seed*, 84–85. In light of other Valentinian evidence (Tertullian, *Carn. Chr.* 15), it is also possible that the author affirms not a full incarnation but the assumption of a “spiritual” flesh (Peel, “Treatise,” 2:146–47, 151).

¹⁰⁸ Tuckett, *Nag Hammadi*, 70–71; Peel, *Rheginos*, 82. There are at least two other probable uses of Matthew in the *Treatise*. The first, which Layton recognizes as an allusion to Matt 7:13–14 (*Treatise*, 48; “Revision,” 202 n. 55), appears in 44.8–10:

I am writing to you that it [the resurrection] is necessary
and many, to be sure, are lacking faith in it
(ΔΥΩ ΟΥΝ ΡΔΡ ἸΜΕΝ ΟΒΙ ΠΑΠΙΣΤΟΣ ΔΡΑϸ),

but there are a few who find it
(ῤἸΚΟΥΕΙ ΠΔΕ ΝΕΤΣΙΝΕ ΠΜΔϸ).
(*Treat. Res.* 44.8–10)

For the gate is wide and the way is easy
that leads to destruction
and many are those who enter by it
(ΔΥΩ ΡΔΡ ΝΕΤΝΔΒΟΚ ΕΡΟΥΝ ΡΙΤΟΟΤϸ, Sah).
For the gate is narrow and the way is hard
that leads to life,
and few are those who find it
(ΔΥΩ ΡΕΝΚΟΥΙ ΝΕΤΝΔΖΕ ΕΡΟϸ, Sah).
(Matt 7:13–14)

Since the contrasting terms are fairly common, it is difficult to be certain of the use of Matthew here. Still, the dominical saying in Matt 7:13–14 is memorable, and so the author might legitimately expect the reader to recognize the allusion. If so, the author’s redactional emphasis is on the theme of unbelief. The interest in disbelief of the resurrection could in turn account for the author’s attraction to the doubt in Matt 28:17.

to be like the doubting apostles of Matt 28:17. The exhortation is repeated – again with *διστάζω* – at the bottom of the same page (47.36–37), this time assuring the reader that “the visible members which are dead shall not be saved, for (only) the living [members] which exist within them would arise” (47.38–48.3). In other words, readers are encouraged not to doubt like the apostles of Matt 28:17, but ironically, they are not to doubt an immaterial view of resurrection.

Similarly, the admonition, “Do not *think* (ἄνωγ' ἀμεγε ἀτ = μὴ δόκει) the resurrection is *phantasia* (οὐφάντασια = φαντασία)” (*Treat. Res.* 48.10–11), echoes the Western text of Luke 24:37: “they *thought* (εδοκουν) they saw a *phantasm* (φαντασμα).”¹⁰⁹ There is no other clear evidence for the author’s knowledge of Luke’s Gospel, and so our conclusions must remain tentative. But given that resurrection is the topic of discussion, it is at least plausible that the author intended his addressee(s) to hear the echo. If so, the author has adopted Luke’s denial that the risen Christ was a phantasm but has cleverly reversed its meaning. Luke’s language is now ironically used to affirm that only the spiritual resurrection is “truth” while “the world [i.e., the material world] is φαντασία.” The paradoxical implication is that whereas the spiritual resurrection is real, the resurrection of the flesh is nothing more than φαντασία. The author has docetized the idea of the resurrection of the flesh by docetizing the entire world of matter.

The *Treatise on the Resurrection* thus appears to be another example of a second-century text that draws on the doubt motif from the Gospels to support a docetic, in the sense of non-material, view of the resurrection. It may be

The contrast between “many” and “few” also appears in Matt 22:14 (“Many are called, but few are chosen”), a verse to which other Valentinians seem to have appealed in order to distinguish between the “elect,” i.e., the spirituals or gnostics, and the “calling,” i.e., the psychics or proto-orthodox Christians (Heracleon apud Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.51.341; Clement, *Exc.* 58; *Gos. Phil.* [NHC II,3] 55.19–22; cf. *Gos. Thom.* 75; similarly Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*, 208). The latter are identified by their doubt or lack of faith (*Tri. Tract.* 118.24–119.2; Heracleon apud Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.10.63; 13.60.419), the former by their “superior faith” (Clement, *Exc.* 9).

The other probable use of Matthew follows the second exhortation not to doubt mentioned above: “What, then, is the resurrection? It is always the disclosure of those who have risen. For if you remember reading in the Gospel that Elijah appeared and Moses with him (ἰῶνμεφ), do not think the resurrection is an illusion” (*Treat. Res.* 48.4–11). The fact that Elijah is mentioned before Moses points to the use of Mark’s Gospel (so Peel, *Rheginos*, 89–90), but the *Treatise* includes an additional prepositional phrase, ἰῶνμεφ (“with him”), which reflects the redactional μετ’ αὐτοῦ (ἰῶνμεφ, Sah) in Matt 17:3. While the editors of NA²⁸ place this prepositional phrase at the end of the verse, most manuscripts of Matthew include it immediately after the names of the prophets as the *Treatise* does here. In sum, the author either conflates Mark and Matthew or relies on a Gospel harmony.

¹⁰⁹ The reading φάντασμα is attested in Codex Bezae, Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.43; Origen, *Fr. Jo.* 106. The reading φαντασία in Marcion’s Gospel is attested in *Adamant. Dial.* 5.12.

significant that doubt is the *only* aspect of the post-resurrection appearance narratives that the author chose to allude to in his resurrection polemic. The fact that all three of the proposed allusions have this theme increases the probability that the references are indeed deliberate. If so, it also suggests that the doubt was, at least for the author of the *Treatise*, a particularly conspicuous or memorable element in Matthew's and Luke's narratives.¹¹⁰

The repeated exhortation not to doubt the resurrection is best understood in light of two earlier statements about the resurrection and faith:

...concerning the resurrection, I am writing to you that it is necessary and many, to be sure, are lacking faith in it, but there are a few who find it. (44.6–10)

This is the spiritual [resurrection], which swallows up the psychic in the same way as the fleshly. But if there is one who does not believe, he does not have the (capacity to be) persuaded. For it is the domain of faith, my son, and not that which belongs to persuasion. (45.39–46.7)

The *Treatise*, though it here reflects the standard Valentinian threefold ontology, does not seem to work with the corresponding threefold division of mankind in other Valentinian texts. In the statements above, the *Treatise* posits only two types of people in the world, the “few” who “believe” in the author's view of resurrection and the “many” who do not. Later in the *Treatise*, the “few” are described as the “predestined” elect, who “know the truth,” and the “many” as those “who are without knowledge” (46.27–42).¹¹¹ In other words, humanity is divided into those who believe and so attain gnosis and those who do not believe and so lack gnosis.¹¹² As we shall see below, Heracleon and the author of the *Tripartite Tractate* designate a middle category for those who “doubt” or “hesitate” to believe at first but have the potential to be persuaded later. The *Treatise*, which implicitly equates doubt and unbelief, offers no such middle ground; those who do not believe do “not have the (capacity to be) persuaded.”¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Similarly, [Ps.-]Justin's treatise *On the Resurrection*, which may be in part responding to this Gnostic *Treatise on the Resurrection*, presupposes that the group appearance stories in the Gospels were known for their reference to the doubts of the apostles (see Chapter 6).

¹¹¹ Peel, “Treatise,” 2:144.

¹¹² Cf. Bardaisan, *BLC*: “Awida is not the only who will not believe, there are many. Because faith is not in them, they cannot arrive at a firm conviction ... and they lack all knowledge of truth.... There are many people *who have no faith and so have not obtained the knowledge of true wisdom*” (trans. H. J. W. Drijvers, *The Book of the Laws of Countries: Dialogue on Fate of Bardaisan of Edessa* [Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1965; repr., Gorgias, 2006], 9, emphasis added).

¹¹³ On the equation of doubt and unbelief in the *Treatise*, see Peel, *Rheginos*, 82, 131. The reason the author offers no middle ground for the doubter is that the “spiritual resurrection” belongs to “the domain of faith” rather than to “persuasion.” Perhaps this is because a “spiritual resurrection,” unlike a “physical resurrection,” cannot by definition be demonstrated. The author of the *Treatise* differs in his assessment from [Ps.-]Justin, who in his own

5.2.2 Heracleon's Commentary on John

Heracleon, writing sometime during the latter half of the second century, is reputed to be a “pupil of Valentinus” and “the most celebrated of Valentinus’s school.”¹¹⁴ He is best known today for his commentary on the Fourth Gospel. Though it is no longer extant, forty-eight fragments are preserved by Origen, who responds to Heracleon in his own commentary on John.¹¹⁵ Heracleon’s commentary presupposes a threefold classification of humanity (spiritual, psychic, hylic) in which each type is identified by their various responses to the Savior.¹¹⁶ According to Heracleon, the Samaritan woman in John 4 illustrates the first class, the spirituals, “because she demonstrated a faith (πίστιν) that was unhesitating (ἀδιάκριτον) and appropriate to her nature by not doubting (μὴ διακριθεῖσαν) what he told her.”¹¹⁷ The second class, the psychics, are those to whom Jesus says, “Unless you see signs and wonders, you will never

Treatise on the Resurrection indicates it is worthwhile to attempt to make worldly arguments for the sake of the weak and unbelieving (1.12; 5.11–15; see further Chapter 6).

¹¹⁴ Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 2.14.100; Clement, *Strom.* 4.9 [71.1]. Heracleon’s work is usually dated ca. 170 CE. Given that both Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria knew of Heracleon but seem to be unaware of his commentary on John, perhaps a date in the last quarter of the second century is more probable (so Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 207–9; Einar Thomassen, “Heracleon,” in *Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel* [ed. Tuomas Rasimus; NovTSup 132; Leiden: Brill, 2010], 174).

¹¹⁵ Critical Edition: Cecile Blanc, *Origène, Commentaire sur Saint Jean* (5 vols.; SC 120, 157, 222, 290, 385; Paris: Cerf, 1966–1992).

¹¹⁶ Elaine H. Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis: Heracleon's Commentary on John* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 83–97; Thomassen, “Heracleon,” 182. A dissenting position is advocated in Ansgar Wucherpfennig, *Heracleon Philologus: Gnostische Johannesexegese im zweiten Jahrhundert* (WUNT 142; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 333–57. Wucherpfennig contends that Origen artificially imposes this tripartite schema onto Heracleon. While Wucherpfennig rightly perceives that Origen misinterprets Heracleon as maintaining a strict soteriological determinism, it is unnecessary to posit that Origen added Valentinian labels to Heracleon’s statements. Heracleon, as a Valentinian, is aware of Valentinian terminology (Origen, *Comm Jo.* 10.33.211; 13.33.187–192) and employs these categories not just in his anthropology but also in his cosmology (10.11.48; 10.33. 210–15; 13.16.95; 13.20.120; 13.33.187; 13.51.341). Thomassen (“Heracleon,” 187 n. 59) concludes that Wucherpfennig’s attempt to disassociate Heracleon from Valentinian vocabulary “must be considered a blind alley.”

¹¹⁷ Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.10.63. That Heracleon considered the Samaritan woman a “spiritual” is demonstrated by his other statements on the same passage (13.25.148; 13.33.187; 13.51.341; so Thomassen, “Heracleon,” 187–88).

Heracleon’s association of unhesitating faith with the spiritual class differs from another Valentinian view. According to Clement of Alexandria, some followers of Valentinus claimed that because they had gnosis, they had no need of faith at all. They held that faith was necessary only for the psychics (*Strom.* 2.3 [10.2]). Clement is also aware of other Valentinians who did not eschew faith but claimed instead that their faith was “superior” to that of the psychics (*Exc.* 9).

believe” (John 4:48).¹¹⁸ Heracleon affirms that this statement “is properly made to the kind of person ... who is persuaded through sense perception and does not believe what is said (to him).”¹¹⁹ Thus for Heracleon faith and doubt are what distinguishes one “kind of person” from another: the spiritual person (the true gnostic) is identified by an unhesitating, undoubting faith whereas the psychic person requires additional persuasion before believing.¹²⁰

It is worth inquiring about the extent to which Heracleon’s understanding of faith and doubt will have affected his reading of the resurrection appearance narratives. Because Origen’s last extant quotation of Heracleon appears in his discussion of John 8, we cannot know for certain if and how Heracleon interpreted John 20 in his own commentary. The preserved fragments do nonetheless provide enough evidence to permit a plausible reconstruction. Heracleon criticizes the disciples because they speak in a “fleshly manner” and “think on a lower level” (13.226). They are also like the “foolish virgins ... who fall asleep” in Jesus’s parable (13.200–201; cf. Matt 25:1–12; Tertullian, *An.* 18).¹²¹ Elaine H. Pagels rightly concludes that in the fragments of Heracleon, “the disciples exemplify the psychic level of perception.”¹²²

In this light, Heracleon probably understood Thomas to be a typical psychic, i.e., “the kind of person” who does “not believe what is said (to him)” but requires “persuasion through sense perception.” Thomas does not believe the word of the other apostles but demands to see and even touch the risen Jesus before believing (John 20:25). The verbal echo of John 4:48 (“Unless you see

¹¹⁸ Heracleon associates this statement with those who belong to the Demiurge (13.424), himself a psychic being. See also 13.51.341, where Heracleon refers to “psychics.” Heracleon’s practice of taking characters in John’s Gospel as exemplars of the different classes of people may be compared to Irenaeus’s account of the Valentinian classification of characters in Luke’s Gospel (*Haer.* 1.8.3–4).

¹¹⁹ Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.60.419: οἰκείως πρὸς τὸ τοιοῦτον πρόσωπον ... δι’ αἰσθήσεως πείθεσθαι καὶ οὐχὶ λόγῳ πιστεύειν. I have here translated οὐχὶ λόγῳ πιστεύειν “does not believe what is said (to him)” because Heracleon is here responding to John 4, a chapter that repeatedly refers to the idea of believing on the basis of a word spoken by someone else (4:39 ἐπίστευσαν ... διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς γυναικὸς μαρτυρούσης), 41 [ἐπίστευσαν διὰ τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ], 42 [διὰ τὴν σὴν λαλιὰν πιστεύομεν], 50 [ἐπίστευσεν ... τῷ λόγῳ ὃν εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς]). Origen later paraphrases Heracleon’s words: “the psychic nature ... is persuaded by sense perception and not by words (τὴν ψυχικὴν φύσιν ... αἰσθήσεως πείθεσθαι οὐχὶ δὲ λόγων)” (13.61.431; cf. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.6.1, which states that psychics require instruction through sense perception [αἰσθητῶν παιδευμάτων]).

¹²⁰ Heracleon appears to illustrate (or identify?) the third group, the hylics, with the Jews who reject Jesus in John 8. Heracleon denies that they are hylics by nature and argues that they have chosen to be so. This denial seems to be part of an inner-Valentinian debate (Thomassen, “Heracleon,” 190–93).

¹²¹ It is also possible that Heracleon thought the disciples, like the Jews, to be characterized by “ignorance, unbelief and sins” (19.89–90).

¹²² Pagels, *Gnostic Exegesis*, 93.

... you will never believe”), which Heracleon sees as the characteristic description of the psychic class, in John 20:25 (“Unless I see ... I will never believe”) no doubt encouraged Heracleon to identify Thomas as a psychic.

Support for this reconstruction of Heracleon’s reading of John 20 is found in Origen’s refutation of Heracleon’s school for its distorted interpretation of Jesus’s words to Thomas in John 20:29:

But they [the Heracleonites] say that those who have not seen and have believed are more blessed than those who have seen and have believed, because they have misconstrued what the Lord said to Thomas at the end of John’s Gospel: “Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” For [it is] not [possible] that those who have not seen and have believed are more blessed than those who have seen and believed. According to their interpretation at least, then, those who come after the apostles are more blessed than the apostles, which is the most ridiculous of all things. (*Comm. Jo.* 10.43.301–302)¹²³

These Heracleonites, like other Valentinians, cite John 20:29 as a proof-text for their own superiority to the apostles.¹²⁴ Additionally, Jesus’s word to Thomas is applied to all the apostles. The Heracleonites thus seem to presuppose that the other apostles, like Thomas, were psychics who did not immediately believe on the basis on the word of another – in this case, Mary’s (John 20:18) – but needed sense-perceptible proofs (John 20:20). In any case, it is clear that Heracleon, or at least his followers, understood the doubt motif and the physical demonstrations to be indications of the apostles’ inferiority.¹²⁵

5.2.3 EXCURSUS: Origen, *Fr. Jo.* 106

There is a catena fragment attributed to Origen that looks as if it could be a response to Heracleon’s interpretation of the Thomas pericope:

It seems that Thomas had some concern for accuracy and careful review, which is shown by the things said by him, which I suppose he said *not because he disbelieved those who said*

¹²³ Trans. Ronald E. Heine, *Origen, Commentary on the Gospel according to John: Books 1–10* (FC 80; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 322–23. Origen does not explicitly identify the “they” at the beginning of this quotation, but Heracleon is the only opponent in this portion of the commentary. Origen must therefore be referring to Heracleon and/or his followers, whom Origen mentions elsewhere in his commentary, e.g., 13.74, 122; 20.170.

¹²⁴ See further the discussion of Tertullian, *Res.* 34 in Chapter 4. Additionally, the followers of Ptolemy argued that the “twelve ... inferior Aeons were manifested by Savior through the choice of the apostles, whereas the elder, and for that reason superior [Aeons] were not manifested previously” (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.21.1 [Unger and Dillon]). The Valentinians thus claim that the apostles are symbolic of the inferior aeons, and that the Gnostics, i.e., those who are revealed later, represent the superior aeons. Cf. other claims to superiority in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.6.1–2; 3.2.2; Clement, *Exc.* 9.

¹²⁵ Heracleon exhorts the spirituals not to abuse their superior status vis-à-vis the psychics by taking advantage of them. He calls them instead to be a light to the psychics (Pagels, *Gnostic Exegesis*, 72–73, 94).

they had seen the Lord (μὴ ἀπιστοῦντα τοῖς λέγουσι τεθεωρηκέναι τὸν κύριον) but wary lest it was a ghost and remembering the [saying of Jesus]: “Many will come in my name saying, ‘I am he.’” I think that this was the feeling of the other apostles, too, but especially of Thomas. That the other apostles had some such thought on seeing Jesus is clear from there being written, “They supposed it was a ghost, and he answered and said to them, ‘Handle me and see, for a spirit does not have bones and flesh as you see me having.’”¹²⁶

If Heracleon disparaged Thomas as a psychic who is “persuaded through ... sense perception but not by words (δι’ ... αἰσθήσεως πείθεσθαι οὐχὶ δὲ λόγων)” (13.61.431), this might explain why Origen goes so far as to overturn the obvious import of John 20:25 by denying that Thomas disbelieved (μὴ ἀπιστοῦντα) the testimony of those who said (τοῖς λέγουσι) they had seen the risen Jesus. It must be acknowledged that Origen need not be responding specifically to Heracleon in this passage. As we have seen, the omission/reversal of the post-resurrection doubt motif is a common tactic in proto-orthodox apologetics in general (see Chapters 3 and 4). However, given that much of Origen’s interpretation of John is directed against Heracleon, it seems plausible, if not probable, that the same is true of this catena fragment.

Origen’s interpretation of the Thomas pericope entails a significant departure from earlier receptions of the resurrection narratives. Whereas most proto-orthodox authors address the problem of the apostles’ doubt by suppressing it, Origen explicitly denies that Thomas “disbelieved.” To be sure, Origen denies only that Thomas rejected claims that others “had *seen*” something. Origen does not reject the idea that Thomas was skeptical of bodily resurrection. Nevertheless, Origen creatively overturns the standard negative view of doubt by re-characterizing Thomas’s skepticism positively as both a concern for “accuracy” and an attempt to be faithful to Jesus’s teaching (“remembering the [saying of Jesus]: ‘Many will come in my name saying, ‘I am he’”). Origen may seem to anticipate modern readings that claim a positive apologetic role for the doubt motif by arguing that it indicates of a lack of gullibility, but there is a crucial difference: Origen is providing an apology for Thomas’s doubt rather than claiming that the evangelist included it for apologetic purposes. As we have already seen in Chapter 2, Origen is aware of the widespread negative assessment of the apostles’ doubt and attempts on more than one occasion to defend them against accusations of unbelief. In the passage above Origen is proposing a novel, more positive way of reading the doubt motif.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ *Fr. Jo.* 106, trans. Smith, *Ante-Nicene Exegesis*, 6:139–40, slightly modified. While the authenticity of a number of catena fragments attributed to Origen has been questioned (Ronald E. Heine, “Can the Catena Fragments of Origen’s Commentary on John be Trusted?” *VC* 40 [1986]: 118–34), the similarity of the above passage to *Cels.* 61–62 lends support to the probable authenticity of this fragment.

¹²⁷ The novelty of Origen’s reading is indicated not only by the absence of anything similar in extant Christian literature prior to Origen but also by the triply tentative manner in

5.2.4 The Tripartite Tractate¹²⁸

The fact that the *Tripartite Tractate* (NHC I,5) shares a number of themes with the fragments of Heracleon suggested to early commentators that Heracleon himself may have been the author.¹²⁹ Today, the *Tractate* is judged to be a later, revisionist version of Valentinian thought from the third century.¹³⁰ One of the key similarities to Heracleon's thought is the classification of different kinds of people according to their response to the Savior:

They were not known at first but only at the coming of the Savior, who shone upon the saints and revealed what each was. The *spiritual race*, being like light from light and like spirit from spirit, *when its head appeared, it ran toward him immediately*. It immediately became a body of its head. It *suddenly received knowledge* in the revelation. The *psychic race* is like light from a fire, since it *hesitated to accept knowledge* of him who appeared to it. (It *hesitated*) *even more to run toward him in faith*. (*Tri. Tract.* 118.24–119.2, emphasis added)

For Heracleon, the Samaritan woman is spiritual because she has no doubt and responds with unhesitating faith, but the psychics require persuasion before believing. Likewise, in the *Tripartite Tractate* the spirituals respond immediately whereas the psychics are identified by their hesitation to respond in faith. In sum, what marks the spirituals, i.e., the Valentinians, as superior to the psychics is the fact that the former respond with immediate faith rather than with hesitation and doubt.¹³¹

A comparable criterion is found in Marcion's thought. Irenaeus tells us that according to Marcion,

which Origen introduces it as his own speculation ("It seems [ἔουκε] that ... which I suppose [οἶμαι] ... I think [οἶμαι] that...").

¹²⁸ Unless otherwise noted, I follow the critical edition and English translation in Harold W. Attridge and Elaine H. Pagels, "The Tripartite Tractate," in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex)* (2 vols.; ed. Harold W. Attridge; NHS 22–23; Leiden: Brill, 1985), 1:159–337. Other critical editions: Rodolph Kasser et al., *Tractatus Tripartitus. Pars I: De supernis* (Bern: Francke, 1973); idem, *Tractatus Tripartitus. Pars II: De creatione hominis. Pars III: De generibus tribus* (Bern: Francke, 1975); Einar Thomassen and Louis Painchaud, *Le Traité tripartite (NH I, 5)* (BCNHT 19; Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1989).

¹²⁹ Henri-Charles Puech and Gilles Quispel, "Le quatrième écrit du Codex Jung," *VC* 9 (1955): 69–70, 83–102; Kasser et al., *Tractatus I*, 37.

¹³⁰ E.g., Attridge and Pagels, "Tractate," 1:178; Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism*, 187.

¹³¹ The contrasting descriptions in the *Tripartite Tractate* seem to imply that the spirituals immediately run to the Savior in faith when they see him. Although some Valentinians distinguished between simple psychics, who have faith, and the more advanced spirituals, who have gnosis (Clement, *Strom.* 2.3 [10.2]), this seems to be a minority view in Valentinian thought. The claim, that the spirituals had faith but that it was a faith superior to that of the psychics, appears more frequently in extant literature (Clement, *Exc.* 9; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.6.1–2; Heracleon apud Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.10.63). Despite his criticisms of the Valentinians, Clement of Alexandria agrees that the true gnostic is characterized by a complete lack of hesitation (οὐδὲ καθ' ὅτι οὖν διστασας) with respect to faith (*Strom.* 4.22 [136.5]).

Cain and those like him, the Sodomites and the Egyptians and those like them, and all the pagans who walked in every mess of wickedness, were all saved by the Lord when he descended into the netherworld and *they ran to (adcurrissent)* him, and he took them into his kingdom. But Abel, Enoch, Noah, and the rest of the righteous and the patriarchs who came from Abraham, together with all the prophets and those who pleased God, did not share in salvation.... For, he says, since these people know that their God always tempted them, they had a suspicion that he was tempting them at that time, and *they did not run to (non adcurrerunt)* Jesus, *nor did they believe (neque crediderunt)* in his preaching. As a result, their souls remained in the netherworld. (*Haer.* 1.27.3)¹³²

On the one hand, in contrast to Marcion, the author of the *Tractate* has three categories rather than two and would identify Marcion's "saved" pagans with the third class, the hylics, who are not saved (*Tri. Tract.* 119.18–20). On the other hand, Marcion and the author of the *Tractate* utilize a similar criterion for distinguishing between categories. In both, the first group "ran to" the Savior upon his arrival and the second group "did not run to" him. And as with the *Tractate*, a lack of faith is exhibited by Marcion's second group. Marcion's twofold schema is like that of *Treatise on the Resurrection* (NHC I,4): the second group does not believe and so is not saved. The *Tractate*'s schema, like that of Heracleon, is more nuanced; the second group hesitates to believe.

The views of Marcion, the *Treatise on the Resurrection*, Heracleon, and *Tripartite Tractate* may be summarized as follows:

	Group 1	Group 2	
Marcion (<i>apud</i> Irenaeus, <i>Haer.</i> 1.27.3)	"Ran to" Jesus.	Did "not believe in his preaching."	"Did not run to Jesus" because of suspicions.
<i>Treat. Res.</i> 44.6–10; 46.3–7	The "few" who have faith in spiritual resurrection.	The "many" who "lack faith."	"Does not believe, does not have the (capacity) to be persuaded."
Heracleon (<i>apud</i> Origen, <i>Comm. Jo.</i> 13.10.63; 13.60.419)	Has "unhesitating faith" and does not doubt Jesus's word.	"Does not believe" Jesus's "word" at first.	Requires "persuasion through sense perception."
<i>Tri. Tract.</i> 118.24–119.2	"Ran to" Jesus "immediately" and received knowledge suddenly.	"Hesitated...to accept knowledge of him" and "(hesitated) even more to run to him in faith."	

This table gives the impression that the *Tractate*'s view may be a mixture of the earlier schemas of Marcion and Heracleon. While this proposal can be neither proven nor disproven, the comparisons demonstrate that allegations of

¹³² Trans. Unger and Dillon, *Irenaeus I*, 92, slightly modified.

doubt and/or unbelief allowed both Marcionites and Valentinians to relegate their opponents to an inferior status.¹³³

Proto-orthodox authors employ a similar ad hominem tactic. As we saw in Chapter 2, the word “unbeliever,” which was originally applied to non-Christian outsiders, quickly became a term of abuse for heterodox opponents within the church. Ignatius of Antioch derogatorily refers to his docetist opponents as “unbelievers.” And [Ps.-]Justin, who upholds the same ideal of “undoubting faith” as advocated by Heracleon and the author of the *Tripartite Tractate*, reproaches those who deny the resurrection of the flesh for being “more unbelieving than unbelievers.”¹³⁴ The fact that doubt/unbelief was a disparaging social identification marker among Marcionites, Valentinians, and proto-orthodox alike indicates that it was a more important issue in second-century Christianity than extant literary remains might at first glance suggest.

Indeed, returning to the *Tripartite Tractate* we may observe the paradigmatic role that doubt plays in the author’s worldview. In the *Tractate*, doubt is not simply an anthropological problem but a cosmological one. The divisions among humankind in the *Tractate* are rooted in the doubt of the divine Logos himself:

The Logos himself caused it to happen ... for he was not able to bear the sight of the light, but he looked into the depth and *he doubted* (αὐτὸς ἐδῶκεν). Out of this there was a division. (77.11–21, emphasis added)

Mankind came to be in three essential types, the spiritual, the psychic and the material, conforming to the triple disposition of the Logos, from which were brought forth the material ones and the psychic ones and the spiritual ones. (118.14–21)

The Logos had an “expectation of comprehending the incomprehensible” (77.26–27), but the attempt to do so proved overwhelming (“he was not able to bear the sight of the light”). He therefore doubts within himself, thereby creating a division.¹³⁵ The implications of this “division” are cosmic in scope. The threefold division of humanity is but one result. As is often observed, the Logos in the *Tripartite Tractate* plays an analogous role to that of Sophia in other gnostic myths: it is the aeon that tragically brings about division, deficiency, evil, suffering, etc.¹³⁶ In the *Tripartite Tractate*, all of these miserable things ultimately derive from the doubt of the Logos.

¹³³ This perspective on disbelief probably influenced Marcion’s criticism of Jesus’s disciples, who in Marcion’s Gospel are guilty of persistent disbelief (see Chapter 6).

¹³⁴ [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 5.2 (see Chapter 6).

¹³⁵ Similarly Thomassen and Painchaud, *Traité*, 336. According to Attridge and Pagels, “What the Logos fails to do is to recognize the distinction between the unknowability of the Father and the knowability of his existence” (“Tractate,” 2:308).

¹³⁶ Williams, *Immovable Race*, 115–21; Attridge and Pagels, “Tractate,” 2:308; Thomassen and Painchaud, *Traité*, 337.

How is this revision of the Sophia myth to be evaluated? Harold W. Attridge and Elaine H. Pagels judge it to be a “significant difference” that “is in conformity with the generally positive evaluation of the Logos” in the *Tripartite Tractate*.¹³⁷ However, in light of the universally negative assessment of doubt in prior Christian literature (see Chapter 2), this positive reading seems implausible. The warning in the immediately preceding paragraph, that it is “not fitting to criticize the movement which is the Logos” because the results were “destined to come about,” is better understood as a preemptive apology designed to soften negative description of the Logos’s doubt that follows.

Moreover, the difference from the standard Sophia myth is in one sense more superficial than it first appears. The “doubt” is perhaps terminologically new to this portion of the myth, but it is conceptually similar to descriptions of Sophia elsewhere.¹³⁸ According one Valentinian account, Sophia wanted to comprehend the greatness of the father, but being unable to do the impossible, experienced “an extreme agony of mind.”¹³⁹ Another Valentinian version of the myth depicts Sophia’s response to her failure as a state of “perplexity (ἀπορήσαι).”¹⁴⁰ The doubt of the Logos may also be compared to the instability of Sophia as depicted in the *Apocryphon of John*.¹⁴¹

As with Heracleon and other Valentinians (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.7.5–1.81), the apostles in the *Tripartite Tractate* are assigned to the psychic race.¹⁴² The author tells us that the psychic race itself is divided into the good and the bad (*Tri. Tract.* 119.20–122.12). The good psychics are identified as those who “were assigned to the service of the proclamation of the coming of the Savior

¹³⁷ Attridge and Pagels, “Tractate,” 2:308.

¹³⁸ Thomassen and Painchaud, *Traité*, 337.

¹³⁹ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.2.2 (*ANF* 1:317).

¹⁴⁰ *Haer.* 1.2.3; cf. Clement, *Exc.* 48.2–3, where the elements of the world are created from ἀπορία.

¹⁴¹ Similarly, Williams (*Immovable Race*, 115–21) observes an analogy between Sophia’s instability in the *Apocryphon of John* and the “movement of the Logos” in the *Tripartite Tractate*. Doubt is directly linked to mental instability in other early Christian texts, e.g., Jas 1:5–8 (“For the one who *doubts* is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.... He is a double-minded man, *unstable* [ἀκατάστατος] in all his ways”); *Gos. Truth* [NHC I,3] 29.1–5 (“Since it was ... disturbance and *instability* and *doubt* and division, there were many illusions at work”); Bardaisan, *BLC* (“They are not even certain whether they are right in not believing that which they do not believe. Being *uncertain* in their thoughts, they cannot arrive at a *steadfast* opinion” [trans. Drijvers, *Laws of Countries*, 9, emphasis added]). Cf. Clement, *Strom.* 2.11 [51.3]: “The Gnostic is therefore fixed by faith but the man who thinks himself wise touches not what pertains to the truth, moved as he is by *unstable* (ἀστάτοις) and wavering impulses” (*ANF* 2:359).

¹⁴² So Jeffrey A. Trumbower, *Born from Above: The Anthropology of the Gospel of John* (HUT 29; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 134.

before it happened as well as of his revelation after he had come” (120.9–11).¹⁴³ I understand this to refer to the OT prophets and the apostles, respectively.¹⁴⁴

The author does not here explain why the apostles are psychics and not spirituals. This must be inferred from the initial description of the psychic race in the preceding paragraph: “it hesitated to accept knowledge of him who appeared to it. It hesitated even more to run toward him in faith” (118.38–119.2). Since the author identifies the apostles as psychics, we may inquire as to why he believes the apostles fit this description. In this case, I would suggest that Matthew’s group appearance narrative, where the apostles “doubt” or “hesitate” (ἐδίστασαν) after seeing the risen Jesus (Matt 28:17), has influenced the author’s assessment of the apostles.

The author’s familiarity with Matt 28:17–19 is evident in his discussion of baptism:

There is no other *baptism* apart from this one alone, which is the redemption into *God, Son and Holy Spirit*, when confession is made through faith in those names, *which are a single*

¹⁴³ Because of its readability I follow here the translation in Einar Thomassen, “The Tripartite Tractate,” in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The International Edition* (ed. Marvin Meyer; San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2007), 94. There is no significant difference in meaning from the more literal translation of Attridge and Pagels.

¹⁴⁴ *Pace* Attridge and Pagels, who claim that the apostles belong to the spiritual race. The statement (“It is indeed the spiritual (substance). The organization is different,” 116.8–9) on which they base this conclusion is, as Attridge and Pagels themselves admit, ambiguous (“Tractate,” 440, 444). In my judgment, 116.8–9 makes a distinction between the spirituals, described just prior (115.33–116.7), and the psychics and hylics, who are discussed in 116.9–117.36 and 117.36–118.14, respectively. The following section (118.14–122.12) is intended to elaborate on the tripartite division in 115.33–118.14. The appointment of the apostles, along with the evangelists, is explicitly mentioned in 116.13–20. In that passage, the apostles are said to have originated in “prayer,” which is precisely the same origin as that of the good psychics in 119.28–120.11:

Others are from *prayer*, so that they heal the sick, when they have been *appointed* to treat those who have fallen. These are the *apostles and evangelists*. They are the disciples of the Savior ... who need instruction. (116.13–20)

Those whom the Logos brought forth ... when he ... *prayed* for salvation.... They are from the disposition which is good. They were *appointed* for the service in *proclaiming* the coming of the Savior ... and his revelation which had come. (119.28–120.11)

The parallels indicate that the author has the apostles in mind in both statements. Moreover, the comment that the apostles “need instruction” is another indication that they belong to the psychic race; whereas the spirituals receive knowledge suddenly (118.35), the psychics require “instruction” (119.3; cf. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.6.2). Additionally, just as the good psychics are identified with the OT prophets and the apostles, so also the bad psychics are identified with those Jewish leaders in the Gospels and in Acts who “deny the Lord and plot evil against him” and against “the Church” (122.5–9). Finally, the “Hebrews,” whom Attridge and Pagels rightly characterize as good psychics in *Tri. Trac.* 110.23 (“Tractate,” 2:424), are identified in the Valentinian *Gospel of Philip* (NHC II,3) as including “the apostles and the followers of the apostles” (55.34–26).

name of the Gospel, when they have come to believe what has been said to them, namely that they exist. From this they have their salvation, those who have believed that they exist. This is attaining in an invisible way to *the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* in an *undoubting* (ἄταρρη γητ σνεγ) *faith*. And when they have borne witness to them, it is also with a firm hope that they attained them, so that the return to them might become the perfection of those who have believed in them and so that the Father might be one with them.¹⁴⁵

This passage is, to be sure, somewhat obscure, but a Matthean background can help bring a degree of clarity to it. The baptism into “God, Son, and Holy Spirit” echoes the baptismal formula of Matt 28:19. The main difference is the *Tractate*’s “God” in place of Matthew’s “Father,” but the precise Matthean list (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) appears a few lines later. Though this is a liturgical formula, the author is dependent directly on Matthew rather than on oral tradition.¹⁴⁶ This can be seen in the explanatory gloss, “those names, which are a single name of the Gospel,” an allusion to the stylistically awkward but theologically significant way in which Matt 28:19 refers to baptism in “the name [sing.] of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (εις τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος).” A second allusion to Matt 28:19 is conflated with an indirect reference to “but some/they doubted (οἱ δὲ ἐδίστασαν)” in Matt 28:17: “This is attaining in an invisible way to *the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* in an *undoubting* (ἄταρρη γητ σνεγ) *faith*” (*Tri. Tract.* 128.5–9).¹⁴⁷ The author here seems to construe the initial “doubt” of the apostles as a foil for the ideal of “undoubting faith” for which all should strive.¹⁴⁸

The author implies that the apostles eventually did reach this ideal. In the next sentence, the author states that “they have borne witness.” Though verbally closer to Luke 24:48, this statement is fitting in a context in which the author interprets the Great Commission pericope. If so, a coherent picture of the apostles begins to emerge: as psychics they doubted/hesitated when Christ first appeared to them (*Tri. Tract.* 118.37–119.2; cf. Matt 28:17), but later, “when they came to believe” (*Tri. Tract.* 128.1), they attained an “undoubting faith” (128.9) and fulfilled their commission to “bear witness” to baptism in the Trinitarian name (128.6–10; cf. Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8; Matt 28:19).¹⁴⁹

In summary, doubt is programmatic in the *Tripartite Tractate*. It is the immediate cause of the fall and division of humanity. Consequently, doubt is a

¹⁴⁵ 127.25–128.15, emphasis added. I have capitalized the term “Gospel” in the quotation (so Attridge and Pagels, “Tractate,” 2:476; Thomassen and Painchaud, *Traité*, 235, 443).

¹⁴⁶ Pace Tuckett, *Nag Hammadi*, 72.

¹⁴⁷ As noted above, γητ σνεγ translates διστάζω in *Apocryphon of John* ([BG,2] 21.15; [NHC IV, I] 3.2) and *Gospel of Mary* (BG, 9.14–17; P.Oxy. 3525, lines 10–11), both of which appear to be allusions to Matt 28:17. See also Crum, *Dictionary*, 714.

¹⁴⁸ This ideal is shared by both [Ps.-]Justin (*Res.* 10.4: πίστιν ἀδιάκριτον) and Heracleon (*apud* Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.10.63: τὴν ἀδιάκριτον ... πίστιν).

¹⁴⁹ As with the allusion to Matt 28:17 in the *Gospel of Mary*, the author of the *Tripartite Tractate* seems to presuppose that all the apostles doubted rather than just some of them.

(the?) key obstacle that the good psychics must overcome if they are to be saved. This aligns with the schema outlined in *Excerpts of Theodotus* quoted at the beginning of this section: whereas the spiritual and the hylic are by nature saved or condemned, respectively, the psychic “has a propensity toward *faith* and incorruption and also toward *unbelief* and corruption, according to its own choice.” The author of the *Tripartite Tractate*, for his part, depicts the apostles as model psychics who overcome the initial doubts of Matt 28:17 and thereafter bear witness with an “undoubting faith.”

5.3 Doubt and Gnostic/Proto-Orthodox Debates

The goal in the first two sections of this chapter has been to examine each passage within its own literary context so as to allow each text to voice its own distinctive response to the group appearance narratives. This final section will draw together some of the common threads and place gnostic reception within a broader context. More specifically, I will attempt to harmonize some of the exegetical results of the previous two sections with some of Irenaeus’s comments about how gnostics in general respond to the Gospels and criticize the apostles.¹⁵⁰

Despite the considerable creativity and diversity exhibited, our analysis has uncovered some shared characteristics of gnostic reception. First, all of the authors view the apostles’ doubt/unbelief negatively, either as a problem that needs to be resolved or as an indication of a character flaw. In this respect, the gnostic texts examined above confirm one of our conclusions from Chapter 2: that in contrast to many modern readings of the resurrection narratives, early Christians, whether orthodox or heterodox, did not understand the doubt of the apostles as a positive indication of a lack of naiveté.¹⁵¹ In fact, some Valentinians went so far as to codify the negative assessment of doubt by portraying it as a character flaw that was *inherent* to an inferior class of people.

Second, like the early gnostics behind the Ophite account, all of the texts above exploit the post-resurrection doubt motif in the Gospels as an opportunity to promote gnostic doctrine and/or to criticize the apostles as representatives of an inferior doctrinal position, i.e., proto-orthodoxy. This offers a striking counterpoint to the redactional pattern observed in our examination of

¹⁵⁰ On the one hand, because Irenaeus does not appear to be responding specifically to any of the texts examined in this chapter, it would be unreasonable to expect a perfect harmonization. On the other hand, the relative independence means that agreements may be indicative of a larger pattern.

¹⁵¹ The only possible exception in extant literature before 250 C.E. is a catena fragment attributed to Origen (see excursus above).

proto-orthodox apologetics in Chapter 4. Whereas a number of gnostic authors capitalize on the doubt motif, many proto-orthodox writers omit it altogether.

The contrast leads me to suspect that the proto-orthodox suppression of the doubt motif was at least in part a reaction to the gnostic exploitation of the same. This suspicion is, of course, impossible to prove: proto-orthodox omission of the doubt necessarily entails silence regarding the reasons for omission. However, there are a couple of paragraphs in bk. 3 of Irenaeus's *Against Heresies* that are best explained by precisely the kind of gnostic response and proto-orthodox counterresponse to the motif that I am proposing:

This Gospel they [the apostles] first preached orally, but later by God's will they handed it on [*tradiderunt*] to us in the Scriptures, so it would be the foundation and pillar of our faith. We are not permitted to say that they preached before they had received "perfect knowledge," as some dare to state, *boasting that they are correctors of the apostles*. For, after our Lord had risen from the dead, and they were clothed with power from on high when the Holy Spirit came upon them, they had *full assurance* concerning all things, and had "perfect knowledge." Only then did they go forth to the ends of the earth. (*Haer.* 3.1.1)

The [heretics] are opposed to tradition and claim that they are wiser ... than the apostles and have found the unadulterated truth. In fact, they maintain that the apostles mixed with the Savior's words matter from the law.... They [the heretics], however, know the hidden mystery *without doubt* (*indubitae* = ἀδιστακτως), admixture or adulteration.... The result is that they no longer agree with either the Scriptures or tradition. (*Haer.* 3.2.2)¹⁵²

The primary accusation leveled against the apostles is that "they preached before they had received perfect knowledge (*agnitionem* = γνῶσιν)."¹⁵³ While Irenaeus does not relate the basis for this claim, there are a number of reasons to suggest that it is based on the post-resurrection doubt motif in the Gospels.

First, an appeal to the doubt of the apostles is implicit in the opponents' boast that they themselves are "without doubt." This boast could not support the opponents' larger claim to be superior to the apostles unless it was intended as a contrast to the doubt of the apostles.¹⁵⁴ Given that in context Irenaeus is

¹⁵² Trans. Unger and Steenberg, *Irenaeus* 3, 30–31, slightly modified; Greek retroversion in Rousseau and Doutreleau, *Irénée III*, 2:29. Irenaeus here speaks of heretics in general; in the previous paragraph he names Valentinus, Marcion, Cerinthus, and Basilides as prime examples (*Haer.* 3.2.1).

¹⁵³ Similarly Tertullian, *Praescr.* 22.2.

¹⁵⁴ The opponents actually make three boasts about how their own knowledge is superior to that of the apostles: they claim that it is (i) without doubt; (ii) without admixture; and (iii) without adulteration. The second and third boasts are clearly intended to contrast with the accusations that the apostles "mixed" the Savior's words and did not know the "unadulterated truth." The first boast, to be "without doubt", stands out because Irenaeus does not mention a corresponding accusation that the apostles had doubt. Yet one must have existed or at least been implied. In light of Irenaeus's omission of the doubt motif elsewhere (see Chapter 4), his choice to leave this particular accusation unexpressed is not surprising. To refute the accusation of doubt, Irenaeus would have to reject the testimony of the Gospels themselves.

discussing their responses to the Gospels, the opponents probably derived the notion that the apostles doubted from the Gospels themselves. The phrase “without doubt (*indubitate* = ἀδιστακτως)” may have been meant to contrast with Matt 28:17 (οἱ δὲ ἐδίστασαν; *quidam autem dubitaverunt*, Vulg.), a verse that is alluded to in four of the six texts discussed above.¹⁵⁵

Second, the opponents’ claim that the apostles preached without “perfect gnosis” may, from a gnostic perspective, be a simple logical deduction from the resurrection narratives. As we have seen, a number of gnostics maintain that a (or the) identifying characteristic of a non-gnostic, i.e., a person who lacks gnosis, is doubt/unbelief. It therefore makes sense for gnostics to read the resurrection narratives in the Gospels, and conclude that the apostles, because they doubted, lacked gnosis.

Third, Irenaeus’s defense of the apostles seems to respond precisely to this kind of argument. In order to counter the accusation that the apostles “preached before they had received perfect knowledge (gnosis),” Irenaeus contends that the apostles were given “full assurance” through the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. By linking certainty with gnosis, Irenaeus appears to accept the standard gnostic notion that doubt, i.e., a lack of full assurance, is an indicator of a lack of gnosis.¹⁵⁶ More importantly, Irenaeus’s assertion that the apostles received

¹⁵⁵ οἱ δὲ ἐδίστασαν in Matt 28:17 can be translated in three different ways: (i) “but *some* doubted” (NRSV, NIV, NLT, NKJV, CEV); (ii) “but *they* doubted” (NABR); or (iii) “but *others* doubted” (Carson, *Matthew*, 593; Morris, *Matthew*, 745). I discuss these in Chapter 2. My concern here is with how gnostic and proto-orthodox writers understood the phrase. Although there are exceptions (OL, Diatessaron) that favor (i) or (iii), most second-century readers seem to take (ii) for granted. As we have seen in the *Gospel of Mary*, all the apostles are addressed by Mary’s exhortation not to doubt (BG, 9.14–17; P.Oxy. 3525, lines 10–11). Similarly, the author of the *Tripartite Tractate* appears to take it for granted that all the apostles doubted at first and then later attained an “undoubting faith.” Furthermore allusions to Matt 28:17 in [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 9.6 and *Ep. Apos.* 11.5–6 also attribute doubt to the whole apostolic band (see Chapters 6 and 8, respectively). Most of these texts involve some level of harmonization between gospels, and so it is possible that Luke’s account, in which all the disciples are said to disbelieve, has influenced the way Matt 28:17 is read. In any case, Irenaeus’ paraphrase of Matt 28:17 in *Epid.* 76 likewise seems to presuppose that all the apostles doubted (see Chapter 4). If *Haer.* 3.2.1 is also responding to Matt 28:17, it is significant that none of the accusations against the apostles in *Haer.* 3.1.1–3.2.1 distinguish between some apostles and others. The group as a whole is said to have preached before receiving gnosis, and so, it would seem, all had post-resurrection doubt. To be sure, some of Irenaeus’s opponents, e.g., the Ophites, do differentiate between the select few apostles who received gnosis and those who did not. But in these cases, gnosis is revealed after, indeed in response to, the doubt. The select few are not portrayed as immune to initial post-resurrection doubt.

¹⁵⁶ According to *Haer.* 1.6.2, the Valentinians taught that psychics are saved “through works and *bare* faith (πίστεως ψιλῆς), and do not have perfect knowledge.” This statement does not mean that “faith” itself betrays a lack of gnosis. Irenaeus’s Valentinians do not claim that faith and gnosis are mutually exclusive as the Valentinians of Clement, *Strom.* 2.3 (10.2) seem to do. The modifier ψιλός in *Haer.* 1.6.2 implies that psychics have a faith that

“full assurance” at Pentecost implies that they lacked such assurance before Pentecost. Therefore, although Irenaeus refrains from explicitly mentioning the post-resurrection doubt of the apostles – a standard practice among proto-orthodox writers (see Chapter 4) – his argument presupposes it. Indeed, Irenaeus alludes specifically to the post-resurrection situation: “For *after our Lord had risen from the dead* ... when the Holy Spirit came upon them, they had full assurance.” By framing the argument this way Irenaeus is able to resolve the post-resurrection doubt motif without actually drawing attention to it. In this way he simultaneously undercuts and mutes the polemic of his opponents. In short, *Haer.* 3.1.1–3.2.1 not only presupposes that gnostics were criticizing the apostles for their doubt, it also provides evidence of a proto-orthodox author responding to these criticisms by suppressing the doubt motif.

Irenaeus does not counter the gnostics by claiming that the appearances of the risen Jesus themselves provided the apostles with “full assurance.”¹⁵⁷ Rather he specifies that this came later, i.e., at Pentecost.¹⁵⁸ Contrary to most

is in some way inferior to the faith of the spirituals/gnostics. Irenaeus’s Valentinians therefore align more closely with those of Clement, *Exc.* 9, who claim for themselves a “superior faith” to that of “the Calling,” i.e., the psychics. It is not faith itself but inferior faith that precludes the attainment of perfect gnosis.

Precisely what makes πίστις ψιλή inferior is difficult to determine, but it apparently does not entail the “full assurance” and “perfect knowledge” that Irenaeus claims that the apostles obtained (*Haer.* 3.1.1). Heracleon’s commentary may shed some light on this. Heracleon’s statement that the psychics need “to be persuaded by means of sense perception (δὲ αἰσθήσεως πειθεσθαι)” (Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.60.419) parallels the description of psychics as those who require “instruction by means of sense perception (αἰσθητῶν παιδευμάτων)” in *Haer.* 1.6.1. If these are true equivalents, then the “bare” faith of the psychics in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.6.2 is probably best understood in contrast to the “unhesitating” and “undoubting” faith that Heracleon ascribes to the spirituals in Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.10.63. As we have seen, *Tri. Tract.* 128.9 indicates that the apostles, though they are psychics, are eventually able to attain to this gnostic ideal of “undoubting faith.” πίστις ψιλή may therefore be inferior because it is dependent on sense perception and thus subject to doubt.

¹⁵⁷ Unger and Steenberg (*Irenaeus* 3, 118) have argued that Irenaeus is here drawing on the language of *I Clem.* 42. While this is no doubt correct, Irenaeus has significantly modified Clement’s content. Whereas Clement claims that the apostles were “fully assured by the resurrection,” Irenaeus states that “after” the resurrection, when the Holy Spirit came upon them, they had ‘full assurance.’

¹⁵⁸ Irenaeus’s description (“they were clothed with power from on high when the Holy Spirit came upon them”) conflates Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:4. We may inquire why Irenaeus assigned “full assurance” to Pentecost rather than to the resurrection appearances. If his opponents appealed to post-resurrection doubt to support their claim that the apostles lacked perfect gnosis, it may have been difficult for Irenaeus to address the issue of the apostles’ doubt in any other way. Irenaeus could not, for example, take the same approach as Ignatius, who boldly overturns the Lukan (or Luke-like) appearance story by replacing the apostles’ unbelief with belief. For Irenaeus to reject the claim that the apostles doubted would require rejecting the plain statements of the Gospels themselves. To do so would make Irenaeus guilty of the very thing for which he censures his opponents. Similarly, since neither

modern biblical commentators, Irenaeus assumes that the apostles continued to have doubts even after the appearances reported in the Gospels. As we have seen, the same assumption not only lies behind each of the post-resurrection dialogues examined above, it provides justification for their very existence. In the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Gospel of Mary*, and the *Letter of Peter to Philip*, the continuing doubts of the apostles are the problem that prompts the need for additional revelation. In each case the canonical appearances are reckoned insufficient.

One final feature of the debate between Irenaeus and his opponents is crucial to an accurate understanding of gnostic reception of the Gospels. The gnostic critique of the apostles is not primarily intended to tarnish the reputation of the apostles but to undermine the revelatory value of the Gospels as apostolic documents. Irenaeus portrays the gnostic protest that the apostles “preached before they had received perfect gnosis” as a response to the claim that the Gospels are the written form of the apostle’s preaching (3.1.1). Irenaeus’s opponents are not disputing the claim itself but its significance.¹⁵⁹ They indeed accept the apostolicity of the Gospels but argue that the Gospels reflect the preaching of the apostles “before” perfect gnosis has been revealed to them.¹⁶⁰

Matthew nor Luke explicitly resolves the apostles’ doubts, Irenaeus may have thought it safer to appeal to the supernatural movement of the Spirit that empowered the apostolic witness in the book of Acts. This allows him to deemphasize the doubt, which his opponents exploited, and at the same time ensure his readers that any lingering doubts were removed before the apostles began preaching.

¹⁵⁹ Their boast in *Haer.* 3.1.1 to be “correctors (*emendatores* = διορθωταί) of the apostles” seems to presuppose their acceptance of the Gospels as apostolic documents. Both *emendator* and διορθωτής are terms that refer to editors and revisers of books (*OLD*, s.v. “*emendator*”; LSJ, s.v. “διορθωτής”). On the gnostic acceptance of the apostolicity of Luke’s and John’s Gospels in particular, see, e.g., Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.8.5 (John); 1.30.14 (Luke); Clement, *Exc.* 7 (John); 74 (Luke).

¹⁶⁰ According to both the Ophites and the Valentinians, the apostles (or a select few of them) did not attain to full gnosis until “eighteen months” after the resurrection (*Haer.* 1.3.2; 1.30.14). This suggests the possibility that some of Irenaeus’s opponents dated the Gospels very early, not only within the apostles’ lifetimes but within the first year and a half of their ministry. While this seems far-fetched from a modern historical perspective, it was not implausible from the perspective of ancient gnostics. The *Apocryphon of James* (NHC I,2) depicts the “twelve disciples” writing “books” about Jesus – a reference that probably includes but is not necessarily limited to the canonical Gospels (similarly Williams, “Apocryphon,” 1:26, 2:9; see also the extensive list of allusions and echoes of material from the Gospels in Craig A. Evans, Robert L. Webb, and Richard A. Wiebe, *Nag Hammadi Texts and the Bible: A Synopsis and Index* [NTTS 18; Leiden: Brill, 1993], 5–18, many of which are analyzed in Tuckett, *Nag Hammadi*, 87–97). This writing process is said to be already underway “five hundred and fifty days” (= eighteen months) after the resurrection, when the risen Jesus appears again to reveal secret gnosis to Peter and James, who in turn relate this gnosis to the other disciples. The *Apocryphon of James* thus bears witness to a gnostic sect that believed the apostles began writing gospels before receiving gnosis.

This notion that the Gospels are apostolic but non-gnostic appears to be a fundamental premise of gnostic reception and interpretation of the Gospels. It explains why, much to Irenaeus's frustration, they "recognize the Scriptures [i.e., the Gospels]" (3.12.12) and yet "claim that the truth was not handed down" in them (3.2.1). Gnosis was revealed to the apostles (or to some of them) later, and was transmitted orally.¹⁶¹ Consequently, truth can be found in the Gospels, but not "by those who are ignorant" of the secret gnostic tradition (3.2.1) that supplements and helps one reinterpret the Gospels.

As we have already seen in Chapter 3, Ophite interpretation of Luke was more or less explicitly guided by the same premise. The Ophite author treats Luke's Gospel as a historically reliable report of the beliefs of Jesus's own disciples but claims that they were ignorant of the mysterious spiritual realities behind the events that they themselves reported (*Haer.* 1.30.13–14). Gnosis is revealed later, but only to a select few disciples. For the Ophites, the received text of Luke reflects the teaching of the other disciples, who did not have the benefit of this special gnosis. Luke's narrative is therefore radically reinterpreted in accordance with the gnostic myth, and the "very great error" of the disciples, that Jesus rose in the flesh, is corrected.

The *Apocryphon of John* indicates that the apostle John was initially the only recipient of secret gnosis, and that he passed on this new knowledge to his fellow disciples. The title, the *Apocryphon* (or *Secret Book*) of John, seems to presuppose that the Gospel of John is apostolic but non-gnostic and therefore in need of supplementation. As with the Ophite account, the post-resurrection doubt motif becomes an occasion to augment the teaching of the Gospels, especially the Gospel of John. John, pondering questions that are left unanswered in the Gospel of John, remains in the state of doubt mentioned in Matt 28:17. The Savior therefore appears again – an appearance additional to those in the Gospels of Matthew and John – to explain the gnostic mysteries so that John can overcome his doubt and actualize his status as a member of the "unwavering race of perfect man." Like the Ophite account, this story also assumes that the resurrection appearances narrated in the Gospels were insufficient for the apostles to overcome all doubt and attain perfect knowledge.

Irenaeus appears to know of another gnostic view of the composition of the Gospels, namely, that the apostles had gnosis already but that the gospels reflect apostolic teaching that has been adapted to the mental and spiritual capacities of non-gnostics (*Haer.* 3.5.1; 3.12.6; cf. Chapter 2).

¹⁶¹ Tertullian overlooked or ignored this nuance when he accused the gnostics of inconsistency: "They usually tell us that the apostles did not know all things: (but herein) they are impelled by the same madness, whereby they turn round to the very opposite point and declare that the apostles certainly knew all things, but did not deliver all things to all persons" (Praescr. 22.2 [*ANF* 3:253]). If the apostles initially preached without gnosis but received it later and transmitted it secretly, then the gnostics are not making contradictory statements.

While the *Letter of Peter to Philip* ensures that all the apostles receive gnosis together, it is again their “unbelief,” this time alluding to Luke 24:41, that serves as a prompt for additional revelation. The setting of this revelatory experience appears to be Acts 8. If so, this letter takes for granted the claim of Irenaeus’s opponents that the apostles preached before they had perfect knowledge. In this case, the author defends gnostic teaching against the charge of novelty by claiming that it is a mere repetition of what Jesus had already told the apostles; it is only because of their unbelief that the apostles still lack gnosis. But the teaching is nonetheless new vis-à-vis Luke-Acts, the main text to which the *Letter* is responding. As with the Ophite account the biblical texts are presumed to reflect apostolic tradition, but the tradition is reinterpreted and updated on the basis of further revelation.

The *Gospel of Mary* takes a slightly different approach. The apostles do not preach before receiving gnosis because they are too full of doubt and fear. Still, like the more explicitly gnostic texts, the *Gospel of Mary* assumes that the post-resurrection appearances to the apostles, at least as they are reported in the Gospels, were insufficient. The apostles are still doubting as in Matt 28:17, and so are in need of supplementary revelation. In this case, Jesus himself does not appear an additional time to the doubting apostles. Rather they are to learn from Mary Magdalene, who does not waver when Jesus appears to her in John 20. Again, the canonical resurrection stories are presupposed but supplemented.

In one way or another the post-resurrection doubt of the apostles as depicted in the Gospels serves as a point of departure for all the gnostic texts that we have examined so far in this study. My analysis sheds light on how gnostics can, on the one hand, rely on the reporting of events in the Gospels, yet, on the other hand, claim justification for departing so radically from their plain sense. As much as this inconsistency exasperates Irenaeus, there is a coherent, internal logic to it from the perspective of the gnostic: (i) the doubt of the apostles shows that the apostles themselves (or at least some of them) lacked gnosis even after the post-resurrection appearances reported in the Gospels; (ii) the Gospels reflect the early preaching of Jesus’s disciples during this imperfect, pre-gnosis state; (iii) later, some or all of them receive further revelation that perfects their knowledge; and (iv) the apostolic tradition reflected in the Gospels therefore needs to be revised accordingly.

It seems to be along these lines that the docetization of Jesus’s resurrection is rationalized. Although he agrees that the disciples of Jesus originally believed Jesus to have risen in the flesh, the Ophite author can defend his departure from this view by claiming that the disciples lacked gnosis and so were unable to recognize that Jesus’s body was psychic and spiritual.¹⁶² Similarly,

¹⁶² The *Testimony of Truth* (NHC IX,3) appears to exploit, in a similar way, the doubt of the apostles for the purpose of advancing a docetic/gnostic model of resurrection. Preserved

the *Gospel of Mary* acknowledges that its concept of salvation, i.e., the ascent of the soul alone, is “different” from what the apostles of Jesus themselves initially perceived to be the teaching of Jesus. Nevertheless, because Mary is unwavering and the apostles remain in doubt after seeing the risen Jesus, her secret teaching supersedes theirs. Likewise, in the *Apocryphon of John*, doubts and questions left over from an earlier appearance prompt the Savior to appear again to expound the gnostic system and deny bodily resurrection. The author depicts this new appearance as polymorphic and implies that the previous appearance in Matt 28:16–20 was also polymorphic. The *Letter of Peter to Philip* adds appearances beyond those of Luke 24–Acts 1 because the apostles are still in the state of “unbelief.” The author docetizes the previous appearances and through the new appearances promotes a doctrine of salvation that entails escape from the body instead of bodily resurrection.

in Coptic, this treatise was originally composed in Greek sometime in the late second or early third century. The author was in all probability Julius Cassianus, or one of his close followers (Giverson and Pearson, “Testimony of Truth,” 101–20; critical text: 122–203). Clement of Alexandria depicts Cassianus as a former Valentinian and a leading exponent of docetic Christology (*Strom.* 3.13 [91.1; 92.1]).

Although the text is fragmentary, one section seems to summarize and comment on a post-resurrection dialogue similar to those examined above in that it contains echoes of the canonical narratives and capitalizes on the doubt motif. Christ’s appearance is denoted by the phrase “*he stood* (ⲁϩⲱⲗⲉ] ⲉⲣⲁⲧⲉ; cf. ⲁϩⲁⲗⲉⲣⲁⲧϩ [Luke 24:36, Sah]). The appearance is followed by questions common to other gnostic dialogues: “they asked what they have been bound with, and how they might properly release themselves. And they came to know themselves” (35.20–26). Presumably, Christ appears only to a subset of his disciples. The author’s comments then appear to draw on the language of Luke’s Emmaus pericope as if it were a paradigm for gnostic revelation: “These Christ will transfer to the heights, since they have renounced *foolishness* (ⲛⲧⲙⲛⲧⲁ[ⲧⲉⲛⲧ] = ἄνοια; cf. ἀνόητοι [Luke 24:25]),” i.e., belief in the resurrection of the flesh, “(and have) advanced to *knowledge* (γνῶσις)” (36.3–7) – such a person “has *recognized* (ⲁϩ]ϩⲱⲛ; cf. ⲁϩϩⲱⲛ [Luke 24:31, Sah]) the Son of Man, that is, he has come to know himself” (36.23–26). The other disciples, who expect a “carnal resurrection” (36.30), are “blind guides” (33.20–34.1) who “do not know the power of God (cf. Matt 22:29), nor do they understand the *interpretation of the Scriptures* (ⲙⲡⲧⲱⲗ ⲛⲛⲉⲣⲁϩⲱⲛ[ⲉ]; cf. ⲉⲱⲱⲗ ... ⲛⲉⲣⲁϩⲱⲛ [Luke 24:27, Sah]) on account of their *double-mindedness* (ⲙⲛⲧⲉⲛⲧ ϩⲛⲁϩ; cf. οἱ δὲ ἐδίσταν [Matt 28:17])” (37.5–9).

If the identification of allusions is correct, the author is claiming that some of the disciples, i.e., those who doubted in Matt 28:17, foolishly expected a resurrection of the flesh because they could not properly understand the Scriptures. Others, like the Emmaus disciples, renounced this foolish belief and advanced to true gnosis. In any case, the author attributes the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh to double-mindedness.

Chapter 6

Further Readings of Luke 24: Responding to Resurrection as *phantasia*

The preceding surveys of proto-orthodox apologists (Chapter 4) and gnostic writers (Chapter 5) have revealed some trends in the reception of the resurrection narratives. The apologists exhibit an inconsistency between their stated theological positions and their actual practice. Although they believe that the resurrection of Jesus is paradigmatic for the future resurrection of believers, proto-orthodox defenses of the resurrection of the flesh exhibit a tendency to avoid appeals to the group appearance stories of Luke and John. And when they do allude to these narratives, they almost never mention their so-called physical proofs. With even greater regularity, proto-orthodox authors from Clement of Rome to Tertullian suppress all mention of the doubt of the apostles. By contrast, their gnostic counterparts frequently exploit the doubt motif as an opportunity either to promote gnostic doctrines – including a non-material view of resurrection – or to criticize the apostles. They view the hesitation to respond in faith to Jesus as indications of the apostles' inferiority and a lack of understanding (gnosis).

In this chapter, I examine two further apologetic texts: Tertullian, *Against Marcion* and [Ps.-]Justin, *On the Resurrection*. These works are exceptional in that they discuss the group appearance tradition, including the doubt motif and the physical demonstrations in Luke 24. Each does so out of necessity, that is, in response to what they judge to be false, docetic interpretations of the story. Both confidently present counter-interpretations. These texts expand our understanding of antidocetic redaction beyond our initial study of Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3–5, and at the same time provide a valuable glimpse into the views of the docetists themselves. With regard to the latter, examining these two texts together is advantageous because the underlying christological models employed by the Marcionites and the unnamed opponents of [Ps.-]Justin appear to be closely related. They employ similar terminology (φαντασία / φάντασμα) and seem to interpret Luke 24 in light of angelophanies.

As in the discussions of the earlier works of Ignatius and the Ophites (Chapter 3), this chapter will show that Luke 24 could be appropriated by both docetists and antidocetists. Again, the second-century evidence will suggest that the docetists were responding to Luke rather than vice versa. Neither Marcion nor the docetist opponents of [Ps.-]Justin reject the so-called physical

proofs as late apologetic inventions. Rather they seem to accept these elements in Luke's narrative as a given but interpret them as illusion (*phantasia*). In other words, the picture of the docetic/antidocetic debate that emerges from the analysis below is that of an ancient *exegetical* battle over Luke 24.

6.1 Marcion and Tertullian on Luke 24¹

6.1.1 Introduction

The writings of Marcion and his followers exist today only in fragments preserved by some of their fiercest opponents, and so even the most careful reconstructions of Marcionite texts and arguments must remain provisional.² Nevertheless, any account of docetic/antidocetic polemic surrounding the stories of Jesus's resurrection in the early patristic period would be incomplete without a reconstruction, however provisional, of the debate between Tertullian and the Marcionites over the narratives preserved in Luke 24. Given the necessarily tentative nature of such reconstructions, my goal is to offer a plausible account of Marcion and Tertullian that accords with both the available evidence and the second-century patterns of interpretation and redaction that have been described in this study so far.

6.1.2 Luke's Text before Marcion and Marcion as Editor

The precise relationship between the *Gospel of Marcion* and canonical Luke has been debated for the past two centuries.³ Today's consensus, while more nuanced than that of the church fathers, still largely aligns with the patristic view that Marcion edited Luke.⁴ This consensus has nevertheless been and

¹ I am grateful to Dieter T. Roth for his gracious and constructive critique of an earlier version of this argument.

² Until recently, the most comprehensive collection of quotations of source material on Marcion's Gospel was that of Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott. Eine Monographie zur Geschichte der Grundlegung der katholischen Kirche* (TUGAL 45; 2nd ed.; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1924). Harnack's work has now been surpassed, at least with respect to Marcion's Gospel, by Dieter T. Roth, *The Text of Marcion's Gospel* (NTTSD 49; Leiden: Brill, 2015). See also the recent introduction to the various sources and their relative value in BeDuhn, *First New Testament*, 34–46. Unless otherwise noted all translations of Tertullian's works are from Ernest Evans, *Tertullian: Adversus Marcionem* (2 vols.; OECT; Oxford: Clarendon, 1972); idem, *Tertullian's Treatise on the Incarnation* (London: S.P.C.K., 1956).

³ See surveys in Dieter T. Roth, "Marcion's Gospel and Luke: The History of Research in Current Debate," *JBL* 127 (2008): 513–27; idem, *Text*, 7–45.

⁴ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.12.12; Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.2–6; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 42.9–12; Albrecht Ritschl, "Über den gegenwärtigen Stand der Kritik der synoptischen Evangelien," *Theologische Jahrbucher* 10 (1851): 480–538; Gustav Volckmar, *Das Evangelium Marcions. Text*

continues to be challenged. Some contend that canonical Luke represents an expansion of Marcion's Gospel.⁵ Others argue that Marcion and canonical Luke each derive from a common proto-gospel.⁶ Proponents of this latter theory often posit that some anti-Marcionite redaction has been incorporated into the final version of Luke.⁷ On the one hand, because the analysis of the doubt motif below is primarily concerned with Tertullian's apologetic response to Marcionite *interpretation* – rather than *redaction* – of his source text, the results do not ultimately depend on a particular textual theory. On the other hand, this is also an inquiry into the redaction of the resurrection narratives, so I make some proposals regarding Marcion's editorial activity and the state of Luke's text before Marcion. Therefore, though I make no claims to offer a definitive case, it seems appropriate that I state at the outset my own position and some of the reasons for it.

Whether or not Marcion knew an earlier version, i.e., proto-Luke, it is my judgment that an essentially complete text of Luke's Gospel preceded the publication of Marcion's Gospel. By this I mean a text that included such debated passages as the infancy narratives and all, or at least most, of Luke 24.⁸ As

und Kritik mit Rücksicht auf die Evangelien des Märtyrers Justin, der Clementinen und der apostolischen Väter. Eine Revision der neuern Untersuchungen nach den Quellen selbst zur Textbestimmung und Erklärung des Lucas-Evangeliums (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1852); William Sanday, "Marcion's Gospel," *Fortnightly Review* 23 (1875): 855–75; Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium*; Alfred Firmin Loisy, "Marcon's Gospel: A Reply," *HibJ* 34 (1936): 378–87; E. C. Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence* (London: S.P.C.K., 1948); Hays, "Response"; Carter, "Marcion's Christology"; Sebastian Moll, "Marcion: A New Perspective on His Life, Theology, and Impact," *ExpTim* 121 (2010): 281–86.

⁵ E.g., F. C. Albert Schwegler, review of *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in die kanonischen Bücher des Neuen Testaments*, by W. M. L. de Wette, *Theologische Jahrbücher* 2 (1843): 544–90; Paul-Louis Couchoud, "Is Marcion's Gospel One of the Synoptics?" *HibJ* 34 (1936): 265–77; Klinghardt, "Plädoyer"; Vinzent, *Resurrection*, 84–92; idem, *Marcion*.

⁶ E.g., Johann Salomo Semler, foreword to *Abhandlung über die vier Evangelien*, by Thomas Townsons (Leipzig: Weygand, 1783); BeDuhn, *First New Testament*, 86–92.

⁷ F. C. Baur, *Das Markusevangelium nach seinem Ursprung und Charakter. Nebst einem Anhang über das Evangelium Marcion's* (Tübingen: Ludwig Friedrich Fues, 1851); Knox, *Marcion*; D. S. Williams, "Reconsidering Marcion's Gospel," *JBL* 108 (1989): 477–96; Tyson, *Defining Struggle*.

⁸ To these, I would also add Luke's preface (1:1–4). Pace Tyson (*Defining Struggle*, 112–16), Marcion is certainly *not* one of the predecessors to whom Luke refers in this preface. Luke's portrayal of those to whom he responds is incompatible with everything that is known about Marcion. In 1:1–2 Luke depicts his predecessors as compiling a "narrative of the events that have been *fulfilled* among us" and as faithfully following the tradition of the apostles ("just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have *delivered* them to us"). Tyson's argument, that the reference to the fulfillment of prophecy and the appeal to the apostles are Luke's counterresponses to Marcion, falters on the fact that Luke is in these verses explicitly describing the accounts of his predecessors. If Marcion

have I argued in Chapter 3, Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30 offers evidence for the existence of a pre-Marcionite version of Luke that already contained the infancy narratives, at least one resurrection appearance story, and probably an ascension account. While not excluding the possibility that later scribes made changes to Luke 24, I do argue below that certain elements, e.g., Jesus's invitation to "touch" in v. 39, his post-resurrection meal in v. 43, and the reference to the OT in v. 44, are not, as is sometimes alleged, anti-Marcionite additions.⁹ Nevertheless, it must be stressed that the prior existence of an essentially complete text of Luke does not necessitate identifying this text with Marcion's *Vorlage*. The possibility must remain open that Marcion instead utilized an earlier proto-Luke or an already edited – possibly "Western" – text of Luke that contained harmonizations with Matthew.¹⁰ Thus, while the presence of the infancy

were one of the predecessors in Luke 1:1–2, then Luke would be claiming that Marcion's Gospel emphasizes the fulfillment of prophecy and the importance of the original apostles. Of course, this is nonsensical because it is precisely the opposite of how all anti-marcionite writers characterize Marcion and his gospel. Thus, Luke's preface is, if anything, strong evidence against the claim that canonical Luke was written in response to Marcion.

⁹ Ehrman argues that the longer variants in Luke 24 that correspond to the so-called Western non-interpolations were added to counter docetic Christology (*Orthodox Corruption*, 247–72). This raises the question as to whether they might be directed at Marcion. However, Marcion's text includes the longer reading at Luke 22:20 (Dieter T. Roth, "Marcion's Gospel: Relevance, Contested Issues, and Reconstruction," *ExpTim* 121 [2010]: 290), and evidence from Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30 suggests that one of the alleged additions, "and he was taken up into heaven (καὶ ἀνεφέρετο εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν)" (Luke 24:51), is probably also pre-Marcionite in origin (see Chapter 3). Therefore, if the longer readings in Luke 24 are indeed antidocetic, then they must target one or more of Marcion's predecessors rather than Marcion himself. On the question of antidocetic intent in the longer readings, see the Appendix.

Alternatively, Carter, following Harnack, argues that the absence of these elements in the Western text may be the result of intentional omission by Marcion or his followers (Carter, "Marcion's Christology," 550–82, esp. 566–72; Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 247*). Ehrman's analysis does not consider this possibility but seems to presuppose that all second-century scribes were in full agreement with proto-orthodox Christology and/or would never intentionally omit material. But Ehrman (*Orthodox Corruption*, 218) himself admits that Marcion excised what he considered to be interpolations. If Marcion and his followers could intentionally omit material, why could others not do the same? Moreover, a number of early scribes exhibit a tendency to omit, whether intentionally or unintentionally, more than they add (James R. Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri* [NTTSD 36; Leiden: Brill, 2008]). Neither Carter's nor Ehrman's reconstruction is decisive.

¹⁰ The latter is more probable in view of the ostensible presence of Lukan redactional material in Marcion's Gospel (Michael Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium* [HNT 5; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008], 3). For Marcion's use of a harmonized text, see Volckmar, *Das Evangelium Marcions*, 256–67; Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 243*; Leland Edward Wilshire, "Was Canonical Luke Written in the Second Century? – A Continuing Discussion," *NTS* 20 (1974): 246–53. On the debate over the relationship between Marcion's Gospel and the "Western" text, see the summary in Roth, "Contested issues," 289–90. See also the previous note on the "Western non-interpolations."

narratives in a pre-Marcionite text of Luke seems to substantiate patristic accusations that Marcion removed them, it does not necessarily prove that these accusations are correct. But it does show that the infancy narratives were *not* added to Luke's Gospel *in response to Marcion*.¹¹

Nonetheless, I find any theory that denies significant redactional work on the part of Marcion implausible. According to patristic testimony Marcion "openly" admitted to removing what he considered to be "interpolations" in his source(s).¹² There is no evidence that Marcion ever claimed to have discovered an early "non-interpolated" gospel manuscript that he used to identify these so-called interpolations.¹³ In fact, Tertullian presupposes that Marcion made no such claim when he taunts Marcion for an explanation of what became of the original gospel document by asking him if it had been completely destroyed by a flood of falsifiers (*Marc.* 4.3.4).¹⁴ Indeed, Tertullian's arguments, especially in *Marc.* 4.4–5, presuppose a Marcionite claim (apparently found in the *Antitheses* itself) to "correct" an adulterated gospel rather than to preserve an unadulterated one.¹⁵ Their expressly stated criterion for correction was a

¹¹ Contra Tyson, *Defining Struggle*, 90–100; Vinzent, *Marcion*, 106.

¹² Irenaeus points out that Marcion "alone" was so bold as to "openly (*manifeste*)" mutilates the Scriptures (*Haer.* 1.27.4; cf. the same term in *Haer.* 5.26.2). Tertullian likewise complains that Marcion "expressly and openly (*exerte et palam*) uses the knife" (*Praescr.* 38 [*ANF* 3:263]).

¹³ Pace BeDuhn, *First New Testament*, 87–90.

¹⁴ Instead, Tertullian would probably have accused Marcion of producing a forgery.

¹⁵ Tertullian argues that "by making these corrections, [Marcion] assures us of two things – that ours came first, for he is correcting what he has found there already, and that that other came later which he has put together out of his corrections of ours" (*Marc.* 4.4.5). Strictly speaking Tertullian's argument is correct, but it would have been irrelevant to Marcion and his followers. They were not claiming that their version of the Gospel was *written* first but that either (i) the oral gospel story was corrupted with interpolations "before it was even published" (4.4.2) or that (ii) the original text was corrupted early on by "false apostles" in Paul's own day (4.3.2–4). Tertullian expresses his main contention as follows: "So [Marcion] did correct the one he thought was corrupt. Yet even this he had no right to correct: because it was not corrupt" (4.5.6; cf. *Carn. Chr.* 3.1, where Tertullian notes that Marcion thinks himself competent to make text-critical decisions to omit material). This, however, leads back to the original claim of Marcion's *Antitheses*, which argued that it had been corrupted (*Marc.* 4.4.4). In other words, the issue under discussion is not so much about which text was written first – this is not in dispute – but which most accurately portrays the original teaching of Jesus.

Nothing in *Marc.* 4.3–4 supports the bold proposal of Vinzent (*Resurrection*, 87–88; *Marcion*, 100–101) that Marcion was the *first* gospel writer and that Marcion himself complained that the interpolations were inserted during Marcion's own day. While it is not possible to give a full response here, Vinzent's claims are, at best, highly implausible in light of ample evidence that Marcion and his followers disagree with them. According to Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 5.7 and *Adamant. Dial.* 1.6–8, Marcionites understood the phrase "according to my gospel" in Rom 2:16; 16:25 as a reference to a written gospel used by Paul. In other

regula rather than an earlier gospel text.¹⁶ Additionally, Marcion's followers diligently continued his text-critical enterprise.¹⁷ If Marcion thought he had access to a pristine "non-interpolated" source text, then the task of his followers would have been to preserve *that* text faithfully. The fact that they continued to edit their gospel text strongly suggests that Marcion and his followers were reconstructing a text that in their opinion must have (or ought to have) existed but was not actually extant. Also, not to be overlooked is the fact that Marcion and his followers traced the so-called interpolations to false apostles who lived during the apostolic period.¹⁸ In this way, Marcion himself clearly attests to the antiquity of the "falsified" gospel that he criticizes.

Given that Marcion understood the "interpolations" to be promoting a synthesis over against an original *antithesis* between the gospel and "the Law and the prophets," it is reasonable to conclude that Marcion's source text, whether Luke or proto-Luke, contained claims of OT fulfillment that Marcion later removed. And this is corroborated by Ignatius of Antioch, who, as I have argued in Chapter 3, bears witness to an early gospel text that included the uniquely Lukan combination "Law of Moses" + "the prophets" as found, e.g., in Luke

words, Marcionites believed that the first gospel was written in Paul's day rather than in Marcion's day. And as Vinzent (*Marcion*, 101) himself admits, Tertullian attributes a similar view to Marcion himself in *Marc.* 4.3 (cf. *Marc.* 4.2.4–5, which refers to a gospel document that Paul found and to which he assented). Oddly enough Vinzent seems to undermine his own claim by arguing that Marcion based "his entire thinking not on oral traditions ... but on literature alone," which included "written narratives of Christ" (*Resurrection*, 81). Moreover, Marcion and his followers dated the alleged interpolations to Paul's day as well (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.12.12; Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.20.1–4; 4.2–4; 5.3.1–2; see notes below). If so, Marcion cannot have been the first gospel writer and is unlikely to have the blame for the interpolations on his contemporaries.

¹⁶ Tertullian reports that the Marcionites "allege that in separating the Law and the Gospel Marcion did not so much invent a new rule (*regulam*) <of faith> as refurbish a rule previously debased" (*Marc.* 1.20.1). In *Haer.* 3.2.1–2, Irenaeus responds to various heretics, but he seems to have Marcionites specifically in mind when he accuses them of "saying that they themselves are wiser not merely than the presbyters, but even than the apostles, because they have discovered the unadulterated truth. For [they maintain] that the apostles intermingled the things of the law with the words of the Savior" (*ANF* 1:415, emphasis added; cf. Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.3–5). In context, the "unadulterated truth" is not found in a manuscript free of interpolations but in a secret oral tradition that provides wisdom for interpreting the Scriptures (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.2.1).

¹⁷ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.12.12; Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.5.7.

¹⁸ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.12.12; Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.20.1–4; 4.2–4; 5.3.1–2. Marcion identifies the interpolators as Paul's opponents in Galatia. That Marcion envisioned the falsifications of the Gospel occurring at an early date can also be seen from Tertullian's sarcastic comment in *Marc.* 4.4.5: "As corrector apparently of a gospel which from the times of Tiberius to those of Antoninus had suffered subversion, Marcion comes to light, first and alone, after Christ had waited for him all that time, repenting of having been in a hurry to send forth apostles without Marcion to protect them" (emphasis added; similarly *Marc.* 1.20.1; *Praescr.* 29.2–3).

24:44. It is therefore highly probable that Marcion intentionally removed similar references from vv. 25, 27, 32, 45 and 46. Even assuming that Marcion was correct to conclude that these OT references are indeed interpolations into an earlier gospel, the evidence from Ignatius confirms Marcion's own indications that they were incorporated into the text during the apostolic period. Therefore, these elements in Luke's Gospel cannot be the result of an anti-Marcionite redaction.¹⁹

6.1.3 Marcion's Docetism and Criticism of Jesus's Disciples

Two other matters need to be considered before discussing the resurrection narratives. The first is Marcion's Christology, the precise characteristics of which are difficult to pin down. Tertullian suspects that Marcion employed an angelic model, i.e., comparing Christ to Abraham's three visitors in Gen 18, but hesitates because he doubts that Marcion himself would have admitted his dependence on an OT model.²⁰ Tertullian's initial suspicion is probably not far from the truth. Marcion's Gospel retains Jesus's saying about the resurrected being like angels (Luke 20:36) – perhaps also the reference to “a vision of angels” at the empty tomb (24:4, 23) – and later Marcionites are known to have appealed to Gen 18.²¹ More securely, we can say that Marcion considered Christ to be a “spirit (*spiritus*)” who suddenly “appeared (*manifestatum*)” from heaven “in the form of a man (*in hominis forma*)” but *not* in the flesh.²² Marcion “claimed that Christ was a phantasm (*phantasma vindicans Christum*)”

¹⁹ Contra Hoffmann, *Marcion*, 114–16; Tyson, *Defining Struggle*, 46; Klinghardt, “Plädoyer,” 123.

²⁰ *Carn. Chr.* 3.6–9; *Marc.* 3.9.

²¹ Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.38.5–6; 4.43.2 (*angelorum visione*; cf. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 42 Scholion 76; Luke 24:4, 23); Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Hom. cat.* 5.8; Ephrem, *Comm. Diat.* 21.3; possibly also *Adamant. Dial.* 5.4–12. On the one hand, Marcion may simply have been inconsistent here. Tertullian accuses Apelles of inconsistency on this very topic. Apelles, though he parted ways with Marcion in arguing that Christ took on celestial / angelic flesh, nevertheless maintained Marcion's ditheism. Tertullian argues that Apelles therefore has no right to appeal to a model derived from the Creator God's angels in Gen 18 (*Carn. Chr.* 6). If Apelles, Marcion's disciple, can be inconsistent on this matter, so also could Marcion.

On the other hand, an appeal to an angelic model may not necessarily have been inconsistent in Marcion's estimate. Marcion may have been able to avoid the problem on the basis of his own interpretation of Luke 20:36. He may have interpreted *ισάγγελοι* as a reference not to the Creator's angels but to those of Marcion's unknown God. His followers argued that *θεός* in their version Luke 20:35–36 referred to their unknown God (Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.38.7). And Tertullian, when interpreting the phrase “because of angels” in Marcion's version of 1 Cor 11:10, inquires as to “whose” angels, those of the creator God or “those of [Marcion's] other God” are in view (*Marc.* 5.8). This, in turn, may account for the apparent presence of angels at the empty tomb in Marcion's Gospel.

²² Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.27.2; 4:33.2; Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.19.2; 5.20.3–4; *Carn. Chr.* 3.2, 4.

and used the docetic slogan τῷ δοκεῖν to describe Christ's flesh.²³ Despite his use of standard docetic terminology, Marcion's Christology represents a significant development over that of earlier docetists. Ignatius's opponents, for example, applied τῷ δοκεῖν directly to Christ's suffering.²⁴ By contrast, Marcion actually affirms Christ's suffering and death and explicitly applies docetic (δοκέω) terminology only to Christ's humanity/flesh.²⁵ Marcion's more nuanced form of docetism is bewildering to Irenaeus and Tertullian, who cannot fathom how Christ's suffering and death can be real if his flesh is not.²⁶

²³ Tertullian, *Marc.* 3.8.1; *Carn. Chr.* 1.4. Although Tertullian writes in Latin, he retains Marcion's Greek phrase τῷ δοκεῖν in *Carn. Chr.* 1.4.

²⁴ Ignatius, *Trall.* 10.1; *Smyrn.* 2.1. Similarly, the Simonians claimed that Simon Magus himself was he who "appeared among the Jews as the Son," and that although "he was not a man ... he was *thought* (δεδοκηκέναι) to have suffered in Judaea, when he had not suffered" (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.1, 3 [*ANF* 1:347–48]). According to Epiphanius, Saturnilus claimed that Christ did everything τῷ δοκεῖν, including suffering (*Pan.* 23.1.10). Though Basilides offers a unique twist – Jesus transfigures Simon of Cyrene and switches places with him – he too emphasizes that Jesus was only "thought (*putatus*) to be crucified" (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.24.4). Because Hippolytus's account of Basilides differs considerably from that of Irenaeus, it is possible that Irenaeus has mistakenly identified Basilides as the originator of this peculiar Christology. Either way, *Disc. Seth* 55–56 (NHC VI,2), which includes a strikingly similar account of the crucifixion, shows that Irenaeus is more or less accurately describing the Christology of an early group of docetists, whoever they may be.

²⁵ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.33.2, 5; Tertullian, *Carn. Chr.* 1.4; 5; 3.2; *Marc.* 1.24; 3.8; 3.11; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 42 Elenchus 4. While some of these texts are available only in Latin or Latin translation and so lack δοκέω and cognates, most do employ Latin equivalents like *puto*, *putative*, *putativus*. Direct links between the Greek and Latin terms with respect to docetic Christology can be seen in Tertullian in *Carn. Chr.* 1.14 and in Latin translations of Irenaeus where Greek fragments are available, e.g., *Haer.* 3.18.6; 4.33.5; 5.1.2; see further Reynders, *Lexique*, 59, 262. Irenaeus (*Haer.* 4.33.2), Tertullian (*Marc.* 3.11.7–8), and Epiphanius (*Pan.* 42 Elenchus 4) all attempt to refute Marcion by arguing that Marcion's denial that Christ took on flesh necessarily implies that Christ did not actually suffer. The assumption is that Marcion affirmed and did not deny Christ's suffering, at least not explicitly (see further Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 125–26; Blackman, *Marcion*, 100–102; Peter M. Head, "The Foreign God and the Sudden Christ: Theology and Christology in Marcion's Gospel Redaction," *TynBul* 44 [1993]: 320; Tyson, *Defining Struggle*, 34). There are two possible exceptions. Hippolytus accuses Marcion of claiming that Christ "underwent neither generation nor passion except in appearance (τῷ δοκεῖν)" (*Haer.* 10.19.3–4). Ephrem makes a similar accusation (*PR II* 81). Given the logic of the argumentation of Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Epiphanius, these allegations are probably based on an inference from Marcion's view of Christ's flesh or on a statement of later Marcionites rather than on an actual claim of Marcion himself.

²⁶ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.2.1–2; 4.33.2; Tertullian, *Marc.* 3.8; 3.10–11; *Carn. Chr.* 1.4; 5. It is not clear exactly how Marcion himself reconciled these two aspects of his Christology, but we do have evidence of how his followers resolved the issue. Eznik of Kolb indicates that Marcionites in his day believed that Christ endured "spiritual torments" rather than "a bodily death" (*Deo.* 404). According to Eznik's account, Jesus had to "resemble the dead" so that he could trick Hell into opening its mouth to receive one who was actually alive; only then

The second factor is Marcion's disparagement of Jesus's original apostles.²⁷ According to patristic testimony, Marcion and his followers criticized the disciples of Jesus and maintained that "Paul alone knew the truth."²⁸ The starting point for this criticism appears to have been Paul's public rebuke of Peter in Galatians (2:11–16), a book placed at the head of the Pauline corpus in Marcion's canon. On this basis, Marcionites accused the apostles of ignorance and of corrupting the gospel with Jewish opinions.²⁹ The frequency and intensity of Irenaeus's and Tertullian's defense of the apostles testifies to the prominence of these criticisms in Marcionite polemic.³⁰

Given his treatment of Gal 2, it stands to reason that Marcion would also have utilized material from his *Gospel* to criticize the apostles.³¹ Support for this theory can be found in Tertullian's responses to a sequence of three pericopae in Marcion's Gospel.³² The first is the story of Peter's confession (*Marc.* 4.21.6–7). According to Tertullian, Marcion interprets Jesus's command to

could he rescue the souls of those residing there (*Deo.* 358, 404, trans., Monica J. Blanchard and Robin Darling Young, *Eznik of Kolb, On God* [Early Christian Texts in Translation 2; Leuven: Peeters, 1998], 184, 201). Given that Marcion and his followers stressed the notion of Christ's humility on the basis of Phil 2:6–7, a passage that they also used as a docetic proof-text (Tertullian, *Marc.* 2.27.1–2; 5.20.3–4, Eznik, *Deo.* 404; Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 126; Head, "Foreign God," 316), Marcion probably maintained that Christ suffered not physical pain but humiliation, which he underwent willingly (similarly Barbara Aland, "Marcion: Versuch einer neuen Interpretation," *ZTK* 70 [1973]: 420–47, esp. 438–39). Ephrem's Marcionite opponents claimed that Christ paid the Creator a "ransom in humility (*zēbintā' dēmakikūtā'*)" (*PR II* 132, 35–36, trans. Judith M. Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic: God and Scripture in the Second Century* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015], 173; Syriac text in C. W. Mitchell, A. A. Bevan, and F. C. Burkitt, *S. Ephraim's Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion, and Bardaisan* [2 vols.; London: Williams and Norgate, 1921]).

²⁷ Hoffmann (*Marcion*, 101–53) refers to this as Marcion's "doctrine of false apostleship."

²⁸ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.13.1–2; similarly 1.27.2; 3.2.2; 3.12.12, 15; Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.20.2; 4.3.2; *Praescr.* 23–24.

²⁹ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.2.1–2; 3.12.15–3.13.2; Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.20.1–2; 4.3.2; 5.3.7; *Praescr.* 22; Moll, *Arch-Heretic*, 83–84; Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 37–39.

³⁰ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.27.2; 3.2.2; 3.12.12, 15; 3.13.1–2; Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.20.2; 4.3.2; *Praescr.* 23–24. In some instances, these defenses of the apostles seem to be directed at Valentinians as well, suggesting that they also criticized the apostles on the basis of Gal 2.

³¹ According to Hoffmann (*Marcion*, 111), Marcion "believed that while the teaching of the apostles was wrong, the testimony to their ignorance was accurately recorded in the gospel." Hoffmann (114) maintains that Marcion would have supported this belief with "passages averring the disbelief and misunderstanding of the apostles (8.9; 8.25; 9.19ff.; 9.40; 22.24, 34; 9.45–6; 24.25)."

³² So Enrico Norelli, "Marcion et les disciples de Jésus," *Apocrypha* 19 (2008): 30. Norelli, who analyzes the characterization of the apostles throughout Marcion's Gospel, suggests that Marcion exploited these three episodes to help build a cumulative case against the apostles.

silence (Luke 9:21) as a rebuke of Peter's false belief that Jesus was the Christ of the Creator God; Marcion claims that Jesus enjoined silence because "he did not wish a lie to be spread abroad."³³ This passage may have been foundational for Marcion's case against the disciples and against the identification of Jesus as the Creator's Christ.³⁴ Tertullian's reply includes a pointed defense of Peter: "Certainly ... the reason he gave for commanding silence was not one which proved Peter mistaken" (*Marc.* 4.21.8).

That Tertullian is at pains to counter the notion that Peter was in error can be seen in his response to the next pericope, the Transfiguration story. Tertullian provides a sophisticated apologetic explanation of the brief narrative aside, "not knowing what he was saying" (*Marc.* 4.22.4–6; cf. Luke 9:33).³⁵ Tertullian repeatedly insists that this statement does not mean that Peter made a mistake. He instead argues for a Montanist explanation: Peter "did not know what he was saying" because he spoke in a state of prophetic ecstasy.³⁶ Tertullian's extended polemic and his creative exegesis suggest that Marcion or his followers used the phrase as a proof-text against the authority of Peter.³⁷ If not, then the general Marcionite vitriol against Peter must have been so strong that it

³³ *Marc.* 4.21.7; 4.22.4–6; see also Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 37. Unless we are to suppose that Tertullian invented this rhetorically potent critique of the apostle(s) on his opponent's behalf, we must conclude that these words derive from Marcion or one of his followers (similarly Norelli, "Marcion," 24).

³⁴ So Norelli, "Marcion," 25.

³⁵ Incidentally, Marcion's text appears to depend on Lukan redaction here – another sign that Marcion did in fact edit Luke's text. Tertullian's Latin quotation of Marcon's Gospel (*nesciens quid diceret*) looks more like a translation of Luke's wording (μη εἰδὼς ὃ λέγει; cf. *nesciens quid diceret* [Vulg.]) than of Mark's (οὐ γὰρ ᾔδει τί ἀποκριθῆ [λαλησει, A C3 D K N Γ f13 1241. 1424 ℳ]); cf. *non enim sciebat quid diceret* [Vulg.]). Similarly Roth, *Text*, 419.

³⁶ Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.22.4–6.

³⁷ This helps to explain one small but significant textual difference in Tertullian's quotation of Marcion's text. In Tertullian's quotation of Marcion's Gospel, the aside is introduced with a strong adversative:

"Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah" – not knowing what he was saying. (Luke 9:33)

"Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." *But (sed)* he did not know what he was saying. (Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.22.4)

The difference causes greater emphasis to fall on Peter's ignorance. While caution is needed here because of Tertullian's tendency to vary conjunctions in his citations (Roth, *Text*, 89), this change enhances Marcionite polemic and does not help Tertullian's argument. It is also possible that the adversative appeared not in Marcion's text but in Marcionite interpretation (René Braun, *Tertullian, Contre Marcion: Tome IV (Livre IV)* [SC 456; Paris: Cerf, 2001], 280 n. 1; Norelli, "Marcion," 26 n. 32). In either case, a Marcionite critique of Peter is implied. On Tertullian's knowledge of Marcionite interpretation of the Transfiguration pericope, see H. J. W. Drijvers, "Christ as Warrior and Merchant: Aspects of Marcion's Christology," *StPatr* 21 (1989): 75, 81.

prompted Tertullian to launch a passionate preemptive strike on the basis of this brief aside found only in Marcion's Gospel and Luke.³⁸

The discussion of the next pericope, the exorcism of a boy brought to the disciples by his father, entails a probable Marcionite insertion and a defense of the apostles by Tertullian. The equivalent to Luke 9:41 in Marcion's Gospel (or at least the version of it known to Epiphanius [*Pan.* 42 Scholion 19]) has an additional phrase, πρὸς αὐτούς ("to them").³⁹ The effect of the addition is that Jesus's rebuke ("O faithless generation . . .") appears to be spoken directly to the disciples rather than to the man whose son was possessed or to the Jews in general.⁴⁰ If so, this passage may serve for Marcionites as the climax of the three-episode sequence in which Jesus condemns the apostles for their unbelief. In response, Tertullian offers two separate defenses, one in the case that the accusation is directed at "Israel" – as Tertullian presumably perceives to be the case in Luke's text – and one in the case that the accusation is directed at the "disciples, upon whom he [Marcion's Christ] has come down hard" (4.23.2). The phrase "upon whom he has come down hard (*in quos insilit*)" probably reflects Tertullian's recognition that the additional phrase πρὸς αὐτούς in Marcion's version of Luke 9:41 is meant to pin the accusation of unbelief directly on the disciples.⁴¹

³⁸ Ephrem the Syrian, who offers an anti-Marcionite interpretation of the Transfiguration story, also feels compelled to give multiple apologetic explanations for this aside (*Comm. Diat.* 14.5–9).

³⁹ BeDuhn, who normally eschews the idea of Marcion's editorial activity, nevertheless accepts this as a possible Marcionite change (*First New Testament*, 54, 107). Despite the claim of Klinghardt ("Plädoyer," 494) that Marcion's Gospel involved no additions, Epiphanius observes significant Marcionite additions at 22:47–48 and 23:2 (*Pan.* 42 Scholia 68 and 69). A number of other minor additions are attested in Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.34.10; 4.36.7; 4.38.5; 4.39.4 and Epiphanius, *Pan.* 42 Scholia 32 and 76 (Hays, "Response," 217).

⁴⁰ Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 38; Norelli, "Marcion," 31. The final portion of Luke 9:41, προσάγαγε ὧδε τὸν υἱόν σου ("Bring your son here"), is unattested in the extant witnesses to Marcion's Gospel. If it was indeed absent from Marcion's text, the omission strengthens the impression that the accusation of faithlessness was directed at the disciples.

⁴¹ Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 203*; BeDuhn, *First New Testament*, 151. Luke's account gives no hint that the rebuke is directed at the disciples nor that the disciples failed to cast the demon out because of their unbelief. If Marcion was "correcting" Luke, he may have felt justified in doing so here on the basis of the parallels in Matthew and Mark, both of which support the possibility that the rebuke for unbelief was directed at the disciples. Mark 9:19 includes αὐτοῖς where Marcion adds πρὸς αὐτούς, and Matthew records Jesus afterwards explaining to the disciples (αὐτοῖς) that they could not cast out the demon on account of their "little faith" (Matt 17:20). If "to them" is not a Marcionite insertion, then the additional phrase reflects harmonization or conflation in Marcion's *Vorlage*.

6.1.4 Marcion and Tertullian on the Resurrection Narratives

Following Harnack, a number of scholars, most notably Hoffmann, Tyson, Norelli, and Vinzent, have argued that Marcion drew attention to the doubt motif in order to criticize the apostles.⁴² Building on observations from these earlier studies, I propose below a new reconstruction of Marcionite interpretation of the resurrection narratives and a fresh assessment of Tertullian's response. I argue (i) that Marcion and his followers indeed criticized the apostles for their persistent doubts; (ii) that they used the doubt as an opportunity to promote their docetic Christology; and (iii) that Tertullian had no adequate response to (i) and probably misunderstood or distorted (ii).

Marcion's Emmaus pericope differs from that of Luke in a number of ways, two of which may be particularly significant. First, the rebuke of the disciples in 24:25 is for not believing "all the things *he* [Christ] spoke" rather than "all the things *the prophets* spoke."⁴³ Second, Marcion's text almost certainly lacked v. 27, and does not appear to have included vv. 22–24 either.⁴⁴ The net effect of these differences is that Jesus's rebuke of the disciples' unbelief in 24:25 becomes a direct response to the statement in 24:21 ("We supposed him to be the redeemer of Israel").⁴⁵ This at least appears to be how Tertullian understood Marcionite interpretation of vv. 21 and 25. In other words, the doubt motif is used to reject a Christology that associates the Christ with the prophets and the creator God of Israel.⁴⁶

⁴² Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 37–38; Hoffmann, *Marcion*, 118–24; Tyson, *Defining Struggle*, 45–47; Norelli, "Marcion," 33–36; Vinzent, "Pauline Basis," 230–31; Vinzent, *Resurrection*, 118–21.

⁴³ The change is consistent with Marcion's accusation that the OT patriarchs did not "believe" Christ's "preaching" and were therefore condemned to remain in the netherworld (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.27.3; see further Chapter 5). This also confirms that Marcion would have understood the unbelief in Luke 24:25 as culpable.

⁴⁴ These verses are unattested in extant sources. A lack of attestation does not, of course, prove that these verses were absent from Marcion's text. However, it is improbable that Marcion would have retained v. 27, at least in its present form, which refers to Jesus fulfilling OT prophecy. This is precisely the kind of material Marcion complains about in *Antitheses* (Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.4.4). Moreover, the omission of v. 27 is to be expected given the change to v. 25 mentioned above. The presence or absence of vv. 22–24 is more difficult to determine. On the one hand, Marcion does not appear to have been opposed in principle to references to the empty tomb story, and these verses might have served his purposes by making the disciples look more foolish. On the other hand, Tertullian's response to v. 25 ("It is true, that he severely rebuked them") follows directly after his discussion of v. 21, giving the impression that he is responding to a Marcionite interpretation that understood v. 25 as a rebuke of the view of the disciples expressed in v. 21.

⁴⁵ Similarly Tyson, *Defining Struggle*, 46. Cf. Luke 24:21: "We had *hoped* he was the one who was *about* to redeem Israel."

⁴⁶ As Hoffmann observes, "The dramatic irony of the [Emmaus story]--the glorified savior walking unknown among the mourners--can scarcely have failed to commend itself to

Tertullian's reply suggests that he too found the doubt motif embarrassing and was responding to Marcionite criticism of the apostles. Tertullian reveals his uneasiness when he portrays the unbelief of the disciples as a kind of a *felix culpa* that providentially affords him the opportunity to refute Marcion's dissociation of Christ from the OT: "It is well also that the disciples' unbelief persisted (*bene autem quod incredulitas discipulorum perseverabat*), so that right to the end our claim should stand that to the disciples Christ Jesus had declared himself no other than the Christ of the prophets" (*Marc.* 4.43.3). Because this defensive comment is otherwise unprompted, it appears to be motivated by Tertullian's own sense of embarrassment over the fact that the disciples were guilty of persistent unbelief. Tertullian elsewhere avoids reference to the doubts of the apostles (see Chapter 4), and here admits their unbelief only reluctantly. So it seems that Tertullian was in *Marc.* 4 forced to address the issue of unbelief directly because Marcion or his followers appealed to it to criticize the disciples.⁴⁷ And this explains why Tertullian introduces the reproof for unbelief in Marcion's version of 24:25 as if he were making a concession: "It is true (*plane*) that he severely rebuked them: O fools and slow of heart in not believing all the things which he spoke to you" (*Marc.* 4.43.4).⁴⁸

Tertullian's treatment of the group appearance narrative in the next few paragraphs only briefly mentions the doubt motif in Marcion's version of Luke 24:38 and 24:41 (*Marc.* 4.43.6, 8). However, the lack of detailed engagement at this point is not to be interpreted as indifference. Tertullian's response to Marcion's group appearance narrative is focused almost entirely on his attempt to explain why Marcion leaves Luke 24:39 largely intact – a *crux interpretum* to which I will turn in a moment – and Tertullian's preoccupation with the retention of this verse helps account for his lack of commentary on 24:38 and 24:41. Another factor that probably contributes to Tertullian's relative silence here is his tendency to become "increasingly terse" over the course of bk. 4.⁴⁹ Indeed, the final two sections of the book (4.43.8–9) consist of a series of brusque retorts that give the impression that Tertullian is hastily trying to wrap

Marcion," who "doubtless turned the scene to catechetical advantage in his effort to show that the unknown God remained unknown" (*Marcion*, 123–24).

⁴⁷ Similarly Norelli, "Marcion," 35.

⁴⁸ Similarly, *plane* introduces Tertullian's concession to Marcion's critique of Peter in *Marc.* 5.3.7: "But, you object, he censures Peter for not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel. It is true (*plane*) that he censures him, yet not for anything more than inconsistency in his taking of food" (trans. Evans, *Adversus Marcionem*, 2:523, slightly modified). Additionally, *invectus* ("severely rebuked") in 4.43.4 may derive from an actual Marcionite critique. In Book 4, Tertullian's normal term for rebuke is *increpo* (appearing at least twenty-three times), and he only rarely uses *inveho* (only three times, including 4.43.4).

⁴⁹ I am indebted here to Dieter T. Roth, who directed my attention to this phenomenon in a private email correspondence.

up what has become an overly long discourse on Marcion's Gospel.⁵⁰ It is in this final section that Tertullian mentions in passing the continuing disbelief of the apostles in 24:41.

In light of these observations, Tertullian probably believes that his earlier *felix culpa* argument has already sufficiently addressed the post-resurrection doubt motif in general. The phrase "so that right to the end (*ut in finem usque*)" (4.43.3) seems to hint that this is the case. In context, this phrase most naturally refers to the end of Marcion's Gospel, and thereby also to the end of Tertullian's argument in Book 4. The implication, in my opinion, is that the clause "the disciple's unbelief persisted," though written in the context of a discussion of the resurrection report of the women and the "Emmaus" pericope, is a more general reference to the doubt motif that appears repeatedly at the end of Marcion's Gospel.⁵¹ Tertullian's *incredulitas discipulorum perseverabat* (4.43.3) more closely resembles the idea expressed in Luke 24:41 ("but still they were disbelieving [ἔτι δὲ ἀπιστοῦντων αὐτῶν]") than that in 24:11 ("and they did not believe them [καὶ ἠπίστουν αὐταῖς]") or in 24:25 ("slow of heart in not believing [βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ τοῦ πιστεῦειν]").⁵²

Moreover, if, as some scholars maintain, Marcion's version of ch. 24 was significantly shorter than Luke's, it may have encouraged reading each of these instances of the doubt motif in relation to one another. Unattested for Marcion's text are vv. 27–29, 32–36, and 40. If significant portions of these verses were indeed absent from Marcion's Gospel – and this is probable for at least vv. 27, 32, and 40 – the rebuke for unbelief in v. 25, the question about their doubts in v. 38, and the statement that they still disbelieved in v. 41 would all have appeared in rapid succession, making the post-resurrection doubt motif more prominent in Marcion's Gospel. Not surprisingly, then, it has often been suggested that Marcion construed the final instance in v. 41 ("but they were still disbelieving") as a climactic, negative assessment of the apostles.⁵³ If so, I would hazard a further conjecture, namely, that Tertullian's reply ("It is well also that *the disciples' disbelief persisted*, so that *right to the end...*") echoes a Marcionite critique that insisted the *disciples persisted in unbelief all the way*

⁵⁰ Note also the tentative way in which Tertullian begins the final paragraph: "I have, I think, fulfilled my promise (*impleuimus, ut opinor, sponsionem*)" (4.43.9).

⁵¹ This is admittedly not the only possible way to understand *perseverabat*. As Roth (see note above) has suggested to me, it could more narrowly refer to "their remaining in disbelief after hearing the testimony of the women."

⁵² Similarly Hoffmann, *Marcion*, 121.

⁵³ So Hoffman, *Marcion*, 121–23. Norelli ("Marcion," 35) and Vinzent (*Resurrection*, 121) offer similar assessments. Tyson (*Defining Struggle*, 47) concludes: "Marcion's gospel appears to be unrelenting in portraying those chosen by Jesus as blind to his purposes and failing to understand his teachings. In the end the Twelve almost disappear from the narrative; they have become false apostles."

to the end of the Gospel.⁵⁴ While the details of this mirror-reading cannot be proven, they do cohere with Marcion's critical evaluation of the apostles elsewhere and with the concessive way that Tertullian introduces the doubt motif in both 4.43.3 and 4.43.4.

Tertullian's treatment of Marcion's version of Luke 24:37–38 is more difficult to assess. Tertullian seems to express the sense of 24:37 in two different ways: *cum haesitantibus eis ne phantasma esset* and *immo phantasma credentibus*. Neither clause seems to reflect a straightforward translation of Marcion's text. While Marcion's use of a text form like that of Codex Bezae (ἐδόκουν φάντασμα θεωρεῖν) could explain Tertullian's use of *phantasma* instead of *spiritus*, neither *haesitantibus* ("hesitating") nor *credentibus* ("believing") is the most natural rendering of ἐδόκουν ("thinking"), as found in all Greek manuscripts of Luke.⁵⁵ The Latin text of Codex Bezae and the Vulgate translate ἐδόκουν as *putabant* ("thinking") and *existimabant* ("supposing"), respectively. The same two renderings appear in the Old Latin.⁵⁶ And Tertullian, in a related passage, has *puto* as an equivalent of δοκέω (*Carn. Chr.* 1.4). While it is possible that Marcion's text used a verb other than δοκέω – *haesitantibus* could potentially reflect a harmonization with Matt 28:17b (οἱ δὲ ἐδίστασαν) – the apparent quotation of Marcion's Gospel in *Adamant. Dial.* 5.12 makes this improbable. The latter reads δοκοῦσιν φαντασίαν εἶναι, and this reading is probably reflected in Tertullian's first clause (*haesitantibus ... phantasma ... esset*).⁵⁷ Still, this does not explain why Tertullian has rendered the verse in two different ways and done so using unexpected vocabulary.

My proposal is that Tertullian is juxtaposing two different possible interpretations of v. 37. In the first, the disciples hesitate about whether or not Christ is a phantasm. In the second, there is no hesitation; the disciples simply believe that Christ is a phantasm. That the second should be identified with Tertullian's preferred understanding of the verse is suggested by the term *immo* that introduces it and by the fact that it anticipates Tertullian's later accusation of inconsistency on Marcion's part: "If he was in every respect a phantasm, why did he upbraid them for believing (*credentes*) he was a phantasm?" (*Marc.* 4.43.8). Though forceful, Tertullian's rhetoric here may be misleading, especially if, as the parallel word order in *Adamant. Dial.* 5.12 just noted might suggest, Marcion's own interpretation of the verse more closely resembles that of

⁵⁴ Neither Marcion's nor Luke's Gospel ever explicitly affirms that the apostles "believed."

⁵⁵ The only exceptions are Θ and 579, which have the alternate spelling εδοκουν.

⁵⁶ Jülicher, *Itala*, 3:278. The OL regularly has *puto* for δοκέω elsewhere in Luke's Gospel (8:18; 10:36; 12:40, 51; 13:2, 4; 19:11). On *puto* as a standard translation of δοκέω in patristic authors, see notes above and Theodore A. Bergren, *A Latin-Greek Index of the Vulgate New Testament* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1991), 130.

⁵⁷ In Luke 24:37 πνεῦμα / φάντασμα is followed by θεωρεῖν / *videre* rather than εἶναι / *esset*. Harnack reconstructs Marcion's text as ἐδόκουν αὐτὸν φάντασμα εἶναι.

Tertullian's first clause. If Marcion understood v. 37 as indicating that the apostles *hesitated* about whether or not Christ was a phantasm, then he would have understood v. 38 not as a rebuke for *believing* Christ was a phantasm but for *hesitating* on the matter. In other words, in Marcion's view Christ rebukes them because they should have, without any hesitation, believed him to be a phantasm.⁵⁸ While this reconstruction does not attribute to Marcion the most natural reading of Luke 24:37–38, it is based on an articulation of v. 37 that Tertullian himself notes as a possibility. More importantly, this reconstruction does not require us to posit inconsistent editing on Marcion's part. Rather, it illustrates how Marcion might have maintained a consistently docetic reading of his Gospel, one that also permits him to criticize the apostles for their disbelief. To put it another way, it shows that Marcion may have capitalized on the doubt motif in order to promote a docetic interpretation.

Tertullian's more potent accusation of inconsistency has to do with Marcion's retention of Luke 24:39, or at least most of it:

Behold my hands and feet, that it is I myself: for a spirit hath not bones, as ye see me having. Now here Marcion, on purpose I believe, has abstained from crossing out of his gospel certain matters opposed to him, hoping that in view of these which he might have crossed out and has not, he may be thought not to have crossed out those which he has crossed out, or even to have crossed them out with good reason. But he is only sparing to statements which he proceeds to overturn by strange interpretation no less than by deletion. He will have it then that <the words> *A spirit hath not bones as ye see me having*, were so spoken as to be referred to the spirit, "as ye see me having," meaning, not having bones, even as a spirit has not (*Vult itaque sic dictum quasi, Spiritus ossa non habet sicut me videtis habentem, ad spiritum referatur, sicut me videtis habentem, id est non habentem ossa sicut et spiritus*). And what sense would there be in such a round-about (*tortuositatis*) way of putting it, when he might have said quite plainly, "For a spirit hath not bones, as ye see that I have not" (*Quia spiritus ossa non habet, sicut me videtis non habentem*)? (*Marc. 4.43.6–7*)

In modern study, this passage is sometimes considered a telltale sign that Marcion is not, after all, editing Luke but rather preserves a pre-Lukan text.⁵⁹ It would be odd that Marcion, if editing Luke, left in material that opposes his

⁵⁸ Vinzent (*Resurrection*, 121) proposes an alternative interpretation, namely, that Marcion, rather than Christ, criticized the disciples for believing that Christ was a phantasm instead of a spirit. While possible, I find this reading implausible because the implied subject of "upbraid" in the context of *Marc. 4.43.8* is more naturally Christ and aligns better with Tertullian's polemic throughout Book 4. More importantly, there is no evidence that Marcion made a distinction between φάντασμα / *phantasma* and πνεῦμα / *spiritus*. If he did so, Tertullian certainly was unaware of it, for Tertullian indicates on more than one occasion that Marcion himself claimed Christ was a phantasm, e.g., *An. 17.14*; *Marc. 3.8.1*.

⁵⁹ Schwegler, review of *Lehrbuch* (by Wette), 583–84; Klinghardt, "Plädoyer," 487–88, 495; Tyson, *Defining Struggle*, 89, 157 n. 49.

own Christology.⁶⁰ Yet methodologically speaking we must at least consider the possibility that where Tertullian detected contradiction, Marcion saw coherence.⁶¹ Indeed, a number of scholars have observed that a docetic interpretation of Luke 24:39b, while somewhat artificial, is nevertheless grammatically viable.⁶² Some aspects of Luke 24:39b can even be said to lend themselves to a docetic reading. First, Marcion may have noticed its awkward use of καθώς.⁶³ This term, a synonym for καθάπερ or καθά, often denotes an exact correspondence and is normally translated “just as.” Thus, Marcion may have expected the clause that follows καθώς to offer a close comparison with the prior clause rather than a contrast with it, and for this reason may have posited an unexpressed οὐκ in the second half of the sentence: “A spirit has not bones just as (καθώς) you see me [not] having.”⁶⁴

Alternatively, ἔχω can mean “to have” or simply “to be.”⁶⁵ Norelli suggests that καθώς encouraged Marcion to take the second instance of ἔχω in Luke 24:39 in the latter, intransitive sense.⁶⁶ And since πνεῦμα in Luke 24:39 could be taken either as a nominative or an accusative, Marcion may have exploited these ambiguities so as to interpret the text to mean “A spirit has not bones, just as you see me being.”⁶⁷ Admittedly, this not the most natural reading of Luke 24:39b. Tertullian rightly protests: “And what sense would there be in such a round-about (*tortuositatis*) way of putting it, when he might have said quite plainly, ‘For a spirit hath not bones, as ye see that I have not’?” However, the syntax does, as Tertullian himself tacitly admits, technically allow for it.

⁶⁰ Marcion taught that “the body, as having been taken from the earth, is incapable of sharing in salvation” (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.27.3).

⁶¹ Norelli, “Marcion,” 17–18.

⁶² E.g., Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered*, 65 n. 162; Hays, “Response,” 220; Carter, “Marcion’s Christology,” 557–60.

⁶³ So Carter, “Marcion’s Christology,” 558.

⁶⁴ ὡς, as found in the paraphrase of 24:39 that Adamantius cites against his opponents, was probably considered less susceptible to docetic interpretation (*Adamant. Dial.* 5.1: πνεῦμα γὰρ σάρκα καὶ ὅστ’ αὐτὸς οὐκ ἔχει ὡς ἐμὲ ὁρᾶτε ἔχοντα). Eriphanus offers a similar paraphrase: καὶ μετὰ ἀνάστασιν ὅστ’ αὐτὸς καὶ σάρκα ἔχει, ὡς αὐτὸς ἐμαρτύρησε λέγων ὡς ἐμὲ ὁρᾶτε ἔχοντα (*Pan.* 42.11.17 Elenchus 78; cf. 64.64.7). This suggests the possibility that both knew a text or paraphrase of Luke 24:39 that had ὡς ἐμὲ ὁρᾶτε in place of καθὼς ἐμὲ θεωρεῖτε.

⁶⁵ Riley notes that the same is true of the Latin equivalent (*habeo*) used by Tertullian, allowing Tertullian’s argument to work in both languages (*Resurrection Reconsidered*, 65 n. 162).

⁶⁶ “Marcion,” 35 n. 52. The intransitive sense of ἔχω is frequently employed with adverbs of manner, including ὡς, e.g., Aristophanes, *Lys.* 610; Sophocles, *Aj.* 981; *Oed. tyr.* 345; Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.114 (LSJ, s.v. “ἔχω”). One weakness of this line of interpretation is that the word order in Luke 24:39 favors taking καθὼς with θεωρεῖτε rather than with ἔχοντα. This, of course, does not necessarily mean that Marcion read it that way.

⁶⁷ So Hays, “Response,” 220.

And it coheres with Marcion's view of Christ as a "saving spirit (*spiritus*)" (Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.19.2).⁶⁸ All of this lends credibility to Tertullian's claim that Marcion, instead of deleting in its entirety a saying that opposes his Christology, sought to overturn it "by strange interpretation."⁶⁹

There is additional evidence to support Marcion's docetic reinterpretation of the verse. Marcion's version of Luke 24:39 probably did not include the phrase *ψηλαφήσατέ με καὶ ἴδετε* ("Touch me and see").⁷⁰ The fact that this phrase appears verbatim in Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3.2 shows that it is traditional and was part of the story prior to Marcion's text-critical activity.⁷¹ In other words, even if one maintains the priority of Marcion's Gospel, it would be a mistake to characterize this phrase ("touch me and see") as an anti-Marcionite addition.⁷² More plausibly, Marcion omitted *ψηλαφήσατε* in order to remove a *potential* obstacle to his docetic interpretation of the rest of the verse.⁷³ I say

⁶⁸ So Carter, "Marcion's Christology," 559.

⁶⁹ Compare also Polycarp, *Phil.* 7.1: "For everyone who does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is antichrist . . . whoever twists the sayings of the Lord to suit his own sinful desires and claims that there is neither resurrection nor judgment – well, that person is the firstborn of Satan" (trans. Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 289). On the one hand, if as Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.3.4 might suggest, *Phil.* 7.1 is directed at Marcion, it could refer in part to Marcion's docetic interpretation of Luke 24:39. For just as Polycarp denounces "whoever twists the sayings of the Lord" in order to deny the "resurrection," so also Tertullian complains of Marcion's *tortuous* reading of a saying of the Lord to deny the reality of his resurrection in the flesh. On the other hand, despite these tantalizing correspondences, it is doubtful whether Marcion is the target of Polycarp's polemic (so Moll, *Arch-Heretic*, 12–14). If not directed at Marcion, Polycarp's comments are aimed at a group of docetists whose interpretation of the gospel tradition probably served as a precursor to Marcion's "strange interpretation." Either way, Polycarp, *Phil.* 7.1 confirms the plausibility of Tertullian's account of Marcion's interpretation.

⁷⁰ On the basis of Tertullian's quotation habits, Roth (*Text*, 182–84) argues that we cannot dismiss the possibility that Marcion retained these words and that Tertullian is responsible for their omission.

⁷¹ See Chapter 3.

⁷² Even Vinzent, who argues for the priority of Marcion's Gospel, holds that Marcion removed *ψηλαφήσατέ με καὶ* ("Der Schluß des Lukasevangeliums bei Marcion," in *Marcion und seine kirchengeschichtliche Wirkung* [eds. Gerhard May and Katharina Greschat; TU 150; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002], 86) – though Vinzent's later work suggests that he may have changed his position (*Resurrection*, 120–21). While it is possible that Marcion knew an older written gospel, now lost, that lacked this phrase, this amounts to special pleading in light of (i) *Smyrn.* 3.2; (ii) the unified testimony of the church fathers that Marcion edited Luke; and (iii) the fact that Marcion himself openly admitted to text-critical work (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.27.4; Tertullian, *Praescr.* 38). Similarly Head, "Foreign God," 311 n. 14.

⁷³ So already D. Plooi, "The Ascension in the 'Western' Textual Tradition," *MKAW* 67 A, 2 (1929): 6, 16. Tertullian's and Epiphanius's quotations of Marcion's text also lack *σάρκα καὶ* ("flesh and") from Luke's *σάρκα καὶ ὀστέα* ("flesh and bones"), though they do appear in *Adamant. Dial.* 5.3, 12. Marcion may have intentionally omitted these words as well, but it is also possible that these words were not in Marcion's *Vorlage* of Luke.

“potential” because *ψηλαφήσατε* did not, in the second century, present an insurmountable obstacle to a docetic reading.⁷⁴ Some docetists accepted Jesus’s tangibility but insisted that his body was composed of something other than normal human flesh.⁷⁵ Indeed, Marcion himself retains in his “restored” Gospel passages in which Jesus touches and is touched by others.⁷⁶ More importantly, Luke’s Gospel does not explicitly narrate that the apostles touched the risen Christ. Consequently, docetists could theorize that when the apostles tried to touch Christ, they were unable to do so. Examples of precisely this phenomenon appear in *AJ* 93.3 and *2 Apoc. Jas.* (NHC IV,5) 57.10–19.⁷⁷ Marcion did not share with these other writers a desire to supplement the story with apocryphal material, so he may have chosen instead to omit *ψηλαφήσατέ με καὶ ἴδετε* in order to avoid potential ambiguity.

Alternatively, Marcion may have had a more thoroughgoing method of discounting the physicality of Jesus. In *An.* 17.14, Tertullian claims that Marcion drew on philosophical arguments against the reliability of the senses to support his docetic interpretation that Christ’s body was a *phantasma*.⁷⁸ Thus, according to Tertullian, even if the apostles and others in the Gospel narrative are said to see, hear, and touch Jesus, Marcion construes these experiences as mere *phantasia*. In response, Tertullian says:

Now, not even to His apostles was his nature ever a matter of deception. He was truly both seen and heard upon the mount; true and real was the draught of that wine at the marriage of (Cana in) Galilee; true and real also was the touch of the then believing Thomas (*fidelis et tactus exinde creduli Thomae*). Read the testimony of John: “That which we have seen,

Although all extant manuscripts of Luke contain these words, the manuscript tradition shows considerable variation as to both the order and placement of these words. Given these variations, it is conceivable that a scribe accidentally omitted *σάρκα καὶ* (or *καὶ σάρκα*) by haplography. For example, *homeoarchton* could account for the omission of *καὶ σάρκα* by a scribe working with a manuscript like that of Codex Bezae (TO Π̅Ν̅Α ΟΥ̅Τ̅Α ΟΥ̅Κ ΕΧΕΙ Κ̅Α̅Ι ΣΑΡΚΑ Κ̅Α̅Θ̅Ω̅Σ ΕΜΕ ΒΛΕΠΙΕΤΕ ΕΧΟΝΤΑ). Even Marcion himself could have made the omission accidentally. Furthermore, this omission does little to aid a docetic reading (so Evans, *Resurrection*, 108) – though a docetic motive cannot be ruled out in light of Marcion’s omission of *τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ* from Col 1:22 (Tertullian, *Marc.* 5.19.6). It is technically possible that *σάρκα καὶ* could be an antidocetic addition to Luke’s text, but the unanimous testimony of the manuscript tradition suggests otherwise. Additionally, the emphasis on the flesh of the risen Christ in Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3 may attest to the presence of *σάρκα* in an early text of Luke 24:39 (Carter, “Marcion’s Christology,” 565).

⁷⁴ See Chapter 7.

⁷⁵ See Chapter 2.

⁷⁶ E.g., Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.9.4 (cf. Luke 5:13); 4.20.8–9, 13 (cf. Luke 8:44–46).

⁷⁷ See Chapter 7.

⁷⁸ Critical edition and commentary in J. H. Waszink, *Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani De Anima* (Amsterdam: J. M. Meulenhoff, 1947). On Marcion’s possible dependence on Platonism, see also Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.3 [12.1–24.3]; Han J. W. Drijvers, “Marcionism in Syria: Principles, Problems, Polemics,” *SecCent* 6 (1987): 153–72, esp. 167.

which we have heard, which we have looked upon with our eyes, and our hands have handled (*contrectauerunt* = ἐψηλάφησαν) of the Word of life.” False, of course, and deceptive must have been that testimony, if the witness of our eyes, and ears, and hands be by nature a lie.⁷⁹

The appeals to John and 1 John are an indication that Tertullian is here addressing his readers rather than refuting Marcion on his own terms.⁸⁰ They are nevertheless significant because they imply that even acts of touching Jesus could be construed docetically.⁸¹ This is why Tertullian must stress that Thomas’s touch experience was “true and real.” It also explains why, despite the apparent inconsistency with his docetic Christology, Marcion elsewhere retains Lukan passages where Jesus touches or is touched by someone.⁸² If so, it is possible that Marcion did not engage in a detailed, tortuous exegesis of Luke 24:39, but simply assumed, as he would have for all other pericopae in the Gospel, that the whole appearance narrative was another instance of *phantasia*. In either case, it is safe to assume that Marcion did not consider Luke 24:39 a significant obstacle to his docetic Christology.

Tertullian’s appeal to the Thomas pericope is also significant in that it shows how he would have argued against Marcion’s docetism in another setting. In *Marc.* 4, for rhetorical purposes Tertullian has restricted himself to refuting Marcion only on the basis of the text of Marcion’s own Gospel (see 4.1.1–2; 4.6). In *An.* 17.14, Tertullian feels free not only to appeal to John’s Gospel but also to add to the story. Even though John’s Gospel never explicitly says so, Tertullian claims that Thomas did in fact touch the risen Jesus, and implies, contrary to John 20:29 (“Have you believed because you have *seen*?”), that it was touching that convinced Thomas. The author of the *Adamantius Dialogue* later makes a similar assertion against certain “Docetists,” including Bardesanites and Marcionites: “Thomas was also convinced when he touched the scars of the wounds” (5.6).⁸³ Ignatius supplements the story preserved in Luke 24 in much the same way (see Chapter 3), and as we shall see below and again in Chapter 8, other antidocetic writers make comparable modifications when retelling the canonical narratives ([Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 9.7; *Ep. Apos.* 12.1).

⁷⁹ *An.* 17.14 (*ANF* 3:197).

⁸⁰ Although Tertullian’s readers would affirm John and 1 John as reliable and authoritative, Marcion no doubt rejected both, as being written by a false apostle. Tertullian describes the opponents of 1 John as “premature and abortive Marcionites” (*Marc.* 3.8; similarly *Praescr.* 33.11).

⁸¹ In *AJ* 93 (see Chapter 7), when the apostle John first touches Jesus, he is solid, but when he attempts to feel Jesus a second time, he finds him bodiless. This may be a narrative illustration of the unreliability of the senses.

⁸² Roth has demonstrated that Marcion’s Gospel has ἅπτω/ἅπτομαι once in its version of Luke 5:13 and three more times in its version of Luke 8:44–46 (*Text*, 191–92, 209–10, 287–88, 299–300, 413, 418).

⁸³ Trans. Robert A. Pretty, *Adamantius: Dialogue on the True Faith in God* (Gnostica 1; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 154.

In other words, Tertullian employs a standard antidocetic tactic in *An.* 17.14 that he did not have the freedom to use in *Marc.* 4.43.

Much the same can be said of Tertullian's treatment of the doubt motif. In *An.* 17.14, Tertullian follows the standard apologetic practice of avoiding direct reference to doubt and stressing instead the apostle's faith. The apostle is not depicted as "Doubting Thomas" but as the "then believing Thomas (*exinde creduli Thomae*)"! When combined with the examples from *Apol.* 21.20–23 and *Res.* 34 (see Chapter 4), *An.* 17.14 confirms that Tertullian's references to unbelief in *Marc.* 4.43 are indeed exceptions to his normal practice of omitting the doubt motif. Again, the exception was probably necessitated by the particular circumstances in *Against Marcion*, i.e., the doubt was emphasized in either Marcion's text and/or in Marcionite criticisms of the apostles.

Returning to the examination of *Marc.* 4.43, Tertullian judges one other part of Marcion's group appearance narrative inconsistent with docetic Christology, namely, the meal scene. Tertullian argues that Jesus asked the disciples for food, "so as to show that he even had teeth." While Tertullian introduces this interpretation as if it were the only one possible, the fact that he needs to offer it at all is telling. We may recall that Ignatius is likewise compelled to gloss the tradition about Jesus's post-resurrection meal, insisting against the docetists that Jesus ate and drank "as [does] one who is in the flesh." And as we shall see shortly, [Ps.-]Justin repeatedly glosses the meal tradition to counter docetic interpretations of Luke 24. The pattern suggests that Tertullian's curt explanation may be a hurried attempt at the end of a long book to avoid having to engage in a more protracted argument against possible docetic interpretations of the meal scene. Certainly, if touching Jesus can be construed docetically, so also can a meal, as Tertullian himself observes (*Marc.* 3.8.4). In order to deny that Christ really ate, some Marcionites do in fact appeal to a well-known interpretive tradition that understood the meal of the angels in Gen 18 to be nothing more than *phantasia*.⁸⁴ Whether Marcion himself made a similar appeal to OT angelophanies – Tertullian is elsewhere (*Carn. Chr.* 3.6–9) hesitant about coming to this conclusion – or appealed to the unreliability of the senses (*An.* 17.14), it seems reasonable to conclude that Marcion viewed the meal as no more than show-eating.⁸⁵ As Ephrem complained, "[The Marcionites] believe that he *showed only images*... (They say) he ate and did not eat, he drank and did not drink" (*Hymn. c. haer.* 36.12–13). Tertullian was aware of this kind of reading, but for some reason chose not to address it in *Marc.* 4.43.

⁸⁴ Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Hom. cat.* 5.8; Ephrem, *Comm. Diat.* 21.3. Cf. *Adamant. Dial.* 5.4–12, which is directed primarily against Bardesanites but mentions Marcionites as well. On interpretive traditions of Gen 18, see discussion of [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 2.14 below.

⁸⁵ Similarly Vinzent, *Resurrection*, 121.

Additionally, Marcion may have made positive use of this show-eating to support his asceticism. Some Marcionites appeal to the post-resurrection meal as instructive for diet, giving them permission, despite their vegetarianism, to eat fish.⁸⁶ Clement of Alexandria similarly interprets Luke 24:42–43 as evidence that Jesus taught his disciples to maintain a frugal diet (*Paed.* 2.1). In short, the antidocetic reading was not the only possible way to interpret Luke’s 24:41–43. Instead of detecting an antidocetic intent, some actually thought these verses were compatible with docetism. Others saw Jesus’s meal as providing dietary guidelines. Such variety among early interpreters should caution modern readers against too quickly assuming that Luke’s meal scene was intended as a refutation of docetism.

6.1.5 Conclusion

Marcion’s Gospel included most of the words of Luke 24:37–39. Even if this is judged to be evidence against Marcion’s editorial activity, the problem remains as to how Marcion and his followers can have reconciled this material with their docetic view of Christ’s resurrection. However we assess Tertullian’s suggestions about Marcion’s editorial motivations and practices, Marcion’s retention of at least most of these verses makes it reasonable to assume that Marcionites interpreted these verses as in some sense supportive of, or at least not hostile to, their docetic Christology.⁸⁷ I have proposed some possibilities how they might have done this. Although certain aspects of my reconstruction remain hypothetical, the presence of this material in Marcion’s Gospel argues against the conclusion that Luke 24 reflects the influence of anti-Marcionite apologetic. As I have argued, even if a later redactor added $\psi\eta\lambda\alpha\phi\acute{\eta}\sigma\alpha\tau\acute{\epsilon}\ \mu\epsilon\ \kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}\ \dot{\iota}\delta\epsilon\tau\epsilon$ to Luke 24:39 – a highly unlikely scenario in light of Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3.2 – the mere invitation to touch does little to counter a docetic/Marcionite reading of the verse. A more effective, and more obviously antidocetic, defense is to add what is lacking in the canonical stories, i.e., an explicit statement that the apostles touched Jesus and confirmed his flesh to be real.⁸⁸ This is the strategy of nearly all antidocetic writers, e.g., Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3.2; [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 9.7; *Ep. Apos.* 12.1–2; *Adamant. Dial.* 5.6.

⁸⁶ Eznik of Kolb, *Deo.* 407–15. This dietary interpretation of Luke 24:41–43 may well stem from Marcion himself (Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.14). It may also have been encouraged by a variant in Luke 24:43 (K f¹³ l 844. l 2211 [c r¹ sy^c] bo^{pt} Θ aur vg [sy^{h**}]), in which Jesus gives the leftovers to the disciples (BeDuhn, *First New Testament*, 198). If so, it corroborates the theory that Marcion was using an edited version of Luke. On the diet of Marcionites, see further Alistair Stewart-Sykes, “Bread and Fish, Water and Wine: The Marcionite Menu and the Maintenance of Purity,” in *Marcion und seine kirchengeschichtliche Wirkung* (eds. Gerhard May and Katharina Greschat; TU 150; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 214–18.

⁸⁷ So Hoffmann, *Marcion*, 121.

⁸⁸ Though *AJ* 93.1–4 suggests that even this tactic can be circumvented (see Chapter 7).

Tertullian employs this standard tactic to refute Marcion in *An.* 17.14. The reason that he cannot do so in *Marc.* 4 is that Tertullian has restricted himself methodologically to the contents of Marcion's text. He must therefore resort to accusing Marcion of distorting what he considers the more natural way of reading the text.

To Tertullian's surprise, Marcion's Gospel also included the statement that Jesus ate. This means that, regardless of his reasons for doing so, Marcion accepted most, if not all, of the allegedly antidoctetic "proof" material found in Luke 24:39, 43 as authentic and authoritative!⁸⁹ Whatever we make of Tertullian's reconstruction of Marcion's exegetical reasoning, Marcion no doubt had some way of interpreting these verses so that they aligned with his docetism. If the so-called physical proofs of Luke 24 were no major obstacle for Marcion's docetism, there is little basis for the conclusion that they originated as antidoctetic polemic and certainly no warrant for characterizing them as anti-Marcionite additions to Luke.

With a number of other scholars, I have concluded that Marcion and/or his followers drew attention to the post-resurrection doubt motif, especially ἔτι δὲ ἀπιστούντων αὐτῶν in Luke 24:41, to bolster their criticisms of the apostles. This critique seems to be implied by Tertullian's counter-arguments and coheres with what we know of Marcionite polemic against the apostles. Tertullian appears to have been at a loss as to how to respond. The best defense of the apostles that he could muster was to claim that their persistent disbelief ironically turned out to be a good (*bene*) thing in that it helped Tertullian argue against Marcion's Christology. It is no wonder that he and other church fathers suppressed the apostles' doubt in their apologetic arguments.⁹⁰ In all likelihood, the only reason Tertullian uncharacteristically breaks silence in *Adversus Marcionem* is because Marcion and his followers appealed to the doubt passages as prooftexts for their polemic.

Finally, I have proposed two instances in which Marcion took advantage of the doubt motif to support his Christology. First, in Marcionite redaction the rebuke for being slow to believe in 24:25 becomes a rebuke for associating Christ with the creator God of Israel. Second, Marcionite interpretation construes the doubt in 24:38 as a rebuke for hesitating to believe Christ was a phantasm. While these last two proposals involve a measure of speculation, they are consistent with Marcionite interests and can be corroborated in part by gnostic parallels (discussed in Chapters 3 and 5) that exploit the doubt motif to criticize the apostles and/or promote a docetic Christology.

⁸⁹ This is true whether Marcion edited Luke's Gospel or had access to an earlier version of it.

⁹⁰ See Chapters 3 and 4.

6.2 [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 9.6–8⁹¹

6.2.1 Introduction

[Ps.-]Justin's *On the Resurrection* represents the primary alternative to the pattern of avoidance documented in Chapter 4: it appeals to the group appearance tradition but thoroughly rewrites it to make it less vulnerable to docetic interpretation and to portray the apostles and their doubts in a more positive light. Although some defend and others reject Justin Martyr's authorship, most who contest it still date the composition of the treatise prior to or contemporary with Irenaeus's *Against Heresies*.⁹² Consequently, consensus places the

⁹¹ Recent critical editions: Alberto D'Anna, *Pseudo-Giustino, Sulla resurrezione: discorso cristiano del II secolo* (Letteratura cristiana antica, Testi; Brescia: Morcelliana, 2001); Martin Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin – Über die Auferstehung: Text und Studie* (PTS 54; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001). Unless otherwise noted, I follow below the Greek text and versification of Heimgartner. English translations are my own but are indebted to *ANF* 1:294–299. Aside from one brief fragment from a florilegium, our only sources for *On the Resurrection* are the manuscripts of the *Sacra Parallela* of John of Damascus (eighth century CE). John quotes nearly the whole treatise, explicitly informing the reader of two brief sections that he chose to omit. These lacunae fall between chs. 8 and 9 and between chs. 9 and 10.

⁹² *On the Resurrection* is attributed to Justin by John of Damascus. Eusebius, however, does not include it in his list of works by Justin (*Hist. eccl.* 4.11.8–9).

For authenticity: Karl Semisch, *Justin der Märtyrer: Eine kirchen- und dogmengeschichtliche Monographie* (2 vols.; Breslau: August Schulz, 1840–42), 1:146–61; Pierre Prigent, *Justin et l'Ancien Testament: L'argumentation scripturaire du traité de Justin contre toutes les hérésies comme source principale du Dialogue avec Tryphon et de la Première Apologie* (Paris: Gabalda, 1964), 28–67, esp. 50–61; Georg Kretschmar, "Auferstehung des Fleisches: Zur Frühgeschichte einer theologischen Lehrformel," in *Leben angesichts des Todes: Beiträge zum theologischen Problem des Todes* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1968), 119; Eijk, "History of a Formula," 518; André Wartelle, "Le traité *De la Résurrection* de saint Justin ou le destin d'une oeuvre," in *Histoire et culture chrétienne: Hommage à Monseigneur Yves Marchasson* (Cultures & Christianisme 1; Paris: Beauchesne, 1992), 3–10; Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (Lectures on the History of Religions NS 15; New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 28–29; Claudia Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body in Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Doctrine, Community, and Self-Definition* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 78.

Against authenticity: Aimé Puech, *Les apologistes grecs du II^e siècle de notre ère* (Paris: Hatchette, 1912), 267–75, 339–42; F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock, "Loofs' Asiatic Source (IQA) and the Ps-Justin De Resurrectione," *ZNW* 36 (1937): 41–60; Horacio E. Lona, "Ps. Justins 'De Resurrectione' und die altchristliche Auferstehungsapologetik," *Salesianum* 51 (1989): 691–768; D'Anna, *Pseudo-Giustino*, 254–57; Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 203–21; Sara Parvis and Paul Foster, eds., *Justin Martyr and His Worlds* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), xv.

The lack of consensus regarding authorship seems to have been anticipated by Adolf von Harnack, who initially rejected Justin's authorship but later allowed for the possibility that it was authentic (*Die Überlieferung der griechischen Apologeten des zweiten Jahrhunderts*

composition of the document between 155 and 185 CE, i.e., during Justin's lifetime if authentic, but no later than Irenaeus if not.⁹³

While the authenticity and precise dating of the text are not essential to my argument, it is nevertheless worthwhile to examine briefly a key point of contention in the scholarly discussion. Justin's authorship is usually called into

in der alten Kirche und im Mittelalter [TU 1/1–2; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1882], 163–64; idem, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius. Erster Theil: Die Überlieferung und der Bestand* [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1893], 113; idem, *Chronologie*, 1:510). Given the difficulty in deciding the matter, perhaps the most reasonable approach is to leave open the issue of authenticity but argue for a relatively early date (Bernard Pouderon, "Le contexte polémique du De Resurrectione attribué à Justin: destinataires et adversaires," *StPatr* 31 [1997]: 143; idem, "Étude critique: À propos de l'ouvrage récent d'Alberto D'Anna, *Pseudo-Giustino, Sulla resurrezione*," *Apocrypha* 13 [2002]: 246–47).

⁹³ There are three main reasons for dating the treatise no later than 185 CE even if it is pseudonymous. First, Tertullian's *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* (211/12 CE) appears to have made extensive use of it and therefore provides a *terminus ante quem* (D'Anna, *Pseudo-Giustino*, 112–28; cf. Harnack, *Überlieferung und Bestand*, 113). Heimgartner (*Pseudojustin*, 75–76, 203–32), who attributes the treatise to Athenagoras, pushes this back to Theophilus of Antioch, who he thinks used *On the Resurrection* in his *To Autolytus* (180–183 CE). Second, a striking cluster of parallels in the fifth book of Irenaeus's *Against Heresies* suggests either that Irenaeus is also dependent on [Ps.-]Justin's treatise or that he was addressing the same group of adversaries (Lona, "De Resurrectione," 752–61; D'Anna, *Pseudo-Giustino*, 100–12; Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 77–82; cf. Harnack, *Überlieferung und Bestand*, 113). Third, the arguments in *On the Resurrection* are pedestrian by comparison with later apologists and seem to assume an inner-ecclesial situation that no longer exists in third century (D'Anna, *Pseudo-Giustino*, 100–28, 241–278). Pouderon similarly concludes that developmentally it should be placed prior to Athenagoras ("Étude critique," 246; so also Gunnar af Hällström, *Carnis Resurrectio: The Interpretation of a Creedal Formula* [Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum 86; Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1988], 41). Bynum likewise judges that the treatise's technical arguments regarding the material continuity of the resurrection body fit best within Justin's day (*Resurrection*, 28–29). In sum, *On the Resurrection* was probably composed sometime in the third quarter of the second century.

A dissenting opinion is registered in Alice Whealey, "Hippolytus' Lost *De Universo* and *De Resurrectione*: Some New Hypotheses," *VC* 50 (1996): 244–56; idem, "Pseudo-Justin's *De Resurrectione*: Athenagoras or Hippolytus?" *VC* 60 (2006): 420–30. Whealey makes a case for attributing authorship to Hippolytus of Rome sometime between 202 and 236 CE. She draws attention to overlooked parallels in Hippolytus and archeological evidence for a lost work of his on the resurrection. But Hippolytus's authorship allows very little time for his contemporary, Tertullian, who makes use of the treatise in 211/12 CE, to have obtained a copy of it. Also, as D'Anna has shown (see above), the primitive character of [Ps.-]Justin's arguments fits much better in the second century than in the third. Additionally, Hippolytus is explicit in naming his adversaries, whereas [Ps.-]Justin's *On the Resurrection* never does so. The similarities in style with Hippolytus are more likely due to Hippolytus's dependence on [Ps.-]Justin's *On the Resurrection*. If, as D'Anna proposes, *On the Resurrection* was written in Rome in the second century, it is probable that Hippolytus had read and was influenced by it, especially if he believed Justin was the author.

question on the basis of apparently irreconcilable differences in style or theology when compared to Justin's undisputed works.⁹⁴ Because the debate usually focuses on these differences, less attention has been given to potential points of literary contact between the documents.⁹⁵ Perhaps the strongest argument against authenticity is the conflict between the view of the soul in *Dial.* 5–6 and that in *Res.* 8.16–20; 10.1–10.⁹⁶ Yet it is precisely here that the author of *On the Resurrection* seems to presuppose knowledge of Justin's conversion story in the *Dialogue with Trypho*.⁹⁷ According to *Dial.* 2–8, Justin studied the philosophies of Pythagoras and Plato until he met a mysterious old man, who turned him instead to “the prophets” and to the “friends of Christ,” presumably the apostles.⁹⁸ The old man boldly exhorts Justin to reject these philosophers' opinions on the soul: “I don't care ... if *Plato or Pythagoras* ... held such views. What I say is *the truth* (τὸ ... ἀληθές) and here is how you may *learn* (μάθοις) it” (*Dial.* 6.1).⁹⁹ The author of *On the Resurrection*, when criticizing the views of the soul in Greek philosophy, alludes to this very incident, saying, “For we heard these things from *Pythagoras and Plato* even before *learning the truth* (μαθεῖν τὴν ἀλήθειαν)” (*Res.* 10.7). This allusion strongly suggests that the author of *On the Resurrection* is either Justin himself or a disciple who has pseudonymously taken on the persona of his master.¹⁰⁰ While the latter possibility offers an attractive resolution of the various discrepancies between *On the Resurrection* and the undisputed writings, the former, though

⁹⁴ Harnack's judgment, that Justin's authorship of *On the Resurrection* cannot be excluded on the basis of stylistic differences, has been confirmed by detailed studies (Prigent, *Justin*, 36–61; Wartelle, “*Résurrection*,” 7–8; Gilles Dorival, “Justin et la résurrection des morts,” in *Le résurrection chez la Pères* [ed. J.-M. Prieur; Cahiers de Biblia Patristica 7; Strasbourg: Université Marc Bloch, 2003], 101–18). Discrepancies in theology and anthropology nevertheless remain a sticking point. There are also significant differences in Scripture quotations (Hitchcock, “Source,” 41–60).

⁹⁵ Two notable exceptions are Pouderon and Hällström, who observe that Justin in *Dial.* 80.3 promises a future literary work and that *On the Resurrection* appears to fulfill this promise (Hällström, *Resurrectio*, 40; Pouderon, “Le contexte,” 145). This suggests that *On the Resurrection* was written after *Dialogue with Trypho* (ca. 155–160), but it does not require that Justin himself wrote it; a disciple or admirer may have sought to fulfill Justin's intentions by writing posthumously.

⁹⁶ Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 218.

⁹⁷ This is one of the few passages in Justin's works that Eusebius thought worthy of note (*Hist. eccl.* 4.18.6). If so, perhaps [Ps.-]Justin expects the reader to recognize the allusion.

⁹⁸ On the identity of the old man, see Andrew Hofer, “The Old Man as Christ in Justin's Dialogue with Trypho,” *VC* 57 (2003): 1–21. On the identity of the “friends of Christ,” see Craig D. Allert, *Revelation, Truth, Canon, and Interpretation: Studies in Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho* (VCSup 64; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 98–102.

⁹⁹ Trans. Falls, *Dialogue*, 13.

¹⁰⁰ Similarly Hällström, *Resurrectio*, 41; Pouderon, “Étude critique,” 246. This also suggests to me that Justin's name, whether pseudonymous or genuine, was attached to the text from its first publication.

improbable, cannot be completely ruled out. I therefore refer to the author as [Ps.-]Justin.

6.2.2 *The Opponents and Their Docetic Interpretation of Jesus's Resurrection*

The treatise is written in response to those “who say that there is no resurrection of the flesh” (*Res.* 2.1). While it is not entirely clear whether the opponents consist of separate but similar groups or of various subsets within a single group, the author responds to three main arguments against the resurrection of the flesh: (i) that it is “impossible” (2.2; 5.1, 2–6.18); (ii) that it is not desirable (2.3–13; 5:1; 7.1–12); and (iii) that it is not “promised” by God (2.14; 5.1; 8.1–25; 9.1–4).¹⁰¹ The author also addresses a fourth argument, which is really a subspecies of (iii) that is important enough for the author to address it separately, namely, (iv) “that even Jesus himself appeared only as spiritual, and no longer in flesh, but presented the mere appearance of flesh” (2.14).¹⁰² The analysis below is primarily concerned with this final argument and Justin’s response to it.

Although [Ps.-]Justin never names his adversaries, what he says about them is informative. First, they are said to “bear the name of the savior” (10.4) and call themselves “believers” (5.2). The opponents are therefore not pagans but Christian heretics.¹⁰³ The choice not to name the opponents may be an indication that they are members of the mainstream church who have been influenced by heretical opinions rather than a completely separate heretical sect.¹⁰⁴ This is how Irenaeus, who may be dependent on [Ps.-]Justin, describes his opponents when addressing the same, or at least a very similar, false teaching (*Haer.*

¹⁰¹ So D’Anna, *Pseudo-Giustino*, 129–61.

¹⁰² The *ANF* translation obscures the fact that *Res.* 2.14 is a reference to the post-resurrection appearance narratives by translating μηκέτι ... ἐν σαρκί “not in the flesh” rather than “no longer in the flesh.”

¹⁰³ When Justin speaks of groups “who are called Christians” and “say there is no resurrection of the dead,” he is referring to Marcionites, Valentinians, Basilidians, Saturnilians, and various others (*Dial.* 35.6; 80.4).

¹⁰⁴ D’Anna, who cites as a parallel Ignatius’s refusal to name his adversaries in *Smyrn.* 5.3, comes to a similar conclusion (*Pseudo-Giustino*, 245–51).

5.31.1; 5.32.1).¹⁰⁵ [Ps.-]Justin himself seems to presuppose an internal debate in his concluding exhortations.¹⁰⁶

Second, the opponents' assertion that the risen Jesus was "only spiritual ... no longer in flesh" and "presented the mere appearance of flesh" indicates that they are not thoroughgoing docetists such as Marcion, Saturninus, and the opponents of Ignatius, all of whom deny that Jesus was ever in the flesh in the first place. The phrase "no longer in the flesh" and the insistence on an "only spiritual" resurrection suggests instead that [Ps.-]Justin's opponents have adopted a view similar to that of the Ebionites of the Pseudo-Clementine literature who maintained a spiritual resurrection in which bodies of flesh would be dissolved and transformed into bodies of light. These Ebionites, like [Ps.-]Justin's opponents, support this view by appealing to Jesus's teaching that the resurrected will be "like angels."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ So D'Anna, *Pseudo-Giustino*, 100–12, 251–71. Not all find D'Anna's conclusion that Irenaeus is dependent on [Ps.-]Justin convincing (e.g., Mark J. Edwards, review of *Pseudo-Giustino, Sulla resurrezione: discorso cristiano del II secolo*, by Alberto D'Anna, and *Pseudo-Justin – Über die Auferstehung: Text und Studie*, by Martin Heimgartner, *JTS* NS 55 [2004]: 333–36; cf. Hitchcock, "Source," 41–60, who previously argued for [Ps.-]Justin's dependence on Irenaeus), but the two apologists do seem to be addressing similar opponents.

¹⁰⁶ See, e.g., *Res.* 10.6–7: "Why do we still bear with these unbelieving and scandalizing arguments, and allow ourselves not to notice that we are regressing when we listen to such an argument as this: that the soul is immortal, but the body mortal and no longer capable of being revived? For this we used to hear from Pythagoras and Plato even before we learned the truth. If then the Savior said these things and proclaimed good news only to the soul, what new thing beyond Pythagoras and Plato ... did he bring us?" These comments exposing the similarity of the false teaching to that of Pythagoras and Plato indicate that the influence of Greek philosophy is at most indirect and that [Ps.-]Justin is primarily concerned with churchgoers who do not realize that the false teachers have led them to embrace non-Christian ideas.

¹⁰⁷ *Ps.-Clem. Recog.* 3.30; *Hom.* 17.16. This Ebionite doctrine is not the only possible background for [Ps.-]Justin's opponents. On the basis of a number of correspondences with Irenaeus's description of Caprocrates, Hällström (*Resurrectio*, 18–19) argues that the Carpocratians were one of the sects to which [Ps.-]Justin responded. Although this theory is criticized by Pouderon ("Le contexte," 161–63), there is an additional parallel that both Hällström and Pouderon have overlooked. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.32.3–4 suggests the possibility that the Carpocratians may have docetized Luke's account of Jesus's resurrection and ascension by saying "The Lord also did these things *in appearance only* (φαντασιωδῶς)." This is similar to the claim of [Ps.-]Justin's opponents who claimed that Jesus "presented the mere appearance (φαντασίαν) of the flesh" (*Res.* 2.14).

Although [Ps.-]Justin does not address separationist Christology in his treatise, some noteworthy parallels make me reluctant to rule out the possibility of Eastern Valentinian or Ophite/Naassene influence on [Ps.-]Justin's opponents. *Treatise on Resurrection* (NHC I,4), often thought to be Valentinian, presupposes Christ's incarnation and suffering but affirms a spiritual-only resurrection that swallows up both the psychic and the fleshly (45.14–46.2). By contrast, [Ps.-]Justin affirms the resurrection of body, soul, and spirit (*Res.* 10.1–4). Additionally, *Treat. Res.* 48.10–15 considers the world, and by implication the resurrection of

A third characteristic is that the opponents accept the OT as authoritative but interpret it in a way that [Ps.-]Justin considers problematic.¹⁰⁸ For example, they appeal to Genesis to support their denial of the resurrection of the flesh, arguing that even though the flesh is God's creation, it "did not receive the promise (of resurrection) *at the beginning*" (5.1; 8.1).¹⁰⁹

The fourth characteristic of the opponents is that they are either Jewish Christians themselves or have otherwise been influenced by Hellenistic Judaism.¹¹⁰ A Jewish Christian background is implied by [Ps.-]Justin's description of the origins of the false teaching:

The ruler of wickedness *sent out* (ἐξέπεμψε) his apostles ... having *selected* (ἐκλεξάμενος) them from those who *crucified* (τῶν σταυρωσάντων) the Savior, and these men bore the name of the Savior, but did the works of him who sent them, *on account of whom blasphemy*

the flesh, to be φαντασία – the term that [Ps.-]Justin's opponents use to describe Jesus's resurrection appearances (*Res.* 2.14).

According to Hippolytus, the Naassenes taught that resurrection involved a change from an earthly body to a spiritual body without flesh (*Haer.* 5.8.18–24). The Ophites maintained that Jesus's resurrection body was both "psychic and spiritual" (*Haer.* 1.30) rather than "spiritual only." However, the use of latter phrase in the context of [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 2.14 is intended as a denial of the flesh and does not necessarily presuppose a rejection of a psychic resurrection. Also, the Ophites do not make a sharp terminological distinction between the psychic and the pneumatic (Birger A. Pearson, *The Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology in 1 Corinthians: A Study in the Theology of the Corinthian Opponents of Paul and Its Relation to Gnosticism* [Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1973], 61, 122 n. 63).

¹⁰⁸ This confirms that Marcion is not [Ps.-]Justin's primary target (so D'Anna, *Pseudo-Giustino*, 161).

¹⁰⁹ The logic of this argument is not exactly clear because the basis for the claim that the flesh did not receive the promise at the beginning is not stated, at least not in the extant fragments of *On the Resurrection*. If this treatise is the same Περὶ Ἀναστάσεως by Justin Martyr mentioned by Procopius of Gaza (see text in Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 286–93), it is possible to supply the missing proposition. Procopius includes Justin's treatise in a list of works by various church fathers who reject a heretical allegorical interpretation of Gen 3:21, namely, that the "garments of skin" given by God to Adam and Eve is a reference to the human body (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.5.5; Clement, *Exc.* 55.1). If so, the false teachers are arguing that the flesh is given after the fall and is therefore not promised the resurrection "from the beginning" (*Res.* 5.1). Although the available fragments of *On the Resurrection* do not include this argument, it seems to fit nicely into the lacuna between chs. 8 and 9, especially since it would follow the discussion of Gen 1–2 in *Res.* 7 and the discussion of the σάρξ as God's workmanship in *Res.* 8 (so already Semisch, *Justin der Märtyrer*, 1:148–49). Tertullian, who at certain points depends on [Ps.-]Justin, refutes this interpretation of Gen 3:21 in his own treatise on the resurrection (*Res.* 7).

¹¹⁰ Prigent, *Justin*, 43; François Altermath, *Du corps psychique au corps spirituel: Interprétation de 1 Cor. 15, 35–49 par les auteurs chrétiens des quatre premiers siècles* (BGBE 18; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1977), 62; Hällström, *Resurrectio*, 18–19; Horacio E. Lona, *Über die Auferstehung des Fleisches: Studien zur frühchristlichen Eschatologie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), 141–42.

has accompanied even his name (δι' οὗς καὶ τῷ ὀνόματι ἠκολούθησεν ἡ βλασφημία). (*Res.* 10.11–12)

“Those who crucified the Savior” is almost certainly a reference to the Jews, as can be seen from the striking set of verbal correspondences in Justin, *Dial.* 17.1–2:

For after you had *crucified* (σταυρῶσαι) Him ... not only did you not repent ... but having *selected* (ἐκλεξάμενοι) *chosen* (ἐκλεκτούς) men from Jerusalem, you *sent* them *out* (ἐξεπέμψατε) into all the earth to report the emergence of the godless sect of the Christians... Isaiah cries out justly: “*On account of* you, my name is *blasphemed* (δι' ὑμᾶς τὸ ὄνομά μου βλασφημεῖται) among the Gentiles.”¹¹¹

The parallel offers further evidence of the author's knowledge of Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*.¹¹² Yet it also illustrates a significant conceptual difference: whereas in Justin, *Dial.* 17.1–2 the false apostles are non-Christian Jews denouncing Christians, in [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 10–11 they are Jewish Christians.¹¹³

Jewish influence, once acknowledged, allows for a coherent reconstruction of the logic behind the opponents' docetic interpretation of Jesus's resurrection (*Res.* 2.14). [Ps.-]Justin's opponents appear to have been interpreting the post-resurrection appearance tradition by analogy with the way Hellenistic Jews interpreted OT angelophanies.¹¹⁴ In their argument against the resurrection of the flesh, the opponents cite as proof Jesus's comparison of the resurrection state to that of angels (Matt 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:34–36).¹¹⁵ Immediately

¹¹¹ Isa 52:5 LXX; cf. Rom 2:24.

¹¹² This is another of the few passages from Justin mentioned by Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 4.18.7).

¹¹³ Pace Pouderon (“Le contexte,” 163–66), who dissents from the consensus and suggests that *Res.* 10.11–12 is really an allusion to Simon Magus. Pouderon proposes that Simon Magus, a Samaritan, can be considered one of those who crucified the Savior because Justin places both Jews and Samaritans under the banner “Israel” (*I Apol.* 53.4).

¹¹⁴ OT angelophanies appear to have been a “starting point for christological understanding and expression” in early Jewish Christianity (Richard N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* [SBT 2/17; London: SCM, 1970], 32; see further Martin Werner, *Die Entstehung des christlichen Dogmas problemgeschichtlich dargestellt* [Leipzig: Haupt, 1941], 302–21; Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* [The Development of Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicea 1; trans. John A. Baker; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964], 117–46; Stroumsa, “Polymorphie”; idem, “Form[s] of God: Some Notes on Metatron and Christ,” *HTR* 76 [1983]: 269–88; Darrell D. Hannah, *Michael and Christ: Michael Traditions and Angel Christology in Early Christianity* [WUNT 2/109; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999]; Marshall, “Wrath,” esp. 12–17).

¹¹⁵ This argument itself may be another indicator of the Jewish-Christian origin of the false teaching. The Ebionites make a similar argument, claiming on the basis of the same dominical saying, that in the resurrection the flesh will be dissolved and transformed into light (*Ps.-Clem. Recog.* 3.30; *Hom.* 17.16). The late apocryphal text known as the *Apocalypse of Saint John the Theologian* (ca. third to fifth century CE), which also exhibits some

following this, [Ps.-]Justin relates a further claim of the opponents that “even Jesus himself” did not rise in the flesh:

But is it not absurd to say that these members will exist after the resurrection from the dead, *since the Savior said, “They neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but will be as angels in heaven”*? And the angels, they say, have neither flesh, nor do they eat, nor have sexual intercourse; so that neither will there be a resurrection of the flesh. So then, by relating these and similar arguments, they attempt to turn people away from the faith. *And there are some who say that even Jesus himself appeared as only spiritual, no longer in flesh, but presented the mere appearance of the flesh.* These too are trying to rob the flesh of the promise. (*Res.* 2.9–14)

In the above passage, the appeal to Jesus’s resurrection appearance (2.14) presupposes and augments the prior appeal to Jesus’s teaching about angels and the resurrection (2.9–12).¹¹⁶ The logic is as follows: not only will people in general be like angels in the resurrection, but “even” Jesus’s resurrection body was angel-like, i.e., “only spiritual” and presenting “the mere appearance of the flesh.”¹¹⁷

The language employed by the opponents also indicates an angelophanic interpretation of Jesus’s resurrection appearance. φαντασία and its cognate, φάντασμα, appear often in Hellenistic-Jewish interpretations of OT

signs of Jewish-Christian influence, appeals to this saying of Jesus as proof that all people will arise “bodiless (ἄσώματοι).”

¹¹⁶ The two arguments are linked by the statement “So then, by these and similar arguments, they attempt to distract men from the faith” (2.13). Although 2.14 may represent the opinion of a distinct group (or sub-group) of opponents, it is nevertheless one of the “similar arguments” mentioned in 2.13. This is made explicit in the important manuscript Rupefucaldinus (Berolinensis gr. 46), which connects 2.13 to 2.14 with γάρ rather than δέ. While possibly a later corruption, this variant demonstrates that at least one ancient scribe understood 2.14 as illustrative of 2.13. More importantly, the dependence of the second argument on the first is also confirmed by the syntax of 2.14: εἰσὶ δέ τινες οἱ λέγουσι καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν Ἰησοῦν πνευματικὸν μόνον παρεῖναι, μηκέτι ἐν σαρκί, φαντασίαν δὲ σαρκὸς παρεσχηκέναι, πειρώμενοι καὶ αὐτοὶ ἀποστρεφεῖν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τὴν σάρκα. The adjunctive force of καὶ in the final clause of 2.14 (“they too [καὶ] are trying to rob the flesh of the promise”) indicates that those who deny Jesus’s appearance in the flesh in 2.14 are, at least in the author’s mind, closely associated with the opponents mentioned in 2.9–12. Even more telling, the presumably ascensive καὶ in the first clause (“even [καὶ] Jesus himself”) suggests that Jesus is a special example of a broader principle, and so presupposes the earlier teaching about the general resurrection and the angels. Further evidence of this appears in *Res.* 9.9. Immediately following his refutation of their docetic interpretation of Jesus’s resurrection, the author again alludes to Jesus’s refutation of the Sadducees. This time, however, he rhetorically turns the tables on his opponents and calls them Sadducees for not being convinced of the “resurrection of the flesh.”

¹¹⁷ Cf. *Ep. Apost.* 19.17: “Will it be like the angels or [in] the [flesh]?” (trans. Julian V. Hills, *The Epistle of the Apostles* [Early Christian Apocrypha 2; Salem, Oreg.: Polebridge, 2009], 44).

angelophanies.¹¹⁸ Philo's interpretation of the meal eaten by Abraham's angelic visitors in Gen 18 offers a close parallel to *Res.* 2.14:

It is a marvel indeed that though they neither ate nor drank, they *presented the mere appearance* (παρέχειν φαντασίαν) of both *eating* (ἐσθιόντων) and *drinking* (πινόντων). (Philo, *Abr.* 118)

And there are some who maintain that even Jesus himself appeared only as spiritual, and *no longer* in flesh, but *presented the mere appearance of flesh* (φαντασίαν δὲ σαρκὸς παρεσχικέναι). ([Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 2.14)¹¹⁹

Philo's explanation of Gen 18 reflects a standard assumption among Hellenistic Jews that angels do not really eat.¹²⁰ This assumption is explicitly stated by [Ps.-]Justin's opponents a few lines earlier (*Res.* 2.11). The opponents also deny the physicality of Jesus's resurrection by employing the same construction (παρέχω + φαντασίαν + genitive) that Philo uses to deny that the angels really ate and drank. Philo's understanding of Gen 18 not only represents a common interpretive tradition; the construction he uses seems to reflect a conventional way of expressing that tradition.¹²¹ Josephus, for example, employs a similar construction, only substituting δόξα for φαντασία: "but they presented an appearance of eating (οἱ δὲ δόξαν αὐτῷ παρέσχον ἐσθιόντων)" (*A.J.* 1.197). An Aramaic equivalent also appears in *Tg. Neof.* Gen 18:8: "they were giving the appearance as of eating and as of drinking (*whwwn mthmyn hyk 'klyn whyk*

¹¹⁸ When recounting OT angelophanies, Josephus regularly refers to the angels as φαντάσματα, e.g., *A.J.* 1.325, 331–334 (Gen 32); 3.62 (cf. Exod 3); 5:213, 277 (cf. Judg 6; 13) (so Kevin P. Sullivan, *Wrestling with Angels: A Study of the Relationship between Angels and Humans in Ancient Jewish Literature and the New Testament* [AGJU 55; Leiden: Brill, 2004], 49–50). Similarly, Philo refers to the story of the angels ascending and descending Jacob's ladder as a God-sent φαντασία (*Somm.* 1.133; cf. Gen 28). *Testament of Reuben* 5.6–7 likewise refers to the outward appearance of the Watchers as φαντασία (cf. Gen 6:4). In the Greek Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, φαντασία and φάντασμα consistently have a more negative connotation in that they are nearly always employed in reference to demons (or fallen angels) rather than good angels (*T. Sol.* [A] 3:7; *T. Reu.* 3:7; 5.6–7; *Apoc. Adam* 1:4; *Liv. Pro.* 23.2; *I En.* 99.7 [P.Beatty VIII]).

¹¹⁹ In Rufefucaldinus (Berolinensis gr. 46), *Res.* 2.14 is even closer to Philo; it has παρέχειν in place of παρεσχικέναι in Heimgartner's critical text.

¹²⁰ E.g., Tobit 12:19; Philo, *Abr.* 111–118; *QG* 4.9; Josephus, *A.J.* 1.197; Justin, *Dial.* 57; *T. Ab.* [A] 4.9; *Tg. Neof.* Gen 18.8; *Tg. Ps.-J.* Gen 18.8; 19.3; *Gen. Rab.* 48.11, 14; *Lev. Rab.* 34.8; *Exod. Rab.* 47.5; *b. B. Meši'a* 86b. See further David Goodman, "Do Angels Eat?" *JJS* 37 (1986): 160–75; Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts*, 65; Darrell D. Hannah, "The Ascension of Isaiah and Doetic Christology," *VC* 53 (1999): 172–76; Sullivan, *Wrestling*, 179–95.

¹²¹ παρέχω + φαντασίαν + genitive seems to be idiomatic for describing a variety of situations in which appearances can be deceiving, e.g., Josephus, *J.W.* 3.192. It is therefore possible that the phraseology [Ps.-]Justin's opponents is independent of Hellenistic Jewish exegetical traditions. But the Jewish background of the false teachers suggests that they were more probably influenced by the repeated use of this construction or others like it Jewish interpretations of Gen 18.

štyñ).”¹²² In sum, given their appeal to Jesus’s saying about the resurrection and angels and their claim that angels don’t eat, the phraseology in *Res.* 2.14 makes clear that [Ps.-]Justin’s opponents were drawing on traditional interpretations of Gen 18 and applying them to the stories of Jesus’s resurrection appearances.¹²³

That they did so is not surprising in light of the frequency with which docetic interpretations of Gen 18 are the topic of polemical discussions about Christology in the early Church. Already in *Dial.* 55–57, Justin identifies Christ with one of the three who appeared to Abraham and agrees with Trypho that they did not actually eat.¹²⁴ Tertullian, though he disagrees with the standard interpretation and says the angels really did eat, suspects that Marcion has inconsistently modeled his Christology after the angels in Gen 18 (*Marc.* 4.38; *Carn. Chr.* 3). Apelles, Marcion’s disciple, explicitly appeals to Gen 18 for his celestial flesh Christology (*Carn. Chr.* 6). According to later church fathers, Marcionites, Manichaeans, Bardesanites, and Valentinians all appeal to Gen 18 as a model for their docetic Christologies.¹²⁵ One example from the last part of the *Adamantius Dialogue*, which is directed against docetists, primarily Bardesanites and Marcionites, is worth mentioning here. The opponents claim that “just as the angels appeared to Abraham and ate and drank and conversed, so also Christ [appeared to the disciples]” (5.1). Adamantius’s refutation includes language that closely echoes [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 2.14. Whereas [Ps.-]Justin’s opponents claim that Jesus appeared as “*only spiritual* (πνευματικὸν μόνον), no longer in the *flesh* (ἐν σαρκί), but presenting the *mere appearance*

¹²² Cf. *Gen. Rab.* 48.14: “they were only appearing as if eating (*hyw 'l nr 'yw k'wklyw*).”

¹²³ Pace, D’Anna (*Pseudo-Giustino*, 158–60), who argues that the opponents have been influenced by the idea, widespread in Middle Platonism, that demons were equipped with an invisible pneumatic body that they could use to produce *phantasia* to make themselves visible. On the one hand, this is certainly part of the historical milieu and may well have influenced the opponents indirectly. On the other hand, it is intrinsically more probable that the opponents compared Christ to the angels of Gen 18 in Jewish tradition than to the *daimones* of Platonist literature, especially since the opponents are Christians who appeal to the creation account in Genesis and quote Jesus to support their doctrine of an angelomorphic resurrection.

¹²⁴ Similarly, Epiphanius (*Pan.* 30.3.3–6) knows of Ebionites who identify Christ with the angel who appeared to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He also refers to an Elchasite/Ebionite φαντασία in which Christ is depicted as a ninety-six mile tall angel (*Pan.* 30.3.2; 30.17.5–7).

¹²⁵ E.g., Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Hom. cat.* 5.8; Ephrem, *Comm. Diat.* 21.3; Eutherius of Tyana, *Confutationes quarundam propositionum* 15; *Adamant. Dial.* 5.4–12. On the prominence of Gen 18 in christological discussions among the church fathers, see also Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling, “Abraham’s Angels: Jewish and Christian Exegesis of Genesis 18–19,” in *Exegetical Encounter between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity* (eds. Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling; Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series 18; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 181–203.

(φαντασίαν) of flesh,” Adamantius refutes those who appeal to Gen 18 to argue that “Christ did have not *flesh* (σάρκα), but *was only a spirit* (μόνον ἦν πνεῦμα), having the *mere appearance* (φαντασίαν) of a man” (*Adamant. Dial.* 5.6). The key difference here is that the dialogue partners of Adamantius seem to claim that Christ never had flesh, whereas [Ps.-]Justin’s opponents limit this claim to Jesus’s resurrection. Regardless, the verbal correspondences help to confirm that docetizing interpretations of Gen 18 stand behind *Res.* 2.14.

The prominence of Luke 24 in [Ps.-]Justin’s response (to be discussed below) suggests that the opponents may be responding primarily to Luke’s Gospel when reinterpreting Jesus’s appearance as an angelic φαντασία.¹²⁶ This suggestion is corroborated by the presence of an allusion to Luke 24:15 (καὶ αὐτὸς [ὁ] Ἰησοῦς) in [Ps.-]Justin’s quotation of his opponents (“*Even Jesus himself* [καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν Ἰησοῦν] ... presented the mere appearance of flesh”).¹²⁷ Moreover, Luke 24 includes a number of motifs typical of angelophanies – sudden appearances and disappearances (vv. 31 and 36), a traveling stranger (vv. 13–35), the visitor depicted a standing (v. 36), a fearful response to the appearance (vv. 37–38), an ascent into heaven (v. 51) – any number of which could have prompted an angelophanic reading.¹²⁸ Given the influence of traditional

¹²⁶ Contra Hällström (*Resurrectio*, 30), who claims that the opponent’s view in [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 2.14 “does not rest on exegesis of any Easter narrative in the canonical gospels.” Hällström provides no evidence to support this claim. [Ps.-]Justin presupposes that his opponents have access to the same Gospel traditions, so they are presumably familiar with Luke 24. According to [Ps.-]Justin, the problem with the opponents is that “the eyes of their heart” are so “blind” that they have not paid attention to the details of these Gospel traditions (*Res.* 3.16–4.6, esp. 4.3). D’Anna (*Pseudo-Giustino*, 158–60) is surely closer to the mark than Hällström when he proposes that [Ps.-]Justin’s opponents are using the term φαντασία as an interpretation of Jesus’s stigmata in pericopae such as Luke 24:36–49 and John 20:19–29. Some early critics of the Christian doctrine of the resurrection, e.g., Celsus and Porphyry, show awareness of docetic interpretations of the appearance stories, and specifically of Jesus eating and showing his wounds (Origen, *Cels.* 2.61–62; 3.22; 7.35; Augustine, *Ep.* 102.2–7; cf. Nemesius, *Nat. Hom.* 38: “some Christians *phantasize* the resurrection”). Epiphanius also seems to argue against those who claim the resurrection appearances were φαντασίαι (*Pan. De Incarnatione* 3.4–5). A specifically angelomorphic interpretation of Jesus’s resurrection appearance is given in *Soph. Jes. Chr.* (NHC III,4) 91.10–13: “The Savior appeared, not in his previous form, but in the invisible spirit. And his likeness resembles a great angel of light” (trans. Parrott, *Nag Hammadi Codices III,3–4 and V,1*, 39).

¹²⁷ The context in each case is the appearance of the risen Jesus, and αὐτός in Luke 24:15 is redactional – confirming the opponent’s knowledge of Luke. This is the verse that the Ophites allude to when denying that Jesus rose in the flesh (see Chapter 3). [Ps.-]Justin’s opponents probably also appealed to the Emmaus pericope to support their angelomorphic, docetic Christology. This may also be why [Ps.-]Justin omits this pericope in his response in *Res.* 9.

¹²⁸ See already Hermann Gunkel, “The Religio-Historical Interpretation of the New Testament,” *The Monist* 13 (1903): 398–455: “Christ appears as a traveller unrecognised and reveals his mysterious and divine nature only through certain characteristics; but as soon as he

interpretations of Gen 18, the opponents' term φαντασία may be chiefly directed against Jesus's meal in Luke 24:41–43. This would help to explain the otherwise superfluous insistence of the opponents in *Res.* 2.11 that angels do not eat. In context, the opponents' primary complaint against the flesh is that it causes sin, with a particular, albeit muted, reference to sexual organs. The entirety of the next chapter is devoted to arguing that sexual organs do not necessarily have the same functions in the resurrection. In this context, the first and third claims of the opponents about angels, that they do not have flesh and that they do not have sexual intercourse, respectively, are integral as they directly support the opponent's argument. The second claim, that angels do not eat, is peripheral at best, unless it is mentioned in anticipation of the post-resurrection appearance tradition in 2.14.¹²⁹

Either or both of the foods mentioned in [Ps.-] Justin's text of Luke 24:42, which includes both broiled fish and honeycomb (*Res.* 9.7), may have encouraged an angelomorphic interpretation.¹³⁰ For readers with a background in Jewish Christianity or Hellenistic Judaism, Luke's ιχθύος ὀπτοῦ ... ἔφαγεν, might sound like an echo of Tobit 6:5 [G¹], in which Tobias and the angel (ἄγγελος) broiled a fish and ate it (ιχθὺν ὀπήσαντες ἔφαγον).¹³¹ At the end of the book, the angel insists that he did not really eat but that Tobias was seeing a vision (12:19). The angel then ascends into heaven much as Jesus does in Luke-Acts.¹³² If [Ps.-]Justin's opponents recognized similarities between Luke and Tobit, then it may have encouraged them to interpret Jesus's eating of broiled fish as an angelic φαντασία.¹³³

is recognised, he disappears. This sketch of the story is perfectly analogous to the oldest narratives of the appearance of a divinity: the story might be taken from Genesis so far as its style goes." See further Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts*, 62–71.

¹²⁹ While the brief summary of the opponents' view in *Res.* 2.14 does not refer to the risen Jesus eating, [Ps.-]Justin does emphasize the Lukan tradition of Jesus's post-resurrection meal in 9.7 in the context of refuting the position of the opponents introduced in 2.14.

¹³⁰ Most manuscripts (K N Γ Δ Θ Ψ f¹.¹³ 33 565 700 892 1241 1424 ℓ 844 ℓ 2211 ̱ lat sy^c.p.h.** bo^{pt}) include the honeycomb.

¹³¹ ὀπτός does not appear in [Ps.-]Justin's account, but this should not cause us to doubt that it appeared in his source. The term is not absent from any Greek manuscripts of Luke. It is possible that [Ps.-]Justin omitted it because he was summarizing the account and found this detail unnecessary. Alternatively, if he was aware of the similarity with Tobit, he may have omitted it intentionally. As we shall see below, [Ps.-]Justin omits a number of details that would lend themselves to, or be vulnerable to, docetic interpretation.

¹³² Catchpole (*Resurrection People*, 88–98) examines this and a number of other parallels between Tobit and Luke.

¹³³ Whether or not Luke actually intended his narrative, which seems to have been directed more towards Gentile readers, to be read in light of Tobit is another matter altogether. On the possible influence of Tobit's angel on early Christology, see Phillip Muñoz, "Raphael, Azariah and Jesus of Nazareth: Tobit's Significance for Early Christology," *JSP* 22

The honeycomb may also have encouraged an angelophanic interpretation. At least some Hellenistic Jews in the second-century understood honeycomb to be the special diet of angels (*Jos. Asen.* 14–16).¹³⁴ While it is not possible to confirm that the Jewish influence on [Ps.-]Justin’s opponents included this particular belief, it is plausible. Of course, the influence need not have been Jewish in origin. In the ancient world, honey had the reputation of being divine or heavenly food.¹³⁵ Other early Christians, most notably Irenaeus and Tertullian, shared this view. Irenaeus, though he never quotes or alludes to Luke 24:41–43, interprets the prophecy of Isa 7:15 to mean that Jesus ate honey as a child. He concludes from this that it is a mistake to “understand him to be a mere man” (*Haer.* 3.21.3). Tertullian, for his part, was aware that the risen Jesus “tasted the honeycomb.” In his view, it was part and parcel with Christ’s exaltation to heavenly glory, and more specifically his shedding of the temporary earthly status of being “for a time a little less than the angels” (*Cor.* 14.4; cf. Heb 2:6–9; Ps 8:5–7 LXX).

6.2.3 [Ps.-]Justin’s *Antidocetic Redaction*

Now that I have sketched out some probable and possible features of the opponents’ argument, we are in a better position to understand [Ps.-]Justin’s response. He appeals to the fact that “the Savior through the whole Gospel has demonstrated the salvation of our flesh” (10.5). By this he means the stories of Jesus healing the sick, raising the dead, appearing to the disciples after his own resurrection, and ascending into heaven (9.1–8).¹³⁶ Thus by “the whole gospel” [Ps.-]Justin seems to be referring to a complete, presumably written, gospel narrative of Jesus’s life that included each of these elements. On the one hand, Luke would appear to be the most likely candidate, as Luke alone narrates the ascension. On the other hand, [Ps.-]Justin’s quotations and paraphrases of gospel materials show evidence of harmonization or conflation of multiple

(2012): 3–39, esp. 34–35. Muñoa provides a survey of previous scholarship and a number of suggestive, albeit speculative, links between Tobit and the NT.

¹³⁴ Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts*, 66–68. Honey may have first become known as angel food by means of a conflation of Ps 78:25 (“men ate the bread of angels”) and Exod 16:31 (“The house of Israel called it manna ... and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey”). *Joseph and Aseneth* 16.8 likens the honey to “dew from heaven” (cf. the “dew” in Exod 16:13–14 and Num 11:9).

¹³⁵ E.g., Plato, *Symp.* 203b; Homer, *Od.* 5.92; b. *Yoma* 75b; *Sib. Or.* 3.746; 5.281–283.

¹³⁶ Cf. Clement, *Exc.* 7: “The Lord, having made the dead whom he raised an image of the spiritual resurrection, raised them not incorruptible with respect to their flesh, but as yet to die again.” The Valentinians, for their part, did not deny the reality of the gospel stories in which Jesus raised people from the dead, but they interpreted their significance differently. For [Ps.-]Justin they foreshadow the salvation of the flesh, whereas for the Valentinians these resuscitations were a mere image of spiritual resurrection.

gospels.¹³⁷ It is therefore possible that by the “whole gospel” [Ps.-]Justin meant “throughout the fourfold gospel.” In any case, with respect to the resurrection

¹³⁷ The clearest evidence of harmonization appears in [Ps.-]Justin’s longer quotation of Jesus’s teaching on the resurrection and angels in *Res.* 3.17:

		<u>οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος</u> <u>τούτου γαμοῦσι</u> <u>καὶ ἐγαμίσκονται,</u> <u>οἱ δὲ υἱοὶ</u> <u>τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος</u>	<u>οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος</u> <u>τούτου γαμοῦσιν</u> <u>καὶ γαμίσκονται,</u> <u>οἱ δὲ καταζωθέντες</u> <u>τοῦ αἰῶνος</u> ἐκείνου τυχεῖν καὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως τῆς ἐκ νεκρῶν <u>οὔτε γαμοῦσιν</u> <u>οὔτε γαμίζονται,</u> <u>οὔτε γαμίσκονται,</u> <u>οὔτε γαμίζονται</u> οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀποθανεῖν ἔτι δύνανται, ἰ <u>σάγγελοι</u> γὰρ εἰσιν
ἐν γὰρ τῇ	ὅταν γὰρ		
ἀναστάσει	ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῶσιν		
<u>οὔτε γαμοῦσιν</u> <u>οὔτε γαμίζονται,</u>	<u>οὔτε γαμοῦσιν</u> <u>οὔτε γαμίζονται,</u>	<u>οὔτε γαμοῦσιν</u> <u>οὔτε γαμίσκονται,</u>	<u>οὔτε γαμοῦσιν</u> <u>οὔτε γαμίζονται</u> οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀποθανεῖν ἔτι δύνανται, ἰ <u>σάγγελοι</u> γὰρ εἰσιν
<u>ἀλλ’</u> <u>ὡς ἄγγελοι</u> <u>ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ</u> εἰσιν.	<u>ἀλλ’</u> εἰσιν <u>ὡς ἄγγελοι</u> ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.	<u>ἀλλ’</u> ἔσσονται <u>ὡς ἄγγελοι</u> <u>ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ.</u>	καὶ <u>υἱοὶ</u> εἰσιν θεοῦ τῆς ἀναστάσεως <u>υἱοὶ</u> ὄντες.

(Matt 22:30) (Mark 12:25) ([Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 3.17) (Luke 20:34–36)

The first part of the quotation repeats verbatim Luke 20:34, a verse that is unique to Luke and typically attributed to Lukan redaction (Marshall, *Luke*, 738; John Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53* [WBC 35C; Dallas: Word, 1993], 963, 965; though see Bovon, *Luke*, 3:62–63). It differs from the critical text of NA²⁸ by only two letters: instead of γαμίσκονται it has the compound form ἐγαμίσκονται, but most Greek manuscripts of Luke include a compound form (εκαγαμίζονται or εκαγαμίσκονται). And other parallels suggest that [Ps.-]Justin follows a non-Alexandrian text of Luke (see below). The last two clauses follow Matt 22:30/Mark 12:25 closely, the main difference being the future ἔσσονται in place of the present εἰσίν as in all the Synoptics. This may be a stylistic change, possibly influenced by the parallel quotation in Justin, *Dial.* 81.4, which also employs the future here but otherwise differs significantly from [Ps.-]Justin’s harmonization. The middle section of *Res.* 3.17 differs from all the Synoptics in wording. Although Heimgartner (*Pseudojustin*, 149–50), on the basis of parallels in Clement, *Strom.* 3.12 [87.1, 3]; 3.14 [95.3], claims that [Ps.-]Justin is here dependent on Julius Cassian or on the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the wording of *Res.* 3.17 is still closer to Luke 20:34–36 than to either of these parallels. More probably [Ps.-]Justin’s οἱ δὲ υἱοὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος is his summary of Luke 20:35a (οἱ δὲ καταζωθέντες τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐκείνου) and 20:36b (υἱοὶ εἰσιν θεοῦ τῆς ἀναστάσεως υἱοὶ ὄντες).

In addition to the resurrection narrative to be discussed below, there are two other instances of harmonization. The first is *Res.* 8.24, which conflates traditions from Matt 5:44, 46 and Luke 6:27, 32. While the quotation is mostly Matthean, [Ps.-]Justin has χάρις, which reflects Lukan redaction (so Marshall, *Luke*, 262; Bovon, *Luke*, 1:237; cf. the corroborating evidence in Denaux and Corstjens, *Vocabulary*, 640). The second is *Res.* 7.12, which quotes Mark 2:17 verbatim but then adds εἰς μετάνοιαν, a phrase unique to Luke’s version of the saying (Luke 5:32; cf. Matt 9:13). This addition is absent in one manuscript, and so it is

appearance account in *Res.* 9.6–8, [Ps.-]Justin himself is no doubt largely responsible for the harmonization process. As we shall see, the specific combination of source material, the omissions, the insertions, and the transformations all contribute to his polemic against his opponents.

Overall, [Ps.-]Justin loosely follows the framework of Luke 24:36–51, incorporating traditions from various sources along with his own interpretive glosses.¹³⁸ This is illustrated in the chart below. For the sake of convenient reference in the analysis that follows, I have included in the far-left column subject headings appropriate to the content of Luke’s narrative.

	Luke 24:36-51	[Ps.-]Justin, <i>Res.</i> 9.6–8	Other Parallels
1. Appearance	As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them.		
2. Initial doubts	But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw (θεωρεῖν) a spirit.	Desiring to confirm this, while his disciples were wondering whether to believe that he had truly risen in the body, while they were seeing (βλεπόντων) and doubting (δισταζόντων),	[cf. <i>Ep. Apoc.</i> 11.5] [cf. Luke 24:41] When they saw (ιδόντες) they worshiped him, but some/they doubted (ἐδίστασαν). (Matt 28:17)
3. Jesus’s question	And <u>he said to them</u> (εἶπεν αὐτοῖς), “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?”	<u>he said to them</u> (εἶπεν αὐτοῖς), “ <u>Do you not yet have faith?</u> ” (οὐπῶ ἔχετε πίστιν;)	And <u>he said to them</u> (εἶπεν αὐτοῖς), “Why are you so afraid? “ <u>Do you not yet have faith?</u> ” (οὐπῶ ἔχετε πίστιν;) (Mark 4:40)
4. Jesus’s statement of identity	<u>See...that it is I</u> (ἴδετε...ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι) myself(αὐτός).	He says, “ <u>See that it is I.</u> ” (ἴδετε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι)	

possible that the harmonization was a scribal addition. D’Anna judges εἰς μετάνοιαν to be original; Heimgartner does not.

¹³⁸ Similarly Hug, *La finale*, 75; Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 179–80. Hällström (*Resurrectio*, 49) posits that the choice of Luke’s account may be in response to Marcionites. This is possible, but the profile of the opponents suggests that they are not Marcionites (see above). It would be more plausible to propose that the opponents are members of the mainstream church who have been persuaded by Marcionite teaching on the resurrection but do not agree with Marcionite rejection of the incarnation.

	Luke 24:36-51	[Ps.-]Justin, <i>Res.</i> 9.6–8	Other Parallels
5. Touch invitation	<i>Touch</i> (ψηλαφήσατε) me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”	And he allowed them <i>to touch</i> (ψηλαφᾶν) him,	
6. Display of the wounds	And when he had said this, <i>he showed</i> ([επ]ἔδειξεν) ¹³⁹ them <i>his hands</i> (τὰς χεῖρας) and his feet.	and <i>he showed</i> (ἐπεδείκνυε) <i>the marks of the nails</i> (τοὺς τύπους τῶν ἡλῶν) <i>in his hands</i> (ἐν ταῖς χερσίν).	When he had said this, he <i>showed</i> (ἔδειξεν) them <i>his hands</i> (τὰς χεῖρας) and his side. (John 20:20a) ...“Unless I see <i>in his hands</i> (ἐν ταῖς χερσίν αὐτοῦ) <i>the mark of the nails</i> (τὸν τύπον τῶν ἡλῶν)....” (John 20:25)
7. Disciples’ Response	And while they were still disbelieving from joy and marveling,	And when they had observed him from every angle <i>that it was he himself</i> (ὅτι αὐτός ἐστι), and in the body,	[cf. <i>Ep. Apost.</i> 11.7] [cf. Luke 24:39]
8. Eating prompt	he said to them, “Do you have any food here?”	they invited him to eat with them,	

¹³⁹ The compound verb ἐπιδείκνυμι appears in most manuscripts of Luke (A K W Γ Δ Θ Ψ f¹³ 565 700 1424 Π). [Ps.-]Justin was probably influenced by a manuscript of Luke that included this variant. Prior to the compound ἐπιδείκνυμι in 9.6, the simple form of the verb (δείκνυμι) appears four consecutive times. The sudden change suggests the influence of a source. Since all extant manuscripts of the parallel in John 20:20 have δείκνυμι rather than ἐπιδείκνυμι, Luke is the most likely source. [Ps.-]Justin also seems to have been aware of two other variants that appear in many of the same manuscripts of Luke: the compound ἐγκαμίσκονται in Luke 20:34 (see note above) and the “honeycomb” variant in Luke 24:42 (see note below).

	Luke 24:36-51	[Ps.-]Justin, <i>Res.</i> 9.6–8	Other Parallels
		<p><i>that also through this they might come to know with certainty that he truly rose bodily</i> (ἵνα καὶ διὰ τούτου βεβαίως μάθωσιν ὅτι ἀληθῶς σωματικῶς ἀνέστη)</p>	<p>So we touched him, <i>that we might know truly whether he had risen in the flesh</i> (ἵνα γινῶμεν ἀληθῶς εἰ ἀνέστη ἐν σαρκί). (<i>Ep. Apos.</i> 12.1)¹⁴⁰</p>
9. Meal	<p>They gave him a piece of broiled <i>fish</i> (ἰχθύος) and some <i>honeycomb</i> (κηρίου [or κήριον])¹⁴¹ 43 and he took it and <i>ate</i> (ἔφαγεν) before them.</p>	<p>and he <i>ate</i> (ἔφαγε) <i>honeycomb</i> (κηρίου) and <i>fish</i> (ἰχθύον).”</p>	
10. Commission	[vv. 44–49]		
		<p>And having thus shown them that there truly is a resurrection of the flesh, wishing to show them this also – just as He had said, “in heaven is our dwelling-place” – that it is not impossible even for flesh to ascend into heaven,</p>	

¹⁴⁰ The Greek here is a retroversion from the Coptic in Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 180. Cf. *Ep. Apos.* 23.2: “so that we may learn correctly.”

¹⁴¹ So K N Γ Δ Θ Ψ *f*¹, ¹³ 33 565 700 892 1241 1424 ℓ 844 ℓ 2211 𐌹 lat sy^c.p.h.** bo^{pt}.

	Luke 24:36-51	[Ps.-]Justin, <i>Res.</i> 9.6–8	Other Parallels
11. Ascension	<p>...<i>he parted</i> (διέστη) from them</p> <p><i>and was carried up</i> (καὶ ἀνεφέρετο)</p> <p><i>into heaven</i> (εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν)</p>	<p><i>he was taken up</i> (ἀνελήφθη),</p> <p><i>while they were watching</i> (βλεπόντων αὐτῶν),¹⁴²</p> <p><i>into heaven</i> (εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν) while He was in the flesh.</p>	<p>...<i>he was taken up</i> (ἀνελήφθη) (Acts 1:2)</p> <p>...</p> <p><i>while they were watching</i> (βλεπόντων αὐτῶν), he was lifted up (ἐπήρθη) (Acts 1:9)</p> <p>“Why do you stand <i>looking</i> ([ἐμ]βλέποντες) <i>into heaven?</i> This Jesus, <i>who was taken up</i> (ἀναλημφθεῖς)... <i>into heaven</i> (εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν)... (Acts 1:11)</p> <p>... <i>was taken up</i> <i>into heaven</i> (ἀνελήφθη εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν) (Mark 16:19)</p>

[Ps.-]Justin’s text not only follows the overall sequence of Luke 24:36–51, it also contains distinct verbal correspondences with Luke’s account. These include details that are often thought to be later scribal additions to Luke’s text, e.g., the so-called Western non-interpolation of Luke 24:40 and the “honeycomb” variant in Luke 24:42. When these correspondences are combined with the fact that *On the Resurrection* elsewhere exhibits elements of Lukan redaction, it becomes evident that [Ps.-]Justin begins with Luke 24:36–51 as a base and then omits or replaces Lukan material with parallel traditions or paraphrases, often adding explanatory glosses.

In contrast to the theory that Luke 24:36–43 reflects an antidocetic embellishment of the appearance tradition, [Ps.-]Justin makes two noteworthy omissions from Luke’s narrative, namely, Luke 24:37b (“they thought they were seeing a spirit [*phantom*, D]”) and 24:39b (“For a spirit does not have flesh and bone as you see me having”).¹⁴³ These two statements form the substructure of modern antidocetic interpretations of Luke’s resurrection narrative. According

¹⁴² βλεπόντων αὐτῶν in Acts 1:9 reflects Luke’s preference for the genitive absolute and so is most probably redactional. When this is combined with the other verbal and contextual similarities, we can be virtually certain that [Ps.-]Justin is dependent on Acts.

¹⁴³ [Ps.-]Justin’s text of Luke consistently differs from that of Codex Bezae, and so his version of Luke 24:37b probably read πνεῦμα rather than φάντασμα.

to this standard mirror reading, Luke (or his source) has superimposed the view of his docetic or gnostic opponents onto the disciples and has then refuted it by placing an antidocetic statement on the lips of Jesus. Yet [Ps.-]Justin knowingly omits this supposedly ready-made, antidocetic material.

The significance of this omission should not be underestimated. Ironically, it is completely overlooked by Gunar Hällström, who says, “Ps-Justin has not chosen the Easter text of St. Luke by pure chance. It is precisely in this version that we have the statement that the risen Christ was *flesh and blood* [*sic*, bone?].”¹⁴⁴ If so, [Ps.-]Justin failed to include the very statement that motivated his choice of Luke’s Gospel! More plausibly, it was the opponents who chose Luke’s resurrection narrative and did so because they found it amenable to a docetic-angelomorphic interpretation. This makes sense of [Ps.-]Justin’s otherwise inexplicable avoidance of the so-called antidocetic material in Luke 24:37b, 39b. As we have seen in the previous section, Marcion, who may also have been influenced by angelomorphic Christology, did not find these verses to be a real obstacle to his docetic interpretation of the resurrection. If Marcion or his followers could twist these verses to support their own position, what would stop [Ps.-]Justin’s opponents from doing the same?¹⁴⁵

Along similar lines, we may note another significant omission. Like Ignatius in *Smyrn.* 3.2–3, [Ps.-]Justin’s retelling of the resurrection appearance narrative does not, in fact, narrate Jesus’s appearance!¹⁴⁶ Instead it awkwardly presupposes Jesus’s presence and begins the story with the disciples’ initial reaction to seeing him. If, as I have argued above, [Ps.-]Justin’s opponents are interpreting Jesus’s resurrection appearance as analogous to OT angelophanies, it is easy to identify the motivation for this omission. Luke 24:36–37 portrays Jesus’s appearance as happening *abruptly* (ταῦτα δὲ αὐτῶν λαλοῦντων αὐτὸς ἔσται ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν), leading the disciples to think that they were seeing a πνεῦμα, a term often applied to angels.¹⁴⁷ Sudden appearances are a standard formal element in OT angelophanies. And the verb ἵστημι that indicates the appearance in Luke 24:36, regularly denotes the appearances of angels in the

¹⁴⁴ Hällström, *Resurrectio*, 49, emphasis original.

¹⁴⁵ Tertullian complains that Marcion’s interpretation of Luke 24:39b contradicts the most natural sense of the syntax, but by doing so he tacitly admits that the awkward reading is nevertheless possible. If so, it is not implausible that [Ps.-]Justin’s opponents read the verse similarly. [Ps.-]Justin’s treatise, unlike that of Tertullian, doesn’t engage in this detailed level of exegesis. [Ps.-]Justin may therefore have chosen to avoid the matter altogether by omitting Luke 24:37b, 39b.

¹⁴⁶ On Ignatius, see Chapter 3.

¹⁴⁷ By contrast, Justin, *Dial.* 106.1 quotes Luke 24:36 as evidence for the fulfillment of prophecy.

LXX (including Gen 18:2).¹⁴⁸ By starting mid-story, [Ps.-]Justin avoids material that his adversaries could use to support their angelomorphic reading.¹⁴⁹

[Ps.-]Justin makes other changes that may be designed to counter a docetic-angelomorphic interpretation. As already mentioned, either or both of the foods eaten by Jesus in [Ps.-]Justin's text of Luke 24 may have reminded readers of angelophanies, and the same is true of Jesus's ascension. [Ps.-]Justin does not omit these elements but he does gloss them heavily. Whereas Luke 24 simply says that Jesus ate the fish (and honeycomb) in their presence, [Ps.-]Justin inserts interpretive annotations (in italics) both before and after the meal: "They invited him to eat with them *that also through this they might come to know with certainty that he truly rose bodily*. And he ate honeycomb and fish. *And having thus shown them that there truly is a resurrection of the flesh ...*" (*Res.* 9.7; cf. Luke 24:42–43).¹⁵⁰ He adds similar glosses before and after his summary narration of the ascension: "... *that it is not impossible even for flesh to ascend into heaven*, he was taken up, while they were watching, into heaven,

¹⁴⁸ In the LXX see also Dan 8:15; 12:5; Num 22:23, 31; 1 Chr 21:15–16; Tob 5:4 [G¹]; Zech 1:8–11; Ezek 43:6. Luke himself seems to have been aware of this convention, e.g., Luke 1:11; Acts 10:30; 11:13. In keeping with his preference for compound verbs, Luke's angelophanies also have ἐπίστυμι (Luke 2:9; 24,4; Acts 12:7) and παρίστυμι (Acts 10:10; 27:23).

¹⁴⁹ Earlier in the treatise, there is another instance that appears to deal with Gospel traditions in a similar manner. When [Ps.-]Justin quotes Jesus's teaching about the resurrection and angels in *Res.* 3.17, he begins with Luke's version but then shifts to the wording of Matthew/Mark (see note above). While Luke has "equal to angels (ἰσάγγελοι)," Matthew and Mark have "like angels (ὡς ἄγγελοι)." While Luke, in context, clearly qualifies what he means by "equal to" (i.e., "they cannot die anymore"), [Ps.-]Justin may have found ὡς ἄγγελοι more amenable to his defense of the resurrection of the flesh.

¹⁵⁰ There is another noticeable difference from Luke's account. In *Res.* 9.7 the disciples invite Jesus to eat "with (μετ') them," whereas in Luke 24:41 Jesus himself takes the initiative to ask for the food. Heimgartner (*Pseudojustin*, 180 n. 204) posits influence from the Emmaus pericope where the two disciples invite Jesus to stay "with (μεθ') us." It is certainly possible that [Ps.-]Justin has transferred μετὰ from Luke 24:29, but there are no other verbal similarities, and so we might equally consider the influence of Acts 1:4 or 10:41, both of which indicate that disciples "eat with" Jesus. More importantly, Heimgartner's proposal doesn't adequately explain the motivation for the change. Identifying this motivation with certainty is, of course, impossible, but the opponent's angelomorphic interpretation of Jesus's resurrection permits a plausible, if still speculative, proposal. The invitation itself may not have been [Ps.-]Justin's innovation. It may have been a paraphrase of the opponents, who were reading Luke 24 in light of angelophany stories. Abraham, Manoah, and Aseneth all, as a matter of hospitality, offer food to angels (Gen 18:5; Judg 13:15; *Jos. Asen.* 15.14; see especially *T. Ab.*[B] 13.6, which, like [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 9.7, employs παρακαλέω for Abraham's invitation of an angel to a meal). If so, [Ps.-]Justin has responded by conceding the invitation and claiming a different purpose: the invitation was not out of an implicit concern for hospitality, but that the disciples "might, with certainty, learn that he truly rose bodily."

while he was in the flesh” (*Res.* 9.8; cf. *Acts* 1:2, 9, 11).¹⁵¹ These additions may seem overly repetitive, but they probably reflect the author’s zeal to defend the reality of Jesus’s flesh against those who have interpreted *Luke* 24 as an angelic *phantasia*.¹⁵² In any case, for [Ps.-]Justin *Luke* 24 required significant supplementation before it could be employed in antidocetic apologetic.

It is probably also for apologetic reasons that [Ps.-]Justin omitted the disbelief of the apostles in *Luke* 24:41.¹⁵³ Like *Luke* and *Ignatius*, [Ps.-]Justin relates in sequence the touch invitation, the response of the apostles, and the meal:

¹⁵¹ The emphasis on a fleshly ascension may be directed against an alternate form of teaching attributed to Apelles. According to Hippolytus, and in contrast with Tertullian’s account, Apelles affirmed a real resurrection but insisted that Jesus returned the material elements of his body back to the earth before ascending to heaven (cf. the Ophite account [Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30.13] in which the same thing happens prior to the resurrection). The language of Apelles in the following quotation preserved by Hippolytus is similar in some ways to that of [Ps.-]Justin, and so it is possible that [Ps.-]Justin has in part crafted his account with Apelles in mind: “Being raised up after three days, he appeared to *his disciples* (τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ). And (the Saviour) *showed* (δείξαντα) them, (so Apelles taught,) *the prints of the nails* (τοὺς τύπους τῶν ἥλων καὶ τὴν πλευράν) and (the wound) in his side, desirous of persuading them that he was in truth no *phantom* (φάντασμα) but was present *in the flesh* (ἔνσαρκος). After, says (Apelles), he had *shown* (δείξας) them his flesh, (the Saviour) restored it to earth, from which substance it was (derived. And this he did because) he coveted nothing that belonged to another. (Though indeed Jesus) might use for the time being (what belonged to another), he yet in due course rendered to each (of the elements) what peculiarly belonged to them. And so it was, that after he had once more loosed the chains of his body, he gave back heat to what is hot, cold to what is cold, moisture to what is moist, (and) dryness to what is dry. And in this condition (our Lord) departed to the good Father, leaving the seed of life in the world for those who through his disciples should believe in him” (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.38.4–5 [*ANF* 5:116, emphasis added]). Alternatively, [Ps.-]Justin may be refuting the Carpocratians. The language of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.32.3–4 suggests the possibility that this sect may have docetized the account of Jesus’s ascension in *Acts* 1:9.

¹⁵² See also, immediately following the account of the resurrection and ascension, the gloss “of the flesh” added to the author’s allusion to Jesus’s refutation of the Sadducees: “If, therefore...any one demand demonstration of the resurrection, he is in no respect different from the Sadducees, since the resurrection *of the flesh* is the power of God” (9.9; cf. *Mark* 12:18–27 par).

¹⁵³ There is one other sizeable omission, but it is of less significance for my argument. [Ps.-]Justin does not include a commissioning of the apostles. The omission is understandable because it is not relevant to [Ps.-]Justin’s argument. While this section of *Luke* does mention to the fulfillment of OT prophecy, it does not specifically refer to or suggest a promise of the resurrection of the flesh. The absence of the fulfillment theme may also be a further indication that the opponents were not Marcionites. It is improbable that an anti-Marcionite author would fail to mention these verses, unless, like Tertullian, he had methodological reasons for doing so.

<p>“Touch me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”</p> <p>And when he had said this, he <i>showed</i> them his <i>hands</i> and his feet.</p>	<p>“...Touch me and see, for I am not a bodiless daimon.”</p>	<p>And he allowed them to <i>touch</i> him,</p> <p>and he <i>showed</i> the marks of the nails in his <i>hands</i>.</p>
<p>And while they were still <i>disbelieving</i> from joy and marveling,</p>	<p>And immediately they touched him and believed, having intermingled with his flesh....</p>	<p>And when they had observed him from every angle that it was he himself and in the body,</p>
<p>he said to them, “Do you have any food here?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish [and some honeycomb] and he took it and ate before them.</p> <p>(Luke 24:39–43)</p>	<p>And after his resurrection he ate and drank with them as [does] one who is in the flesh.</p> <p>(Ignatius, <i>Smyrn.</i> 3.2–3)</p>	<p>they asked him to eat with them, that also through this they might come to know with certainty that he truly rose bodily. And he ate honeycomb and fish.</p> <p>([Ps.-]Justin, <i>Res.</i> 9.7)</p>

Ignatius transforms the persistent disbelief of the apostles into instantaneous faith and confirms that the apostles did indeed touch Jesus. As we have seen in Chapter 3, this change results in an awkward inconsistency because it renders the subsequent eating proof unnecessary. Although [Ps.-]Justin’s approach is more sophisticated than that of Ignatius, it is nevertheless unable to achieve complete coherence. [Ps.-]Justin enhances the antidocetic argument – even more so than Ignatius’s insistence that the apostles touched and believed – by having the disciples perform a full autopsy on Christ’s risen body: “they had carefully observed him from every angle (πανταχόθεν αὐτὸν κατανοήσαντες).”¹⁵⁴ The result is that the apostles are able to confirm explicitly

¹⁵⁴ D’Anna includes καὶ πανταχόθεν αὐτόν with the previous sentence, presumably in order to overcome the apparent awkwardness of having κατανοήσαντες take two objects, αὐτόν and the clause that begins with ὅτι (*Pseudo-Giustino*, 48). But κατανοέω does sometimes take an accusative followed by ὅτι, e.g., Luke 12:24; Philo, *Laws* 1:105. Moreover, the result of D’Anna’s punctuation is more awkward than that of Heimgartner because κατανοέω normally takes an accusative object rather than a clause that begins with ὅτι. Additionally, Heimgartner’s punctuation is supported by Cyril of Alexandria’s *Commentary on Luke*. Though it is preserved in Syriac, Cyril’s text repeats some of [Ps.-]Justin’s arguments from *Res.* 9.6–7: “He shows his hands and his feet, and the holes of the nails, and permits them to handle him, and in every way convince themselves that the very body which had suffered was, as I said, risen...The Lord fully convinced them that the body which had suffered has risen. But, to produce in them still further a yet more firmly-settled faith therein, he asked for something to eat” (trans. R. Payne Smith, *A Commentary upon the Gospel*

both the identity of the Risen one and his bodily nature: “that it was he himself, and in the body” (*Res.* 9.7).¹⁵⁵ Thus [Ps.-]Justin adds a thorough physical examination of the risen Jesus and replaces the “still disbelieving” of Luke 24:41 with an explicit confirmation that the apostles were persuaded. The unambiguous results of their careful inspection of Jesus’s body seem to rule out any possibility of continuing doubt on the part of the apostles. Yet in the next clause, [Ps.-]Justin has the disciples request that Jesus eat with them as an additional proof. In [Ps.-]Justin’s retelling this request is both unexpected and unmotivated. In order to smooth out the inconsistency, [Ps.-]Justin adds an explanatory gloss providing the motivation: “that through this also they might, with certainty, learn that he truly rose bodily.”¹⁵⁶ This explanation presupposes some lingering unbelief on the part of the apostles as in Luke 24:41, but carefully avoids mentioning it. In sum, while [Ps.-]Justin’s retelling is more internally consistent than that of Ignatius, Luke’s version of the story remains the most coherent: the apostles were “still disbelieving” even after being given the

According to S. Luke by S. Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria [Oxford University Press, 1859], 729–30, slightly modified). Cyril here reproduces the same logical inconsistency found in [Ps.-]Justin’s account: the apostles are “fully convinced” and yet still need further proof.

¹⁵⁵ While the phrase “that it was he himself (ὅτι αὐτός ἐστι)” is an allusion to Luke 24:39a, “in the body” is [Ps.-]Justin’s antidoctetic gloss.

¹⁵⁶ Heimgartner (*PseudJustin*, 180) argues that the gloss “that also through this they might come to know with certainty that he truly rose bodily (ἵνα καὶ διὰ τούτου βεβαίως μάθωσιν ὅτι ἀληθῶς σωματικῶς ἀνέστη)” (*Res.* 9.7) derives from *Ep. Apos.* 12.1: “in order that we might know truly whether he [had risen] in the flesh (χαλαρῆμε νᾶμε χενη α[φτωμε] εἴ καρξ = ἵνα γνῶμεν ἀληθῶς εἰ ἀνέστη ἐν σαρκί).” This is an ingenious proposal, but a number of factors tell against it. First, *Ep. Apos.* 12.1 gives the motivation for touching Jesus, whereas *Res.* 9.7 provides an interpretation of Jesus’s meal. Second, the actual verbal overlap is limited to three words (ἵνα, ἀληθῶς, ἀνέστη). Third, and most importantly, Heimgartner’s proposal involves an unlikely scenario in which [Ps.-]Justin, whose goal is to prove the resurrection of the σάρξ, intentionally changes the phrase ἐν σαρκί to the more ambiguous σωματικῶς. It makes little sense for [Ps.-]Justin to take traditional material perfectly suited to his argument and change it in a way that weakens his case. While it is possible that the gloss in *Res.* 9.7 is derived from traditional material, I find it improbable that *Ep. Apos.* 12.1 is the source.

A more plausible source of the first clause, ἵνα καὶ διὰ τούτου βεβαίως μάθωσιν, is *Ep. Apos.* 23.2: κεκαλας ἀνηλαρμε ρογογνε εἴνη ογορξ α[βαλ] ριτοοτ (“that through you we might learn with certainty”). Accounting for standard changes in word order when translating from Greek to Coptic (on which, see Plumley, “Limitations,” 143–45), the underlying Greek could be reconstructed as ἵνα διὰ σου βεβαίως μάθωμεν αὐτοί, which is much closer to [Ps.-]Justin *Res.* 9.7. In this section of the *Epistula* the apostles are defending their need to question Jesus repeatedly about the resurrection (and judgment) of the flesh by arguing that they must learn with certainty so that they can become “effective preachers” and ensure that their hearers “believe.” In other words, *Ep. Apos.* 23.3 shifts the focus from the doubts of the apostles to those of their hearers. If this is [Ps.-]Justin’s source, then *Res.* 9.7 is re-characterizing the apostles as ideal disciples/learners rather than as doubters.

opportunity to touch the Risen one, and this is what prompted the additional demonstration.

In light of gnostic, Marcionite, and pagan critiques of the apostles, [Ps.-]Justin probably rewrote Luke 24:41 in order to shield the apostles from the stigma of persistent disbelief. [Ps.-]Justin makes clear that the standard to which he is calling his readers is one of “undoubting faith (πίστις ἀδιάκριτος)” (10.4), and like Ignatius, he repeatedly and pejoratively characterizes his opponents as unbelievers – ἄπιστοι or close cognates, e.g., 3.18; 5.2, 4, 12, 15; 8.6; 10.6. [Ps.-]Justin goes so far as to argue that his opponents are “even more unbelieving than unbelievers” (5.2). His reasoning is that even the pagans who worship idols believe that nothing is impossible for the gods, whereas his opponents argue that the resurrection of the flesh is not possible (5.3). Throughout the treatise the problem with the opponents is that they will not be convinced either by worldly arguments, i.e., from philosophy, or by arguments from faith, i.e., from the account of creation in Genesis or from “the whole Gospel” (5.16; 9.9; 10.5–6).¹⁵⁷ According to [Ps.-]Justin, worldly arguments merely prove that the resurrection of the flesh is possible; they do not make it credible. Indeed, without evidence of actual resurrections it is justifiably considered incredible (5.8). It is therefore understandable that pagan outsiders do not believe. By contrast the opponents, who are supposed to be Christians, do have evidence of actual resurrections – of those whom Christ raised during his ministry and of Christ himself – from “the Gospel” (9.6). Such evidence makes the resurrection of the flesh all the more credible (5.9–10). The unbelief of the opponents, therefore, consists in an active denial of the faith.¹⁵⁸ Having rejected both worldly philosophical arguments and the evidence from the life of Christ, the opponents are “exceedingly unbelieving” (5.15), “worthy of great contempt” (5.16), and “in no respect different from the Sadducees” (9.9).¹⁵⁹

It is precisely in light of this characterization of his opponents that [Ps.-]Justin must completely rewrite Luke 24:41. Luke’s statement that the apostles were “still disbelieving (ἔτι δὲ ἀπιστοῦντων)” even after Jesus had given them the opportunity to touch him, would, in [Ps.-]Justin’s logic, imply an active denial of the evidence presented by the Savior, rendering the apostles just as

¹⁵⁷ D’Anna (*Pseudo-Giustino*, 214–15) suggests instead that [Ps.-]Justin has three levels of argumentation: (i) from faith; (ii) from the world; and (ii) from unbelief, the last being the lowest and most despicable category. Whether there are two or three levels, [Ps.-]Justin has a negative view of unbelief.

¹⁵⁸ For a more detailed analysis, see D’Anna, who comes to a similar conclusion (*Pseudo-Giustino*, 212–19, esp. 214–15). D’Anna (*Pseudo-Giustino*, 45) goes so far as to translate ἐφρημίτωσαν οἱ ἄπιστοι, εἰ τὸ μὴ πιστεύειν ἔχουσιν αὐτοῖς “Tacciano gli increduli, se non vogliono credere!” (“Let the unbelievers be silent if they are unwilling to believe!”).

¹⁵⁹ In 5.15, [Ps.-]Justin also identifies their “mother” as “unbelief.” Hitchcock, citing a parallel in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.31.1, suggests that this may be a derogatory reference to the aeon Achamoth of gnostic mythology (“Source,” 56).

unbelieving and “worthy of great contempt” as [Ps.-]Justin’s adversaries. This conclusion is confirmed by the parallel statements in Luke 24:41 and *Res.* 3.18:

Let those outside the faith
(οἱ τῆς πίστεως ἐκτός)
not marvel
(μὴ θαυμάζετεσσαν). (*Res.* 3.18)

But they were still disbelieving
(ἔτι δὲ ἀπιστούντων)
... and marveling
(θαυμαζόντων). (Luke 24:41)

This parallel shows that the portrayal of the apostles in Luke 24:41 is too negative for the purposes of [Ps.-]Justin’s argument. Consequently, instead of portraying the apostles as “still disbelieving ... and marveling” in the face of the evidence presented to them by the Savior, [Ps.-]Justin portrays them as persuaded but desiring “to learn with certainty.” This is clearly not “unbelief” in the sense that [Ps.-]Justin uses the term throughout his treatise, but rather a desire for greater assurance, or better a desire to reach [Ps.-]Justin’s ideal state of “unquestioning faith” (*Res.* 10.4).¹⁶⁰

It may be surprising that [Ps.-]Justin, unlike Ignatius, does not omit the *initial* post-resurrection doubt of the apostles. In fact, he introduces the group appearance narrative as if it were a story about the apostles’ doubt: “When his disciples did not know whether or not to believe that he had truly risen in the body, seeing and doubting...” (9.6). Apparently, [Ps.-]Justin expected his readers to understand doubt as an identifying characteristic of the post-resurrection appearance tradition. This raises the question of how the story became known as the “doubt” story. Because of their highly negative characterizations of unbelief, it seems unlikely that [Ps.-]Justin or his proto-orthodox contemporaries are the originators of this reputation. More plausibly, it arose among Gnostics, Marcionites, or pagans, all of whom criticize the apostles for their doubt. Given these criticisms, [Ps.-]Justin probably felt obliged to acknowledge at least the initial doubts of the apostles. He has, nevertheless, qualified them in significant ways.

In [Ps.-]Justin’s retelling, the portrayal of the apostles’ initial doubt is softened so as to emphasize that it is limited in extent and short-lived in duration.¹⁶¹ First, [Ps.-]Justin omits references to the apostles’ fear in vv. 37–38. Second, while Luke portrays the apostles’ initial assessment (“they thought they were seeing a spirit”) as mistaken and in need of Jesus’s corrective in Luke 24:39, [Ps.-]Justin implies that the apostles were merely undecided and in need of further confirmation: “when his disciples did not know whether or not to believe he had risen in the body (τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ μὴ πιστευόντων εἰ ἀληθῶς σῶματι ἀνέστη), seeing and doubting (βλεπόντων αὐτῶν καὶ δισταζόντων) ...” (*Res.* 9.6). This way of wording the matter associates the

¹⁶⁰ This ideal of “undoubting faith” is shared by Valentinian authors, e.g., Heracleon *apud* Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 13.10.63; *Tri. Trac.* (NHC I,5) 128.5–9.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Philo’s defense of Abraham’s doubt as “not long-lived (οὐ πολυχρόνιον)” in *Mut.* 178 (see Excursus in Chapter 2).

disciples with unbelief only in the most tentative way.¹⁶² It suggests that the apostles are not guilty of unbelief, but are rather in a temporary, pre-belief state, a state in which they are not sure what to believe.¹⁶³ Third, the temporary character of their doubt is further emphasized by [Ps.-]Justin’s selection of traditional material: in contrast to the Lukan Jesus, who says, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?” the words of [Ps.-]Justin’s Jesus are imported verbatim from Mark 4:40: “Do you not *yet* have faith (οὐπω ἔχετε πίστιν)?” (*Res.* 9.6).¹⁶⁴ *On the Resurrection* 9.6 thus looks forward to a time when the apostles will have faith.

Martin Heimgartner proposes that two bits of traditional material from Luke 24:41 appear in *Res.* 9.6. First, he judges the introductory gloss of 9.6 (τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ μὴ πιστευόντων) equivalent to εἶπε δὲ ἀπιστούντων αὐτῶν in Luke 24:41. Second, Jesus’s question, “Do you not yet have faith?” is introduced with εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, which Heimgartner says are imported from Luke 24:41.¹⁶⁵ The plausibility of Heimgartner’s proposal is more easily recognized when the passages are set out next to each other:

	When his disciples did not know whether or not to believe
While they were still disbelieving (εἶπε δὲ ἀπιστούντων αὐτῶν)...	(μὴ πιστευόντων εἰ) he had risen in the body,
he said to them (εἶπεν αὐτοῖς)...	he said to them (εἶπεν αὐτοῖς)
“Do you have (ἔχετε) any food? (Luke 24:41)	“Do you not yet have (οὐπω ἔχετε) faith?” (<i>Res.</i> 9.6)

¹⁶² Because διστάζω nearly always has a negative connotation in early Christian works, one might object that its use here results not in a softer portrayal of the apostles but in a more critical one. However, placing this introductory gloss “when his disciples did not know whether or not to believe he had risen in the body” in front of διστάζω may also serve to soften διστάζω to a more neutral sense, as in secular Greek literature. The emphasis on Greek philosophy and quotations from Greek literature in *On the Resurrection* may point in this direction. Alternatively, if, as I have suggested above, the opponents are responsible for characterizing the group appearance narrative as a doubt story, [Ps.-]Justin’s διστάζω may derive from the opponents.

¹⁶³ The fact that [Ps.-]Justin has a category for a pre-belief state in his purview is clear from *Res.* 1.12, wherein the “Adversary (ὁ ἀντικείμενος)” (cf. 2 Thess 2:4) is attacking two sets of people: (i) “those who have come to believe (τοὺς πεπιστευκότας), that he might lead them away from the faith” and (ii) “those who still disbelieve (τοὺς ἀπίστους ἔτι), that they might not come to believe.” These groups are the “weak” on behalf of whom [Ps.-]Justin writes his treatise (cf. the same target audience in Origen, *Cels.* pref. 6).

¹⁶⁴ One the one hand, οὐπω in Mark’s context could potentially be construed more negatively as “still not” or even as emphatically (“not at all”). On the other hand, following τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ μὴ πιστευόντων εἰ ἀληθῶς σώματι ἀνέστη in *Res.* 6, it is certainly to be taken to mean “not yet.”

¹⁶⁵ Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 179 n. 204a, 180 n. 204d. εἶπεν αὐτοῖς could instead come from Luke 24:38 or Mark 4:40.

In *Res.* 9.6 the forward-looking and hopeful οὐπω (“not yet”) of Mark replaces the more condemning ἔτι (“still”) of Luke.¹⁶⁶ The impact of these redactional moves by [Ps.-]Justin is significant. By relocating the unbelief from Luke 24:41 to an earlier part of the narrative, i.e., before the invitation to touch, the result is that the apostles’ unbelief is no longer portrayed as persistent, but as short-lived and preliminary. This also ensures, against Luke, that the touch test is successful in convincing the apostles.

6.2.4 Conclusion

[Ps.-]Justin’s fuller account of Jesus’s post-resurrection appearance to the apostles makes him something of an oddity among the Apologists. The Apologists discussed in Chapter 4 above seldom mention the stories of Jesus’s appearances in their defenses of the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh, and almost never appeal to the physical demonstrations. The one exception is Irenaeus, who only briefly alludes to John 20:20, 25, and may in this instance be drawing on [Ps.-]Justin.¹⁶⁷ [Ps.-]Justin’s *On the Resurrection* differs in this respect from the undisputed writings of Justin examined in Chapter 4. In *1 Apol.* 19–21, Justin replies to those who find the resurrection incredible because they “have never seen a dead man raised,” but he argues from analogies with nature and Greco-Roman hero myths rather than from the stories of Jesus’s resurrection. It will be recalled that Justin, in *1 Apol.* 30–31, eschews simple appeals to miracle stories because by themselves they could be attributed to magic. He prefers instead the more reliable argument from the fulfillment of prophecy. [Ps.-]Justin, by contrast, does not appeal to Jesus’s fulfillment of prophecy but does, in addition to the appearance tradition, appeal to his Jesus’s miracles. On

¹⁶⁶ On the contrast between οὐπω and ἔτι, compare 1 Cor 3:2: “I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not yet (οὐπω) ready for solid food. Even now you are still (ἔτι) not ready.” οὐπω here anticipates a future time when the Corinthians will be ready for meatier teaching. The ἔτι, by contrast is condemning. In the Gospels, οὐπω sometimes appears in negative characterizations of the disciples’ lack of perception, but in each of these instances the disciples later come to an understanding (Matt 16:9; Mark 8:17, 21; cf. John 7:39). It therefore designates a temporary state. Outside of Mark 4:40, οὐπω is always forward-looking in Mark and in the rest of the NT (Matt 16:9; 24:6; Mark 8:17, 21; 11:2; 13:7; Luke 23:53; John 2:4; 3:24; 6:17; 7:6, 8, 30, 39; 8:20; 11:30; 20:17; 1 Cor 3:2; 8:2; Heb 2:8; 12:4; 1 John 3:2; Rev 17:10, 12). Thus οὐπω in Mark 4:40 “probably implies that, at some later time, the disciples will have faith” (Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 27; New York: Doubleday, 2000], 334).

¹⁶⁷ Compare their conflation of John 20:20 and 25:

καὶ τοὺς τύπους τῶν ἡλῶν	καὶ τοὺς τύπους τῶν ἡλῶν
ἐν ταῖς χερσίν	
ἐπεδείκνυε.	δεῖξαι.
([Ps.-]Justin, <i>Res.</i> 9.6)	(Irenaeus, <i>Haer.</i> 5.31.2)

the one hand, because *On the Resurrection* is explicitly addressed to a Christian rather than a pagan audience, [Ps.-]Justin probably had no fear that his audience would accuse Jesus of being a magician. On the other hand, the lack of references to fulfilled prophecy, especially in light of the opponents' contention that the resurrection was not promised by God, tells against Justin's authorship. In any case, the reason [Ps.-]Justin chooses to include a discussion of the group appearance tradition is clear: his opponents, in support of their polemic against the resurrection of the flesh, claim that the risen Jesus gave only the appearance (φαντασία) of having flesh, a claim that in all probability reflects their interpretation of Luke 24 in light of Jewish traditions about angelophanies. In other words, [Ps.-]Justin is engaging in an exegetical debate over Luke's resurrection narrative. At issue is whether Luke 24 should be interpreted along docetic or antidocetic lines.

[Ps.-]Justin's treatment of Luke 24 helps us to fill out and refine our growing set of characteristics of antidocetic redaction. We may first note some similarities between [Ps.-]Justin and Ignatius. Both authors suppress the sudden appearance of Jesus. And both omit allegedly antidocetic material from Luke 24:37b ("they thought they saw a spirit/phantasm") and 39b ("For a spirit has not flesh and bone as you see me having"), though Ignatius replaces the latter with an unambiguous substitute. That the docetist Marcion preserves these two statements while Ignatius and [Ps.-]Justin omit them tells against the modern theory that these verses were antidocetic in origin. If the latter were true, might we not expect the opposite to have occurred? Might we not expect Marcion to have omitted these statements and Ignatius and [Ps.-]Justin to have retained them?

Ignatius and [Ps.-]Justin also enhance the story by making it explicit that the apostles touched Jesus and by adding decisive interpretive commentary. Ignatius inserts "And immediately they touched him and believed, being closely united with his flesh and blood" (*Smyrn.* 3.2). [Ps.-]Justin enhances the proof even further: "they had observed him from every angle that it was he himself, and in the body" (*Res.* 9.7). Both authors are equally compelled to gloss Jesus's post-resurrection meal. Ignatius notes that he ate "as one who is composed of flesh" (*Smyrn.* 3.3). [Ps.-]Justin says that by eating Jesus has "thus shown them that there truly is a resurrection of the flesh" (*Res.* 9.7). As we have seen, Tertullian likewise adds that he ate "so as to show that he even had teeth." Again, Marcion accepts Jesus's post resurrection meal and so does not appear to construe it as an obstacle to his docetic Christology. The same is probably true of [Ps.-]Justin's opponents, who explicitly claim that the risen Jesus only appeared to be in the flesh. As we saw in Chapter 3, Ignatius writes as though he feared that the appearance tradition was especially susceptible to docetic interpretation. Ignatius was already aware of this kind of reading, and the evidence from Marcion and [Ps.-]Justin confirms that his fear was not only warranted but realized.

All of this suggests that the glosses added by the church fathers represented only one side of a continuing *exegetical* debate with docetists who interpreted the same “proofs” differently. It is surely significant that at least some advocates of a docetic reading of Jesus’s resurrection appearances, i.e., Marcionites and Ophites, accepted some form of Luke 24 as authoritative. For Marcion this includes the so-called physical proofs. If my reconstruction above is correct, the same is true of [Ps.-]Justin’s opponents. Rather than reject Luke 24, these various groups understood the narratives as either supporting or being compatible with their docetic understanding of Jesus’s resurrection. The proto-orthodox likewise saw Luke as supporting their position. Both sides claim Luke as their own. At least with respect to the texts discussed so far in this study, there is no evidence that Luke 24 is a *response* to a docetic/antidocetic debate; it is rather the *subject* of the debate. Luke 24 is the hallowed ground over which an *exegetical* battle is fought.

[Ps.-]Justin and Ignatius differ somewhat in their handling of the doubt motif. Both authors address unnamed opponents within the church, whom they derogatorily refer to as “unbelievers.” It is thus not surprising that they seek to avoid characterizing the apostles as persistent in their disbelief. Ignatius removes the doubt motif in its entirety, claims that the apostles believed immediately, and then characterizes them as heroic martyrs. [Ps.-]Justin, like Ignatius, omits or perhaps relocates (see above) the second instance of disbelief from Luke 24:41. Unlike Ignatius, [Ps.-]Justin does allude to the initial doubts of the apostles upon seeing Jesus (cf. Luke 24:37–38; Matt 28:17). Yet he downplays even these initial doubts by characterizing them as preliminary and temporary, thereby distancing the apostles from the willful and stubborn disbelief that he attributes to his opponents.

[Ps.-]Justin writes at least a few decades after Ignatius, and thus after the rise of the Ophites, the Marcionites, and various other docetic and gnostic sects who capitalized on the doubt motif. This may be one of the reasons why [Ps.-]Justin is able to introduce the appearance narrative as the time when the disciples were “doubting,” and why he can expect his readers to recognize the reference. In any case, unbelief was viewed so negatively in [Ps.-]Justin’s circles (“worthy of great contempt”) that it may have been inevitable that the group appearance tradition would acquire a reputation as a doubt story. The doubt motif did not, for [Ps.-]Justin, enhance the apostolic witness to a physical resurrection by proving that the disciples were not gullible.¹⁶⁸ If that were the case, we might expect [Ps.-]Justin to emphasize the doubt. Instead, he deemphasizes it. The doubt was more a liability than an asset for [Ps.-]Justin’s apologetic.

¹⁶⁸ Contra Hug, *La finale*, 74–77.

Chapter 7

The Different Glory (*hetera doxa*) of Docetism: The “Gospel” of the *Acts of John (AJ)*¹

7.1 Introduction

The *Acts of John (AJ)* has for good reason been called “the classic docetic text.”² It is the only surviving text written from the point of view of a docetist of the anthropomorphosist type. While several texts written by docetists of the separationist type are still available today, all witnesses to this more thoroughgoing form of docetism, aside from *AJ*, are preserved within writings of those who are hostile to docetic Christology.³ *AJ* is therefore an invaluable example of how early docetists responded to the Jesus tradition and the post-resurrection appearance narratives of the Gospels.

Having been consigned to the flames for its aberrant Christology during the Second Council of Nicaea (787), it is not surprising that *AJ* is extant only in fragments.⁴ Fortunately, around 70% of the text has survived.⁵ Most scholars

¹ Critical edition: Éric Junod and Jean-Daniel Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis* (2 vols.; Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum 1–2; Turnhout: Brepols, 1983). English translations are my own but are often indebted to J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 311–38. I deviate from the *SBL Manual of Style*, which uses *Acts John* as an abbreviation for the *Acts of John*, and use the popular and more efficient designation *AJ*.

² Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 206, citing Weigandt, “Doketismus,” 39. Junod and Kaestli object to a “docetic” label for section B because it does not explicitly confront the incarnation with respect to the nativity and the passion (*Acta Iohannis*, 2:493). This argument from silence cuts both ways; the omission of the nativity and the passion may constitute an implicit rejection of these two events. Lalleman rightly objects that section B does refute the incarnation by editing the human characteristics of Jesus out of the gospel stories and by explicitly rejecting Jesus’s humanity in *AJ* 90.10–11 (*Acts of John*, 210).

³ Similarly Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 212. On the distinction between “anthropomorphosist” and “separationist” varieties of docetism, see Chapter 2.

⁴ Critical edition of the Acts of the Council in Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis*, 361–65.

⁵ An estimated 1700 out of the 2500 *stichoi* recorded in the so-called *Stichometry of Nicéphorus* have survived (Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 14). This enough to assess the general character of the document, but not quite enough for scholars to agree on how to arrange the fragments in their original order (so Harold W. Attridge, “The Acts of John and the Fourth Gospel,” in *From Judaism to Christianity: Tradition and Transition: A Festschrift for Thomas H. Tobin, S.J., on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* [NovTSup 136; Leiden:

have concluded that the complete version was itself a composite document. In order to facilitate discussion of the parts, Pieter J. Lalleman has conveniently divided the text into three sections: section A (chs. 18–86, 106–108, 110–115), section B (chs. 87–93, 103–105), and section C (chs. 94–102, 109).⁶ Section A contains the main narrative of the Acts, consisting largely of tales, many miraculous, of the apostle John’s travels through Asia Minor. Sections B and C join to form two halves of a sermon given by the apostle John, comprised primarily of what could be called gospel flashbacks of the apostles’ experiences with Jesus. Although the sermon stands as a unit in the manuscript tradition, section C is so different from section B in style, form, content, and theology that nearly all scholars today agree that the material comes from two different authors.⁷ While there is some debate over how and when the three sections came together, the most persuasive reconstruction to date posits that the original *AJ*, including sections A and B (along with other lost portions), is docetic and non-gnostic in character, and that section C, gnostic in orientation, was added later.⁸ This study will focus primarily on section B because it is the only section that responds to the post-resurrection doubt motif in Luke and John.

Brill, 2010], 257). The major question in this regard is the placement of chs. 87–105, which survive complete in only one manuscript that contains no other chapters. The text’s first editor, Maximilien Bonnet, concluded that these chapters fit best in the lacuna after ch. 86 (“Acta Ioannis,” in *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha* [2 vols.; eds. Richard Adelbert Lipsius and Maximilian Bonnet; Leipzig: Mendelssohn, 1898], 151–216). While some have opted instead for the lacuna between chs. 36 and 37 (Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis*, 73–75; Knut Schäferdiek, “The Acts of John,” *NTApoc* 2: 198–201), Lalleman (*Acts of John*, 27–30) has persuasively defended Bonnet’s original placement (so Attridge, “Acts,” 257). The following analysis assumes but does not depend on Lalleman’s argument.

⁶ Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 25.

⁷ Sections B and C are preserved as a whole in a single fourteenth century manuscript (Vindobonensis), but excerpts from both are quoted in the various manuscripts of the Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea. The sermon in section B appears as if it is beginning to conclude in 93.14–17, only to be interrupted by chs. 94–102 (section C) and then resumed in chs. 103–104 (section B). Junod and Kaestli (*Acta Iohannis*, 198 n. 3, 581) argue that the disjunction between the necessity for silence in 93.14–17 and the continuation of the speech 94–102 can only be explained by the interpolation of independent material. They also argue that 93.14–17 looks as if it belongs to the conclusion of the sermon because it draws attention to the same theme with which the sermon begins in *AJ* 88, namely, the difficulty of communicating what John witnessed about Christ. I would add that much of the vocabulary in 93.14–17 echoes that of 87.3–88.8 (e.g., πίστις, προσομιλέω/ὀμιλέω, δύναμαι, νῦν, ἀδελφοί, ἀκοῖ/ἀκούω) and so forms an inclusio with the beginning of the sermon. See further arguments for separate authorship in Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis*, 425, 581–632; Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 30–61, 158–215. A dissenting opinion, arguing for the unity of chs. 87–105, is registered in István Czachesz, *Commission Narratives: A Comparative Study of the Canonical and Apocryphal Acts* (SECA 8; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 102–106, 120–22.

⁸ There are two versions of this theory. The original is that of Junod and Kaestli, who argue that section C represents an interpolation from an independent gnostic source (*Acta*

Questions of provenance and date are complicated by the composite nature of the document. Although nearly all hold that section C, or at least parts of it, originated in Syria, opinion is divided over sections A and B.⁹ While both Egypt and Syria have been suggested, the recent trend, following the detailed analysis of Lalleman, has been to locate sections A and B in Asia Minor.¹⁰

Iohannis, 425, 581–632). Traces of a gnostic myth appear in 95.95.22–28 and 98.15–19. Junod and Kaestli's theory has gained many adherents: Paul G. Schneider, "The Acts of John: The Gnostic Transformation of a Christian Community," in *Hellenization Revisited: Shaping a Christian Response within the Greco-Roman World* (ed. Wendy E. Helleman; Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1994), 241, 253–54 n. 4; idem, "A Perfect Fit: The Major Interpolation in the Acts of John," *SBLSP* 30 (1991): 518–32; Gerard P. Lutikhuisen, "A Gnostic Reading of the Acts of John," in *The Apocryphal Acts of John* (ed. Jan N. Bremmer; SAAA 1; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995), 119–152, esp. 119–123; Richard I. Pervo, "Johannine Trajectories in the Acts of John," *Apocrypha* 3 (1992): 58. Even Schäferdiek, who previously argued for the original unity of all parts of *AJ* ("Acts of John," in *New Testament Apocrypha* [eds. Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963–1965], 2:211–14), later conceded that section C derived from a separate source – though he maintained, on the basis of the continuities, that this source was incorporated by the original author and was not a later interpolation ("Acts of John [rev. ed.]" [rev. ed.] 2:164–65; similarly Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction* [trans. Brian McNeil; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2008], 40). In response, Lalleman introduced a modification to Junod and Kaestli's theory to better account for continuities. He proposed that section C was composed by a later gnostic author, not independently of section B, but as an intentional expansion of it (*Acts of John*, 25–66, esp. 58–66). Lalleman's proposal has been seconded in Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 259; Attridge, "Acts," 257–58.

⁹ Lalleman, who argues for Asia Minor, allows for the possibility that section C incorporates traditions from Syria/Palestine (*Acts of John*, 266–67).

¹⁰ Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 256–66; Jan N. Bremmer, "The Apocryphal Acts: Authors, Place, Time and Readership," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas* (ed. Jan N. Bremmer; SECA 6; Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 158–59; Birger A. Pearson, *Gnosticism and Christianity in Roman and Coptic Egypt* (SAC; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 49; Klauck, *Apocryphal Acts*, 18, 42. Although an Asian provenance was rejected for a time because of supposed topographical inaccuracies and the improbability that an Ephesian would invent a story of the destruction of the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus (*AJ* 39–43), this rejection has proven premature. Lalleman (*Acts of John*, 261–66) has demonstrated (i) that the author does in fact have an accurate knowledge of Ephesus; and (ii) that while an Ephesian is unlikely to have invented a story of the destruction of the Artemision, an author from a rival Asian city like Smyrna might have no qualms about doing so. On the fierce rivalry between Ephesus and Smyrna, see Dio Chrysostom, *2 Tars.* (*Or.* 34) 47–48; Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.61; 4.56; Anthony D. Macro, "The Cities of Asia Minor under the Roman Imperium," *ANRW* 7.2 670–71; Emmanuelle Collas-Heddeland, "Le culte impérial dans la compétition des titres sous le Haut-Empire: Une lettre d'Antonin aux Éphésiens," *REG* 108 (1995): 410–29; Frederick W. Weidmann, *Polycarp & John: The Harris Fragments and Their Challenge to the Literary Traditions* (Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity Series 12; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 141–44. On the rivalry's influence on *AJ*, see Eckhard Plümacher,

Lalleman has made a plausible argument for Smyrna in particular.¹¹ It will therefore be pertinent to consider possible thematic and/or intertextual connections with other second-century writings from the same area, e.g., Ignatius's *To the Smyrnaeans*.¹²

Against the general tendency in past scholarship to date *AJ* to the late second-century date, Lalleman has proposed that the final form of the text was established in the second quarter of the second century.¹³ Though few consider Lalleman's arguments for such an early dating decisive, recent scholarship seems to have shifted away from a late second-century date and toward a mid-century date.¹⁴ Lalleman's case is illuminating regarding the early character of the content of *AJ*. He argues (i) that the final form of *AJ* has influenced both the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Acts of Peter*; (ii) that the existence of the type of docetism advocated in *AJ* is unattested after 150 CE; and (iii) that even the "gnostic" theology of section C is pre-Valentinian.¹⁵ While none of these points necessarily proves a pre-150 date, they demonstrate that an early date cannot be ruled out.¹⁶ More importantly, even if the second quarter of the second century is "a little too early" for the *final* form of the text, Lalleman's arguments make it probable that at least the earlier portions of *AJ* originated in the first half of the second century.¹⁷ This judgment seems especially appropriate with respect to section B and its simpler form of docetism.¹⁸

"Apostolische Missionreise und statthalterliche Assisetour," *ZNW* 85 (1994): 276–78; Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 264–66.

¹¹ Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 264–66. Lalleman's argument for Smyrna builds on the earlier work of Plümacher ("Missionreise," 259–78).

¹² Possible literary connections between *AJ* and the *Epistula Apostolorum* will be examined in Chapter 8.

¹³ Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 270. Junod and Kaestli date Sections A and B between 150 and 200, the origins of section C around the same time, and the integration of the two anytime between the late second century and the end of the third century (*Acta Iohannis*, 694–700).

¹⁴ Many find Lalleman's arguments plausible but not necessarily compelling (Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 259; Trebilco, *Early Christians*, 258–60, esp. 260; Attridge, "Acts," 256, 265 n. 32). Hill dates it just before or after 150. Similarly Braun, *Jean*, 200; Richard Bauckham, "Papias and Polycrates on the Origin of the Fourth Gospel," *JTS* NS 44 (1993): 66; Bremmer, "Apocryphal Acts," 153–54; Klauck, *Apocryphal Acts*, 18.

¹⁵ Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 106, 136–37, 200–202, 212–13, 255, 270. The pre-Valentinian nature of the section C has been confirmed by Klauck, *Apocryphal Acts*, 18.

¹⁶ Similarly Trebilco, *Early Christians*, 259.

¹⁷ The words quoted come from Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 49 n. 154. The assessment of Lalleman's arguments is my own.

¹⁸ Similarly Klauck, *Apocryphal Acts*, 18.

7.2 Source Analysis: Dependence on the Gospels

It is generally agreed that *AJ* uses the Gospel of John and at least one or two of the Synoptics.¹⁹ My goal here will be to assess the influence of Luke's and John's Gospels in section B. The nature of the analysis differs for each. There is little doubt about the use of the Fourth Gospel in section B.²⁰ The evidence is relatively straightforward, and the detailed argumentation of previous scholars need not be repeated. Consequently, my approach with John will be to summarize and supplement the data so as to shed light on the author's specific interest in the resurrection narratives and his general stance towards the Fourth Gospel, and towards the Synoptics by extension.

By contrast, the question of the author's use of Luke is complicated by the differing theories about the composite nature of the text and the authorship of sections A, B, and C. Section A does not contain any material that can be attributed to Lukan redaction with certainty, but it does allude to "L" material, including the parable of the Prodigal Son and the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man.²¹ The latter appears on Irenaeus's list of material that is unique to Luke in early Christian literature.²² Moreover, because section A has recently been shown to be dependent on Luke's Acts, especially the "we" sections, the "L" material in section A should probably count as evidence of knowledge of Luke's Gospel.²³ If, as seems to be the case, sections A and B were written by the same author, then any Luke-like material in section B probably also derives from Luke. A minority of scholars nevertheless maintain separate authorship for sections A and B.²⁴ In the interest of achieving the broadest possible acceptance of the results, the following investigation into the use of Luke's Gospel is limited to section B, with only occasional reference to corroborating data from section A.²⁵

¹⁹ So Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 134; Schäferdiek, "Acts of John (rev. ed.)," 165–66; Trebilco, *Early Christians*, 258; Luttikhuisen, *Revisions*, 140; Helmut Koester, *From Jesus to the Gospels: Interpreting the New Testament in Its Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 181; Klauck, *Apocryphal Acts*, 17.

²⁰ Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 134; Schäferdiek, "Acts of John (rev. ed.)," 164; Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 259–61; Koester, *From Jesus to the Gospels*, 181; Attridge, "Acts," 259. One notable exception is István Czachesz, "The Gospel of the Acts of John: Its Relation to the Fourth Gospel," in *The Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Tuomas Rasimus; NovTSup 132; Leiden: Brill, 2010). Czachesz argues that the author knew a proto-John rather than the Fourth Gospel in its final form.

²¹ Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 132–33.

²² *Haer.* 3.14.3. On the significance of Irenaeus's list, see Chapter 1.

²³ Lalleman's case for the use of Luke's Acts (*Acts of John*, 74–98) has been affirmed in Gregory, *Reception*, 348–49.

²⁴ E.g., Czachesz, *Commission Narratives*, 96–122.

²⁵ Nothing unique to Luke's Gospel appears in section C, though *AJ* 102.2 is probably dependent on Acts 1:2, 9 (see note below).

7.2.1 Dependence on Luke

The influence of Luke's Gospel on section B, though often detected by scholars, has yet to be proven by means of a rigorous methodology. Lalleman, who comes the closest to achieving this, notes three pericopae in section B that seem to depend on Lukan redaction. Below, I take Lalleman's work as a starting point, but attempt a more thorough source- and redaction-critical analysis.

The first pericope is the account of the call of the first disciples in *AJ* 88.9–20. Lalleman notes that while the beginning of the story follows either Matthew or Mark, the end of the episode includes a detail found only in Luke's version:²⁶

And so having brought the boat to shore (καὶ οὕτως εἰς γῆν τὸ πλοῖον ἀγαγόντες)... (*AJ* 88.18–19)²⁷

And having brought the boats onto the shore (καὶ καταγαγόντες τὰ πλοῖα ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν)... (Luke 5:11a)

Luke 5:1–11 is included in Irenaeus's list of uniquely Lukan pericopae.²⁸ And Lukan scholarship has rightly recognized Luke 5:11a as redactional.²⁹ The verb *κατάγω* is characteristically Lukan.³⁰ The syntax, an aorist participle in an initial subordinate clause denoting "temporal sequence," is also typical of Lukan style (cf. Acts 28:12).³¹ Though it has the simpler cognate, *ἀγαγόντες* instead of *καταγαγόντες*, *AJ* 88.18–19 reflects the same syntax. Additionally, both texts begin the sentence with *καί*, have *πλοῖον* as the object of the participle, and place *γῆ* in the accusative as the object of a preposition.³²

This detail about bringing the boat to the shore is incidental to the docetic purposes of the story in *AJ*. At most, its function is to provide a narrative transition for what follows. It is highly unlikely that Luke and the author of *AJ*, added this incidental detail independently of one another, especially since the

²⁶ Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 125–26. Junod and Kaestli (*Acta Iohannis*, 480) also detect a connection with Luke 5:11.

²⁷ I follow here the critical text of Junod and Kasteli which, adopts James's suggested emendation to replace the nonsense reading (σγῆ) in Codex Vindobonensis with εἰς γῆν. James's emendation may be based on Luke 5:11. If correct, the emendation makes the influence of Luke more likely.

²⁸ *Haer.* 3.14.3.

²⁹ E.g., Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:569; Bovon, *Luke*, 1:171. Luke inserts this participial clause either to serve as a transition from sea to land missing in Mark and/or to counterbalance ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς ἐπαναγαγεῖν in Luke 5:3.

³⁰ So Neirynek, "Le texte des Actes," 323. Outside of a single occurrence in Rom 10:6, *κατάγω* appears in the NT only in Luke and Acts, often in reference to landing a boat (Luke 5:11; Acts 27:3; 28:12). Other occurrences in Acts: 9:30; 22:30; 23:15, 20, 28; 27:3; 28:12.

³¹ Cadbury, *Style*, 1:134; similarly Bovon, *Luke*, 1:5.

³² The change in preposition from Luke's ἐπὶ to εἰς may be due to a conflation with John 21:9 (εἰς τὴν γῆν).

wording is nearly the same.³³ In short, one may with confidence conclude that the wording of *AJ* 88.19 was derived from Luke 5:11.

The second example comes from *AJ* 93.4–10. Jesus is invited to dine at the house of a Pharisee and performs a miracle reminiscent of the feeding of the five thousand in the Synoptics.³⁴ *AJ* presents this scene as if it were a typical or regular occurrence.³⁵ While the feeding of the multitudes occurs twice in Mark and Matthew, neither of these gospels ever mentions that Jesus ate with the Pharisees. As this is the first and only mention of the Pharisees in the entirety of *AJ*, the notion that Jesus often attended dinner parties thrown by the Pharisees no doubt derives from a source. Luke, who mentions Jesus eating with the Pharisees on more than one occasion (Luke 7:36–50; 11:37–52; 14:1–24), is the obvious choice.³⁶ The pericope utilizes a pair of phrases that seem to be derived from Luke’s first story of Jesus dining with the Pharisees:

And, if at any time he were invited by
one of the Pharisees (τινὸς τῶν Φαρισαίων),

he would go into the place he was invited...
And he would bless his own loaf and divide
it amongst us; and from that little piece each
of us was filled...so that those
who had invited him (τοὺς καλοῦντας αὐτόν)
were amazed. (*AJ* 93.4–10)

And
one of the Pharisees (τις...τῶν Φαρισαίων)
asked him to eat with him, and
he went into the Pharisee’s house
and reclined at the table....

Now when the Pharisee
who had invited him (ὁ καλέσας αὐτόν)
saw this.... (Luke 7:36, 39)

The phrases in each case employ the same vocabulary and same order of words. The two phrases also occur in the same sequence. In addition to these verbal similarities, the first sentence (Luke 7:36 and *AJ* 93.4–5) in each pericope

³³ The sheer improbability of this is seen more clearly when *AJ* 88 and Luke 5 are considered in contrast to the parallel story in John 21:1–14. This passage, also utilized by author of section B (Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis*, 489; Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 112–13), depicts a return to the shore after a miraculous catch of fish, but it differs significantly from Luke 5:11 and *AJ* 88.18–19 in both vocabulary and syntax: “The other disciples came in the boat (τῷ πλοιαρίῳ ἦλθον)... When they got out on land (ὡς οὖν ἀπέβησαν εἰς τὴν γῆν) ...” (John 21:8–9). The verbs for the trip to shore (ἦλθον and ἀπέβησαν) are different from those in Luke and *AJ*. John also has a different noun for the boat (πλοιαρίῳ), which functions adverbially rather than as a direct object. Additionally, to denote sequence in the initial subordinate clause, John 21:9 has ὡς + finite verb instead of an aorist participle as in Luke and *AJ*.

³⁴ Mark 6:41–42 is the main Synoptic source behind this feeding miracle. Lalleman (*Acts of John*, 127) notes that the sequence of four verbs (ἐλάμβανεν, εὐλογοῦν, διμερίζεν, ἐχορτάζετο) matches a sequence that is otherwise unique to Mark (λαβών, ἐυλόγησεν, ἐμέρισεν, ἐχορτάσθησαν). The only real difference is that *AJ* has a compound form of Mark’s third verb.

³⁵ The habitual or repeated nature of the event is indicated by εἰ δέ ποτε (“whenever/if at any time”) at the beginning of the sentence and also by the imperfect ἐπορεύετο.

³⁶ So also Robbins, *Rewriting Gospel*, 211.

follows the same conceptual sequence: (i) one of the Pharisees invites Jesus and then (ii) Jesus enters the Pharisee's house. There is clearly a relationship between these two narratives, and this story in Luke 7 is one that Irenaeus says cannot be known from any source other than Luke's Gospel.³⁷

Regardless of whether Luke 7:36–50 is derived from Mark 14:3–9 and/or another source, there are good reasons for concluding that each of the phrases paralleled in *AJ* 93 is dependent on Luke's redactional activity. τῖς ... τῶν Φαρισαίων in Luke 7:36 serves as a literary link to the previous pericope, probably from a different source, and its authorial aside (v. 30) about the Pharisees.³⁸ It also reflects Luke's interest in providing extra details about the audience and setting.³⁹ Moreover, the redactional character of τῖς ... τῶν Φαρισαίων in Luke 7:36 is corroborated by the clearly redactional τινὲς ... τῶν Φαρισαίων in Luke 6:2 (cf. οἱ Φαρισαῖοι in Mark 2:24/Matt 12:2).⁴⁰

ὁ καλέσας αὐτόν in Luke 7:39 is also Lukan in terms of both vocabulary and syntax. The verb καλέω not only occurs much more frequently in Luke than in the other gospels, it also appears frequently in Lukan redaction.⁴¹ In terms of syntax, ὁ καλέσας coheres with Luke's fondness for participles and his habit of employing the article + participle construction in his redaction of Markan

³⁷ *Haer.* 3.14.3. See discussion in Chapter 1.

³⁸ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (SP 3; Collegetown, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991), 126; Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT 3; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 469.

³⁹ Cadbury, *Style*, 2:119–126, esp. 120–21.

⁴⁰ The construction τῖς + partitive genitive is characteristic of Luke (Denaux and Corstjens, *Vocabulary*, 603; see also J. Delobel, "L'onction par la pécheresse: La composition littéraire de Lc., VII, 36–50," *ETL* 42 [1966]: 438). The separation of τῖς from τῶν Φαρισαίων in Luke 7:36 (τῖς αὐτόν τῶν Φαρισαίων) is unusual, but a similar construction (τῖς αὐτόν ἄρχων), also redactional, occurs in Luke 18:18 (cf. Mark 10:17). It is possible that *AJ* mimics this unusual construction in Luke 7:36. While the critical text of Junod and Kaestli reads ποτὲ ὑπὸ τινος τῶν Φαρισαίων, the text of Vindobonensis has ὑπὸ τινός ποτε τῶν Φαρισαίων. The latter is clearly the harder reading, and so the scribe of the Acts of the second council of Nicaea may have used a "corrected" text.

Luke also has a habit of inserting Pharisees "into episodes he shares with Mark, or with Matthew in 'Q,' from which they were originally absent, at times identifying heretofore unnamed bystanders as Pharisees" (J. Patrick Mullen, *Dining with Pharisees* [Interfaces; Collegetown, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2004], 80). See, e.g., Luke 5:17 (Mark 2:2); Luke 5:21 (Mark 2:6); and especially τινὲς τῶν Φαρισαίων in Luke 19:39 (Matt 21:15–16). The fact that the host is an unnamed Pharisee in Luke 7:36–39 until Jesus in 7:40 abruptly addresses him as "Simon" – the same name used of the host in the Synoptic parallel (Matt 26:6; Mark 14:3) – also suggests that τῶν Φαρισαίων is a redactional insertion on Luke's part.

⁴¹ On καλέω as Lukan, see Delobel, "L'onction," 440; Bovon, *Luke*, 1:293 n. 13. It occurs 43x in Luke, 23x in Matthew, and 4x in Mark. καλέω is redactional in Luke 6:14 (Mark 3:18); Luke 19:29 (Mark 11:1); Luke 20:44 (Mark 12:37); Luke 22:3 (Mark 14:10); Luke 22:35 (Mark 10:42); Luke 23:33 (Mark 15:22).

passages.⁴² In sum, it is probably safe to conclude that *AJ* 93.4–10 reuses redactional material from Luke 7.⁴³

The third example comes from the transfiguration stories in *AJ* 90. Both *AJ* 90.1–2 and Luke 9:28 mention that Jesus goes up the mountain “to pray.”⁴⁴ Prayer is a widely recognized redactional emphasis in Luke, and Luke alone mentions prayer in the Transfiguration pericope.⁴⁵ *AJ* 90.1–2 also agrees with Luke against Mark and Matthew on a number of minor details:

...he took along me, James, and Peter	...taking along Peter and John and James	Jesus took Peter and James and John	Jesus took Peter and James and John, his brother, and brought them up to a high mountain by themselves
to the mountain where he was accustomed to pray. (<i>AJ</i> 90.1–2)	he went up to the mountain to pray. (Luke 9:28)	and brought them up to a high mountain by themselves. (Mark 9:2)	and brought them up to a high mountain by themselves (Matt 17:1)

⁴² Luke’s redactional use of the articular, substantive participle appears in Luke 8:8 (Mark 4:9); Luke 8:21 (Mark 3:35); Luke 20:27 (Mark 12:18); Luke 23:40 (Mark 15:41). On Luke’s fondness for participles and his preference for the substantial participle in particular, see already Cadbury, *Style*, 135–36. On ὁ καλέσας αὐτόν as redactional, see C. F. Evans, *Saint Luke* (TPI New Testament Commentaries; London: SCM, 1990), 360; Bovon, *Luke*, 1:295.

⁴³ Similarly Pervo, “Trajectories,” 60; Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 126; Czachesz, *Commission Narratives*, 103 n. 54. There is an additional corroborating parallel between *AJ* 93.6–7 (“those who had invited [ὑπὸ τῶν κεκληκότων]”) and a passage in Luke 14, where Jesus dines at the invitation of a Pharisee. In 14:12 Luke again refers to the host with an articular, substantial perfect participle (“the one who had invited him [τῷ κεκληκότῳ αὐτόν]”). For similar reasons to those mentioned above, this is also probably redactional.

⁴⁴ So Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 125. Bovon (*Luke*, 1:372–73 n. 22) likewise concludes that *AJ* is here dependent on Luke and elsewhere freely appropriates narrative material from Luke. The presence of an allusion is also signaled by the way this story is introduced: “And another time, when (ἄλλοτε δέ ποτε) ...” (90.1). ποτέ is otherwise superfluous after the ἄλλοτε δέ and so alerts readers to the fact that the author is about to allude to something with which they are familiar.

⁴⁵ On prayer as a redactional theme, see the survey of past scholarship in Geir Otto Holmås, *Prayer and Vindication in Luke-Acts: The Theme of Prayer within the Context of the Legitimizing and Edifying Objective of the Lukan Narrative* (LNTS 443; London: New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 4–16. On προσεύξασθαι and ἐν τῷ προσεύξασθαι in Luke 9:28–29 as redactional additions of Luke, see Marshall, *Luke*, 383; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:792, 798; Bovon, *Luke*, 1:374–75.

<u>παραλαμβάνει</u> με, <u>Ἰάκωβον</u> καὶ <u>Πέτρον</u>	<u>παραλαβῶν</u> <u>Πέτρον</u> καὶ Ἰωάννην καὶ <u>Ἰάκωβον</u>	<u>παραλαμβάνει</u> ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὸν <u>Πέτρον</u> καὶ τὸν <u>Ἰάκωβον</u> καὶ τὸν Ἰωάννην	<u>παραλαμβάνει</u> ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὸν <u>Πέτρον</u> καὶ <u>Ἰάκωβον</u> καὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀναφέρει αὐτοὺς <u>εἰς ὄρος</u> ὑψηλὸν κατ' ἰδίαν.
<u>εἰς τὸ ὄρος</u> ὅπου ἦν αὐτῷ ἔθος εὔχεσθαι. (AJ 90.1–2)	ἀνέβη <u>εἰς τὸ ὄρος</u> προσεύξασθαι. (Luke 9:28)	καὶ ἀναφέρει αὐτοὺς <u>εἰς ὄρος</u> ὑψηλὸν κατ' ἰδίαν. (Mark 9:2)	καὶ ἀναφέρει αὐτοὺς <u>εἰς ὄρος</u> ὑψηλὸν κατ' ἰδίαν. (Matt 17:1)

Mark and Matthew include articles before one or more of the names of the apostles, but not before ὄρος, and describe the mountain as ὑψηλός. By contrast, the names are anarthrous in *AJ* and Luke, both of whom include τό before ὄρος and omit the adjective. The omission of the articles and the adjective are attributable to Lukan redaction.⁴⁶ Additionally, Mark and Matthew specify ὁ Ἰησοῦς as the subject of παραλαμβάνω, a detail lacking in both *AJ* and Luke.

The differences between Luke and *AJ* can easily be explained as intentional redactional changes by the author of *AJ*. As in the previous example of the call of the disciples, *AJ* prefers the simple (εὔχεσθαι) verb to the compound verb (προσεύξασθαι) used by Luke.⁴⁷ That *AJ* places Peter at the end rather than the beginning of the list of the disciples is consistent with the author's practice of portraying John as superior to the rest of the apostles.⁴⁸ In contrast with Matthew and Mark and in agreement with *AJ*, Luke names John *before* James.⁴⁹ Could this have been what attracted the author of *AJ* to Luke 9:28? Additionally, the extra detail included in *AJ* 90.2, that Jesus was acting according to his ἔθος, may have been imported from a parallel in Luke 22:39–41, where ἔθος is also used to describe a “custom” of Jesus with respect to a mountain setting and prayer.⁵⁰

Finally, that Jesus prays is inexplicable apart from the use of a source such as Luke. Although prayer is an important repeated theme in *AJ*, its use here with Jesus as the subject is completely incongruous with the docetic Christology of the author. Prayer is a decidedly human activity, but the goal of the entire speech in section B is to assert Christ's divinity and to deny his

⁴⁶ On Luke's omission of articles and his avoidance of adjectives that could be construed as exaggeration, see already Cadbury, *Style*, 2:85, 118–19, 197–99.

⁴⁷ εὔχομαι occurs ten times for prayer in *AJ* (27.8; 39.12; 40.8; 43.5; 45.5; 86.1; 90.2; 90.6–7; 108.1; 111.13), προσεύχομαι only once (41.1). If, as most scholars maintain, sections A and B were written by the same author, then there is a clear preference for εὔχομαι.

⁴⁸ See, e.g., *AJ* 88; 89; 90; 91.

⁴⁹ The scribes of some manuscripts (p^{45.75vid} C³ D L Ξ 33. 892. l 844* r¹ vg^{cl} sy^{s.c.p} sa^{mss} bo) of Luke sought to remedy this oddity.

⁵⁰ Similarly Richard I. Pervo, “Egging on the Chickens: A Cowardly Response to Dennis MacDonald and Then Some,” *Semeia* 80 (1997): 51. The term ἔθος may also be Lukan and is absent from the parallel in John 18:2.

humanity. The Christology of *AJ* has been aptly described as “Christomonism.”⁵¹ There is no distinction between the Father and the Son.⁵² In this schema, there is no other divine person to whom Jesus could pray. Given the thoroughgoing docetic Christology, it is surprising that the prayer motif in the transfiguration narrative is retained at all. Certainly, the author of this section would not have invented or added this detail to a source that did not already contain it. The only plausible explanation is that it is retained as a well-known tradition so that its potential christological implications might be refuted by the description of the transfiguration that follows. When John approaches Jesus, who was supposedly praying (90.6–7), he finds him to be “not at all a man” and so tall that his head reaches “into heaven” (90.10–12).⁵³ Apparently, the prayer, like so many of the other seemingly human qualities about Jesus, is nothing more than an illusion.

If Lukan material was present in only one of the three pericope discussed above, it could be judged coincidental. The cumulative case, however, is decisive. There is ample evidence to conclude with certainty that the author of *AJ* was influenced by Luke’s Gospel.

7.2.2 The Author’s View of the Fourth Gospel

The influence of the Fourth Gospel on section B comes primarily from John 20–21. The most obvious example is a verbatim quotation in *AJ* 90.16 of Jesus’s words in John 20:27 (“Do not be unbelieving but believing [μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός]”), here addressed to the apostle John instead of Thomas. Just prior to this, John explains that it was “because he loved me (ἐπειδὴ ἐφίλει με)” that he alone dared to draw near to the Lord on the mount of transfiguration (*AJ* 90.7–8). This explanation seems to presuppose knowledge, on the part of both the author and the intended readers, of the tradition identifying John as the Beloved Disciple in the Fourth Gospel.⁵⁴ The author alludes specifically to

⁵¹ E.g., Schäferdiek, “Acts of John (rev. ed.),” 165.

⁵² The two are identified in section A. The apostle addresses Jesus as “the Father” in *AJ* 77 and 112.

⁵³ This second instance of prayer in *AJ* 90.6–7 corresponds to Luke’s second redactional insertion of this motif in Luke 9:29. In both cases, the first mention of prayer denotes the intention to pray whereas the second depicts Jesus actually praying.

⁵⁴ On the author’s acknowledgement of John’s authorship of the Fourth Gospel, see Paul G. Schneider, *The Mystery of the Acts of John: An Interpretation of the Hymn and the Dance in Light of the Acts’ Theology* (Distinguished Dissertations Series 10; San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1991), 51; Pervo, “Trajectories,” 59; Bauckham, “Papias and Polycrates,” 66–67; Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 259–60. That the allusion was expected to be recognized is supported by Lalleman’s observation that the designation as the Beloved Disciple “seems somewhat inappropriate in view of [John’s] misbehavior” in *AJ* 90.15–22 (*Acts of John*, 114). The phrase ἐπειδὴ ἐφίλει με is unexpected because nothing like it appears in the preceding chapters of *AJ*.

John 20:2 (“the one whom Jesus loved” [ὄν ἐφίλει ὁ Ἰησοῦς]).⁵⁵ Similarly, in *AJ* 89.11, the apostle recounts his experience of leaning on Jesus’s breast (ἐπὶ τὰ ἴδια στήθη) during a meal (ἀνακειμένον). Although most commentators rightly recognize an allusion to John 13:23–25 (ἀνακειμένος ... ἀναπεσὼν ... ἐπὶ τὸ στήθος τοῦ Ἰησοῦ), the influence of John 21:20 must also be considered. John 21:20 identifies the author of the Fourth Gospel by means of two characteristics: (i) that Jesus loved him (ὄν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς) and (ii) that he leaned on the breast of Jesus (ἀνέπεσεν... ἐπὶ τὸ στήθος αὐτοῦ). The presence of these two identifying characteristics in close proximity to one another in *AJ* suggests the possibility that the author may have chosen them on the basis of John 21:20.⁵⁶ If so, it confirms that the author of *AJ* knew the tradition that John wrote the Fourth Gospel and also that he knew John’s Gospel in its final form.⁵⁷ This is corroborated by two other instances wherein section B shows dependence on John 21.⁵⁸

The first comes from the *exordium* of John’s sermon in *AJ* 88.1–8, the second from the story that immediately follows in *AJ* 88.9–20. I will discuss the former here and the latter in the next part of this chapter. Lalleman, following M. R. James, argues that *AJ* 88.1–8 contains an allusion to John 21:25 and points to the presence of *χωρέω* in both *AJ* 88.4 and John 21:25.⁵⁹ Yet the verbal links are not limited to *χωρέω*:

⁵⁵ So Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis*, 483; Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 114. That the referent is specifically John 20:2 is confirmed by two factors: (i) the verbatim quotation of John 20:27 a few lines later, and (ii) the fact that verb *φιλέω* designates the beloved disciple only in John 20:2. All other references to the beloved disciple (assuming references to Lazarus are not to be counted) in the Gospel of John have *ἀγαπάω*.

⁵⁶ Each is utilized in service of the docetic polemic of *AJ*. The first affords John an opportunity to catch a glimpse of Jesus without a human body (*AJ* 90). The second, which in John’s Gospel demonstrates intimacy, is commandeered to authenticate the author’s polymorphic Christology. John, because he is said to have lain against the breast of Jesus, is uniquely qualified to discuss the nature of Jesus’s body (*AJ* 89; 93).

⁵⁷ Czachesz (“Gospel of the Acts,” 49–72 at 63–64) argues that the lack of overlap in miracle stories between the Fourth Gospel and *AJ* indicates that the author of the latter did not know the final version of former. This argument from silence can be refuted in two ways. First, the absence of Johannine miracle stories could be explained by the fact that in 94.14–17 the author claims that the miracles themselves are impossible to describe in words. Second, if, as I argue below, “many things” (πολλά) in *AJ* 88.3 alludes to John 21:25, then the author’s silence regarding the miracles in John’s Gospel is intentional – the whole point is to relate some of the “many” signs that could not be “contained” in the Fourth Gospel.

⁵⁸ Additionally, the death of John narrated in section A (*AJ* 106–108, 110–115, esp. 114.9–12) may be dependent on John 21:18–23 (Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 119).

⁵⁹ Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 114–15; M. R. James, *Apocrypha anecdota: Second Series* (TS 5; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897), 151. Hill (*Johannine Corpus*, 260) concurs.

There are also *many* (πολλά) other things that (ἃ) Jesus did, which if every one of them were to be written (γράφηται), I suppose that not even the world itself could contain (χωρήσει) the books that would be written.
(John 21:24–25)

We ourselves also, whom he chose for himself to be apostles, were tested by many (πολλά) things. I, for my part, could not capture (χωρῶ), either in conversation with you or in writing (γράψαι), the things that (ἃ) I saw and the things that (ἃ) I heard. Indeed, even now it is necessary to adapt them to your hearing.
(AJ 88.2–5)

In light of the author's interest in the last two chapters of the Fourth Gospel, this verbal overlap is hardly coincidental.⁶⁰ AJ 88.3–4 refers to the many (πολλά) things that John and his fellow apostles experienced that he was not able to adequately capture (χωρῶ) in writing (γράψαι) previously, but that he will now attempt to tell them.⁶¹ The implication of the allusion is that AJ purports to reveal some of the “many things” (πολλά) in John 21:25 that were not written (γράφηται) in the Fourth Gospel because neither it nor “even the whole world” could possibly “contain” (χωρήσει) them all. Taking his cue and justification from the apology in John 21:25, the author of AJ implies that the sermon that follows will attempt to compensate for the inadequacies of the Fourth Gospel in communicating who Jesus is.⁶² Given that the sermon also draws on material from the Synoptics, this subtle, apologetic critique of the Fourth Gospel is meant to extend to the other gospels as well.⁶³

⁶⁰ The presence of the allusion is signaled by the fact that the reference to writing in AJ 88.4 is itself unexpected. Though John is often elsewhere the subject of προσμιλέω or ὀμιλέω (in section B: 91.1; 93.15; in section A: 20.12; 26.2; 46.5; 107.11; 111.6), this is the only instance in AJ where he is the subject of γράφω. In AJ 88.3–5 John says he has no capacity to speak (προσομιλεῖν) or to write (γράψαι), and then goes on to speak (ὀμιλέω) but not to write. Thus, the mention of writing is superfluous unless it is an allusion to John's previous writing activity. AJ 88.3–5 therefore refers to John's inability in the past to contain/capture in writing his visible and audible experiences of Jesus. Lalleman quotes approvingly the James's paraphrase: “In my published writings’, says St John, ‘you will not find the mysteries which I am now going to lay before you: they were too deep for me to record in writing’” (Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 115; James, *Apocrypha anecdota: Second Series*, 151).

⁶¹ Lalleman (*Acts of John*, 115 n. 209) correctly notes that although χωρέω occurs in the present tense in AJ 88.4, the phrase καὶ νῦν μὴν at the beginning of the next sentence requires that it refer to past time (AJ 88.5). I would suggest χωρῶ is probably best read as a present functioning as a perfect (cf. Smyth §1887), thus: “I have not been able to contain/capture.” The fact that modern translations (in English, French, and German) obscure the syntax here may explain why this allusion to John 21:24–25 has not been readily recognized.

⁶² Similarly Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 114–15; Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 261.

⁶³ Similarly Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 115; Luttikhuisen, *Revisions*, 140. The syntax corroborates this conclusion. The sentence begins with a μέν solitarium. According to Smyth §2896, “μέν solitarium occurs when a clause with μέν is not followed by a clause with δέ. This is especially common when the antithetical clause is to be supplied in thought, as when μέν emphasizes a statement made by a person with reference to himself as opposed to others (often with a tone of arrogance or of credulity). Here any possible opposition or difference

The allusion to the end of John's Gospel is complemented by an allusion to the beginning of John's Gospel in the next sentence. In *AJ* 88.5–7, the apostle says that he will adapt his experiences to their hearing “so that” they “might see the glory that surrounds him (ὅπως ἴδητε τὴν περὶ αὐτὸν δόξαν).” This clause sits somewhat uneasily in this context and so probably alludes to John 1:14 (“we have seen his glory [ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ]).”⁶⁴ Given the multiple examples of polymorphy in the sermon that follows and the fact that the apostle is responding to the confusion over the polymorphic nature of Christ's appearance to Drusiana (*AJ* 87), one might more naturally expect the apostle's stated goal to refer more directly to the idea of polymorphy. Instead, he refers more ambiguously to the δόξα, a term that occurs only once in the pericopae that follow. The reference to “seeing” is also awkward. The apostle says he will adapt his experiences to their “hearing” so that they can “see.” Obviously, this is to be taken metaphorically. However, in the previous sentence, the apostle uses the same verb in a more literal sense to refer to the “things I saw and things I heard.” The speech, then, is intended to help them to see in a metaphorical sense the things that John himself saw in a more literal sense. John will preach so that they too can “see the glory” that he wrote about seeing in John 1:14.

It is probably this seeing of glory in John 1:14 that the author of *AJ* believed John's Gospel failed to express adequately.⁶⁵ John 1:14 includes what the author of *AJ* probably considered a strange juxtaposition: “the word became flesh ... and we saw his glory.” Not surprisingly, our docetic author omits the first part of the verse.⁶⁶ Moreover, in order to protect divine transcendence the author refers not to the glory of Jesus himself (as in John) but to “the glory that surrounds him (τὴν περὶ αὐτὸν δόξαν).”⁶⁷ John's Gospel often uses glory in an ironic way, i.e., Jesus is glorified in his suffering. It may be that the author of *AJ* is attempting to “correct” this aspect of the Fourth Gospel.

of opinion, however justifiable, is left unexpressed” (see further J. D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles* [2nd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1954], 380–84). In other words, the overall sense, including the unexpressed portion might be “(If) I, for my part, could not ... (do you really think the other apostles/evangelists could do so?).”

⁶⁴ Similarly Schneider, *Mystery*, 164; Pervo, “Trajectories,” 59; Czachesz, *Commission Narratives*, 103–4.

⁶⁵ “Seeing the glory” is a repeated theme in the Fourth Gospel (1:14; 11:40; 12:41; 17:24; cf. 2:11).

⁶⁶ Similarly Pervo, “Trajectories,” 59 n. 70. The Christomonism of the author also explains the omission of the next phrase of John 1:14 (“glory as of the only Son from the Father”).

⁶⁷ For the same purpose, Philo makes a nearly identical change to Moses's request to see God's glory in Exod 33:18: “I bow before Thy admonitions, that I never could have received the vision of Thee clearly manifested, but I beseech Thee that I may *at least see the glory that surrounds Thee* (τὴν γοῦν περὶ σὲ δόξαν θεάσασθαι)” (*Spec.* 1.45 [Colson, LCL, emphasis added]).

These two allusions to the beginning and ending of John's Gospel illuminate two aspects of the author's strategy for dealing with his gospel sources. First, the reference to the "many things" (John 21:25) that could not be contained in Fourth Gospel foreshadows the author's intention to supplement the gospel tradition with additional, docetic content. As Lalleman puts it, "Instead of straightforward contradiction of these gospels, the author opts to reveal new knowledge that had not yet been expressed in writing before."⁶⁸ The omission of the incarnation from the allusion to John 1:14 illustrates the second aspect of the author's method. Section B "is a re-edition of Gospel stories from which the presentation of a human Jesus has been deleted."⁶⁹ Or, to use one of Irenaeus's analogies, the author of *AJ* has taken mosaic of the human Jesus in the Gospels and rearranged the stones so as to portray him as a shape-shifting deity.⁷⁰

7.3 Re-use of the Resurrection Narratives

The twin motifs of doubt and confusion are integral to the docetic purposes of section B and its polymorphic Christology. The whole of John's sermon is prompted by the bewildered response to Drusiana's vision of Christ appearing to her "in the tomb (ἐν τῷ μνήματι) in the form of John and of a young man (νεανίσκος)" (*AJ* 87.1–3). John speaks because "they were perplexed (ἠπορημένων) and in some ways not yet firmly established in the faith (τῇ πίστει)" (*AJ* 87.3–5). This brief scene at the beginning of section B is reminiscent of the empty tomb narratives of Mark and Luke and reads like a harmonization of the two.⁷¹ Drusiana, like the women in Luke, has a vision in a tomb. She sees two figures, one of which is described as a νεανίσκος, a term unique to Mark's version of the empty tomb story. The confusion and doubt in *AJ* 87.3–5 recall Luke's version, wherein the women are described as being in a state of perplexity (ἐν τῷ ἀπορεῖσθα, 24:4) and the men disbelieve (ἠπίστου) the vision report (24:11). The key difference is that in *AJ* the confusion is over the polymorphic vision rather than the missing body (Luke 24:3). This is the first instance of a pattern throughout section B wherein the doubt motif from the canonical resurrection narratives is exploited in support of a docetic and polymorphic Christology. The purpose of the apostle's sermon is to solidify

⁶⁸ Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 115. In this way section B differs from the more overtly polemical approach of section C (*Acts of John*, 116–22).

⁶⁹ Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 210; similarly Sirker-Wicklaus, *Untersuchungen zu Den Johannes-Akten* (Beiträge zur Religionsgeschichte 2; Witterschlick: Wehle, 1988), 104.

⁷⁰ See Chapter 2.

⁷¹ Pervo ("Trajectories," 54–57) argues that *AJ* 63–86 functions as a parody of the empty tomb narrative in John 20:1–18. If so, the author may be drawing from all three accounts.

the faith of the listeners by demonstrating that polymorphic Christology is “neither strange nor contrary (οὐδὲν ξένον ... οὐδὲ παράδοξον)” to the faith (*AJ* 88.1) but proof that the one whom they are called “to worship is not man ... but God” (*AJ* 104.1–2).⁷² By repeatedly associating the post-resurrection doubt of the apostles with polymorphism and transferring references to their doubt into pre-Easter settings, the author transforms the doubt into an indirect proof that Christ was never truly human. The repetition, along with the use of traditional material from the gospels, makes the “strange” appear normal, and, ironically, dispels doubts about docetism. The following paragraphs will examine three examples of this practice drawn from John 21, John 20, and Luke 24, respectively. They are discussed in the sequence in which they occur in *AJ* so as to illuminate the progressive development of the doubt motif.

7.3.1 *AJ* 88.9–20: Polymorphy and the Non-recognition Motif in John 21.

The first gospel flashback (*AJ* 88.9–20) of John’s sermon relates a revised version of the Synoptic story of the call of the first disciples (cf. Matt 4:18–22; Mark 1:16–20; Luke 5:1–11). As already noted, the episode begins with material from the beginning of Matthew’s (or Mark’s) account and ends with material from the ending of Luke’s account. It therefore has a “Synoptic” frame. Given that John is the “hero” of the Acts, Paul G. Schneider wonders why the author does not draw instead from the call of the first disciples in John 1:35–51.⁷³ I propose two explanations for this. First, John 1:35–51, unlike the call of the disciples in the Synoptics, never mentions John by name and so is less amenable to the author’s practice of appealing to John’s personal experiences. Second, the absence of material from John 1:35–51 does not mean the author has suddenly lost interest in the Fourth Gospel. On the contrary, the Synoptic material merely provides a traditional backdrop onto which the author has superimposed his own docetic reworking of another Johannine passage, namely, John 21:1–14.⁷⁴

A number of thematic, structural, and verbal connections with John 21:1–4 can be observed. In *AJ* 88.12–20, as in John 21:1–14, Jesus stands on the shore

⁷² *AJ* 82.6 explicitly calls Jesus πολύμορφος (“polymorphous,” 82.6), the term that describes Satan in 70.4 (cf. 2 Cor 11:14: “Satan transforms himself into an angel of light”). It may be that this commonality with Satan (paralleled in *Acts Thom.* 44.1; 48.1; 153.1) raised questions about the legitimacy of polymorphic Christology.

⁷³ Schneider, *Mystery*, 50–51.

⁷⁴ Lalleman (*Acts of John*, 112–13) and Junod and Kaestli (*Acta Iohannis*, 489) also detect the influence of John 21 on this pericope. The latter are more hesitant in claiming direct literary dependence on John 21 because of the presence of a parallel fishing story at the end of the *Gospel of Peter* (*Acta Iohannis*, 481). Junod and Kaestli are overly cautious in this instance. The allusion to John 21:25 in the preceding paragraph (*AJ* 88.3–4) makes the influence of John 21:1–14 far more likely, especially since it is Levi rather than John who accompanies Peter and Andrew on the fishing expedition in the *Gospel of Peter*.

shore (John 21:4; *AJ* 88.11–18); and (ii) after they come to shore and approach Jesus (John 21:12; *AJ* 89.1–6). In one sense, *AJ* might be said to fill in the narrative gaps in John 21 by appealing to polymorphy to address John’s silence as to why the disciples had difficulty recognizing the risen Jesus in the first place.⁸¹ Of course, the author of *AJ* would not want to acknowledge a “risen Jesus,” as that could imply that he died and rose again as a man. Rather he is attracted to the Jesus of John 21 because of the unusual way in which he is described. Our docetist has transferred these mysterious characteristics of the risen Jesus to a story at the start of Jesus’s public ministry to claim that he was never human in the first place.⁸² The non-recognition motif from John 21 has become ammunition for docetic Christology.

7.3.2 *AJ* 90: The Transfiguration of Thomas’s Doubt

Following the episode of the call of the fishermen, the doubts of John and his fellow disciples grow in intensity. When the disciples begin following Jesus, they each see him in a different form, causing them to be “perplexed (ἠποροῦμεν)” (*AJ* 89.4). As they continue to follow, they become “gradually more perplexed (κατ’ ὀλίγον ἠποροῦμεν)” (*AJ* 89.5). After relating two more instances of polymorphism, John says that he became “greatly perplexed (διαπορεῖν)” (*AJ* 89.14). This progression of increasing doubt in response to experiences of a polymorphic Jesus appears to reach a climax of full-blown “disbelief” in the transfiguration story of *AJ* 90.4–22. In this episode, which offers the most detailed description of polymorphism in all of section B, John responds by crying out in fear, and Jesus rebukes him with his famous words to Thomas, “Do not be disbelieving but believing!” (*AJ* 90.16 = John 20:27c).⁸³

This reference to post-resurrection doubt comes from the second of two transfiguration scenes. The first is described in summary fashion and adds nothing of major significance to the synoptic accounts. Much like the synoptic frame placed around the story in *AJ* 88.9–20, the role of the first transfiguration scene is to set a traditional stage for the second.⁸⁴ Of all the pericopae in section B, the second transfiguration scene is the most significant.⁸⁵ It is not only the longest episode; it also provides the fullest and most explicit Christology. Whereas all of the other episodes are merely descriptive, requiring the reader to infer Christology from the story, this scene provides a direct interpretation of John’s vision of the transfigured Christ: he is “not at all a man” (*AJ* 90.10–11). The importance of this interpretation is indicated by the fact that it is echoed in the concluding exhortation of John’s sermon: “Therefore you too,

⁸¹ Similarly Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis*, 489.

⁸² So Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 52 n. 202; Klauck, *Apocryphal Acts*, 32.

⁸³ John’s cry of fear is to be understood as an expression of unbelief (cf. Matt 14:30–31).

⁸⁴ The first story is “eclipsed” by the second (Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis*, 482).

⁸⁵ Junod and Kaestli call it “la perle des *AJ*” (*Acta Iohannis*, 482).

beloved, must be persuaded that *it is not a man* that I proclaim to you to worship, but God” (*AJ* 104.1–2).⁸⁶

The quotation of John 20:27 must also be significant. As can be seen from the various examples discussed above, the author’s use of sources normally involves subtle allusions and faint echoes. This is the only verbatim quotation of any source in the entirety of sections A, B, and C. The change in *modus operandi* is a signal to the reader that this pericope is meant to be read in light of John 20.⁸⁷ That the author has the broader context of John 20 in mind is confirmed by the allusion, discussed above, to John 20:2 a few sentences earlier (*AJ* 90.7).

AJ 90 seems to mimic the narrative strategy and structure of John 20. Both texts contain an initial story with a group of disciples followed by a similar, almost duplicate, story centered on the more intimate experience of an individual disciple. Just as the group appearance scene in John 20:19–23 is in some sense replicated and individualized in the Doubting Thomas pericope, so also the synoptic transfiguration scene, briefly summarized in *AJ* 90.1–4, is replicated and individualized in *AJ* 90.4–22.⁸⁸ In each case the second story is linked to the first with the word *πάλιν* (“again”).

Within the second story, there are further structural correspondences. Each includes the following elements in roughly the same sequence: (i) a reiteration of the setting of the previous pericope (*AJ* 90.5–7 [cf. *AJ* 90.1–2]; John 20:26 [cf. John 20:19]); (ii) statements about Jesus’s body (*AJ* 90.9–14; John 20:25, 27a-b); (iii) Jesus’s rebuke of the disciple for unbelief (*AJ* 90.15–16; John 20:27c); (iv) a brief response of the one rebuked (*AJ* 90.16; John 20:28); (v) a final warning/beatitude of Jesus (*AJ* 90.21–22; John 20:29).⁸⁹ These

⁸⁶ In *AJ* 104.2, θεός is anarthrous, but the immediately succeeding context makes clear that it should be translated “God” rather than “a god.” The explicit denials of Jesus’s humanity are paralleled in the teaching of other early docetists who espoused polymorphic Christology, e.g., the Simonians (“yet he was not a man” [Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.3]) and the Basilideans (“but he is not a man and has not taken flesh” [Epiphanius, *Pan.* 24.3.1]).

⁸⁷ Similarly Pervo, “Trajectories,” 60; contra Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis*, 481.

⁸⁸ The first-person plural in *AJ* 90.10 (“he was seen by us [ὅφ’ ἡμῶν]”) is otherwise nonsensical given that John is portrayed as the only disciple to witness this event. This disjunction suggests the influence of a source (cf. the plural ἐωράκαμεν in John 20:25).

⁸⁹ It may seem strange from a modern-day perspective to consider the warning of *AJ* 90.21–22 equivalent to the beatitude of John 20:29. However, one of the disputed fragments of the *Acts of John* shows that beatitude and warning were by no means mutually exclusive categories. In the famous episode of John and the Partridge, one of John’s recent converts proclaims to the apostle: “And blessed (μακάροισ) is he who has not tempted God in you! He who tempts you, tempts him who cannot be tempted (τὸν ἀπειραστον περιάζει)” (trans. Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 326; Greek text in Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis*, 373). Here, a warning against tempting God comes in the form of beatitude. The presence of τὸν ἀπειραστον περιάζει shows the relevance, if not necessarily the authenticity, of this fragment for understanding μὴ περιάζειν τὸν ἀπειραστον in *AJ* 90.21–22. If my reading is

similarities suggest that *AJ* 90.4–22 is in some sense intended to critique and replace John 20:24–29.⁹⁰

The differences are consistent with the author's overall purposes. First, the change in setting aligns with the author's practice of importing material from the post-resurrection stories into pre-Easter settings. Second, the statements about Jesus's body are diametrical to one another. To advance his docetic Christology, the author of *AJ* replaces references to the physicality of Jesus's resurrection body in John 20:25,27 with statements that explicitly deny Jesus's humanity ("not at all a man").⁹¹ Each element in *AJ* 90.9–14 is designed to hint at Jesus's full divinity and/or oppose his true humanity. Jesus is depicted in one moment as so tall that his "head reached to heaven" and in the next as a "man of small stature" (90.11–14).⁹² In addition to this polymorphy, John is said to see Jesus's backside (ἀφορῶν αὐτὸν εἰς τὰ ὀπίσθια αὐτοῦ) in *AJ* 90.8–9, an allusion to the theophany in Exod 33:23 LXX ("you shall see my back [ὄψη τὰ ὀπίσω μου]").⁹³ Next, Jesus is said to be "not dressed in any garments,

correct, *AJ* has transformed the beatitude in John 20:29 into a warning against seeking proof for Jesus's divinity, a change probably motivated by the apophaticism of the author.

According to the traditional numbering, the partridge-story fragment is part of ch. 57. Bonnet in his early critical edition placed this fragment in the lacuna between chs. 55 and 58. Junod and Kaestli consider this episode secondary and insert a different fragment at the same location (see summary of debate in Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 9, 13–14).

⁹⁰ In ancient rhetoric, *emulatio* usually tries to conceal intertextuality. But in the rare cases in which intertextuality is advertised, the purpose is to signal a critical attitude towards the source (Sandnes, *Cento and Canon*, 39–43). This probably accounts for the verbatim replication of Jesus's words to Thomas.

⁹¹ Lalleman notes that *AJ* 90.16 renders John 20:27 "harmless" to its docetic viewpoint "by quoting only the last part of it" (*Acts of John*, 211 n. 264).

⁹² In *AJ*, the gigantic size of Christ is meant to imply his deity. On the ancient Jewish, Greek and gnostic speculations about the cosmic size of the divine body, see Stroumsa, "Form(s)," 269–88. Although similar depictions of Christ occur among the Elchasites and Ebionites (Epiphanius, Pan. 30.3.2; 20.17.5–7), in these cases Christ is said to be a ninety-six mile tall angel. In *Gos. Pet.* 10.39–40, the two escorts have heads that reach "as far as heaven," but the height of the risen One himself "surpassed the heavens." Presumably this is an indication that the former are angels and the latter a divine being of superior status.

⁹³ So Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis*, 1:194; István Karasszon, "Old Testament Quotations in the Acts of Andrew and John," in *The Apocryphal Acts of John* (ed. Jan N. Bremmer; SAAA 1; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995), 70; Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 142; Robbins, *Rewriting Gospel*, 210. The parallels are more extensive than have been recognized previously. John is depicted as a new Moses who (i) having "found favor" with God (Exod 33:17; cf. "since he loves me" in *AJ* 90.7); (ii) insists on seeing God's glory ("Show me your glory [δειξόν μοι τὴν σεαυτοῦ δόξαν]" in Exod 33:18 LXX; cf. "that you may see the glory [ὅπως ἴδητε τὴν ... δόξαν]" in *AJ* 88.7); (iii) ascends "onto a mountain" (εἰς ... ὄρος in both Exod 34:1 LXX and *AJ* 90.5); where he (iv) "stands" (στήση in Exod 33:21 LXX; cf. ἵσταμαι in *AJ* 90.8); and (v) sees God's backside. The last two details are superfluous in context if this is not an allusion to Exodus. Another possible connection is the implied macrocosmic size of

but naked” (*AJ* 90.9–10), a description that is almost certainly code for “not in the flesh” and so an apt counter to John 20:25, 27.⁹⁴

The material inserted after the quotation of John 20:27 also supports the author’s Christology. The unexpected addition of *καὶ μὴ περιέργως* (“and do not be curious/inquisitive”) to the end of the quotation of John 20:27 is explicated by what follows.⁹⁵ In response John asks, “What did I do [wrong] Lord?” Jesus eventually answers, “Let it be your concern from henceforth not to test him who is not to be tested (*μὴ πειράζειν τὸν ἀπειράστον*).” The “one who is not to be tested” is the author’s circumlocution for God.⁹⁶ Thus, the prohibition against curiosity is in effect a prohibition against seeking out definitive proof of Jesus’s divinity.⁹⁷ By doing the latter, John has come dangerously close to, or is perhaps already guilty of, putting the Lord to the test.

God in the Exodus account; when Moses stands in the cleft of the Rock, God is said to cover him merely with his “hand” until he passes by (Exod 33:2).

⁹⁴ While this reading is supported by numerous parallels in the NT and in gnostic literature, two stand out. The first is *Gos. Truth* (NHC I,3) 56.24–58.17, which alludes to the fear of arising naked in 2 Cor 5:3 and then relates a transfiguration story with a Jesus of macrocosmic size. The second is 2 *Apoc. Jas.* [NHC V,4] 58.20–23: “I saw that he was naked, and there was no garment clothing him.” We may also note that the tunics of skin with which God clothed Adam and Eve in Gen 3:21 are frequently interpreted by gnostics to mean that God gave humans flesh only after the Fall.

⁹⁵ Cf. Sir 3:23 (NETS): “With matters greater than your affairs do not meddle (*μὴ περιεργάζου*), for things beyond human understanding have been shown to you.”

⁹⁶ Cf. Deut 6:16; Luke 4:12; and especially Jas 1:13.

⁹⁷ Tertullian in *Prax.* 25 also refers to curiosity in connection Thomas’s doubt: “Yet after the resurrection and the glory of the conquest of death, when, he has put off from him the necessity of any humility and now could show himself as the Father to that faithful woman who attempted to touch him as a result of affection and *not of curiosity nor of Thomas’s unbelief* (*non ex curiositate nec ex incredulitate Thomae*), he says, *Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father, but go to my brethren* – and even in this he shows himself the Son, for he would have called them his sons if he had been the Father – *and tell them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, my God and your God*.... Therefore whatever of these things you have thought were able to be of advantage to you for the demonstration of the identity of Father and Son, you are striving against the express judgement of the gospel: for the things were written, not that you may believe that Jesus Christ is the Father, but that <you may believe that he is> the Son” (trans. Ernest Evans, *Tertullian’s Treatise against Praxeas: The Text Edited, with an Introduction, Translation and Commentary* [London: S.P.C.K., 1948; repr., Eugene, Ore: Wipf & Stock, 2011], 121, 169). The mention of curiosity, seemingly gratuitous in context, suggests the influence of a source. Given that “and do not be curious” in *AJ* 90 is a redactional addition to John 20:27, it is probably safe to conclude that Tertullian has been influenced, whether directly or indirectly by *AJ*. In favor of direct influence, there is another passage in which Tertullian appears to depend on *AJ*. In *Carn. Chr.* 1.1 Tertullian refers to heretics who refer to Christ’s flesh “as if it had no existence at all (*tamquam aut nullam omnino* ≈ ὡς μηδὲ ὄλωσ ὄν).” This echoes the description of Christ’s body in *AJ* 93.4: “as if it were not existing at all (*ὡς μηδὲ ὄλωσ ὄν*).” This phrase may also be redactional, but it is difficult to be certain in this case.

This admonition against testing God is not merely a subtle hint at Jesus's deity; it is also a response to John 20:24–29. The *Protevangelium of James* also refers to the prohibition against putting the Lord to the test while alluding to the Thomas pericope:

And Salome said, “As the *Lord my God* (κύριος ὁ θεός μου; cf. John 20:28: ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου) lives, *unless I thrust my finger* (ἐὰν μὴ βαλῶ τὸν δάκτυλόν μου; cf. John 20:25: ἐὰν μὴ ... βαλῶ τὸν δάκτυλόν μου) and search her nature, *I will never believe* (οὐ μὴ πιστεύσω; cf. John 20:25: οὐ μὴ πιστεύσω) that a virgin has given birth.” ... And Salome thrust her finger into her physical aspect, and cried out and said, “Woe for my lawlessness and for my *unbelief* (ἀπιστία; cf. John 20:27: ἄπιστος), because *I put to the test* (ἐξεπείρασα; cf. πειράζειν, *AJ* 90.22) the living God (θεόν), and behold, *my hand* (ἡ χεὶρ μου; cf. John 20:25: τοῦ τὴν χεῖρα) is falling away from me in fire.” (*Prot. Jas.* 19.3–20.1)⁹⁸

As with John in *AJ*, Salome incurs a form of corporal punishment for her actions. More importantly, Salome's Thomas-esque actions are explicitly characterized as having “put to the test the living God.”⁹⁹ That *AJ* implies the same evaluation of John's actions helps to confirm that John's attempts to seek proof of Jesus's divinity are designed to replace the physical demonstration in John 20:25, 27, and that the warning against testing God replaces the beatitude in John 20:29. This parallel in the *Protevangelium* also suggests that the author of *AJ* would have considered Thomas's skeptical demand for tactile proof to be inappropriate at best, and probably also sinful.¹⁰⁰

This raises the question as to how the author of *AJ* might have understood the Thomas Pericope. Richard I. Pervo makes the following proposal:

By introducing this intertextual reference, the *AcJn* advance the claim to be providing the correct interpretation of *John* 20. The recurrent themes of seeing, touching, and doubt in this portion of the *AcJn* suggest that one of its major objects is to provide a consistent and intelligible interpretation of *John* 20, in particular.¹⁰¹

On the other hand, the influence may be indirect. Tertullian's mention of curiosity may derive from the teaching of Praxeas, who in turn is dependent on *AJ* 90. This is plausible for two reasons. First, Praxeas is from Asia Minor, the likely provenance of this section of *AJ*. Second, the Christology of *AJ* bears some similarity to that of Praxeas. The Christomonism of *AJ* and its use of John 20 may have proven attractive to Praxeas, who appeals to John's Gospel to support his monarchian equation of Father and Son. If so, Tertullian may have drawn attention to Mary in the passage above because Praxeas singled out Thomas, either for his disbelief and curiosity or because he calls Jesus “My Lord and my God.”

⁹⁸ Greek text in Emile de Strycker, *La forme la plus ancienne du Protévangile de Jacques* (Subsidia hagiographica 33; Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1961).

⁹⁹ The link between disbelief and testing God appears already in Wis 1:2: “He is found by those who do not test (πειράζουσιν) him, he reveals himself to those who do not distrust (ἀπιστοῦσιν) him.”

¹⁰⁰ Contra Dunderberg, “Conflict,” 65.

¹⁰¹ Pervo, “Trajectories,” 60.

Pervo does not spell out exactly what he means by a “correct” or “consistent and intelligible interpretation of *John 20*,” at least not with respect to the Thomas pericope (John 20:24–29). We may nevertheless extrapolate from Pervo’s more detailed discussion of the reuse of John 20:1–18 in *AJ* 63–86.¹⁰² Pervo says that the author’s method in *AJ* 63–86 is “to expand upon the apparent inconsistencies and absurdities of the Johannine Easter story,” i.e., the author exploits those aspects of John 20 that could be construed naively docetic.¹⁰³ Pervo sums up his assessment: “Kaesemann ... has demonstrated how the Fourth Gospel *could* be read. The *AcJn* reveal that some *did* so read it.”¹⁰⁴ Of course, as Pervo wisely adds, “one may justly argue that by doing so the author has deprived the Gospel of its subtlety and complexity.”¹⁰⁵

Pervo’s understanding of the use of John 20:1–18 in *AJ* 63–86 can by analogy help make sense of the replacement of John 20:24–29 in *AJ* 90 as I have described it above. The Thomas pericope does contain a few “apparent inconsistencies” and ambiguities that *AJ* may be attempting to correct or exploit. First, Jesus invites Thomas to touch him, offering the tactile proof he demanded, but Jesus does this immediately after mysteriously arriving in a room where “the doors were locked” (John 20:26–27). Second, John 20 consistently speaks of belief and disbelief in general terms; neither v. 25, nor v. 27 or v. 29, explicitly identifies the object of Thomas’s disbelief. For this reason, the author of *AJ* can quote Jesus’s exhortation in v. 27 verbatim (“Do not be disbelieving but believing”) and imply that it is an exhortation to believe in Jesus’s divinity. Third, and even more remarkably, there is contextual evidence to support this interpretation. When offered physical proof of the resurrection, and thereby of Jesus’s humanity, Thomas is not said to touch Jesus or to confirm his resurrection. Instead, he confesses Jesus’s deity (“My lord and My God!” [John 20:28]). Only after this confession does Jesus confirm that Thomas finally believes (John 20:29). In a nutshell, the tension is that whereas John 20:25, 27 seems to emphasize Jesus’s humanity, the conclusion in John 20:28–29 suggests that the question of Jesus’s deity is the primary concern.

To be sure, there is no conflict or inconsistency here for the author of the Fourth Gospel. In his christological schema, Jesus’s divinity is revealed in his flesh, including, and perhaps especially, in his physical resurrection.¹⁰⁶ But this

¹⁰² Pervo, “Trajectories,” 54–57.

¹⁰³ Pervo, “Trajectories,” 54.

¹⁰⁴ Pervo, “Trajectories,” 56 n. 54, emphasis original. Following the lead of Käsemann, Sirker-Wicklaus (*Johannes-Akten*, 212–13) detects a docetic trajectory that begins in the Gospel of John and is extended in *AJ*.

¹⁰⁵ Pervo, “Trajectories,” 56.

¹⁰⁶ See further Chapter 10.

view of Christology is too paradoxical and subtle for the author of *AJ*.¹⁰⁷ Because of the latter's more apophatic approach, God is necessarily defined by what he is not.¹⁰⁸ The only way to maintain Jesus's divinity is to deny his humanity; the two are by definition mutually exclusive for our author. The juxtaposition of Jesus's humanity and divinity in John 20:24–29 would therefore have been construed as inconsistent and absurd by the author of *AJ*. Accordingly, when offering his more "consistent" replacement of the Thomas pericope, the author has retained and expanded its emphasis on Jesus as God, but has eliminated most of the material from John 20:25, 27 in order to explicitly deny Jesus's humanity ("not at all a man").¹⁰⁹ In sum, Thomas's doubt has been purged of any association with the resurrection of the flesh and has been commandeered in service of docetic Christology.

The author does not retain Thomas's climactic confession of Jesus's deity. John instead responds to Jesus's rebuke with "But what did I do Lord?" On the one hand, this question may involve an implied contrast with Thomas, as if to say, "Did I do something worthy of the rebuke you gave to Thomas?" If so, the implicit answer is that John transgressed the apophatic method of the author by seeking out positive proof of Jesus's deity. On the other hand, the author's practice throughout the sermon is to avoid explicit assertions of Jesus's divinity, leaving the reader to infer it from the stories. It is only at the conclusion of the sermon that Jesus's deity is openly proclaimed. John's equivalent of Thomas's confession might therefore be said to be delayed to the end of the sermon: "Therefore, you too must be persuaded, beloved, that it is not man whom I proclaim to worship, but God" (*AJ* 103.1–3, 104.1–2).¹¹⁰ The purpose

¹⁰⁷ Pervo ("Trajectories," 62) notes that "Modalistic monarchianism was a 'popular' theology for this very reason. 'Jesus is God' slices through the knots of theological niceties to the core of the 'simple believer's' desires."

¹⁰⁸ On the apophaticism of the author, see Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis*, 2: 472–491, esp. 472, 483, 491; István Czachesz, "Eroticism and Epistemology in the *Apocryphal Acts of John*," *NedTTs* 60 (2006): 69–70. Lalleman judges "negative theology" to be an inadequate description because of the emphasis on revelation, but he admits that *AJ* employs a "negative Christ-ology" that is "inherently docetic" (*Acts of John*, 210).

¹⁰⁹ Similarly Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 210; Sirker-Wicklaus, *Johannes-Akten*, 104. This editorial activity is analogous to the author's treatment of John 1:14 discussed above.

¹¹⁰ Another possible allusion to the Thomas pericope at the end of the sermon may corroborate my theory that this statement functions as a delayed equivalent of John 20:28. A few sentences earlier, the apostle exhorts: "Let us worship him ... *not with our fingers* (μη δακτύλοις), nor with our mouths, nor with the tongue, nor with any part of our body whatsoever, but with the disposition of our soul" (*AJ* 103.2–4). Mouths and tongues are standard body parts associated with worship, but "fingers" are, if I may use the expression, like sore thumbs in this list. Probably, they stick out on purpose, meant as a little jab at Thomas in John 20:25. It may be significant that the "fingers" appear at the head of the list. Assuming the consensus view that *AJ* 94–102 is a later interpolation, this reference to fingers originally

of this delay may, in part, be to make room for a subtle critique of Luke's resurrection narrative.

7.3.3 *AJ 92–93: A Docetic Replacement for Luke 24:36–43(53)?*

Following this ironic use of John 20:24–29, there are three, possibly four, successive pericopae that respond in one way or another to the group appearance narrative in Luke 24:36–53. The first two stories, *AJ* 92 and 93.1–4, draw on the language of Luke 24:39, 41. The third and fourth, *AJ* 93.4–10 and 10–14, appear to replace Luke 24:41–43 and 50–53, respectively. In each case the Lukan material is reused in such way as to reverse its ostensible function in Luke.

7.3.3.1 *AJ 92–93.4 and Luke 24:39, 41*

The first story, *AJ* 92, has no clear pre-passion parallel in the canonical gospels. It refers to a situation in which all the disciples are sleeping at a house in Gennesaret.¹¹¹ Though Jesus directs John to sleep as well, John only pretends to do so. Consequently, he witnesses Jesus and his double having a conversation – another instance of polymorphy. The doppelgänger tells Jesus, “Those whom you have chosen *still do not believe in you* (ἔτι σοι ἀπιστοῦσιν).” This reference to the unbelief of all of the disciples rather than of John alone is unexpected in context. John “alone (μόνος)” is said to witness the event (92.2). Though the other disciples are in one sense present, for all practical purposes, they are absent because they are sleeping. John was also the only disciple involved in the second transfiguration scene discussed above. There, John alone is rebuked for his unbelief and inappropriate curiosity. Here again, in *AJ* 92, *only* John displays inappropriate curiosity, yet *all* the disciples are accused of persistent unbelief.

This disjunction suggests that the notion that all the disciples “still do not believe (ἔτι ... ἀπιστοῦσιν)” derives from a source. A number of factors indicate that the wording is derived from Luke 24:41 (“still disbelieving [ἔτι ... ἀπιστοῦντων]”).¹¹² First, as we have seen, the author knows Luke's Gospel. Second, it is clear from the discussion above that the author has an interest not only in resurrection narratives in general but more specifically in the post-resurrection doubt motif. The persistent doubt of the apostles in Luke 24:41 is

followed not long after the quotation of John 20:27 in *AJ* 90.15–16 and the probable allusion to John 20:30–31 in *AJ* 93.14–17.

¹¹¹ Gennesaret appears in the Synoptics (Matt 14:34; Mark 6:35; Luke 5:1), but no house is mentioned.

¹¹² Junod and Kaestli (*Acta Iohannis*, 486–90) notice the disjunction, but miss the allusion to Luke 24:41. The first part of the statement in *AJ* 92.6–7 (“those whom you have chosen”) may be redactional (cf. *AJ* 88.2–3) or may draw on a source, e.g., Luke 16:13; John 6:70; 13:18; 15:16; Acts 1:2.

analogous to the doubt of Thomas in John 20:27. Thus the verbatim quotation of John 20:27 makes the allusion to Luke 24:41 more probable. Third, and most importantly, four lines later John uses relatively rare word – that also appears in Luke 24:39 – to indicate that he touched Jesus:¹¹³

Again, one time when all of us disciples were sleeping in a house at Gennesaret, after wrapping myself up I alone watched what he did. And first I heard him say, “John, go to sleep.” And then pretending to be asleep, I saw another like him whom I also heard saying to my Lord, “Jesus, those whom you have chosen *still do not believe* (ἔτι ... ἀπιστοῦσιν) in you.” And my Lord said to him, “You speak correctly, for they are human.” A different glory I will tell you, brothers. Sometimes when I meant to grasp him, I met a material and solid body; and at other times again *when I felt him* (ψηλαφῶντός μου αὐτόν), the substance was immaterial and bodiless and as if it did not exist at all. (*AJ* 92.1–93.4)

And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together.... Jesus himself stood in their midst, and said to them, “Peace to you!” But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. *Feel me* (ψηλαφῆσατέ με) and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see me having.” ... But *still they disbelieved* (ἔτι ... ἀπιστοῦντων). (Luke 24:33–41)

Given that the author knows Luke, the presence of this unusual cluster of terms in both texts is unlikely to be coincidental, especially since the subjects (John/disciples) and object (Jesus) of the verbs in each case are essentially the same.¹¹⁴

Moreover, *AJ* 93.3 makes sense as a docetization of Luke 24:39. ψηλαφάω in Luke 24:39 coheres with the usual meaning of the term, which implies the use of the physical sense of touch to grope or feel for something.¹¹⁵ But the author of *AJ* gives this normal sense a paradoxical twist: the apostle is said to have “felt (ψηλαφῶντος)” something that is “immaterial and bodiless” and seems not to “exist at all.” Whereas Luke 24:39 clearly presupposes that Jesus’s body is physical, the author of *AJ* has made Luke’s ψηλαφάω the

¹¹³ ψηλαφάω also occurs in 1 John 1:1 and Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3.2, but the ἔτι + ἀπιστέω construction in the immediately preceding context indicates that Luke is the primary source. If either 1 John 1:1 or Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3.2 has influenced *AJ*, it has done so secondarily (see excursus below).

¹¹⁴ The differences in grammar here, e.g., changes in person and tense and mood, can be accounted for by adaptation to the new context and so pose no obstacle to literary dependence.

¹¹⁵ In the LXX ψηλαφάω almost always involves sense-perceptible touch, especially in cases when the ability to see is hindered by blindness or darkness (e.g., Gen 27:12, 21, 22; Deut 28:29; 16:26; Ps 113:15; 134:17; Job 5:14; 12:25; Isa 59:10; Wis 15:15). But see the dramatic use of the adjectival form in Exod 10:21 LXX: ψηλαφητὸν σκότος (“a darkness that can be felt”). The verb can also be employed metaphorically. It can refer to “searching for” God, e.g., Acts 17:27; Philo, *Mut.* 126 (BDAG, s.v. “ψηλαφάω”), or “testing”/ “examining,” e.g., Polybius, *Hist.* 8.29.8 (LSJ, s.v. “ψηλαφάω”). The author of *AJ* may be taking advantage of the fact that the word has a range of meanings.

lynchpin of a docetic proof! The irony suggests an intentional allusion.¹¹⁶ Indeed, the author prepares the reader for an ironic reversal of traditional Christology by introducing the incident as a “*different* glory (ἐτέραν ... δόξαν).”¹¹⁷

Once again, it is significant that Luke 24:36–43, like John 20, does not explicitly state that the apostles touched Jesus. The author of *AJ* may be exploiting this narrative gap by filling it with docetic content. Because ψηλαφάω can mean “feel for” in the sense of a blind man groping about for something to hold on to, it does not in itself *necessarily* imply a successful attempt to touch something – implied success or failure must be determined by context. Thus, for the author of *AJ* there is no need even to deny that the apostles “felt for” (ψηλαφάω) Jesus. Rather, since Luke does not describe what Jesus’s body “felt” like, a docetist can affirm Luke’s account by arguing along the following lines: “Yes, Jesus did invite the apostles to feel his body. But when they attempted to do so, there was nothing to feel.”¹¹⁸ In the mind of a docetist, this might explain why the apostles were “still disbelieving” in Luke 24:41.

¹¹⁶ Similarly Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 127.

¹¹⁷ The author is thus aware that his Christology is heterodox (ἑτερόδοξος), at least in the sense that it is nontraditional, though he would not doubt consider himself more orthodox (ὀρθόδοξος), in the sense of having correct doctrine, than those who hold the traditional view of Jesus’s humanity. On ἐτέραν ... δόξαν, see also the parallel in *Gospel of the Savior*: “We said to him, ‘Lord in what form will you reveal yourself to us, or in what kind of body will you come? Tell us!’ John spoke up and said, ‘Lord, when you are ready to reveal yourself to us, do not reveal yourself to us in all your glory, but change your glory into [*some other*] glory (ἐξ[ε]ρογοῦ) so that [we may be able to bear] it; lest we see [you and] despair from [fear]!’ [The Savior replied], ‘I [will rid] you [of] this fear that you are afraid of, so that by seeing you might believe. But do not touch (*or* hold) me until I ascend to [my Father and your Father], to [my God and] your God, and to my Lord and your Lord! If someone [comes close] to me, he [will get burned. I] am [the] blazing [fire. Whoever is close] to [me] is close to [the fire]. Whoever is far from me is far from life’” (67–71, trans. Stephen Emmel, “Preliminary Reedition and Translation of the *Gospel of the Savior*: New Light on the Strasbourg Coptic Gospel and the Stauros-Text from Nubia,” *Apocrypha* 14 [2003]: 41). In the fragmentary post-resurrection scene at the end of the text, the apostles are given the ability to see “the glory of his divinity and the full glory of his lordship” (*Gos. Sav.* 229). This double reference to divinity and lordship has probably been influenced by Thomas’s confession in John 20:28 (“My Lord and my God”).

¹¹⁸ This is not far removed from docetic reading of Luke 24:39 attributed to Marcion by Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.43: Jesus invites the apostles to see that he, like a spirit, has no bones (see Chapter 6). On the other hand, because *AJ* 93 describes two touch experiences, the first perceiving a solid body and the second feeling nothing at all, the purpose may be to suggest that the touch test is itself unreliable. According to Tertullian, Marcion also supported his docetism by appealing to the unreliability of the sense of touch (*An.* 17.14).

The verb κρατέω denoting John’s first successful attempt at touching Jesus in *AJ* 93.2 may have been chosen on the basis of Matt 28:9: “And behold, Jesus met them.... And they came up and took hold (ἐκράτησαν) of his feet.” Matt 28:9 is the only place in the canonical gospels where the risen Jesus is explicitly touched – the μή μου ἄπτου of John 20:17 is another possibility depending on how it is translated, but it likely refers to the same incident.

The plausibility of this gap-filling theory is supported by the fact that the author of *AJ* is not the only docetist to make use of a touch test. The *Second Apocalypse of James* (NHC IV,5), which conceives of salvation/resurrection as an escape from the flesh by means of gnosis (48.6–9; 63.6–11), includes a docetic (or docetized) account of a post-resurrection appearance to James, the brother of Jesus. Just as Jesus invites the apostles to touch him in Luke 24 and John 20, so also Jesus invites James to touch him in *2 Apoc. Jas.* 57.10–14. But unlike Luke’s and John’s accounts, the *Second Apocalypse of James* reports an explicit attempt at physical contact:

	Luke 24:39–41	John 20:27–28	<i>2 Apoc. Jas.</i> 57.10–14
Touch Invitation	“ <i>Touch me and see</i> , for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see me having.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.	“ <i>Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side.</i> Do not disbelieve, but believe.”	“But now, <i>stretch out your [hand].</i> Now, <i>take hold</i> of me.”
Touch Attempt			[<i>And</i>] <i>then I stretched out my hands</i>
Result	But while they were still disbelieving...	Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”	and I did not find him as I thought (he would be). ¹¹⁹

The initial assumption of James is that he will be able to take hold of Jesus just as Jesus had earlier taken hold of him (56.15). However, as in *AJ* 93, when he tries to do so, the attempt is unsuccessful. As Armand Veilleux paraphrases it, James “discovers that the Lord does not have a physical body, as he thought.”¹²⁰ While it is unclear whether the author of the *Second Apocalypse of James* is dependent on the canonical narratives or on a common tradition in which the risen Jesus invites touch, the chart above illustrates how a small but significant narrative gap in the appearance stories creates an opportunity to promote docetic Christology.¹²¹ Whatever their precise motives may have

The author of *AJ* may have chosen κρατέω for the successful touch on the basis of Matt 28:9 and ψηλαφάω for the unsuccessful touch on the basis of Luke 24:39–41, where the apostles remain unconvinced.

¹¹⁹ Trans. Charles W. Hedrick, “The (Second) Apocalypse of James,” in *Nag Hammadi Codices V, 2–5 and VI with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502,1 and 4* (ed. Douglas M. Parrott; NHS 11; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 135, emphasis added.

¹²⁰ Veilleux, *La première Apocalypse de Jacques (NH V,3). La seconde Apocalypse de Jacques (NH V,4)* (BCNHT17; Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1986), 175; similarly Wolf-Peter Funk, *Die zweite Apocalypse des Jakobus aus Nag-Hammadi-Codex V* (TU 119; Berlin: Akademie, 1976), 154.

¹²¹ On the one hand, the *Second Apocalypse of James* does not elsewhere exhibit clear dependence on the canonical gospels (so Tuckett, *Nag Hammadi*, 100–107). So one might

been, it is significant that the authors of the *Second Apocalypse of James* and *AJ* have docetized the post-resurrection touch motif independently of one another.

As we have seen in Chapter 6, ambiguities in Luke 24:36–43 generated lively exegetical debates between docetists and antidocetists. The author of *AJ* is probably participating in another of these debates. More specifically, I propose that *AJ* 93.1–4 is in part a docetic rejoinder to the antidocetic reuse of Luke 24 in Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3:

Not, as certain unbelievers say, that he suffered in appearance only. It is they who exist in appearance only. Indeed, just as they think so it will happen to them: they will become *bodiless* (ἀσώματοις) and *daimon*-like. For I know and believe that he was in the flesh even after the resurrection. And when he came to Peter and those with him, he said to them: “Take, *handle me* (ψηλαφήσατέ με) and see, for I am not a *bodiless* (ἀσώματος) *daimon*.” And immediately they touched him and believed, having intermingled with his flesh and spirit. (*Smyrn.* 2.1–3.2)

A different glory I will tell you, brothers. Sometimes when I meant to grasp him, I met a material and solid body; and at other times again *when I felt him* (ψηλαφώντός μου αὐτόν), the substance was immaterial and *bodiless* (ἀσώματος) and as if it did not exist at all. (*AJ* 93.1–4)

Three factors suggest that these texts reflect two sides of a long-standing local debate over how to interpret Luke 24. First, both texts appear to have a similar provenance. Lalleman has made a persuasive case that this portion of *AJ* originated in Asia Minor, probably in Smyrna. If so, the author is more likely to have been familiar with Ignatius’s letters, which were collected in Smyrna, copied, and distributed elsewhere (Polycarp, *Phil.* 13.2). Second, the Christology of *AJ* is similar to that of Ignatius’s opponents. Both belong to the

infer that 57.10–14 draws on oral tradition. On the other hand, 2 *Ap. Jas.* 57.14–19 continues to parallel the story in Luke 24:

And he said to them,
 “These are my words that I spoke to you...
 Then (τότε) he opened their minds
 to *understand* (συνιέναι; εἰσρέγιμε, Sah)...
 And they worshiped him
 and returned to Jerusalem
 with *great joy*
 (μετὰ χαρᾶς μεγάλης;
 2N OYHNOΣ ΠΡΑΩΦΕ, Sah).
 (Luke 24:44, 45, 52)

But afterward I heard him saying,
 “Understand and take hold of me.”
 Then (τοτε = τότε)
 I *understood* (ἔειπε)
 and I was afraid.
 And I rejoiced
 with *great joy*
 (2N OYHNOΣ ΠΡΑΩΦΕ
 = μετὰ χαρᾶς μεγάλης).
 (2 *Apoc. Jas.* 57.14–19)

I have adjusted Hedrick’s translation to be more literal in order to facilitate comparison with Luke 24:52. The verbal connections are probably insufficient to prove dependence on Luke, but they are striking enough to suggest that dependence is a good possibility. The combination of sequence and wording at least looks Lukan. If not, the author of the *Second Apocalypse of James* appears to be familiar with the same resurrection appearance tradition known to Luke.

anthropomorphosist type of docetism and explicitly depict Jesus as “bodiless” (ἄσώματος). Additionally, whereas *AJ* 93.1 refers to this Christology as a “different glory (ἐτέραν ... δόξαν),” Ignatius refers to his docetist opponents as “those who hold a different doctrine (τοὺς ἑτεροδοξοῦντας)” (*Smyrn.* 6.2).¹²²

Third, Ignatius and the author of *AJ* appear to be filling out the same narrative gap in Luke 24. Luke is silent about whether the apostles try to touch Jesus. But Ignatius maintains both that they did and that they were immediately convinced that Jesus was “in the flesh” and not “bodiless.” By contrast, the author of *AJ* advances his docetic Christology by stating that when John attempted to touch Jesus, he found him to be “immaterial” and “bodiless.” We thus have in second-century Asia Minor two competing responses, one docetic and one antidocetic, to the touch motif in Luke 24:39.

If *AJ* is responding to Ignatius’s use of Luke 24, the author has deliberately reintroduced the doubt motif that Ignatius so carefully edited out of the group appearance tradition. Either way, Luke 24:41, like Luke 24:39, is upended in the service of docetic Christology. The key difference between Luke 24:41 and *AJ* 92 is the object of disbelief. In Luke, the context implies that the disciples “were still disbelieving (ἔτι δὲ ἀπιστούντων)” that Jesus has been physically raised from the dead. But strictly speaking, Luke does not specify the object of their disbelief. The author of *AJ* adds an object. Christ’s double says to him, “Jesus, those whom you have chosen still do not believe *in you* (ἔτι σοι ἀπιστοῦσιν).” The insertion of σοι, in conjunction with the pericope’s polymorphy, fundamentally changes the point. In the context of *AJ*, disbelieving Jesus means a failure to believe the implicit claim that he is none other than

¹²² If Ignatius is here echoing the language of his opponents, the latter may have in some sense self-identified as “heterodox.” Ignatius also suggests that his opponents think of Jesus as “daimon-like (δαίμονικός).” Although neither this term nor cognates are associated with Jesus in *AJ*, the author’s polymorphic Christology might appropriately be described as “daimon-like.” The author characterizes Satan as “polymorphous (πολύμορφος)” in 70.4, and later in 82.6 employs the same term to describe Christ (cf. the parallels in *Acts Thom.* 44.1; 48.1; 153.1). Additionally, the phrase “a different glory (ἐτέραν ... δόξαν)” that characterizes the polymorphy in *AJ* 93.1–4 is the same as that which characterizes polymorphic ability of a demon (δαίμόνιον) in *Test. Sol.* 16.4: “But I also have a *different glory* (ἐτέραν δόξαν.... I transform myself into wave, come up from the sea, and show myself to men. They call me Kunopegos because I transform myself into a man.” Pamela E. Kinlaw observes that in “Jewish literature ... polymorphic ability is emphasized as a talent of evil beings” (*Metamorphosis*, 37–38; cf. *I En.* 19.1, where the spirits of fallen angels are πολύμορφα). Evidence of a similar perspective is attested in Greek literature, e.g., Ps.-Lucian, *Asin.* 54:14–16: “Some thought that I should be burnt to death immediately as a scoundrel versed in terrible spells and able to adopt many shapes (πολύμορφον); the others advocated waiting and learning what I had to say before deciding on the matter” (Macleod, LCL). Cf. Aristotle, *Eth. Eud.* 239b.11–12: “For good is simple, but evil is polymorphous (πολύμορφον).”

God himself.¹²³ Instead of doubting the bodily resurrection of Jesus, the disciples are said to doubt Jesus's divinity.

As with many of the first- and second-century texts that have been discussed so far, doubt and unbelief are highly negative traits in *AJ*.¹²⁴ So it is in one sense surprising that the apostles are characterized as persistent in their unbelief. This is especially true of John since the entirety of the argument of the sermon depends directly on his personal authority as the Beloved Disciple. One must ask, therefore, why the author did not simply omit the doubts of the apostles.

The doubt motif may have been so well-known as a source of embarrassment in the author's church community that the author felt compelled to address it.¹²⁵ When Jesus replies to his doppelgänger's critique of the disciples' disbelief, he says, "You are right, for they are human" (*AJ* 92.8).¹²⁶ The importance of this reply should not be underestimated. It offers an abrupt ending to an already strange pericope. Moreover, this is the last time the doubt motif, so prominent up to this point in the sermon, is discussed; the motif is absent from the final three pericopae. Consequently, Jesus's reply constitutes a final pronouncement on the pericope itself and on the apostles' doubt in general.¹²⁷

Possibly the author is providing an excuse for the apostles by claiming that unbelief is in an unavoidable part of human existence. Thus we might paraphrase Jesus's response: "Of course, they're only human."¹²⁸ On the one hand, because the author elsewhere depicts unbelief as a serious sin, this rationalization would, by itself, not fully exonerate the apostles.¹²⁹ On the other hand, if we take into account the apophaticism of the author with its emphasis on the transcendence of the divine, the words "they are human" gain new force: it is impossible for humans to understand God fully, and so it should not be surprising that the apostles, as mere men, have difficulty perceiving Jesus's

¹²³ Similarly Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis*, 486; Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 114.

¹²⁴ See, e.g., *AJ* 33; 39; 76; 81; 84.

¹²⁵ As we have seen in Chapter 6, the same seems to be true of [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 9.6–7.

¹²⁶ Codex Vindobonensis reads ἄνθρωπος γάρ εἰσιν. Junod and Kaestli, following James, judge ἄνθρωπος a grammatical error of the copyist and emend the text to read ἄνθρωποι γάρ εἰσιν. Alternatively, the lack of subject-verb agreement may be intentional so as to emphasize the apostles as representatives of humanity in general.

¹²⁷ Additionally, the phrase "those whom you have chosen" in 92.6–7 echoes the introduction to the sermon ("even we ourselves, whom he himself chose as apostles, were tested in many ways" [*AJ* 88.2–3]) and so signals the importance of *AJ* 92 for understanding the doubt motif.

¹²⁸ This is in essence how Philo defends Abraham's doubt in *Mut.* 181–82 (see Excursus in Chapter 2). On another level, the statement "for they are human" may hint that Jesus will one day make them more than human enabling them to overcome their unbelief (Schneider, "Perfect Fit," 524).

¹²⁹ *AJ* 33; 39; 76; 81; 84.

divinity.¹³⁰ Their disbelief is construed as the inevitable result of the author's exalted Christology. In other words, the author has retained the doubt motif because, from his apophatic perspective, it indirectly supports his docetic Christology: human doubt is precisely what we should expect if Jesus truly is God rather than a man. In summary, the author's approach is consistent with that employed in the previous episodes. In every case, doubt helps promote docetic Christology.

7.3.3.2 *AJ 93.4–10 and Luke 24:42–43, 50–53*

The fact that a meal scene immediately follows these allusions to Luke 24:39 and 41 suggests the possibility that the response to Luke 24 continues in *AJ* 93.4–10. The meal scene in Luke 24:42–43 fits coherently into the narrative; Jesus eats in response to the fact that the apostles “still disbelieve.” By contrast, the meal scene in *AJ* is introduced without any transition and appears at first glance to be completely unrelated to what precedes. Its placement at this point in the narrative also seems random, especially since it could have been placed alongside another meal scene in 89.10–15. This is surely one of the reasons why Junod and Kaestli have concluded that the order of pericopae in section B “defies all logic.”¹³¹ However, if one of the purposes of the meal scene in 93.4–10 is to counter the eating proof of Luke 24:42–43, its placement immediately after allusions to Luke 24:39 and 41 makes good sense.¹³²

Junod and Kaestli argue that because all eleven of the other episodes concentrate on some aspect of the body of Jesus, one should expect this meal scene to do the same. The absence of any clear instance of polymorphy leads them to conclude that the episode denies Jesus's humanity by demonstrating that he did not eat.¹³³ Although the text does not say explicitly whether or not Jesus ate, the fact that Jesus's portion is broken and given to others may imply that he did not.¹³⁴ While this is an argument from silence, it is consistent with the

¹³⁰ Cf. *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 2, in which the goddess transforms herself and yet is not recognized, because “gods are not easily discerned by mortals” (line 111).

¹³¹ Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis*, 2:475.

¹³² Lalleman (*Acts of John*, 172) understands *AJ* 93.4–10 as a “clear contradiction” of the meal scenes in Luke 24:41–42 and John 21:5–15.

¹³³ Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis*, 2:478. Lalleman and Hughes Garcia concur (Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 172; Hughes Garcia, “La polymorphie du Christ: Remarques sur quelques définitions et sur de multiples enjeux,” *Apocrypha* 10 [1999]: 23 n. 23). Schneider argues that the episode emphasizes discipleship rather than Christology: Christ's not eating suggests that “he never felt hunger. The disciples emulated the Lord, so they were satisfied by this one piece” (*Mystery*, 55–56).

¹³⁴ The description of the distribution of bread derives from Mark 6:41–42 (Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 127), but the author may also be responding to the parallel in John 21:13 (“Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them”) and/or to a variant text of Luke 24:43 in which

author's practice; nearly all the other episodes are also implicit with respect to their Christology.¹³⁵ The reader is left to discern Jesus's divinity from the polymorphy, never-closed eyelids, the lack of a footprint, etc. Moreover, we have seen that other early docetists deny either that Christ ate or that he did so in reality. It is therefore plausible that the author of section B would have a similar view.¹³⁶ In one ancient apocryphal story associated with, but probably not original to *AJ*, a group of Roman soldiers conclude that John must be "a god and not a man (θεὸν οὐκ ἄνθρωπον)" because he had not eaten "bread" for an inordinately long time.¹³⁷ The language echoes the christological conclusion of *AJ* 104.1–2 (οὐκ ἄνθρωπον ... ἀλλὰ θεόν) and suggests that Junod and Kaestli are probably correct in their assessment of *AJ* 93.4–10.

The placement of the final pericope of the sermon (*AJ* 94.10–14) may also be related to Luke 24. In their discussion of the lack of order in section B, Junod and Kaestli complain that *AJ* 94.10–14 is a rather mundane levitation story and not a proper climax to the sermon. Yet if I am correct about *AJ* 92.1–93.4 replacing the touch proof of Luke 24:39–41 and *AJ* 93.4–10 supplanting the eating proof of Luke 24:42–43, then perhaps *AJ* 93.10–14 is designed to replace the ascension in Luke 24:50–51/Acts 1:9:

And often when I was walking with him, I wished to see whether the print of his foot appeared upon the earth – for I was seeing (ὄρων) him lifting himself up (ἐαυτὸν ἐπαίροντα) from the earth – but I never saw it. (AJ 93.10–14)

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up (ἐπάρας) his hands, he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up (ἀνεφέρετο) into heaven. (Luke 24:50–51)

And when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was lifted up (βλεπόντων αὐτῶν ἐπήρθη), and a cloud took him out of their sight. (Acts 1:9)¹³⁸

Jesus is said to give the rest of his meal to the disciples (K Θ f¹³ ℓ 844. ℓ 2211 aur vg [c r¹ sy^c, h^{**}] bo^p).

¹³⁵ The only exception is "not at all a man" in *AJ* 90.10–11.

¹³⁶ See discussions of Ignatius, *Trall.* 9.1; *Smyrn.* 3.3; [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 9; Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 3.84; Ephrem, *Hymn. c. haer.* 36.12–13 in Chapters 3 and 6. In what appears to have been an attempt to steer a course midway between the Marcionite and proto-orthodox positions, Valentinus posited that Jesus ate but did not defecate (Clement, *Strom.* 3.7 [59.4]; cf. *Acts Pet.* 20.21: "He ate and drank for our sake, although he was neither hungry nor thirsty" [Stoops]).

¹³⁷ Junod and Kaestli (*Acta Iohannis*, 1:9) have dubbed this text *The Acts of John in Rome*. Because it appears to depend on Eusebius for certain historical information, Klauck (*Apocryphal Acts*, 45) posits that it originated in the fifth century.

¹³⁸ Although the wording is different, the ascension in Luke 24:51 also happens while Jesus is speaking.

The ascension in Luke-Acts and the levitation miracle in *AJ* both take place after Jesus walks with the disciple(s).¹³⁹ Luke's Acts and *AJ* both include the motif of "seeing" the ascension. The verb ἐπαίρω in *AJ* 93.12 describing Jesus's levitation also appears in Luke 24:50 and Acts 1:9. In Luke 24:50 it refers to Jesus lifting his hands in blessing, whereas in Acts 1:9 it narrates the ascension itself. The change from the passive voice in Acts 1:9 to the active voice in *AJ* 93.12 can be explained by the Christomonism of the author of *AJ*; since there is no God the Father distinct from Jesus himself, Jesus must lift himself up. Accordingly, Luke's divine passive (ἐπήρθη) is changed to an active participle with a reflexive pronoun (ἐαυτὸν ἐπαίροντα).¹⁴⁰

This reconstruction is made all the more plausible by the fact that *AJ* elsewhere alludes to Acts 1:9. In *AJ* 73, a mysterious handsome youth (= Christ) appears in the tomb of Drusiana to speak to John and then ascends into heaven.¹⁴¹ The language of the account clearly echoes Acts 1:9:

And having said these things (καὶ εἰπὼν ταῦτα) to John, the handsome one went up (ἀνῆει) into heaven while we [all] were watching (βλεπόντων [πάντων] ἡμῶν). (*AJ* 73.7–8)

And having said these things (καὶ ταῦτα εἰπὼν), he was lifted up (ἐπήρθη) while they were watching (βλεπόντων αὐτῶν) (Acts 1:9)

The reuse of Luke's genitive absolute construction to describe those looking on is especially telling. Additionally, as in *AJ* 93.12, Luke's divine passive (ἐπήρθη) is here replaced with an active verb (ἀνῆει).¹⁴²

While there is no way to be certain that *AJ* 93.4–10 and 93.10–14 are intended to replace Luke 24:41–43 and 50–53 respectively, it is plausible in light of the more perceptible use of Luke 24:39–41 in the preceding pericopae. Moreover, this theory helps make sense of the otherwise inexplicable order of

¹³⁹ The depiction of the event as a regular occurrence in *AJ* is consistent with the author's redactional tendencies (cf. the treatment of John 13:23–25 in *AJ* 89.10–14). The trip outside of Jerusalem is not explicitly stated in Acts 1, but it is implied by Acts 1:12.

¹⁴⁰ The wording in *AJ* 93.12 ("lifting himself up from the earth [αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς ἐαυτὸν ἐπαίροντα]") may also have been influenced by the quotation of Isa 53:8 in Acts 8:33 ("For his life is taken up from the earth [ὅτι αἴρεται ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς ἡ ζωὴ αὐτοῦ])."

¹⁴¹ On the identification of the handsome youth as Christ, see Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis*, 266–68 n. 73.2; Pervo, "Trajectories," 55; Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 165–67. Pervo considers this ascension a response to John 20:17. A response to Luke-Acts is more probable, both because it is verbally closer to Luke-Acts and because John 20:17 explicitly indicates that the ascension has not yet happened.

¹⁴² These may be contrasted with another allusion to the Ascension in section C: "And having said these things to me (ταῦτα εἰρηκότος πρὸς με) ... he was taken up, no one of the crowds having seen him (ἀνελήφθη μηδενὸς αὐτὸν θεασαμένου τῶν ὄχλων)" (*AJ* 102.1–3). This sentence is probably intended to counter Acts 1:9, where the larger group of disciples witnesses the ascension after the resurrection. This more overtly polemical approach is typical of the author of section C, but absent from sections A and B (Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 116–22).

pericope in section B. If I am correct, Luke 24:36–53 as a whole has been turned on its head beginning with a reference to the post-resurrection doubts of the apostles. The touch proof is turned into an anti-touch proof, the eating proof is implicitly denied, and the ascension has become evidence that Christ was never truly connected to earthly life.

7.3.4 EXCURSUS: Did 1 John 1:1 Help Inspire the Docetic Christology in *AJ* 93.1–4?

Junod and Kaestli link the term *ψηλαφάω* in *AJ* 93.3 with 1 John 1:1 and argue that *AJ* 93.1–4 depends on an oral tradition that originated as a explanation of 1 John 1:1.¹⁴³ On the contrary, I have for various reasons concluded that *AJ* 93.3 is alluding to Luke 24:39. First, while there is ample evidence to confirm that section B of *AJ* frequently incorporates material from Luke’s Gospel, it is unclear whether the author even knows 1 John.¹⁴⁴ Second, and more importantly, an allusion to Luke 24:39 is more probable in light of the allusion to Luke 24:41 just a few lines prior. That being said, dependence on Luke 24 does not rule out the possibility that 1 John 1:1 may have influenced the author’s reuse of Luke 24:39.¹⁴⁵ After all, 1 John 1:1 more or less proclaims what is at most implicit in Luke 24, namely, that the apostles actually touched Jesus. A careful consideration of Junod and Kaestli’s argument is therefore warranted.

¹⁴³ Éric Junod and Jean-Daniel Kaestli, *L’histoire des Actes apocryphes des apôtres du III^e au IX^e siècle: Le cas des Actes de Jean* (Cahiers de la Revue de Théologie et Philosophie 7; Geneva: Faculté de Théologie de Lausanne, 1982), 13–16; idem, *Acta Iohannis*, 487–88.

¹⁴⁴ The relevant parallels between 1 John and *AJ* involve commonplace vocabulary and are not so similar as to require literary dependence. The closest parallel in section B is *ἃ τε εἶδον ἃ τε ἤκουσα* in *AJ* 88.4–5, which could derive from *ὁ ἀκηκόαμεν, ὁ ἐώρακάμεν* in 1 John 1:1 (so Pervo, “Trajectories,” 59 n. 65). But this is not certain because the terms are common and because close parallels exist elsewhere, e.g., John 3:32 (*ὁ ἐώρακεν καὶ ἤκουσεν*). Even closer in wording to *AJ* 88.4–5 are Luke 7:22 (*ἃ εἶδετε καὶ ἤκούσατε*) and Acts 4:20 (*ἃ εἶδαμεν καὶ ἤκούσαμεν*). In the latter, John is one of the speakers. The text of Acts 4:20 in Codex Bezae is curiously missing a second negation (*μή*). As a result, the text reads “for we are unable to speak of what we have seen and heard (*οὐ δυναμεθα γαρ ημεις α εἶδαμεν καὶ ἤκουσαμεν λαλειν*),” which is precisely what John claims in *AJ* 88.

Other parallels between *AJ* and 1 John occur outside of section B, the closest of which is *AJ* 94.16–17: “We give thanks to you, O Light, in whom darkness does not abide (*φῶς ἐν ᾧ σκότος οὐκ οἰκεῖ*).” This could very well be an allusion to 1 John 1:5: “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all (*ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστὶν καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἐστὶν οὐδεμία*).” The two texts are similar conceptually, but again there is nothing distinctive about the vocabulary. The similarities could just as easily be explained by “a common background in Johannine Christianity” (Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 144). Additionally, *AJ* 94.16–17 comes from section C and so is probably from a different author.

¹⁴⁵ In Lalleman’s view (*Acts of John*, 127, 144), it is impossible to determine if the source is Luke 24:39, 1 John 1:1 or both.

The strongest evidence presented by Junod and Kaestli for the influence of 1 John 1:1 on *AJ* 93.1–4 comes from a parallel tradition cited in Clement of Alexandria’s commentary, *Hypotyposesis*, fragments of which are extant in the Latin translation of Cassiodorus under the title *Adumbrations*. Because it is important to see how this “tradition” fits into the larger context of *Adumbrations*, I have quoted Clement at length with the “tradition” set alongside in parallel:

But by the expression, “we have seen with our eyes,” he signifies the Lord’s presence in the flesh, “and our hands have handled (*contrectaverunt* = ἐψηλάφησαν),” he says, “of the Word of life.” He means not only His flesh, but the virtues of the Son, like the sunbeam that penetrates to the lowest places. This sunbeam coming in the flesh became palpable (*palpabilis* = ψηλαφητή) to the disciples. They say in the traditions, that

John, touching (*tangens* = ἀπτόμενος) the outward body (*corpus* = σῶμα) itself, sent his hand deep down into it (*manum suam in profunda misisse* = ἔβαλεν τὴν χεῖρά εἰς τὸ πέλαγος), and that the solidity (*duritiam* = σκληρότης?) of the flesh (*carnis* = σαρκός) offered no obstacle, but gave way to the hand of the disciple.

Sometimes when I wanted to grasp (κρατῆσαι) him, I struck (προσέβαλλον) into a material and thick body (σώματι), and at other times, again, when I felt him (ψηλαφῶντός μου αὐτόν), the substance was immaterial (ἄυλον) and bodiless (ἄσώματον) as if it existed not at all.

On account of this also he introduced: “And our hands have handled (*contrectaverunt* = ἐψηλάφησαν) of the Word of life;” that is, He who came in the flesh became capable of being touched (*contrectabilis* = ψηλαφητός). (Clement, *Adumbr. in 1 John 1:1*)¹⁴⁶

(*AJ* 93.1–4)

The lack of verbal overlap has led a number of scholars, including Junod and Kaestli, to reject a direct literary relationship between *Adumbrations* and *AJ* and to conclude instead that they depend on a common tradition.¹⁴⁷ I would argue that it is not even necessary to posit a common tradition. The episodes are narrated so differently that no plausible reconstruction of the Greek text behind Cassiodorus’s Latin version would yield any significant verbal overlap

¹⁴⁶ English translation from *ANF* 2:574, slightly modified. Latin text in Otto Stählin, ed., *Clemens Alexandrinus III* (GCS 17; Berlin: Akademie, 1970), 210. Greek retroversions are my own.

¹⁴⁷ Schäferdiek, “Acts of John,” 2:189; Junod and Kaestli, *L’histoire*, 13–16; idem, *Acta Iohannis*, 2:486–87; Schneider, *Mystery*, 54–55. Czachesz dissents, judging Clement dependent on *AJ* 88–102 (*Commission Narratives*, 121).

with the Greek of *AJ*.¹⁴⁸ Particularly telling is the fact that the “tradition” preserved by Clement almost certainly had a different Greek word for touch from either of those that appear in *AJ* 93.1–4. Cassiodorus’s Latin version has *tango*, but it is improbable that either κρατέω or ψηλαφάω stands behind this. In the Vulgate text of the NT, *tango* is almost always a translation ἅπτω, but never of κρατέω or ψηλαφάω.¹⁴⁹ More importantly, in the immediate context Cassiodorus’s version repeatedly renders ψηλαφάω in 1 John 1:1 *contrecto* and employs a cognate (*contrectabilis*) when translating Clement’s comments on 1 John 1:1. Had ψηλαφάω appeared in the tradition cited by Clement, Cassiodorus would undoubtedly have had *contrecto* here rather than *tango*.

I therefore propose an alternative explanation that can account for both the conceptual parallel and the lack of significant verbal and structural similarities. Clement’s tradition and *AJ* may not depend not on a common tradition but on a common interpretive method. As we have seen, the reversal of the touch proof found in *AJ* 93.1–4 is by no means unique to *AJ*. The *Second Apocalypse of James* provides a striking parallel that has not been taken into account by previous scholarship on *AJ*. When *AJ* 93.1–4 is compared to *2 Apoc. Jas.* 57.10–14, the conceptual parallel is clear. But there is again a nearly complete lack of verbal and structural correspondence:

“But now, stretch out your [hand]. Now, take hold of me.” [And] then I stretched out my hands and I did not find him as I thought (he would be).

(*2 Apoc. Jas.* 57.10–14)

Sometimes when I wanted to grasp him, I struck into a material and thick body, and at other times, again, when I felt him the substance was immaterial and bodiless as if it existed not at all.

(*AJ* 93.1–4)

Although it is possible that both authors are responding to the post-resurrection appearance stories in the Gospels, the key conceptual similarity (attempting and failing to touch a non-material Jesus) is in this case best explained by positing not a common tradition but a common interpretative method.¹⁵⁰ I have argued that the *Second Apocalypse of James* and *AJ* advance their docetic Christologies by taking advantage of a gap in the narratives of the post-

¹⁴⁸ The only clear verbal similarity is “body” (*corpus* = σῶμα), but the term is too common to be significant. If, as I have suggested, ἔβαλεν stands behind *misisse* (“send”), then there is also a possible connection with προσέβαλλον (“struck”) in *AJ*. However, ἔβαλεν is but one possibility. And while βάλλω and προσβάλλω have the same root, their meanings differ significantly.

¹⁴⁹ In the Vulgate, κρατέω is usually translated *teneo*. The Vulgate translates each of the four instances of ψηλαφάω in the NT with a different word, but never with *tango* (Luke 24:39 [*palpo*]; in Acts 17:27 [*adtracto*]; Heb 12:18 [*tractabilis*]; 1 John 1:1 [*tento*]).

¹⁵⁰ This common method may in turn draw on well-known ghost story motif wherein a character attempts and fails to grasp the phantom image of the deceased, e.g., Homer, *Il.* 23.99–100.

resurrection appearances of Jesus. I suspect that something analogous has happened in the “tradition” quoted by Clement.

Junod and Kaestli argue that the tradition cited by Clement was an expository tradition, that is, a tradition that originated as a commentary on 1 John 1:1.¹⁵¹ This seems reasonable given that Clement uses this tradition to address an obscurity in 1 John 1:1.¹⁵² More specifically, the purpose is to clarify the meaning of the ambiguous expression “our hands have felt concerning the word of life (αἱ χεῖρες ἡμῶν ἐψηλάφησαν περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς).” The question that the “tradition” appears to answer is “What does it mean to feel with one’s hands the word of life?” The answer: when John touched Jesus, his hand went right through the exterior of Jesus’s body and “felt” the divine Logos within.

This reading is far more docetic than we find among most proto-orthodox authors. But Clement is more open to gnostic and docetic thinking than most. Indeed, Clement often draws on gnostic Christology and exegesis, sometimes approvingly, e.g., *Strom.* 3.7 [59.3–4]; 4.9 [71.1–75.4].¹⁵³ I would therefore suggest that Clement in *Adumbrations* is reproducing a gnostic/docetic comment on 1 John 1:1. I would further propose that Clement culled this gnostic interpretation not from oral tradition but from a book known as the *Traditions of Matthias*, which he quotes on at least three other occasions (*Strom.* 29.9 [45.4]; 3.4 [26.3]; 7.13 [82.1]).¹⁵⁴

In support of this proposal, I would draw attention to the way Clement introduces the quotation: “They say in the traditions....” Clement seldom refers to “traditions” in the plural, and never with respect to the received apostolic tradition, which he insists is “one” (*Strom.* 7.17. [108.1–2]). The phrase “in the traditions” occurs only two other times in Clement’s extant corpus. In both cases, it introduces a quotation of the *Traditions of Matthias*, and one closely resembles the way Clement introduces the story about John in *Adumbrations*:

¹⁵¹ Junod and Kaestli, *L’histoire*, 16.

¹⁵² In the writings of Clement, the apostolic tradition is inextricably linked to the interpretation of Scripture. Thus, for Clement the apostolic traditions are for the most part, if not exclusively, expository traditions.

¹⁵³ On the influence of hetero-gnostic thought and exegesis on Clement, see, e.g., Arkadi Choufrine, *Gnosis, Theophany, Theosis: Studies in Clement of Alexandria’s Appropriation of his Background* (Patristic Studies 5; New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 17–76; Judith L. Kovacs, “Echoes of Valentinian Exegesis in Clement of Alexandria and Origen: The Interpretation of 1 Cor 3, 1–3,” in *Origeniana Octava* (ed. Lorenzo Perrone; Leuven: Peeters, 2003); idem, “Clement of Alexandria and Valentinian Exegesis in the Excerpts from Theodotus,” *StPatr* 41 (2006): 187–200; idem, “Concealment and Gnostic Exegesis: Clement of Alexandria’s Interpretation of the Tabernacle,” *StPatr* 31 (1997): 414–37.

¹⁵⁴ Another possible fragment in *Strom.* 4.6 [35.2] equates Matthew in Matt 9:9 with Zacchaeus in Luke 19:2–10.

...as Plato says in *Theaetetus* and as Matthias in the *Traditions* exhorts (ἐν ταῖς παραδόσεσι παραινῶν)... (*Strom.* 2.9 [45.4])

They say in the *Traditions* (λέγουσι δὲ ἐν ταῖς παραδόσεσι) that Matthias.... (*Strom.* 7.13 [82.1])

Therefore, they say in the traditions (*fertur ergo in traditionibus* = φασὶ οὖν ἐν ταῖς παραδόσεσι).... (*Adumbr. in 1 John 1:1*).

The extant fragments of the *Traditions of Matthias* are not extensive enough to prove a gnostic origin, but there is some evidence to suggest that the book was popular in gnostic circles.¹⁵⁵ And at least one of the fragments exhibits certain affinities with gnostic thought in that it encourages fighting against the flesh and growing the soul through “knowledge (*cognitionem* = γῶσις)” (*Strom.* 3.4 [26.3]).¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ *Strom.* 3.4 [26.3]; 7.17 [108.1]; Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.20.1.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. *Strom.* 2.9 [45.4], in which Clement links a quotation of the *Traditions of Matthias* (“Marvel at what is before you”) with a saying from the *Gospel of the Hebrews* (“He that wonders shall reign, and that has reigned shall rest”) that also appears in *Gos. Thom.* 2 (“He will marvel and marveling he shall reign, and reigning shall rest”).

Chapter 8

Casting out Doubt: The Longer Ending of Mark and the *Epistula Apostolorum*

8.1 The Longer Ending of Mark and Its Early Reception

8.1.1 *The Exorcism of Doubt*

While there is still considerable debate over whether Mark intended to end his gospel at 16:8, today there is a near consensus that Mark 16:9–20, also known as the Longer Ending (LE), was written by a different author.¹ Most hold that the LE was added to provide a more suitable conclusion to Mark's Gospel.² The LE is usually dated to the first half of the second century, and this can probably be narrowed to the first third.³

¹ Three notable exceptions are William R. Farmer, *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark* (SNTSMS 25; London: Cambridge University Press, 1974); Maurice A. Robinson, "The Long Ending of Mark as Canonical Verity," in *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark: 4 Views* (ed. David Alan Black; Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 40–79; Lunn, *Original Ending*. A survey of previous scholarship appears in Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission*, 5–46. Recent arguments for a lost ending are N. Clayton Croy, *The Mutilation of Mark's Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003); Robert H. Stein, "The Ending of Mark," *BBR* 18 (2008): 79–98. For Mark 16:8 as the original, intended ending, see J. L. Magness, *Sense and Absence: Structure and Suspension in the Ending of Mark's Gospel* (SemeiaSt; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986). Although vv. 9–20 were apparently absent from most manuscripts known to Eusebius (*ad Marinum*) and Jerome (*Epist.* 120.3), these verses are included in all but three (κ B 304) Greek manuscripts extant today.

² Alternatively, the LE may have been composed to provide an ending not just to Mark but to a fourfold gospel collection following the Western order, i.e., Matthew, John, Luke, Mark (Christian B. Amphoux, "La 'finale longue de Marc': Un épilogue des quatre évangiles," in *The Synoptic Gospels: Source Criticism and the New Literary Criticism* [ed. Camille Focant; BETL 110; Leuven: Peeters, 1993], 548–55; J. K. Elliott, "The Last Twelve Verses of Mark: Original or Not?" in *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark: 4 Views* [ed. David Alan Black; Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008], 92–93). Proposals that the LE originated as fragment of a document independent of, but later attached to, Mark, have proven unpersuasive (Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission*, 158–64).

³ The influential study of Kelhoffer dates the LE ca. 120–150 CE, "possibly to the earlier part of this range." Kelhoffer sets the *terminus post quem* at ca. 110–120 because it appears to harmonize elements from the resurrection narratives of Matthew, Luke and John and

The LE presents a striking contrast to the examples of reception of the resurrection narratives discussed so far. Whereas the latter carefully avoid references to the doubt motif, the LE not only mentions it but does so repeatedly. In this section, I argue that the author emphasizes the apostles' disbelief precisely because he perceived it as an issue in the tradition that needed to be addressed. In this way, the LE offers an exception that proves the rule. Like other second-century writers, the author of the LE viewed the apostles' doubt as an apologetic liability. However, instead of omitting it, he attempts to resolve it in a surprising way.

As many commentators have observed, the first half of the LE (vv. 9–14), which briefly recounts three resurrection appearances, is structured so as to accentuate the disbelief of the apostles.⁴ The first two appearances are summarized in a concise, formulaic manner: (i) The time is noted; (ii) Jesus appears

because a collection of the four gospels is typically not thought to have occurred before that time (*Miracle and Mission*, 158 n. 4, 175, 475). In my opinion, the earliest possible date is toward the end of the first century. Two patristic writers refer to earlier written traditions (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24.5–13; Origen, *Hom. Luke* 1, frag. 9) that attest the Gospels having been collected while John was still alive (similarly Charles E. Hill, “What Papias Said About John [and Luke]: A ‘New’ Papias Fragment,” *JTS* NS 49 [1998]: 582–629; idem, *Who Chose the Gospels? Probing the Great Gospel Conspiracy* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010], 207–25). The reliability of these testimonies can be questioned but they cannot simply be dismissed, especially since they differ enough in detail to suggest their independence. Furthermore, these two testimonies are corroborated by “the tradition of the earliest presbyters” recorded by Clement of Alexandria (*apud* Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.5–7), by the Muratorian Fragment, and by the so-called Anti-Marcionite Prologue to John, all of which indicate that the Fourth Gospel was written with a knowledge of the Synoptics. They are also confirmed to some extent by Papias, who relates an earlier tradition in which John the Elder (and Apostle?) offered commentary on the origins of Matthew and Mark (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.14–16). The precise extent of this collection is not always specified – not all the traditions explicitly include Luke – but there is good reason to maintain that a collection existed prior to the second century. To these arguments we may add evidence for the early use of the LE. I have argued that Irenaeus's Ophite source (ca. 110–140) and the *Preaching of Peter* (no later than 135) both draw from the LE (see Chapters 3 and 4, respectively). And I argue below that the *Epistula Apostolorum*, which is best dated to the 140s, also makes use of the LE. If so, the LE must be dated no later than “the first decades of the second century” (Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* [London: SCM, 1985], 168 n. 47). Alternatively, if LE is independent of Matthew, Luke and John, then it need not be dated much later than the Gospel of Mark itself.

⁴ So Paul A. Mirecki, “Mark 16:9–20: Composition, Tradition and Redaction” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1986), 30; James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark* (PNTC 2; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 504; Bridget Gilfillan Upton, *Hearing Mark's Endings: Listening to Ancient Popular Texts through Speech Act Theory* (BibInt 79; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 157; Michel Gourgues, “‘Qui ne croira pas sera condamné’ (Mc 16,16): Sur la déclaration surprenante de la finale de Marc,” in *La surprise dans la Bible: Hommage à Camille Focant* (eds. Geert Van Oyen and André Wénin; BETL 247; Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 264.

to one or two persons; (iii) who “go” and “report”; (iv) to the apostles; and (v) the apostles are said to “disbelieve.”⁵ In each case, the verb indicating the disbelief of the disciples is delayed until the “final emphatic position” of the sentence.⁶ The third appearance (v. 14), though slightly modified to account for Jesus appearing to the Eleven themselves, follows essentially the same pattern.⁷ It even maintains via analepsis a reference to their prior disbelief at the end of the sentence:

(i) Now when he rose early on the first day of the week	After these things	Afterward, when they were reclining at table,
(ii) he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.	he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country.	he appeared to the Eleven themselves
(iii) She went and told	And they went back and told	and he rebuked
(iv) those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept	the rest,	their unbelief and hardness of heart
(v) But having heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe. (Mark 16:9–11)	but these they did not believe. (Mark 16:12–13)	because, those who had seen him risen, they did not believe. (Mark 16:14)

⁵ Similar patterns are detected in Mirecki, “Mark 16:9–20,” 26–30, 125–26; M. D. McDill, “A Textual and Structural Analysis of Mark 16:9–20,” *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 17 (2004): 39–40; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 807; Camille Focant, *The Gospel according to Mark: A Commentary* (trans. Leslie Robert Keylock; Eugene, Oreg.: Pickwick, 2012), 668; Susan Watts Henderson, “Discipleship after the Resurrection: Scribal Hermeneutics in the Longer Ending of Mark,” *JTS NS* 63 (2012): 118.

⁶ Mirecki, “Mark 16:9–20,” 30.

⁷ If the rebuke in v. 14 replaces the reports to the disciples in vv. 10 and 13, the pattern is maintained (Henderson, “Discipleship,” 118).

(i)	Ἀναστὰς δὲ πρωῒ πρώτη σαββάτου	μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα	ὕστερον δὲ ἀνακειμένοις
(ii)	ἐφάνη πρῶτον Μαρία τῇ Μαγδαληνῇ, παρ' ἧς ἐκβεβλήκει ἑπτὰ δαιμόνια.	δυσὶν ἐξ αὐτῶν περιπατοῦσιν ἐφανερώθη ἐν ἑτέρᾳ μορφῇ πορευομένοις εἰς ἀγρόν	αὐτοῖς τοῖς ἑνδεκά ἐφανερώθη
(iii)	ἐκείνη πορευθεῖσα ἀπήγγειλεν	κάκεινοι ἀπελθόντες ἀπήγγειλαν	καὶ ὠνείδισεν
(iv)	τοῖς μετ' αὐτοῦ γενομένοις πενθοῦσιν καὶ κλαίουσιν	τοῖς λοιποῖς	τὴν ἀπιστίαν αὐτῶν καὶ σκληροκαρδίαν
(v)	κάκεινοι ἀκούσαντες ὅτι ζῆ καὶ ἐθεάθη ὑπ' αὐτῆς ἠπίστησαν. (Mark 16:9–11)	οὐδὲ ἐκείνοις ἐπίστευσαν. (Mark 16:12–13)	ὅτι τοῖς θεασαμένοις αὐτὸν ἐγγηγερμένον οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν. (Mark 16:14)

The concise narration of the first two appearances and the structural emphasis on disbelief suggests that the primary purpose of vv. 9–13 is to prepare for the climactic rebuke of the disciples' unbelief and hardness of heart in Mark 16:14a. This interpretation is confirmed by the analepsis explaining that the rebuke was required "because they had not believed those who had seen him risen" (16:14).

This all leads to one obvious conclusion: the author of the LE draws attention to the disbelief of the apostles in order to denounce it completely. The LE offers a much more explicitly negative characterization of the disciples' disbelief than Matthew, Luke, or John.⁸ The verb ὠνείδισω denotes especially strong rebuke, and the apostles' unbelief is attributed to their σκληροκαρδία ("hardness of heart").⁹ The author's view of disbelief is indicated in Mark 16:16: "whoever has disbelieved will be condemned." A cursory appraisal might conclude that the apostles themselves should therefore be condemned for their persistent disbelief. Yet immediately following the rebuke of Mark 16:14, Jesus commissions the apostles to preach the gospel to all of creation (16:15). Consequently, those condemned for disbelief are those who have rejected the message of the apostles.¹⁰ The Lord also confirms *their* message by miraculous signs (16:20). In the LE, the apostles and their message retain unqualified authority and do so ironically *despite their own repeated failure to believe* the message of others.

⁸ Similarly Alsup, *Appearance Stories*, 122.

⁹ In the LXX, σκληροκαρδία is to be removed (literally, "circumcised") lest it invoke God's wrath (Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4; Sir 16:10). According to Matt 19:8 and Mark 10:5, Mosaic legislation allowing divorce was given to curb the effects of the σκληροκαρδία.

¹⁰ Similarly Mirecki, "Mark 16:9–20," 117–18; Gourgues, "Qui ne croira," 259–75.

This disjunction between the highly negative characterization of the apostles in vv. 9–14 and the decidedly positive one that follows in vv. 15–20 begs for an explanation. The contrast is so stark that Eta Linnemann and Paul A. Mirecki have proposed that one half of the LE was added to the other by a later redactor.¹¹ But this conjecture lacks manuscript support and does not adequately account for the otherwise coherent nature of the LE.¹²

Others stress the continuity between the negative assessment of doubt in vv. 9–14 and the condemnation of those who later disbelieve in v. 16. The former prepares the reader for the latter.¹³ Thus, Hug concludes that the attitude of the disciples is condemned so as to emphasize for a later generation “the importance and seriousness of the choice that is placed before man in the preaching of the gospel.”¹⁴ The apostles therefore provide a negative example by modeling for the reader what *not* to do.¹⁵ This is an attractive interpretation because in the Gospels the faith of minor characters sometimes provides a foil to the failure of the disciples.¹⁶ Nevertheless, it does not fully resolve the issue; it still leaves us with an awkward transition from a negative depiction of the apostles to a positive portrayal of them as an authority to be followed.

Kelhoffer posits that “the rapid progression of the LE’s narrative” can account for “the sudden shift” from the rebuke to the commissioning.¹⁷ On the one hand, this suggestion is commendable because it attempts to account for the style of the narrative and has a precedent in the abrupt transition between vv. 8 and 9. On the other hand, I find it implausible that the author who so carefully structured vv. 9–14 around the problem of unbelief would simply leave this crucial issue unresolved.

I propose that *the rebuke itself* resolves the problem of the disbelief by driving it out completely, thereby preparing the apostles for their commission. This proposal draws on two insights from Mirecki’s narrative-critical analysis. The first is the distinction Mirecki makes between the apostles and their disbelief:

At this point we can speak of another actor, the anti-subject. The group of the eleven are merely dupes of the anti-subject and should not be confused with it. The anti-subject is

¹¹ Eta Linnemann, “Der (wiedergefundene) Markusschluss,” *ZTK* 66 (1969): 255–87; Mirecki, “Mark 16:9–20,” 124–34.

¹² More extensive critiques of Linnemann and Mirecki are offered in Kurt Aland, “Der wiedergefundene Markusschluss? Eine methodologische Bemerkung zur textkritischen Arbeit,” *ZTK* 67 (1970): 3–13; Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission*, 35, 42–45, 158–69.

¹³ Hug, *La finale*, 77–80; Gourgues, “Qui ne croira,” 264.

¹⁴ Hug, *La finale*, 77. So also Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indexes* (2nd ed.; London: Macmillan, 1966; repr., Baker, 1981), 611–12.

¹⁵ Similarly Dodd, “Appearances,” 32.

¹⁶ Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 25–27; idem, *Matthew as Story* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 27.

¹⁷ Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission*, 168.

neither openly identified nor personified in any way and so is essentially an abstraction. The narrator's evaluative and phraseological points of view suggest something of the nature of the anti-subject. The author has carefully employed the $\pi\sigma\tau$ - word group in a negative sense at four points in the story. The eleven repeatedly disbelieve the message of the subject's helpers and it is this disbelief which is to be identified with the anti-subject in the story. It is striking that the $\pi\sigma\tau$ - word group is only used in a negative sense within the story. *The subject does not rebuke his opponents (the eleven) when he confronts them in the third scene. He rebukes, instead, their disbelief and hardness-of-heart which hinder him from attaining his objective.* The anti-subject disappears from the story after it is rebuked and the eleven are transformed from functioning as disbelieving opponents to faithful helpers. This is made clear by their immediate commissioning (16:15) and positive response as heralds of the message (16:20a).¹⁸

While it is probably unhelpful to say that LE characterizes the apostles as Jesus's "opponents" – a category perhaps derived from structuralism – I agree with Mirecki that it is ultimately disbelief that Jesus opposes rather than the apostles themselves. This conclusion is supported by the syntax of Mark 16:14. Grammatically speaking, the object of the rebuke in v. 14 is not the apostles but "their unbelief and hardness of heart ($\acute{\omega}\nu\epsilon\iota\delta\iota\sigma\epsilon\nu\ \tau\eta\nu\ \acute{\alpha}\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\alpha\nu\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omega}\nu\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \sigma\kappa\lambda\eta\rho\kappa\alpha\rho\delta\iota\alpha\nu$)." With the verb $\acute{\omega}\nu\epsilon\iota\delta\iota\zeta\omega$, the person(s) at whom the rebuke is directed is normally indicated in one of two ways: (i) by the accusative; or (ii) if the matter being censured is in the accusative, then by the dative.¹⁹ Mark 16:14 is somewhat unusual in that it conforms to neither convention; no personal object is mentioned at all. Most English translations forcibly supply the missing-but-expected $\acute{\alpha}\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota\zeta$ before rendering the verse in English, e.g., RSV ("he upbraided *them* for their unbelief and hardness of heart"), NRSV ("he upbraided *them* for their lack of faith and stubbornness"), NABR ("rebuked *them* for their unbelief and hardness of heart"), NIV ("he rebuked *them* for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal").²⁰ These translations are, to be sure, legitimate possibilities, and parallels could be cited where the context suggests that the indirect object is simply assumed.²¹ Nevertheless, there are also cases

¹⁸ Mirecki, "Mark 16:9–20," 130–31, emphasis added.

¹⁹ LSJ, s.v. " $\acute{\omega}\nu\epsilon\iota\delta\iota\zeta\omega$ "; BDAG, s.v. " $\acute{\omega}\nu\epsilon\iota\delta\iota\zeta\omega$."

²⁰ A notable exception is CEB ("Jesus criticized their unbelief and stubbornness"). The Vulgate also follows the Greek closely and does not supply the indirect object: *exprobravit incredulitatem illorum et duritiam cordis*. Despite his insistence on a more literal translation of Scripture (*Epist.* 57.5), Jerome is not averse to supplying missing pronouns (G. Cuendet, "De l'ellipse du sujet dans la proposition infinitive," in *Mélanges de philologie, de littérature et d'histoire anciennes offerts à J. Marouzeau* [ed. J. Ernest; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1948], 113–17; Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998], 210 n. 39), but he does not do so here.

²¹ E.g., Josephus, *A.J.* 10.138–39 (Thackeray, LCL): "And, when he came before him, Nebuchadnezzar began to denounce him as an impious wretch and a violator of treaties who had forgotten the words which he had spoken earlier when he had promised to keep the country safely for him. *He also reproached (him) for (his) ingratitude ($\acute{\omega}\nu\epsilon\iota\delta\iota\zeta\epsilon\ \delta\grave{\epsilon}\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \acute{\alpha}\chi\alpha\rho\iota\sigma\tau\iota\alpha\nu$).*"

in which the context makes clear that the omission of the indirect object is designed to ensure that the force of the rebuke is aimed not at the person himself but at the thing being criticized.²² It is therefore prudent to consider the possibility that the omission of the indirect object in Mark 16:14 is deliberate. If so, the primary object of Jesus's rebuke is the unbelief rather than the disciples themselves, and Mark 16:14 can thereby be construed as corrective rather than denunciatory.

The verb *ὀνειδίζω*, as harsh as it is, can sometimes refer to the kind of constructive criticism that modern parlance might refer to as “tough love.” Philo uses it to describe the practice of teachers pointing out the faults of their pupils so as to help them succeed in the future, noting that this is done by friends (*φίλοι*), not enemies (*Migr.* 116; *Det.* 145). He also employs *ὀνειδίζω* to portray the healing work of God's word on an individual's mind:

He will of His gracious goodness gently and kindly correct our faults, by sending forth into our mind His own word, that reproves and chastens, by means of which He will *upbraid* (*ὀνειδίσας*) it, and make it ashamed of its errors, and so will *heal* (*ἰάσεται*) it.²³

And for those that are “difficult to cleanse and cure,” the rebuke of God's word must be more severe (*οὐ μετρίως ἐπιτιμᾷ καὶ ὀνειδίζει*, *Spec.* 2.23). Each of these illustrations from Philo offers a parallel to the rebuke in Mark 16:14. Jesus has a teacher-pupil relationship with the Eleven. He speaks God's word to address an issue of the mind. And the doubt of the disciples in the LE proves to be particularly difficult to cure: they can be convinced neither by Mary nor the two travelers. If *ὀνειδίζω* in Mark 16:14 is understood in this more positive, restorative sense, the perceived contradiction with the commission in v. 15 is greatly mitigated.

Mirecki offers a second insight that can be used to support this restorative reading. He observes an analogy between the LE and exorcism and miracle stories in the Gospels:

It is striking that the third scene exhibits the formal features of an exorcism. Note the elements of confrontation (16:14a), *verbal rebuke of identifiable negative abstractions* (16:14b vices), a word of command (16:15), and the positive and propagandistic response of the eleven (16:20a). Several exorcism and healing stories share the same structure and result in the transformed actor becoming a messenger for Jesus. Note, for example, Mark 1:21–28; 40–45; and 5:1–20.²⁴

²² E.g., Sophocles, *Oed. tyr.* 440–42:

Teiresias: Are you not the best at figuring out these (mysterious sayings)?
Oedipus: *Reproach those things in which you will find me to be great*
(*τοιαῦτ' ὀνειδίζ', οἷς ἔμ' εὐρήσεις μέγαν*).

Teiresias: Yet it was that very fortune that ruined you.

²³ *Det.* 146 (Colson and Whitaker, LCL), emphasis added.

²⁴ Mirecki, “Mark 16:9–20,” 131 n. 54, emphasis added.

Although Mirecki does not further develop this line of thought, the comparison with exorcisms and miracles stories can explain not only the abrupt transition between vv. 14 and 15, but also two other puzzling issues: (i) the seemingly out-of-place reference to the exorcism of Mary Magdalene in v. 9; and (ii) the excuse of Satanic oppression inserted by the author of the Freer Logion.

The last exorcism story (Mark 5:1–20) cited by Mirecki includes an additional element that is common to exorcism and healing stories, namely, a reference to previously failed attempts at a cure.²⁵ Mark 5:3–4 describes multiple unsuccessful attempts to bind the demoniac with chains and notes that “no one had the strength to subdue him” – that is, no one before Jesus. The same could be said of the disbelief of the apostles in the LE. Despite the attempts of Mary and the two travelers, the Eleven remain unconvinced.

The commissioning and response in each story are also similar. Jesus commands both the demoniac and the disciples to “go” and “announce” to others (Mark 5:18; 16:15) and both “went” and “preached” to all/everywhere (5:20; 16:20). Before this, the demoniac begs Jesus that he might be “with him (μετ’ αὐτοῦ)” – an echo of Mark 3:14, where the Twelve were “appointed ... that they might be with him (μετ’ αὐτοῦ) and that he might send them out to preach.” Jesus instead sends the demoniac to announce, “*how much* the Lord has done for [him]” (5:19). In other words, though he was not to be one of the Twelve, his dramatic exorcism experience uniquely qualified him to preach. Mary’s situation in Mark 16:9–10 may be analogous. She also experiences an extraordinary exorcism (“from whom [Jesus] had cast out seven demons”) and is sent to “go” and “announce.” And like the demoniac, her calling is juxtaposed with an echo of the appointment of the twelve. The demoniac begs that he might be with Jesus, and Mary announces, “to those who had been with him (μετ’ αὐτοῦ).”²⁶ Commentators have typically been at a loss to explain the seemingly gratuitous reference to Mary’s exorcism in Mark 16:9.²⁷ However, if Mary’s experience of being exorcized of many demons is what qualifies her, not being one of the Twelve, for mission, then its inclusion in Mark 16:9 is essential rather than superfluous.²⁸

²⁵ As noted in Gerd Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1983), 51–52.

²⁶ Mark 16:1–20 and Mark 5:1–20 also share the following vocabulary: μνημεῖον (5:2; 16:2, 3, 5); κάθημαι (5:15; 16:5); φεύγω (5:14; 16:8); εἰς + ἀγρός (5:14; 16:11); μετ’ αὐτοῦ (5:18; 16:10); verbs of going + ἀπαγγέλλω (5:14, 19; 16:10, 13); κηρύσσω (5:20; 16:18, 20); δαμονίζομαι / δαιμόνιον (5:15, 16, 18; 16:9, 17).

²⁷ Kelhoffer (*Miracle and Mission*, 181) proposes that this bit of information “was perhaps too interesting to pass up.” This is possible, but it runs contrary to the fact author of the LE is otherwise sparing on details in the summaries in vv. 9–13.

²⁸ Cf. Wayne C. Kannaday, *Apologetic Discourse and the Scribal Tradition: Evidence of the Influence of Apologetic Interests on the Text of the Canonical Gospels* (Text Critical

The echo of Mark 3:14 at the beginning of the LE sets up the expectation that the apostles will be sent out to preach. This expectation is eventually met in Mark 16:15, but their responses to the messengers in 16:10–13 indicate that they are not yet ready. Like the demoniac and Mary Magdalene, they also need a radical transformation. It is not so much the appearance of Jesus in Mark 16:14 that effects this transformation as Jesus’s rebuke of their unbelief and hardness of heart.²⁹ In the Gospels, Jesus’s rebuke can be restorative. When Jesus rebukes demons, they come out of those whom they possess (Matt 17:18), and when he rebukes the wind, it stops (Mark 4:39).³⁰ Particularly instructive is the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law in Luke 4:39: “And he ... rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she ... began to serve them.”³¹ I therefore propose that the disbelief and hardheartedness of the apostles in Mark 16:14 is analogous to an illness or demon that Jesus must drive out of the apostles to prepare them for service.³² If so, the unbelief of the disciples is in a sense supernaturally removed by Jesus’s rebuke.

The notion that unbelief is a powerful, oppressive force that must be removed by a divinely empowered rebuke may sound odd, indeed offensive, to modern ears, but it is attested in early Christianity. Section A of the *Acts of John (AJ)*, written probably within a few decades of the LE, depicts the apostle John preaching the following to the Ephesians: “Jesus Christ, of whom I preach, will, in his mercy and goodness, convert you all through me and deliver you from your error, *who are domineered by unbelief* (ἀπιστία κεκρατημένους) and are sold into shameful lusts. By his power, *I will rebuke* (ἐλέγξω) even the *unbelief* (ἀπιστίαν) of your magistrate” (AJ 33).³³ As in the LE, the unbelief rather than the person is the object of the rebuke. The imagery in the above passages suggests that the Ephesians have been *sold* into the slavery of sin and that unbelief plays the role of a *domineering* slave master who can be defeated only by the “power” of Christ.

Studies 5; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 193: “Mary is being identified here as a person purged of those forces that would make her hysterical. She is a sane, reliable witness.”

²⁹ Contra Joachim Gnllka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (2 vols.; EKKNT 2.1–2.2; Zurich: Benziger, 1978–79), 2:365; Collins, *Mark*, 809; Focant, *Mark*, 669.

³⁰ Although Mark 5:1–20 does not actually include a term for “rebuke,” the summary of the story in *Ep. Apoc.* 5.10–12 shows that it is natural for readers to assume that Jesus “rebuked” the demon.

³¹ The verb for rebuke in these examples (ἐπιτιμάω) is different from that in Mark 16:14 (ὀνειδίζω), but the two words are closely related semantically and can be used synonymously, e.g., Sir 8:5; Philo, *Spec.* 2.23; *Det.* 145 (so also L&N §33.419, 422).

³² The formerly demon-possessed man is said to be “in his right mind” after Jesus casts out his demons (Mark 5:15).

³³ Trans. Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 315, slightly modified. Greek text in Junod and Kaestli, *Acta Iohannis*. On the dating of *AJ*, see Chapter 7.

The need for a supernatural act to help the apostles overcome their unbelief was perceived by one of the earliest known readers of the LE. Shortly after the LE was appended to Mark, a scribe introduced the following interpolation, known today as “The Freer Logion” (FL), between vv. 14 and 15:

And they defended themselves, saying, “This age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who does not allow the truth and power of God to prevail over the unclean things of the spirits [*or*, does not allow what lies under the unclean spirits to understand the truth and power of God]. Therefore, reveal your righteousness now” – thus they spoke to Christ. And Christ replied to them, “The term of years of Satan’s power has been fulfilled, but other terrible things draw near. And for those who have sinned I was handed over to death, that they may return to the truth and sin no more, in order that they may inherit the spiritual and incorruptible glory of righteousness that is in heaven.”³⁴

This interpolation responds directly to the LE’s portrayal of the doubt motif by providing the apostles a chance to defend (*ἀπολογέομαι*) themselves in light of their persistent disbelief.³⁵ As Alsup observes, “The rebuke in vs. 14 had indeed become a source of embarrassment to the dignity of the apostolate.... In the Freer Logion ... we find that the narrative could simply not go on to vs. 15 without the disciples being given a chance to reply to this ‘defamation’ of their character.”³⁶ Though not necessarily the result of a direct possession like that of Mary Magdalene or the Gerasene demoniac, the apostle’s unbelief is nevertheless attributed to Satanic forces that control the present age and keep them from “understanding the truth and power of God.”³⁷ The expectation is that

³⁴ Trans. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 104, slightly modified. The Freer Logion is extant in only one manuscript (W), but a number of manuscripts contained the saying in Jerome’s day (*Pelag.* 2.15), and so the *terminus ante quem* is presumably sometime in the fourth century. A second-century date is the most probable (Caspar René Gregory, *Das Freer-Logion* [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908], 64–65; Jörg Frey, “Zu Text und Sinn des Freer-Logion,” *ZNW* 93 [2002]: 24–25; Justin R. Howell, “The Characterization of Jesus in Codex W,” *J ECS* 14 [2006]: 59 n. 34). The language and theology align best with the second century. The apocalyptic urgency sits more comfortably in the early to mid-second century, and the probability of major scribal insertions like this decreases exponentially after the time of Irenaeus and Theophilus. If the LE is dated ca.100–140, then the FL should probably be dated ca.125–175. A later date cannot be ruled out, but the suggestion of Alan H. Cadwalader, that the FL was prompted by the Decian persecution in the middle of the third century (“The Hermeneutical Potential of the Multiple Endings of Mark’s Gospel,” *Colloq* 43 [2011]: 129–46), is at best speculative. Even less persuasive is Thomas R. Shepherd’s claim that the theme of Christ’s cosmic power fits best in the fourth century (“Narrative Analysis as a Text Critical Tool: Mark 16 in Codex W as a Test Case,” *JSNT* 32 [2009]: 77–98). Christ’s cosmic power was clearly very important to first-century Christians as well, e.g., Matt 28:19–20; Eph 1:19–22; Col 1:15–17.

³⁵ So Taylor, *Mark*, 615; Hug, *La finale*, 80; Focant, *Mark*, 673–74.

³⁶ Alsup, *Appearance Stories*, 122.

³⁷ If we follow Shepherd’s translation of the FL, then this interpolation seems to claim something like demonic possession for the apostles: “And they began defending themselves

these forces will finally be overcome only by Jesus's decisive act of revelation. And Jesus assures them that Satan's reign has indeed come to an end.³⁸ That the author of the FL responded to the rebuke of Mark 16:14 in this manner lends further support to the theory that the LE's treatment of the doubt motif is to be understood as analogous to an exorcism.

The FL's tactic of shifting the blame to Satan is, of course, as old as the Garden of Eden. This may seem a flimsy excuse to modern readers, but the Devil's active role in producing unbelief is found already in Paul: "The God of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Cor 4:4).³⁹ Moreover, this satanic blinding is undone by a divine enlightenment of the heart (2 Cor 4:6).⁴⁰

My proposal that the rebuke in Mark 16:14 should be understood as a miraculous act that overcomes the unbelief of the apostles is also not all that different from the way Jesus deals with the doubts of the disciples in Luke 24. In the Emmaus pericope, Luke, employing the same term as in *AJ* 33 to describe the controlling power of unbelief, says that at first "their eyes were *seized* (ἐκρατοῦντο) that they might not recognize him" (24:16). This admittedly cryptic statement, which employs the same verb as the passage from *AJ* discussed above, seems to imply that some supernatural force, whether godly or demonic, stopped them from recognizing Jesus.⁴¹ Jesus responds to the

and said, 'This lawless and unbelieving age is under Satan, the one who does not permit the things *made unclean by the spirits* to receive powerfully the truth of God'" ("Narrative Analysis." 84, emphasis modified). Cf. the attempt to explain John 21 in *Manich. Ps. Bk. II*.187 [Allberry]: "The traitor persuaded them to be fishermen as they were at first and to lay down their nets with which they caught men unto life."

³⁸ Although the FL seems to identify the decisive end of Satan's power as taking place in Christ's death (and resurrection), this does not necessarily preclude the rebuke in v. 14 as a supernatural act that removes the apostles' doubt. For while the cross marks the end of Satan's rule, this does not mean that all his oppressive activity thereby ceases. The LE itself envisions the apostles and other believers continuing to cast out demons.

³⁹ Similarly, *Herm. Mand.* 9.4–12 (39.4–12), which was probably written shortly after the LE, attributes doubt and double-mindedness to satanic influence. Later, in the *Acts of Peter*, Peter provides an excuse for his weak faith by claiming that Devil had deprived him of his senses (7.15). See further examples in Chapter 2.

⁴⁰ Although the concepts are similar, there is no significant shared vocabulary to suggest the FL's dependence on Paul.

⁴¹ The possibility that Luke 24:16 alludes to Satanic influence cannot be easily dismissed. Luke attributes disbelief to Satan in his redaction of the parable of sower (Luke 8:12; cf. Mark 4:15; Matt 13:19). And Acts 26:18 states that Christ sent Paul "to *open their eyes* (ἀνοῖξαι ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν), so that they may turn from darkness to light and *from the power of Satan to God* (ἀπὸ ... τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σατανᾶ ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν)" (cf. 2 Cor 4:4). On the other hand, according to quotation of Isa 6:9–11 (LXX) in Acts 28:27, the people themselves close their own eyes because their hearts had grown dull. The fact that Jesus calls the disciples "foolish" and "slow of heart to believe" seems to suggest that the disciples are guilty regardless of whether Satan is involved or not.

disciples with a reproof: “O foolish ones and slow to believe” (24:25). But, at the end of the story, “their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.” The rebuke and the mysterious opening of the eyes are not explicitly linked, but the passive “were opened” at least suggests the possibility that their disbelief is resolved by supernatural means. The same is true of Luke 24:45: “Then he opened their minds to understand.”⁴²

In sum, the reproof of v. 14 is not incompatible with the commission in v. 15. It may be considered either the loving-but-strict discipline of a teacher or parent as in Philo or a supernatural removal of hardhearted unbelief comparable to the way Jesus casts out demons by rebuking them. In either case, the rebuke is restorative and establishes the essential precondition for the commission that follows. It is designed “to disperse all doubt over the Resurrection at the very heart of apostolic authority.”⁴³

The LE confirms our findings from Clement, Ignatius, Justin, Irenaeus, and Tertullian (see Chapters 3 and 4): the post-resurrection doubt of the apostles was a problem that needed to be dealt with. But the author of the LE has resolved the problem in a radically different way. Instead of quietly avoiding the controversy by omitting the doubt, the LE confronts the problem of their unbelief directly, forcibly casting it out “by the finger of God.”⁴⁴

8.1.2 Trends in the Reception of the LE among Proto-orthodox Writers

At least some early readers, nevertheless, found the LE’s approach to the doubt motif inadequate. As observed, the author of the Freer Logion was compelled to ensure readers that the apostles were not to be faulted; their disbelief was a consequence of the temporary Satanic oppression of the world. This suggests that the LE’s unusually strong emphasis on the apostles’ disbelief is in a sense an exception that proves the rule. Other early readers seem to have been uncomfortable with the LE’s treatment of the doubt motif as well. As with the reception of the resurrection narratives of Matthew, Luke and John, there is a pervasive silence with respect to the doubt motif among those early church fathers who seem to have known the LE. And the few that do acknowledge the doubt generally try to soften it in some way.

⁴² See further Chapter 10. Cf. Augustine, *Faust.* 16. 8, 33, where the risen Christ in John 20:27 is said to “heal the wounds of his [Thomas’s] mind.”

⁴³ Alsup, *Appearance Stories*, 122. Alsup seems to have come to this conclusion instinctively, without reference to the exorcism motif or the parallels from Philo cited above.

⁴⁴ Cf. Luke 11:20. Additionally, the author may have intended to confirm the rehabilitation of the apostles in vv. 17, 20 where the miracles they perform are a sign of “those who believe.” This may imply that despite the persistence of their disbelief in vv. 9–14, the reader can be assured that the apostles did eventually believe, since otherwise they could not have performed so many miraculous signs.

While identifying clear instances of reception of the LE is sometimes difficult, most proto-orthodox writers who appear to know the LE do not quote or allude to the verses that speak of the disciples' unbelief, i.e., vv. 10–14. As already noted, the author of the *Preaching of Peter*, who attempts to enhance the image of the apostles in various ways, seems to suppress the rebuke in v. 14 by placing a clear affirmation of the apostles' faith just prior to its close paraphrase of Mark 16:15–16.⁴⁵ Justin Martyr's writings contain echoes from vv. 9 and 17–20.⁴⁶ Irenaeus quotes only v. 19.⁴⁷ It has also been suggested that Tertullian may have known the LE, and if so he alludes only to material from vv. 9 and 16–20.⁴⁸ Given that all of these authors elsewhere exhibit an aversion to the doubt motif, their silence with respect to Mark 16:10–14 is unsurprising.

The tendency to quote or allude to material from parts of the LE *other than* vv.10–14 continues in the third and fourth centuries:

- (i) Hippolytus, *Noet.* 18 (v. 19); *Trad. ap.* 32.1 (v. 18);
- (ii) Vincentius *apud* Cyprian, *Sent.* 37 (vv. 15–18);
- (iii) Eusebius, *ad Marinum* 1.1–2 (v. 9);
- (iv) Aphraates, *Hom.* 1.17 (vv. 16–17);
- (v) Ephrem, *Comm. Diat.* 11.5 (v. 9) and 19.5 (v.15);
- (vi) Didymus, *Trin.* 2.12 (vv. 15–16);
- (vii) Ambrose, *Fid.* 2.145, 151; *Spir.* 1.86 (vv. 15–18);
- (viii) Epiphanius, *Pan.* 3.6.3 (v. 19); 62.6.7 (v. 19);
- (ix) *Did. Apos.* 21 (v. 9); 23 (vv. 15 and 20);
- (x) *Const. ap.* 6.15 (vv. 15–18); 8.1–2 (vv. 17–18).⁴⁹

Because these references to the LE are generally quoted without context, in most cases it is difficult to argue for an *intentional* silence with respect to vv.10–14. Even so, the trend in second-, third-, and fourth-century reception is

⁴⁵ See Chapter 4.

⁴⁶ Kelhoffer (*Miracle and Mission*, 170–75) put forward cogent arguments for Justin's knowledge of the LE by noting echoes of Mark 16:9 in *1 Apol.* 67.8 and *Dial.* 138.1, of Mark 16:17 in *Dial.* 76.6, and of Mark 16:20 in *1 Apol.* 45.5. Kellhoffer's analysis has since been surpassed by Lunn (*Original Ending*, 76–79), who makes a decisive case for Justin's dependence on the LE by observing a cluster of echoes of the LE in *1 Apol.* 45. Lunn also plausibly argues for the influence of Mark 16:19 in *Dial.* 32.3 and notes that the phrase ὄσπερον δέ appears in both Mark 16:14 and the resurrection appearance story in *1 Apol.* 50.

⁴⁷ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.10.5.

⁴⁸ Hengel (*Mark*, 167–68 n. 47) detects the possible influence of Mark 16:16–17 in *Praescr.* 30.16, Mark 16:19 in *Prax.* 2.1, and Mark 16:20 in *Apol.* 21.25. The strongest of these suggestions is the second. The phrase *et in caelum resumptum sedere ad dextram Patris* in *Prax.* 2.1 is close to Mark 16:19 Vulg.: *adsumptus est in caelum et sedit a dextris Dei*. Literary dependence is highly probable in light of the fact that Mark 16:19 is the only NT verse to refer to both the ascension and heavenly session. Additionally, there may be an echo in *An.* 25.8 of Mary's exorcism in Mark 16:9, but this could derive from Luke 8:2 instead.

⁴⁹ This list is partly culled from Farmer, *Last Twelve Verses*, 31–34. The general lack of citation of vv. 10–14 seems to continue into the fifth century.

too consistent to be merely accidental. And there is at least some evidence to suggest a deliberate avoidance of v.10–14 because of the doubt motif. For example, Aphraates’s homily “On Faith” offers repeated warnings against doubt and disbelief on the basis of stories from the Gospels in the immediate context of his quotation Mark 16:16–17. Yet Aphraates does not so much as hint at the content of Mark 16:10–14, nor to the post-resurrection doubts of the apostles in any of the Gospels. Rather he affirms the faith of the apostles by saying that Peter, “because of his faith, was called the firm rock.”⁵⁰

Aside from Tatian’s *Diatessaron*, the earliest author to quote explicitly from vv.10–14 is Jerome, who justly appeals to v.14 against Pelagius, observing that even the apostles showed “unbelief and hardness of heart” (*Pelag.* 2.15 [NPNF² 6:468]). It is worth noting, however, that Jerome also quotes here the excuse for their unbelief from the Freer Logion. With respect to Tatian’s harmony, there is considerable debate over how reliably the extant sources reflect the work of Tatian. The major witnesses exhibit evidence of Vulgatization, and so are often reckoned more reliable with respect to Tatian’s sequence than to his wording. The resurrection narratives are particularly suspect because a number of ancient writers say that Tatian gave up his harmonizing when he got to the resurrection narratives.⁵¹ William L. Petersen argues that this does not mean that Tatian’s *Diatessaron* contained no resurrection narratives but rather that Tatian “reproduced the resurrection accounts seriatim.”⁵² The Arabic Harmony does exhibit a lesser degree of harmonization in the resurrection narratives, harmonizing primarily at the sentence and paragraph level rather than interlacing individual words and phrases.⁵³ The same could be said of its Western counterpart, *Codex Fuldensis*, which includes a similar sequence. One of Ephrem the Syrian’s quotations of the *Diatessaron* includes the following conflation of Mark 16:15 and Matt 28:19: “Go forth into the whole world, and baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Spirit.”⁵⁴

⁵⁰ *Hom.* 1.17 [NPNF² 13:351], emphasis added. There is also a possible echo of v. 14 in Eusebius, *Comm. Isa.* 310.14. But if Eusebius is drawing on the language of the LE, he has redirected the accusation of “unbelief and hardness of heart” away from the apostles and onto the nation of Israel. A similar phenomenon seems to occur in *Acts Pil.* 13.2 (see below). Cf. Hesychius, *Collectio Difficultatum et Solutionum* 52 (early fifth century), which seems to summarize Mark 16:9–14 yet omits all references to the apostles’ disbelief.

⁵¹ Tjitze Baarda, “The Resurrection Narrative in Tatian’s *Diatessaron* according to Three Syrian Patristic Witnesses,” in *Early Transmission of Words of Jesus: Thomas, Tatian and the Text of the New Testament* (eds. J. Helderman and S. J. Noorda; Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1983), 103–15.

⁵² William L. Petersen, *Tatian’s Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship* (VCSup 25; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 51–52, 60–62.

⁵³ D. C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 133.

⁵⁴ *Comm. Diat.* 19.5 (trans. Carmel McCarthy, *Saint Ephrem’s Commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron: An English Translation of Chester Beatty Syriac MS 709 with Introduction and*

To the extent that the Arabic Harmony and *Codex Fuldensis* reflect Tatian's hand, Tatian incorporates many details from the LE, including references to the disbelief of the apostles from vv.10–14. Because of the unique nature of the harmonizing task, Tatian could not, like so many other church fathers, simply omit the doubt motif. His harmony, nevertheless, does in effect minimize it. For our purposes, the most significant example is the insertion of the rebuke from Mark 16:14 in between Matt 28:16–17 and 18:

Arabic Harmony 55.1–3	<i>Codex Fuldensis</i> 182	Vulgate
But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but there were of them who doubted.	But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had commanded them. And seeing him they worshipped, but some of them doubted.	But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had commanded them. And seeing him they worshipped, but some of them doubted. (Matt 28:16–17)
And while they sat there he appeared to them again, and upbraided <i>them</i> for their lack of faith and the hardness of their hearts,	And he rebuked their incredulity and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who had seen him risen.	Lastly, while they reclined at table, he appeared to the Eleven And he rebuked their incredulity and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who had seen him risen. (Mark 16:14)
those that saw him when he was risen and believed not.		
Then Jesus said to them, “I have been given all authority in heaven and earth.” ⁵⁵	And he said to them, “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.” ⁵⁶	And he came to them and he said to them, “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.” (Matt 28:18)

Notes [Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement 2; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993], 289). Cf. Clement, *Exc.* 76.3, which may also conflate these two verses.

⁵⁵ *ANF* 9:128, emphasis original. The *ANF* translation is based on the *editio princeps*: Agostino Ciasca, *Tatiani Evangeliorum Harmoniae Arabice* (Rome: Bibliographia Polyglotta, 1888; repr., 1930). The most recent critical edition is A.-S. Marmardji, *Diatessaron de Tatien* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1935).

⁵⁶ *Editio princeps*: Ernest Ranke, *Codex Fuldensis. Novum Testamentum latine interprete Hieronymo, ex manuscripto Victoris Capuani* (Marburg: Elwert, 1868).

The italicized “*them*” in the *ANF* translation above is not present in the Arabic.⁵⁷ As in the Greek of Mark 16:14, the object of the rebuke in the Arabic Harmony is the unbelief itself. But unlike Mark 16:14, in which all the apostles are implicated, the Arabic Harmony explicitly restricts unbelief and hardness of heart to a subset of apostles “that saw him ... and believed not,” i.e., the “some” who “doubted” in Matt 28:17.⁵⁸

The same is true of *Fuldensis*, with two differences. First, *Fuldensis* lacks the Arabic Harmony’s adaptation of Mark 16:14a (“And while they sat there he appeared to them again”), making the rebuke in Mark 16:14 appear to be an immediate response to the doubt of the “some” in Matt 28:17.⁵⁹ Second, the wording of *Fuldensis* has been vulgarized to reflect more accurately the final clause of Mark 16:14. In the Arabic Harmony’s version of this last clause, the apostles disbelieve, not in response to the testimony of others as the LE but in response to seeing the risen Jesus themselves as in Matt 28:17. The price of Vulgarization in *Fuldensis* is a minor loss of coherence: the rebuke responds to the doubt of the “some” who saw for themselves, but it is explained by their earlier rejection of the testimony of others. In this instance, the Arabic Harmony preserves a non-vulgarized reading that perhaps goes back to Tatian. Whether the limitation of the rebuke to a subset of the apostles would have been effective apologetically is debatable. Ephrem, for his part, does not mention this passage in his commentary.

The Persian Gospel Harmony, which according to Petersen exhibits limited Diatessaronic influence, inserts Mark 16:14 into a different appearance narrative and attempts to mitigate the harshness of the rebuke:

And, for their joy, *up until this point* they did not believe. They marveled [cf. Luke 24:41a]. He rebuked the *littleness of their faith* and their hardness of heart, because they saw him, that he rose, and did not believe [cf. Mark 16:14]. And he said to them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” [cf. Luke 24:41b]⁶⁰

⁵⁷ I thank Deirdre Dempsey for guiding me through the Arabic text here and below.

⁵⁸ This restriction is partially obscured by Ciasca’s edition. Ciasca emends the text found in the manuscripts by inserting the phrase *li’annahom* (“because they”) after “hearts.” The emendation makes the sentence conform more closely to the text of Mark 16:14 (“because they did not believe those who had seen him when he had risen”) and Codex *Fuldensis*. However, Hope W. Hogg rightly rejects Ciasca’s insertion as conjectural and unnecessary; the reading in the manuscripts is itself intelligible – and perhaps less awkward than Ciasca’s suggestion, which seems not to account for the “and” in “and they believed not (*walamyuminu*)” (*ANF* 9:128 n. 3852). More importantly, the fact that the wording contradicts the Vulgate and the Peshitta is a strong indication that the Arabic manuscripts preserve the original reading.

⁵⁹ The Arabic Harmony assumes some sort of a delay, with Mark 16:14 constituting a second appearance in the same location.

⁶⁰ This English rendering is based on the Italian translation of the Persian text in Giuseppe Messina, *Diatessaron Persiano* (BibOr 14; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1951), 371.

As in the Arabic version of the *Diatessaron*, the rebuke is not for disbelieving the message of others but for their unbelieving response to seeing Jesus. More importantly, two subtle but significant changes are made to soften the negative portrayal of the apostles. First, “their unbelief” in Mark 16:14 has become “the littleness of their faith.”⁶¹ This first change is complemented by a second. In Luke 24:41 the disciples are “*still* disbelieving,” but the Persian Gospel harmony has “*up until this point* they did not believe.” The implication, contra Luke, is that the disciples stopped disbelieving at the moment they had been invited to touch Jesus and inspect his wounds.

This small but significant shift in meaning, brought about by the tendentious translation of ܐܪܬܝ in Luke 24:41, can also be found in the Arabic version of the *Diatessaron* and is corroborated by the Old Syriac:

And they were *until this time* (*ilā hādā alwaqt*) unbelieving, from their joy and their wonder. (Arabic Harmony 54.6 [*ANF* 9:127, emphasis added])⁶²

And while they had not believed *until now* (*‘ēdamā’ lēhāšā*) because of their joy and their fear and they were astonished. (Luke 24:41, syr^S, syr^C)⁶³

The addition of “and their fear” in the Old Syriac refers the reader back to the fear in Luke 24:37–38, confirming that the intent is to read Luke 24:41 as referring to a *former* disbelief rather than to a continuing disbelief as indicated by the Greek adverb ܐܪܬܝ. It is worth recalling that Irenaeus employs an analogous technique in *Epid.* 76.⁶⁴

The *Acts of Pilate* quotes solely from the latter half of the LE – reproducing the words of commission from vv. 15–18 and then alluding to v. 19 – but there is evidence to suggest that the author may be responding to the doubt motif.⁶⁵

Messina was unable to determine whether the influence of Tatian was direct or indirect (on which, see further discussion in Petersen, *Diatessaron*, 259–63).

⁶¹ Cf. Origen’s defense of Peter’s doubt in Matt 14:31: “Only, observe that He did not say, ‘O thou without faith,’ but, ‘O thou of little faith’ ... as he had still a measure of faith, but also had a tendency towards that which was opposed to faith” (*Comm. Matt.* 11.6 [*ANF* 9:436]).

⁶² The *Vorlage* of the Arabic version is commonly judged to have been influenced by the Vulgate (Petersen, *Diatessaron*, 133–38), and so the influence of the Vulgate’s *adhuc* cannot be ruled out here. Nevertheless, the presence of *‘ēdamā’ lēhāšā* in the Old Syriac, also dependent on the *Diatessaron*, makes the influence of the Vulgate unnecessary.

⁶³ Trans. E. Jan Wilson, *The Old Syriac Gospels: Studies and Comparative Translations* (2 vols.; Eastern Christian Studies 1–2; Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias, 2003), 2:666, emphasis added. On the translation of *‘ēdamā’ lēhāšā* (“until now”), see Payne Smith: 1055, s.v. *hās*. I am grateful to Deirdre Dempsey for her guidance in examining these Syriac texts.

⁶⁴ See Chapter 4.

⁶⁵ Suggested dates for this text range from the second to the sixth century. The manuscript tradition shows that the text was unstable and subject to many revisions and additions. The consensus position is that the manuscripts can be categorized into two principal forms: an “A” form, containing chs. 1–16, and a later “B” form, containing an edited version of “A”

The quotation of Mark 16:15–18 follows an embellished version of Matt 28:2–15. Kelhoffer concludes that “it stands to reason that [the author] regarded Mark 16:15–19 as a more compelling continuation” of the story than Matt 28:16–20.⁶⁶ Kelhoffer does not speculate as to what made Mark 16:15–19 more compelling. But embarrassment over the apostles’ doubt may have been a significant factor.⁶⁷

Disbelief is a repeated theme in the author’s additions to the story of Matt 28:2–15. *Acts of Pilate* 13 reproduces portions of Matt 28:2–15 nearly verbatim but replaces the appearance of Jesus to the women (Matt 28:8–11) with an

with 11 additional chapters describing Jesus’s descent into Hell. In what follows, I quote from the Greek text of form A in Bart D. Ehrman and Zlatko Plèše, *The Apocryphal Gospels: Texts and Translations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 424–62. Translations are my own. Some hold that form A is not likely to have originated prior to the fourth century (so Rémi Gounelle and Zbigniew Izydorczyk, *L’Évangile de Nicodème* [Apocryphes 9; Turnhout: Brepols, 1997], 103–11; Hans-Josef Klauck, *Apocryphal Gospels: An Introduction* [trans. B. McNeil; London: T&T Clark International, 2003], 90–91), though others posit that an earlier form must have existed prior to the time of Justin, who cites an “Acts Done Under Pilate” (*1 Apol.* 35.9; 48.3) whose contents, like form A, included a description of Jesus’s crucifixion (so Felix Scheidweiler, “The Gospel of Nicodemus,” *NTApoc* 1: 501–3). To this it might be added, *pace* Scheidweiler, that the miracles of Jesus listed in *Acts Pil.* 1.1; 6–8 overlap significantly with the list of miracles in Isa 26:19, 35:5–6 that Justin claims in *1 Apol.* 48.2–3 to have been fulfilled in the *Acts of Pilate* known to him (Kannaday, *Apologetic Discourse*, 221 n. 64).

Those who dismiss the evidence from Justin nevertheless agree that the later *Acts of Pilate* incorporated traditions stemming from the second century (Gounelle and Izydorczyk, *Nicodème*, 103–11). The portions of the text addressed in the argument below, namely, chs. 13 and 14, may have a legitimate claim to an early date. The dialogue over the missing body of Jesus in 13.2 refers to the Jewish leaders simply as “the Jews,” much as in the Gospel of John, and the Roman soldiers specifically refer to Jesus’s miracles. Both this use of “the Jews” and the debate over Jesus’s miracles have been identified as likely belonging to earlier tradition (Gounelle and Izydorczyk, *Nicodème*, 110–11). In *Acts Pil.* 14.1, the ascension apparently takes place shortly after Easter on “Mount Mamilch,” rather than 40 days later on the “Mount of Olives,” as in Acts. This discrepancy, which is corrected by later scribes, is itself an indication that this portion of the text is early. Additionally, the name “Mamilch” appears to be Aramaic in origin (Elchanan Reiner, “From Joshua to Jesus: The Transformation of a Biblical Story to a Local Myth: A Chapter in the Religious Life of a Galilean Jew,” in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land* [eds. Arieh Kofsky and Guy G. Stroumsa; Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1998], 263–67). Kelhoffer also notes that the quotation of the LE in *Acts Pil.* 14.1 follows an earlier text form of the LE (*Miracle and Mission*, 176 n. 70). Whenever form A is to be dated, these details all point to the early character of 13.2 and 14.1.

⁶⁶ Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission*, 176.

⁶⁷ Another factor may have been the reference to the ascension in Mark 16:19, as this is a prominent theme in the rest of the narrative. But Mark 16:19 is not part of the verbatim quotation, and if it were only the ascension that interested the author, he or she could have continued with Matthew’s commissioning account and appended Mark 16:19.

expanded account of the conversation between the tomb guards and the Jewish leaders. The main purpose of the expansion is to convict the Jews of stubborn unbelief in face of overwhelming evidence:

The Jews said, “Which women was he [the angel] speaking to?” The guards said, “We do not know which ones they were.” The Jews said, “What time was it?” The guards said, “The middle of the night.” The Jews said, “Why did you not seize the women?” The guards said, “We became as dead men from fear, with no hope even to see the light of day. How could we have seized them?” The Jews said, “As the Lord lives, *we do not believe you.*” The guards said to the Jews, “*You have seen so many signs in that man and you did not believe. How could you believe us?* For, you rightly swear ‘as the Lord lives’ – for he is indeed alive.” Again, the guards said, “We heard that you locked up the one who asked for the body of Jesus and sealed the door, and that opening it you did not find him. Give us Joseph and we will give you Jesus. The Jews said, “Joseph has returned to his city.” The guards said to the Jews, “And Jesus has risen, just as we heard from the angel, and he is in Galilee.”

While most of this passage draws directly from Matt 28:1–15, the theme of disbelief is absent from this part of Matthew. In the canonical resurrection stories the vocabulary of faith and disbelief is found only in the responses of the apostles to the resurrection. The application of this motif to the Jewish authorities is the author’s own addition.⁶⁸ In fact, it looks as if the author has transferred the disbelief theme of the LE from the apostles onto the Jewish leaders:

The Jews said, “As the Lord *lives* (ζῆ),
we do not believe you
(οὐ πιστεύομεν ὑμῖν).”

But when they heard that *he lives* (ζῆ)...
they did not believe [her]
(ἠπίστησαν [οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν αὐτή, D])

...

The guards said to the Jews,
“You have seen so many signs
in that man and you did not believe
(εἰς τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐκείνον καὶ οὐκ ἐπίστεύσατε).”

And they went back and told the rest;
Neither did they believe those men
(οὐδὲ ἐκείνοις ἐπίστευσαν).

...

How *could you believe* (ἔχετε πιστεῦσαι)
us?”
(Acts Pil. 13.2)⁶⁹

He rebuked their unbelief and
hardness of heart because
they had not believed (οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν)
those who saw him.
(Mark 16:11–14)

The triple occurrence of πιστεύω, coupled with ζῆ in the first instance and with ἐκεῖνος in the second, is especially telling. Just as the disciples disbelieve both Mary and the two travelers in the LE, so also in the *Acts of Pilate* the Jewish leaders respond to both the signs of Jesus and the testimony of the guards with

⁶⁸ The author inserts the same theme into his or her embellished version of the dialogue between the Jews and Pilate at Jesus’s trial (*Acts. Pil.* 2.4–5).

⁶⁹ This transfer seems to have been facilitated by drawing on the language of John 12:37 (“Though he had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in him”) and inserting it into the mouths of the guards.

unbelief. In each text a third, summary rebuke for disbelieving the messengers is added. The likelihood of the influence of Mark 16:11–14 is only increased by the verbatim quotation of Mark 16:15–18 in the passage that follows. The desire to convict the Jewish leaders of unbelief may also be the reason that the author preferred the words of commissioning in the LE to those in Matt 28. The quotation of the LE includes the statement that “those who disbelieve will be condemned.” It also refers to miraculous “signs,” which in 3.2 are used to condemn the Jews for disbelief.

The shift from Matthew’s account to that of the LE may also have been influenced by a desire to avoid the doubt clause (“but some doubted”) in Matt 28:17. Although the near verbatim repetition of Matthean material stops at Matt 28:15, the author continues to rely on Matthew’s Gospel for his account of the group appearance scene:

We saw (εἶδον) <i>Jesus</i> (τὸν Ἰησοῦν) and his disciples (μαθητάς). He was sitting <i>on the mountain</i> (εἰς τὸ ὄρος) called Mamilch	The eleven <i>disciples</i> (μαθηταί) went... <i>to the mountain</i> (εἰς τὸ ὄρος) to which <i>Jesus</i> (ὁ Ἰησοῦς) had directed them. And when they <i>saw</i> (ἰδόντες) him,	Afterward he appeared to the Eleven themselves as they were reclining at table,
	they worshiped him, but some doubted.	and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.
and was saying to his disciples, “Go into all the world...” (Acts Pil. 14.1) ⁷⁰	And Jesus, coming, spoke to them saying, “All authority...” (Matt 28:16–18)	And he said to them, “Go into all the world...” (Mark 16:14–15)

The author stops following Matt 28 when he reaches the middle of v. 17, in which the apostles are said to “doubt.” He then switches to the LE of Mark, beginning with v. 15, the sentence immediately following the mention of the apostle’s unbelief and hardness of heart. By doing so, the author avoids both the doubt clause of Matt 28:17 (“but some doubted”) and the rebuke of the apostles’ unbelief in Mark 16:14. This omission can hardly be accidental since just prior to this the author has made a redactional insertion denouncing the Jewish leaders for their persistent disbelief. Mentioning the doubts of the apostles at this point can only undermine the author’s polemic. Much like Tertullian in *Apol.* 21, the author of the *Acts of Pilate* has followed the narrative of Matthew right up to the point where it mentions the doubt of the apostles and then switches to another source.⁷¹

⁷⁰ The author’s choice of εἰς, which is somewhat unusual in context, rather than ἐπί was probably influenced by Matt 28:16 (though see εἰς in Mark 13:3).

⁷¹ See further Chapter 4.

8.1.3 The LE, Polymorphism and Docetic Christology

In the course of this study, I have frequently noted that docetists of various types capitalized on the post-resurrection doubt motif. Given this trend it is striking that the LE emphasizes the doubt motif more than any of the other canonical narratives. And yet among these narratives, the LE is the one that is furthest removed from anything resembling antidocetic polemic. The LE offers no christological proofs for the reality of the resurrection in response to the doubts. And the little information it does provide about the nature of Christ's appearances seem to stress Jesus's divinity rather his humanity, perhaps even at the expense of the latter. Indeed, we might characterize the LE's appearance stories as naively docetic, or at least highly susceptible to docetic interpretation.

The verb φαίνω/φαίνομαι in Mark 16:9, unique in the canonical resurrection narratives, appears frequently in angelophany and theophany accounts.⁷² The related term, φανερώω, in Mark 16:12, 14 occurs elsewhere in the resurrection narratives only in John 21:1, 14. There it seems to indicate an act of revelation, more specifically, the disclosure of Jesus's hidden divine identity.⁷³ Also unique to the LE's resurrection accounts is θεάομαι (Mark 16:11, 14). This term can simply mean "to see," but it often occurs in vision accounts and can have the sense of perceiving something beyond what is visible to the naked eye.⁷⁴ The combination of terms, unusual in accounts of Jesus's resurrection, suggests an emphasis on the supernatural and the divine. This coheres not only with the complete absence of physical proofs but also with the one brief description the LE gives of Jesus's appearance: that he was "in a different form (ἐν ἑτέρῳ μορφῇ)" (Mark 16:12).

It is important to note that the language here does not necessarily imply the kind of polymorphic Christology commonly found in the second century.⁷⁵ On the one hand, if the phrase "different form" means "different" with respect to the way Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene in Mark 16:9, then polymorphy is unavoidable.⁷⁶ On the other hand, if it means "different" from the way the

⁷² E.g., Num 23:3–4; 2 Macc 3:26, 33; 5:2; 10:29; 11:8; Matt 1:20; 2:13, 19; Herm. *Vis.* 1.4.3 [4.3]; Josephus, *A.J.* 8.22; 9.20. Similarly Mirecki, "Mark 16:9–20," 107–8. Hug (*La finale*, 59–60) observes that the cognate ἐμφανίζω also occurs in theophanic accounts, e.g., Exod 33:13, 18 (LXX); Wis 1:2; Philo *Leg.* 3.101; Josephus, *A.J.* 1.223. He notes that the same word occurs in the allusion to Jesus's own resurrection in John 14:21–22. In the context of John 14, especially vv. 8–10, 20, the term denotes the revelation of Jesus's divinity.

⁷³ Cf. φανερώω in John 2:11; 17:6; also John 3:21 and 9:3.

⁷⁴ E.g., Tob 13:14 [G¹]; Philo, *Leg.* 1.45; *Somn.* 2.6, 206; *QE* 2.47; Josephus, *Vita* 208; *A.J.* 7.327. See further Mirecki, "Mark 16:9–20," 110–14; BDAG, s.v. "θεάομαι."

⁷⁵ Pace Foster, "Polymorphic Christology," 70–71.

⁷⁶ This polymorphic reading is to some extent encouraged by a few manuscripts (D, W, k), which have the young man at the tomb in Mark 16:7 speaking as if he is Jesus himself: "Behold *I am going* (προσαγω) before you to Galilee."

apostles knew Jesus to have looked prior to his death, then ἐν ἑτέρῳ μορφῇ need not imply polymorphy. In this case, it could refer to something like Paul's notion of a transformed resurrection body (1 Cor 15:37–39, 51–52; Phil 3:21). It is impossible to be certain which of these meanings is intended in the LE.⁷⁷

Whatever the case may be, the language of the LE is susceptible to docetic or polymorphic interpretation.⁷⁸ Lalleman posits that polymorphic Christology may have arisen “from docetic reading” of Mark 16:12.⁷⁹ While this theory cannot be proven, there is evidence to suggest that the LE may indeed have influenced some later polymorphic and docetic Christologies. Many NT apocrypha describe polymorphic appearances of Christ in ways that resemble the LE, some employing vocabulary that is distinctive to the LE among the canonical resurrection narratives:

God was moved by his mercy to *show himself in another form* (in *alia figura ostendere*; cf. Mark 16:12, Vg.: *ostensus est in alia effigie*) and in the likeness of man. (*Acts Pet.* 20.10)

⁷⁷ So already Hug, *La finale*, 62 n. 3. The second possibility can be excluded only if one assumes (i) that the LE was originally written independently of the Gospel of Mark, and so could not be referring to an earlier part of the gospel; and (ii) that Mark 16:12–13 is not summarizing a story known from an earlier source. Kelhoffer, who maintains the LE's dependence on Luke, concludes that the phrase “in a different form” is probably “an expedient means of referring to the plot of Luke without rehearsing it in detail” (*Miracle and Mission*, 89). A similar conclusion could be drawn if the LE is dependent not on Luke but on Luke's source, namely, that it is probably “an expedient means of referring to the plot of Luke[’s source] without rehearsing it in detail.” Either way, “different” need not mean “different” from the appearance to Mary in Mark 16:9.

⁷⁸ So Hug, *La finale*, 215, 218. It is also telling that Cyril of Alexandria, who seems unfamiliar with the LE of Mark, argues that had Christ wanted the apostles to believe that he did *not* rise in flesh, then he would have appeared in another form: “Why would he need to show them his hands and side if, as some perversely think, he did not rise again bodily? And if the goal was not to have the disciples think about him in this way, why not *appear in another form* (ἐν ἑτέρῳ διαφαίνετο σχήματι) and, disdaining any likeness of the flesh, conjure up *other* (ἑτεροίαις) thoughts in their minds? But he obviously thought it was that important to convince them of the resurrection of his body that, even when events would have seemed to call for him to change the mode of his body into some more ineffable and surpassing majesty, he nonetheless resolved in his providence to *appear* (φαίνεσθαι) once more as he had been in the past [i.e., in the flesh] so that they might realize he was wearing *no other form* (μὴ ἕτερον) than the one in which he had suffered crucifixion” (*Comm. Jo.* 12.1, trans. Joel C. Elowsky, ed., *John 11–21* [ACCS New Testament 4b; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007], 357, emphasis added). Had Cyril known the LE of Mark, he probably would have rejected it as spurious and heretical.

⁷⁹ Pieter J. Lalleman, “Polymorphy of Christ,” in *The Apocryphal Acts of John* (ed. Jan N. Bremmer; SAAA 1; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995), 116; idem, *Acts of John*, 147; similarly Einar Thomassen, “Jesus in the New Testament Apocrypha,” in *Alternative Christs* (ed. Olav Hammer; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 87.

And often he *would appear* (ἐφάνετο) to me as a small man and *unattractive in form* (δύσμορφος), and then again as one reaching to heaven. (*Acts John* 89.9–10)

For we did not know him; but he deceived us with his *extremely ugly form* (τῆ μορφῆ αὐτοῦ τῆ δυσειδεστάτη) and his poverty and his neediness; for *seeing* (θεασάμενοι) him to be such, we thought that he was a man wearing flesh, and did not know that it is he who gives life to men. (*Acts Thom.* 45.12)

While he was saying these things, the Lord Jesus Christ *appeared in the form of a child* (ἐφάνη ... ἐν μορφῇ παιδίου). (*Acts Pet. Andr.* 2.1)

And when he had said these things, the Savior *appeared in the form of a twelve-year-old child* (ἐφάνη ... ἐν μορφῇ παιδίου δωδεκαετοῦς). (*Acts Pet. Andr.* 16.1)

And after forty days, the Savior, having *appeared in the form of Philip* (φανείς...ἐν μορφῇ τοῦ Φιλίππου) (*Mart. Phil.* 40)

And Andrew, when he *saw* (θεασάμενος) Jesus, did not recognize him; for Jesus had hidden his own deity, and was *appearing* (φαινόμενος) as a man, the captain (*Acts Andr. Matt.* 5.5)

The Lord was with us in the boat and we did not recognize him; for he *transformed* (μετεμόρφωσεν) himself into a helmsman and humbled himself and *appeared* (ἐφάνη) to us as a man. (*Acts Andr. Matt.* 17.3–4)

Straightway [while I was contemplating these things] behold the [heavens opened and] the whole creation [which is] below heaven shone and [the world] was shaken. [I was afraid and behold I] saw in the light [a child who stood] by me. While I looked [at it, it became] like an old man. And he [changed his] likeness (again) becoming like a servant. There [was not a plurality] before me but there was a [likeness] with multiple *forms* (ἄμορφῆ = μορφῆ) in the light, and [the semblances] *appeared* (ἀγογωνεῖ = ἐφάνησαν) through each other, [and] the [likeness] had three *forms* (ἄμορφῆ = μορφῆ). (*Ap. John* [NHC II,1] 1.30–2.9)⁸⁰

The Savior *appeared* (ἀγογωνεῖ = ἐφάνη), *not in his previous form* (ἄμορφῆ ἐν τῇ ἄμορφῆ = οὐκ ἐν τῇ μορφῇ τῇ πρώτῃ), but in the invisible spirit. And his likeness resembles a great angel of light. (*Soph. Jes. Chr.* [NHC III,4] 91.10–13)⁸¹

We said to him, “Lord in what *form* (ἄμορφῆ) will you *reveal* (οἴων[ε] = φανείε) yourself to us, or in what kind of body will you come? Tell us!” John spoke up and said, “Lord, when you are ready to reveal yourself to us, do not reveal yourself to us in all your

⁸⁰ *Ap. John* (BG 8502,2) 20.3–4 has “a child appeared (ἀγογωνεῖ = ἐφάνη) to me” in place of “I saw in the light a child who stood by me.” Coptic texts and English translations in Waldstein and Wisse, *Apocryphon of John*, 15–17. On the Greek retroversion from ἀγογωνεῖ, see note below.

⁸¹ ἐν is written above the line in the manuscript as if it is to be inserted at this point. The Coptic ἀγογωνεῖ translates ἐφάνη in the Sahidic text of Mark 16:9. That the Greek *Vorlage* probably had ἐφάνη is supported by a comparison of the Greek fragment of the *Sophia* (POxy 1881, lines 29–44), in which φαίνω appears frequently, with the Coptic translations in NHC III 98.14–99.6 and BG 89.6–91.9, which have in ὠνεῖ its place. Texts and English translations in Parrott, *Nag Hammadi Codices III,3–4 and V,1*.

glory, but change your glory into [some other] glory (ἐξ[ε]ῆροϋ = ἐτέραν δόξαν) so that [we may be able to bear] it; lest we see [you and] despair from [fear]!” (Gos. Sav. 67–68)⁸²

Again, there is no way to be sure, but the wording of some of these texts – especially the *Acts of Peter*, the *Acts of Peter and Andrew*, the *Martyrdom of Philip* and the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* – is close enough to the LE to suggest probable dependence.

In addition to the above texts, two earlier possibilities of the LE’s influence on polymorphic and/or docetic Christology need to be considered. According to Epiphanius, Basilides made the following “specious argument” to support his docetic Christology:

He too, likewise, believes that Christ was manifest (only) in appearance (ὡς δοκίσει). He says that since he “appears,” he is an “appearance” (εἶναι ... αὐτὸν φαντασίαν ἐν τῷ φαίνεσθαι); but he is not man and has not taken flesh.⁸³

The language of the LE, i.e., ἐφάνη in v. 9 and ἐν ἐτέρᾳ μορφῇ in v. 12, is easily fitted to the polymorphic Christology of Basilides as reported in Irenaeus and Epiphanius.⁸⁴ Indeed, the docetic polemic of Basilides seems to draw on specific wording of his source (“since he ‘appears’”), which denotes Jesus’s appearance with φαίνω. The only possible NT source is Mark 16:9; Jesus is the subject of φαίνω in no other NT passage.⁸⁵ This is not the only time that Basilides capitalizes on a detail from Mark’s Gospel in support of his docetism. According to Irenaeus and Epiphanius, Basilides also docetized Mark 15:21, where Simon of Cyrene is compelled to carry the cross, arguing that Jesus transformed (*transfiguratum* = μετεμόρφωσεν) Simon into his own image and himself into Simon’s.⁸⁶ Consequently, Simon is crucified rather than Jesus. The

⁸² Trans. Emmel, “Reedition,” 41, emphasis added. Greek retroversions are my own. In some Coptic manuscripts of Mark 16:12 the term ⲉⲙⲟⲩ translates μορφή (so Crum, *Dictionary*, 341).

⁸³ *Pan.* 24.3.1, trans. Francis E. Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis: Book I (Sects 1–46)* (NHMS 63; 2nd ed.; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 78.

⁸⁴ Pace Lunn (*Original Ending*, 341–51), who conjectures that Basilides or similar gnostics excised the LE because they found its account of the risen Jesus incompatible with their “Hellenistic dualism.” On the contrary, the examples discussed above suggest that the LE would have been especially attractive to Christian sects with a dualistic worldview.

⁸⁵ The next closest parallels are John 1:5 (“the light shines [φαίνει] in the darkness”), Matt 24:30 (“Then will appear [φανήσεται] the sign of the son of Man”), and Acts 10:40 (“and God made him visible [ἐμφανῆ]”).

⁸⁶ Bentley Layton, “The Significance of Basilides in Ancient Christian Thought,” *Representations* 28 (1989): 145, 150 n. 25; Grant, *Jesus after the Gospels*, 49. The wording in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.24.4 and Epiphanius, *Pan.* 24.3.2–3 reflects that of Mark 15:21 rather than that of the parallels in Matt 27:32 and Luke 23:36. There is some debate over whether Irenaeus and Epiphanius (who follows Irenaeus) have correctly identified this material as belonging to Basilides (see Chapter 2). If not, some other early docetist is drawing on Mark here.

fact that Basilides drew on Mark 15:21 also makes it more probable that he drew on the LE as well. If so, Mark 16:9 was a Basilidean proof-text for docetic Christology.

The other docetist who may have appealed to Mark 16:9 is Marcion. In the course of his refutation of Marcion's Gospel, Tertullian offers the following abrupt and somewhat ambiguous aside: "It is no matter if somewhere the word 'appeared' (*apparisse*) is used" (*Marc.* 4.7.2).⁸⁷ Harnack plausibly suggests that Tertullian is responding to a comment made by Marcion in his *Antitheses*.⁸⁸ Whether in the *Antitheses* or elsewhere, Tertullian's statement implies that Marcion appealed to an authoritative, presumably written, source that said Jesus "appeared." The way Tertullian refers to the source ("it is no matter if somewhere the word 'appeared' is used") also indicates that he knows that the term in question occurs somewhere other than the Lukan parallel he is presently discussing. I propose that Marcion's source is Mark 16:9.⁸⁹ The Latin verb mentioned by Tertullian (*appareo*) occurs in both the Vulgate and Old Latin of Mark 16:9 as a translation of ἐφάνη.⁹⁰ And on the basis of a close parallel in the anti-Marcionite *Adamantius Dialogue* (2.19), Harnack concludes that the Greek behind Tertullian's Latin is ἐφάνη.⁹¹ Again, because it is the only NT passage in which Jesus is the subject of φαίνω, Mark 16:9 is the most probable source.⁹²

⁸⁷ *Marc.* 4.7.2, trans. Evans, *Adversus Marcionem*, 277.

⁸⁸ Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 185*.

⁸⁹ See also BeDuhn, *First New Testament*, 199–200. BeDuhn lists a number of striking connections between Marcion's Gospel and the LE and posits the LE's dependence on Marcion's Gospel. I would argue for the opposite direction of influence.

⁹⁰ In the Vulgate, the next closest NT parallels (John 1:5; Matt 24:30; Acts 10:40) are all translated with terms other than *appareo*.

⁹¹ Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 185*. This Greek word, because of its association with angelophany and theophany narratives, also fits the connotation that Tertullian assigns the term: "'Appear' suggests a sudden and unexpected sight, <by one> who at some instant has cast his eyes on a thing which has at that instant appeared" (*Marc.* 4.7.2).

⁹² The fact that Marcion accepted only Luke's Gospel as authoritative is by no means an insurmountable obstacle to his dependence on the LE. The term φαίνω is not employed with reference to Jesus in Luke or in the epistles of Paul that Marcion accepts. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that Marcion in his *Antitheses* included material from Matthew's Gospel, and that perhaps he was inspired by the so-called antitheses in the Sermon on the Mount (Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.16.1). If Marcion could discuss and even appeal to Matthean material, there is no reason why he could not do the same with "Markan" material. Indeed, Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.30.1, indicates that either Marcion or his followers did at some point appeal to Mark's Gospel.

It is also possible that Marcion appealed to Mark 16:9 because he knew his opponents accepted it. We might conjecture that Marcion said "somewhere [that is, in one of the texts accepted by you] it is said that Jesus ἐφάνη." This would explain why, Tertullian, who may not have known the LE, responded the way he did.

Even if Marcion had another, unknown, text in mind, it seems clear that he and his followers, like Basilides, found the term ἐφάνη useful for their docetic Christology.⁹³ This and other terms found in the LE describe polymorphic appearances in the other NT apocrypha mentioned above. All of these examples help illustrate that the language of the LE was especially susceptible to docetic interpretation.

8.1.4 Conclusion

The pattern of reception of the LE among the proto-orthodox parallels that of the resurrection narratives of Matthew, Luke, and John discussed in Chapter 4 above. The post-resurrection doubt motif is avoided with a high degree of consistency. Those who could not avoid it, such as the scribe who added the Freer Logion and the creators of Gospel harmonies, attempt to mitigate embarrassment of the apostles in some way. Further, these exceptions parallel those examined in Chapter 6. Tertullian and [Ps.-]Justin respond to their opponents' interpretations of Luke 24, including, it would seem, the doubt motif. Each in his own way also attempts to alleviate the issue of post-resurrection doubt.

Additionally, in light of the potential influence of the LE on polymorphic Christology and docetism, we must consider another factor that may have contributed to the general absence of references to the first half of the LE among the proto-orthodox. If, as suggested above, some sects appealed to Mark 16:9, 12 in support of docetic and/or polymorphic Christology, some proto-orthodox authors may have chosen to avoid these verses because they were controversial. In the next section, I discuss one final text, the *Epistula Apostolorum*, which creatively attempts to resolve both the problem of the doubt and the potential docetism of the LE.

⁹³ It may also be significant that in Josephus, *A.J.* 18.64 ἐφάνη denotes Jesus's resurrection appearance, and that Jesus's true humanity is brought into question in the context (*A.J.* 18.63: "if indeed he was a man"). In addition to employing ἐφάνη for Jesus's appearance (with πρῶτον as a time reference) as in Mark 16:9, *A.J.* 18.64 also describes Jesus as "alive" (ζῶν), as in Mark 16:11. This combination is unique, among accounts of Jesus' resurrection, to the LE, and so suggests Josephus's dependence on the LE. Recent debate over the authenticity of the *Testimonium Flavium* is surveyed in James Carlton Paget, "Some Observations on Josephus and Christianity," *JTS* NS 52 (2001): 554–603. It is possible that the verbs mentioned above belong to later Christian interpolations (so John P. Meier, "Jesus in Josephus: A Modest Proposal," *CBQ* 52 [1990]: 76–103), but there is evidence to suggest that Josephus's original text included them (so Shlomo Pines, *An Arabic Version of the Testimonium Flavianum and Its Implications* [Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1971], 22, 43–44; Paget, "Josephus," 605). If the latter is true, Josephus could possibly be our earliest witness to the LE.

8.2 *The Epistula Apostolorum*

8.2.1 *Introduction*

The *Epistula Apostolorum* is the other important exception to the pattern of omission documented in Chapters 3 and 4. In stark contrast to most other proto-orthodox writers examined in this study, the *Epistula* not only mentions the post-resurrection doubt of the apostles but does so no less than seven times (10.5, 6, 8; 11.3, 5, 6; 12.2) – far more often than any other early Christian text. I argue below that even here the doubt motif is not employed in the service of antidocetic apologetic but is itself one of the problems that prompts the author’s apologetic response. In other words, the doubt motif is *not* amplified because it helps the apologetic argument – as if it made the apostles look less gullible.⁹⁴ Rather, the author is preoccupied with the doubt motif precisely because it was perceived as a liability.

Scholarly consensus indicates that the *Epistula Apostolorum* belongs to a genre of texts made popular by second-century gnostics: the “revelation dialogue” or “post-resurrection dialogue.”⁹⁵ Yet the *Epistula* is something of an ugly duckling when included in this “gnostic” family. The *Epistula* stands resolute against docetic views typically associated with second-century gnostics. In fact, the *Epistula* is the only full-length example of this *Gattung* written from a “proto-orthodox” point of view.⁹⁶ The usual explanation for the *Epistula*’s singularity is that its author took up the revelation dialogue form in “an attempt to combat the gnostic opponents with their own weapons.”⁹⁷

While this has seemed to many “a good working hypothesis,” it has significant shortcomings.⁹⁸ First, the formal features of the dialogue in the *Epistula*

⁹⁴ Pace Hug (*La finale*, 74–77). Hug maintains that in the *Epistula* the doubt motif is further “amplified in the service of apologetics, amplified, that is, with respect to Luke and Ignatius (the footprint motif)” (similarly Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 29–30). But Hug confuses the doubt and the proofs as if they were inseparable. This is surprising since Hug himself notes that the LE emphasizes the doubt without any proofs. Moreover, as we have seen in previous chapters, apologetic writers regularly avoid the doubt motif even when employing the proofs.

⁹⁵ E.g., Manfred Hornschuh, *Studien zur Epistula Apostolorum* (PTS 5; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1965), 108; Helmut Koester, “One Jesus and Four Primitive Gospels,” *HTR* 61 (1968): 236.

⁹⁶ Brief forms of post-resurrection dialogues can be found in John 21:15–23, Acts (1:6–8; 9:1–8) and the Freer Logion, but none is an example of an independent literary genre.

⁹⁷ Philipp Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur: Einleitung in das Neue Testament, die Apokryphen und die Apostolischen Väter* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975), 687 (ET of this phrase in *NTApoc* 1:229); similarly Hornschuh, *Studien*, 6–7, 92–97; Koester, “One Jesus,” 245–46; Perkins, *Dialogue*, 202; Ehrman, *Forgery*, 437.

⁹⁸ Julian V. Hills, *Tradition and Composition in the Epistula Apostolorum* (HTS 57; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 15. Hills himself dissents, observing that

often more closely resemble those of Jewish apocalypses than those of its gnostic counterparts.⁹⁹ Second, the introductory chapters preceding the revelation discourse “have no parallel in any gnostic Revelation,” and key theophanic elements from the gnostic revelation dialogues such as the mountain setting, the “cosmic signs,” and the bright light associated with the appearance are entirely absent from the *Epistula*.¹⁰⁰ Third, there is little evidence for the *Epistula*’s use of any non-canonical gospels.¹⁰¹ Fourth, the *Epistula* does not refute characteristic gnostic doctrines, e.g., the Demiurge and complex creation myths.¹⁰² In sum, the author of the *Epistula* does not appear to be aware of or responding to any extant gnostic dialogues.¹⁰³

All of this suggests that the *Epistula* represents an intermediate stage between the Jewish apocalypses and the gnostic post-resurrection dialogues.¹⁰⁴ Recent work on the dating of the *Epistula* corroborates this conclusion. While proposed dates have ranged anywhere from just before 120 to just before 180 (or even later), an emerging consensus now places the composition of the

the *Epistula* does not offer the “orderly presentation of topics and instructions” that we would expect “in a conscious imitation of a genre.”

⁹⁹ Hills, *Tradition*, 17, 20–21. Koester traces the development of the genre of the revelation dialogue back to Jewish apocalypses and admits that the discourse in the *Epistula* resembles the gnostic dialogues “only very superficially” (“One Jesus,” 239–41, 246).

¹⁰⁰ Koester, “One Jesus,” 244–46.

¹⁰¹ Darrell D. Hannah, “The Four-Gospel ‘Canon’ in the *Epistula Apostolorum*,” *JTS NS* 59 (2008): 625–28.

¹⁰² Carl Schmidt and Isaak Wajnberg, *Gespräche Jesu mit seinen Jüngern nach der Auferstehung: Ein katholisch-apostolisches Sendschreiben des 2. Jahrhunderts* (TU 43; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1919; repr., Georg Olms: Hildesheim, 1967), 171–72.

¹⁰³ The only potential exception is the *Apocryphon of James*, which contains some formal parallels (A. A. T. Ehrhardt, “Judaean-Christians in Egypt, the *Epistula Apostolorum* and the Gospel to the Hebrews,” in *Studia Evangelica* 3 [ed. F. L. Cross; TUGAL 88; Berlin: Akademie, 1964], 367; Detlef G. Müller, “*Epistula Apostolorum*,” *NTApoc* 1: 251). However, Dankwart Kirchner rightly concludes that “no literary dependence can be demonstrated” (“The Apocryphon of James,” *NTApoc* 1: 287). If a direct literary connection could be established, I would suggest that it is easier to read the *Apocryphon of James* as a response to the *Epistula* than vice versa. If the *Epistula* were responding to the *Apocryphon of James*, we should expect James to play some significant role in the narrative or dialogue. Instead, he is entirely absent. Additionally, the *Apocryphon of James*, appeals to a secret revelation to two apostles (Peter and James). The *Epistula* rejects not the idea of a secret revelation to two legitimate apostles but the teachings of two false apostles. The *Apocryphon of James* probably dates to the late second or early third century (Madeleine Scopello, “The Secret Book of James,” in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The International Edition* [ed. Marvin W. Meyer; New York: HarperOne, 2007], 21).

¹⁰⁴ Cf. the *Apocalypse of Adam*, which may represent a non-Christian example of this intermediate stage (Birger A. Pearson, “From Jewish Apocalypticism to Gnosis,” in *The Nag Hammadi Texts in the History of Religions* [eds. S. Giversen, T. Petersen, and J. P. Sørensen; Historisk-filosofiske Skrifter 26; Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 2002], 147).

Epistula prior to the middle of the second century, most probably in the 140s.¹⁰⁵ Few, if any, of the extant gnostic dialogues can be dated prior to this, and so the genre cannot by this point have already acquired a reputation for being peculiar to Gnosticism. In any case, it would be hazardous to identify the opponents of the author of the *Epistula* with the authors of any of the extant gnostic post-resurrection dialogues.¹⁰⁶

The pseudepigraphal *Epistula* claims to have been written by eleven apostles of Jesus in order to warn the church against the widespread teaching of two prominent heretics, Simon Magus and Cerinthus. These two heresiarchs may have been chosen for the sake of historical verisimilitude, i.e., to support the pseudonymous claim to have been written by the apostles, but this does not

¹⁰⁵ Influential in the formation of this new consensus has been Charles E. Hill, “The Epistula Apostolorum: An Asian Tract from the Time of Polycarp,” *J ECS* 7 (1999): 1–53. As Pearson observes, “And now the tide has turned. Charles Hill has presented ... definitive arguments in favor of an Asian province for the *Epistula Apostolorum*, and for a date sometime in the period 117–48” (“Earliest Christianity in Egypt: Further Observations,” in *The World of Early Egyptian Christianity: Language, Literature, and Social Context* [eds. James E. Goehring and Janet A. Timbie; CUA Studies in Early Christianity; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007], 112). Also persuaded by Hill or in agreement with him are Matti Myllykoski, “Cerinthus,” in *Companion to Second-Century Christian ‘Heretics’* (eds. Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 213; Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 456; Hannah, “Four-Gospel ‘Canon,’” 632; Allie M. Ernst, *Martha from the Margins: The Authority of Martha in Early Christian Tradition* (VCSup 98; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 70; Daniel R. Streett, *They Went out from Us: The Identity of the Opponents in First John* (BZNBW 77; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 56; Paul Trebilco, “Christians in the Lycus Valley: The View from Ephesus and from Western Asia Minor,” in *Colossae in Space and Time: Linking to an Ancient City* (eds. Alan H. Cadwallader and Michael Trainor; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 201; Ehrman, *Forgery*, 435. Already in 2003, Gregory could say that “the majority of recent scholarship puts the text before the time of Justin” (*Reception*, 323). See also surveys of older scholarship in Hill, “Epistula,” 1–21; Hills, *Tradition*, 3–6.

Further support for a date in the first half of the second century can be found in the author’s view of the extent and impact of the false teachers. The opponents have spread their teachings “about the world” (7.1), but the teaching is expected to take root “not among many, but among few” (50.6). By the time Justin wrote, docetists like Menander, Saturninus, Basilides, and even Marcion are already said to have influenced “many” (*I Apol.* 26, 58; *Dial.* 35). Later, gnostic sects multiply to such an extent that Irenaeus compares them to the many-headed hydra and to mushrooms that pop up all over the ground (*Haer.* 1.29.1; 1.30.15). If so, the concerned but naïvely optimistic assessment in the *Epistula* fits best in the second quarter of the second century.

¹⁰⁶ Ehrman categorizes the *Epistula* as a “counterforgery.” Yet when listing examples of forgeries to which the *Epistula* could be responding, Ehrman cites only documents that he himself dates considerably later than the *Epistula*, i.e., the *Letter of Peter to Philip* and the *Book of Thomas the Contender* (Ehrman, *Forgery*, 438–39). In this case, it would be more accurate to categorize *Epistula* as the forgery and the gnostic dialogues as counterforgeries.

necessarily imply that they are “mere types” of later gnostic heresy.¹⁰⁷ The latter theory makes sense with regard to Simon, who later had a reputation for being the source of all heresy, but it does not readily account for Cerinthus.¹⁰⁸ The fact that two names are mentioned suggests that two distinct sets of opponents are in view. Given that the *Epistula* does not appear to be directed against Marcionites or Valentinians, it may be that Simon and Cerinthus, though dead by the time the *Epistula* was written, are meant to signify sects named after them, i.e., the Simonians and the Cerinthians.¹⁰⁹ Both groups would still have been active at the time the *Epistula* was written.¹¹⁰ Unfortunately, because the *Epistula* does not directly describe the content of the false teaching, it is

¹⁰⁷ Pace Schmidt and Wajnberg, *Gespräche*, 195; Gustav Bardy, review of *Gespräche Jesu mit seinen Jüngern nach der Auferstehung*, by Carl Schmidt, *RB* (1921): 118; Hornschuh, *Studien*, 99.

¹⁰⁸ Hill, “Epistula,” 19.

¹⁰⁹ Similarly Hannah, “Four-Gospel ‘Canon,’” 632; Hill, “Epistula,” 17, 47–49. Contra Vinzent (*Resurrection*, 128–35), while there are some aspects of the *Epistula* that could be directed against Marcion, the *Epistula* does not address any issue that is particular to Marcionism (so already John J. Gunther, “Syrian Christian Dualism,” *VC* 25 [1971]: 91). For example, the affirmation of God as the Creator need not be anti-Marcionite; it could just as easily counter any number of early gnostic sects. It is telling that, in order to make his case for the *Epistula* as a response to Marcion, Vinzent must posit that the author of the *Epistula* adopts both pro-Marcionite and anti-Marcionite features. In addition to the pro-Marcionite features noted by Vinzent, I find it implausible that an anti-Marcionite author would (i) have Jesus say “You will have no part in the creation below, which defiles” (9.14–15); or (ii) find it necessary to offer a vigorous defense of Paul’s ministry (31.1–33.7) that describes Paul as the “perfection of [Jesus’s] testimony” (31.7). To advocate agreement between Paul and the apostles might be expected in anti-Marcionite polemic, but the *Epistula* here practically exalts Paul over the other apostles. Again, Vinzent rightly detects a defense against criticism of the apostles for their disbelief, which could be directed against Marcion, but the Marcionites were not the only sect to criticize the apostles for their doubt. Moreover, the *Epistula* adds that Paul “will be strong in ... faith” (33.4). Finally, the *Epistula* does not exhibit the standard characteristic of anti-Marcionite polemic: an explicit defense of the unity of OT and Gospel. There are not many OT quotations in the *Epistula*, and unity is assumed rather than defended.

¹¹⁰ The continued influence of Simonians in Samaria and Rome is attested by Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 56; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.4. Celsus (*apud* Origen, *Cels.* 5.62), Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 2.11, 18), and the author of the *Testimony of Truth* (NHC IX,3 58) attest to the activity of Simonians in Egypt until the late second or early third century. According to Origen, a very small remnant of this movement survived in Palestine even into the middle of the third century (*Cels.* 1.57). Even though evidence for the activity of the so-called Cerinthians after the death of Cerinthus is more suspect – prior to Epiphanius (*Pan.* 28) church fathers speak only of Cerinthus rather than a school of his followers – *Ep. Apos.* 7.1 suggests that he had a widespread and lasting impact. It is therefore not unreasonable to think that his followers were still influential at the time the *Epistula* was written.

impossible to confirm the specific identity of the opponents.¹¹¹ More cautiously, we could say that Simon and Cerinthus represent two types of docetic Christology, anthropomorphosist and separationist, respectively.¹¹² The *Epistula* clearly targets the first type and probably the second as well, and so could be written to combat any combination of sects that advocate these Christologies.¹¹³

I provide below a redactional analysis of the *Epistula*'s version of the resurrection narratives, with special attention to the doubt motif. However, one final introductory matter must first be addressed. The *Epistula*, though

¹¹¹ Some aspects of the *Epistula* fit well with what little we know of the Simonians and Cerinthians. The descent of Christ in *Ep. Apos.* 13 is similar to the one attributed to Simon in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.3, and the antidocetic polemic of the *Epistula* could be directed against the docetism of the Simonians (Hills, *Tradition*, 14 n. 23) – though neither of these characteristics is unique to the Simonian system. On potential anti-Cerinthian aspects of the *Epistula*, see Lona, *Auferstehung*, 79–80; Jacques-Noël Pérès, *L'Épître des apôtres accompagnée du Testament de notre Seigneur et notre Sauveur Jésus-Christ* (Apocryphes 5; Turnhout: Brepols, 1994), 54; Alistair Stewart-Sykes, “The Asian Context of the New Prophecy and of *Epistula Apostolorum*,” *VC* 51 (1997): 431; Hill, “*Epistula*,” 19, 21–22, 25, 29; Myllykoski, “Cerinthus,” 213 n. 3.

¹¹² The modalistic docetism of the Simonians is described in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.1, 3; 2.23.3–4; Hippolytus, *Haer.* 6.19.6; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 21.1.3.

¹¹³ That both types of docetism are addressed in the *Epistula* is maintained in Lona, *Auferstehung*, 79–80; Stewart-Sykes, “Asian Context,” 431. While the anti-anthropomorphosist elements in the *Epistula* are widely recognized, anti-separationist elements are not as obvious. Possibilities for the latter can be found in (i) the repeated use of the double name “Jesus Christ” in 1.1; 1.5; 2.2; 3.2; 4.1; 5.22; 6.3; 7.1–2; (ii) the descriptions of the virgin birth in 3.10 and 14.1–6; (iii) the statement that Christ “is the Lord, who was crucified by Pontius Pilate” (9.1); and (iv) the use of the apocryphal tradition about the child Jesus teaching his teacher (4.1–4; cf. Epiphanius, who uses this tradition to counter separationists [*Pan.* 51.20.3]). Ernst also suggests that the absence of Jesus’s name and the use of the title “Lord” in chs. 9–12 may be designed to confirm against separationists that it is “the Lord” and not simply Jesus who was raised in the flesh (*Martha*, 79). The insertion of the title “Lord” at key points in the narrative may indeed have that purpose, but the more general absence of any name or title for the risen One in these chapters is probably due primarily to the influence of the LE (see below).

The most common identification of the anthropomorphosist opponents is the Basilideans (e.g., Hornschuh, *Studien*, 94–95; Lona, *Auferstehung*, 79 n. 206). The Simonians, the Saturnilians, the author of *AJ* and the opponents of Ignatius are also possibilities. Those who detect an anti-separationist polemic in the *Epistula* usually suggest it is directed against the Cerinthians (Pérès, *L'Épître*, 54; Stewart-Sykes, “Asian Context,” 431; Hill, “*Epistula*,” 19, 21–22, 25, 29). In my opinion, the so-called Ophites of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30, who are also pre-Valentinian separationists, need to be considered as well. They describe a descent of Christ as in *Ep. Apos.* 13 and reject the notion, so vigorously defended in *Ep. Apos.* 9–12, that Jesus rose in the flesh. The *Epistula*'s insistence that the resurrection involves not only soul and spirit but also flesh (26.1) could have in mind the Ophite claim that Jesus body is only psychic and spiritual (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30.13).

originally written in Greek, is extant in fourteen Ethiopic manuscripts, one partial Coptic manuscript, and a small Latin fragment. Although the Coptic text is widely regarded as the most reliable witness to the Greek original – not least because it often utilizes Greek loanwords – detailed comparisons have shown that the Ethiopic text is nevertheless by and large a trustworthy guide. This investigation will therefore lean primarily on the Coptic text with recourse to the Ethiopic as need arises. Citations refer to the Coptic text unless otherwise noted.¹¹⁴ In terms of source analysis, I have in some cases reconstructed the original Greek of the *Epistula* in order to facilitate comparison with the text of the Gospels. Whenever possible I have sought corroboration for my reconstructions from Coptic versions of the NT.¹¹⁵

8.2.2 Dialogue, Dialectic, and Doubt (*Ep. Apos. 12–50*)

The author's treatment of the resurrection narratives in chs. 9–12 and the doubt motif in particular can be properly understood only in light of the lengthy dialogue that follows in chs. 12–50. It is in the latter that the author's interpretation of the doubt motif is most clearly expressed. The author has a strongly negative view of unbelief. The doubts of the apostles are described as sinful: "And we fell on our faces confessing our sins, that we had been unbelieving" (12.2; see also 36.9).¹¹⁶ Additionally, their "little faith" makes Jesus "angry" (24.4), and "unbelievers" in general are considered worthy of judgment (36.8–9).

There are nevertheless a number of ways in which the *Epistula* attempts to mitigate, even reverse, the Gospels' characterization of apostles as doubters.¹¹⁷ As just noted, the apostles are depicted as piously repentant for their disbelief.¹¹⁸ This, it will be recalled, is an apologetic device that Justin Martyr also

¹¹⁴ Critical edition of the Coptic text: Schmidt and Wajnberg, *Gespräche*, 1*–26*. I am indebted throughout to the English translations and numbering system in Hills, *Epistle*. For the purposes of source analysis, I have on occasion altered Hills's translation in order better to reflect the word order in the Coptic text.

¹¹⁵ Whereas ancient Coptic translations of the Gospels are available in the Sahidic and Bohairic dialects, the Coptic text of the *Epistula* is written primarily in the later Achmimic dialect. Therefore, readers not familiar with Coptic should note that spelling discrepancies in the comparison charts below are of little significance. The same is true of some differences in vocabulary, especially because the later dialects of Coptic are more prone to replace Greek loanwords with Egyptian words (Plumley, "Limitations," 146–47).

¹¹⁶ Cf. the similar assessment of disbelief in *Prot. Jas.* 19.3–20.1 (quoted in Chapter 7).

¹¹⁷ The author's dependence on Matthew, Luke, and John has been demonstrated in Han-nah, "Four-Gospel 'Canon'," 598–633.

¹¹⁸ Pace Kelhoffer, who states that "the problem of disbelief is not addressed in *Ep. Apostolorum* 12" (*Miracle and Mission*, 184), the confession is itself a way of addressing the problem.

employs.¹¹⁹ Going beyond the standard enhancements of the appearance stories made by other antidocetic writers, the *Epistula* stresses on three occasions that the apostles did in fact come to believe (21.6–7; 24.3; 25.2). Each of these confirmations of faith cancel out a specific instance of post-resurrection doubt in the Gospels.

The first is prompted by Jesus’s prediction of a future resurrection of the dead that will be like his own resurrection. Jesus asks the disciples if they believe it, and they answer, “Yes, O Lord” (*Ep. Apos.* 21.1–3, 6–8).¹²⁰ This confession of faith is immediately followed by an echo of Matt 28:18:

And when they saw him	He said to us, “Do you <i>believe</i> ...?”
they worshiped him, <i>but some doubted</i> .	We answered..., “Yes, O Lord.”
And Jesus came and said to them,	He said to us “Amen I say to you,
“All authority in heaven and on earth	I have received <i>all authority</i> from
has been given to me.” (Matt 28:17–18)	my Father.” (<i>Ep. Apos.</i> 21.6–8, Eth.) ¹²¹

The allusion to Matt 28:18 may at first glance seem out of place, but the matter being discussed is whether or not the disciples believe in the resurrection. And in Matthew’s Gospel Jesus’s claim to “all authority” comes directly after the statement “but some doubted.” By contrast, in the *Epistula* it follows a decisive affirmation that “Yes!” the disciples believe. The doubt in Matt 28:17, left unresolved by Matthew but already echoed in *Ep. Apos.* 11.5, is now resolved.¹²²

The second confirmation of the faith of the apostles is preceded by a lengthy “question-and-answer session” about the nature and manner of the resurrection.¹²³ At one point, fearing they have gone too far in pressing Jesus for answers, the apostles remind Jesus (and the reader), “It is not as unbelievers (οὐχως ... ἄπιστος = οὐκ ὡς ... ἄπιστοι) that we ask ... but we truly believe (ἀλλὰ ὄντως [ε]ἰληπίστευε = ἀλλὰ ὄντως πιστεύομεν)” (*Ep. Apos.* 24.3). Given that the author has already alluded to the Thomas pericope in 11.7 and

¹¹⁹ See Chapter 4.

¹²⁰ This passage echoes John 11:25–27, where Jesus teaches about the resurrection and asks Martha, “Do you believe this?” Martha answers, “Yes, Lord.” In the *Epistula* Martha’s confession of faith is transferred to the apostles.

¹²¹ The Coptic text is fragmentary at this point but aligns well with the Ethiopic. The phrase “all authority” in the Ethiopic probably derives from an original Greek text that read πᾶσα ἐξουσία (Schmidt and Wajnberg, *Gespräche*, 75; Hills, *Epistle*, 48). The same phrase appears in Matt 28:18. The allusion to Matt 28:18 is also signaled by the introductory “Amen,” which elsewhere in the *Epistula* always introduces a traditional saying (Hills, *Tradition*, 26). Hills suggests that the other differences between Matt 28:18 and *Ep. Apos.* 21.8, i.e., the change from passive to active and the mention of the Father, may be reflect the influence of John 5:22 (“The Father ... has given all judgment to the Son”).

¹²² The use of Matt 28:17 in *Ep. Apos.* 11.5 will be discussed below.

¹²³ Cf. Alsop, *Appearance Stories*, 128: “In the Freer Logion ... the disciples have been granted a retort at the rebuke of Jesus; here [in the *Epistula*] a full-scale question and answer session takes place.”

that the topic at hand is the resurrection of the flesh, the structure of the apostles' statement, οὐκ ... ἄπιστοι ... ἀλλὰ ... πιστεύομεν, is no doubt designed to echo and respond to μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός ("Do not be unbelieving but believing") in John 20:27.¹²⁴ A second instance of post-resurrection doubt has thus been neutralized.

Third, although Jesus initially responds to this second confession by becoming angry and saying, "O you of little faith" (24.4), he unequivocally affirms the wholehearted character of their faith just a few lines later: "I know that you question me *in faith and with all your heart*; therefore, I rejoice on account of you. Truly I say to you, I am glad, and my Father who is in me, that you question me" (25.2–3, emphasis added). This sudden shift suggests that the author of the *Epistula* is attempting to reinterpret the doubt motif from the Gospels so as to provide a fresh assessment of the apostles for the post-apostolic church.¹²⁵ In other words, the author alludes to the "little faith" from the Gospels (e.g., Matt 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8) in order to demonstrate that this characterization is no longer relevant. I would further suggest that the wording of the affirmation may be designed to echo and reverse the rebuke of Mark 16:14:

And he rebuked
their unbelief and hardness of heart

(τὴν ἀπιστίαν αὐτῶν καὶ σκληροκαρδίαν)
because they had not believed...

(Mark 16:14)

I know that you question me
in faith and with all your heart
(ἐγὼ οἰπιστικὸς δογᾶ βαλλῶ ἡπιστῶν ἡμῶν
ἐν πίστει καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας ὑμῶν);
therefore, I rejoice on account of you.
Truly I say to you, I am glad, and my
Father who is in me, that you question me.
(*Ep. Apos.* 25.2)

Unbelief and hardheartedness are replaced with belief and wholeheartedness.¹²⁶ The *Epistula* counters the most severe reprimand for doubt found in the Gospels with the warmest, most affirming commendation for faith.

¹²⁴ Cf. the similar reversal in *Acts Thom.* 81.1: "My Lord and my God, I do not separate myself from you, nor *disbelieving* do I call upon you."

¹²⁵ I owe this insight to Hills (*Tradition*, 33, 115–21, 133–39), who observes that the *Epistula* makes a habit of reinterpreting traditional sayings of Jesus in dialectic with new revelation from the risen Lord. For example, the teaching of Matt 23:8–11 is both alluded to and overturned in *Ep. Apos.* 41.4–42.4: "We said to him, 'O Lord, it is you who said to us, 'Do not call <anyone> father on earth, for one is your father who is in heaven, and your teacher.' Why then do you now tell us, 'You will be fathers of many children and servants and teachers?'" ... He said to us, 'Truly I say to you, you will indeed be called fathers because with willing hearts and love you have revealed to them the things of the kingdom of heaven ... and you will be called teachers because you have given them the word without grudging'" (*Ep. Apos.* 41.4–42.4; cf. similar reinterpretations in 16.1–17.4; 29.5–6; 29.7–30.5).

¹²⁶ The echo may be too faint to be certain, but it is corroborated by the *Epistula*'s use of the LE elsewhere (see below).

Whether these three affirmations of belief are designed to neutralize specific instances of post-resurrection doubt or are responding to the post-resurrection doubt motif in general, the apostles are now said to have complete faith. And this assertion is doubly validated by the joyful approval of both Jesus and the Father. The apostles have been fully rehabilitated and thus exonerated of their former disbelief. Chapters 12–25 depict a thoroughgoing re-characterization of the apostles, transforming them from sinful, persistent doubters to repentant, pious believers. In light of this transformation, I argue below that the author has rewritten and harmonized the resurrection narratives of the Gospels, including the LE of Mark, in order (i) to counter potential docetic readings of the Gospels; and (ii) to mitigate the potential embarrassment to the apostles caused by the doubt motif.

8.2.3 *Rewriting the LE of Mark (Ep. Apos. 10.1–11.4)*

It has often been observed that the order of events in *Ep. Apos.* 10–11 resembles that of the LE of Mark in that it includes two disbelieved resurrection reports followed by a group appearance to the apostles.¹²⁷ Manfred Hornschuh concluded that “the basic pattern of the account is thus [taken over] from the inauthentic ending to Mark.”¹²⁸ Hornschuh’s analysis only briefly notes a few simple correlations between the *Epistula* and the LE, and for many these do not justify his claim of a literary dependence.¹²⁹ One of the tricky problems in establishing the *Epistula*’s dependence on the LE is that the LE itself appears to be a conflation of materials from Matthew, Luke, and John.¹³⁰ Consequently, there are not many terms in Mark 16:9–15 that can be readily identified as redactional. The author of the LE has nevertheless carefully arranged traditional material according to his own schema. When both the arrangement and

¹²⁷ Schmidt and Wajnberg, *Gespräche*, 220–21; Hornschuh, *Studien*, 14–16, 105; Hug, *La finale*, 202; Hills, *Tradition*, 80.

¹²⁸ Hornschuh, *Studien*, 15. Also detecting the influence of the LE are Schmidt and Wajnberg, *Gespräche*, 220–21; Burnett Hillman Streeter, *Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: MacMillan, 1924; repr., 1926), 70–71; Kurt Aland, “Der Schluß des Markusevangeliums,” in *L’évangile selon Marc: Tradition et rédaction* (ed. M. Sabbe; BETL 34; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1974), 449–50; Hill, “Epistula,” 21–22; Edwards, *Mark*, 499; Müller, “Epistula,” 1:251.

¹²⁹ So Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre*, 124–25; Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission*, 171; Mohri, *Magdalena*, 164–65; Hannah, “Four-Gospel ‘Canon’,” 625; Ernst, *Martha*, 84–85.

¹³⁰ The results of the source analysis below would not change significantly if the LE were written independently of the other canonical gospels. Lunn, who argues for the latter, comes to many of the same conclusions (Lunn, *Original Ending*, 74–75). Indeed, since I was not aware of Lunn’s study when I first completed my source analysis, Lunn’s arguments regarding the *Epistula*’s dependence on the LE can be taken as independent confirmation of my own (or vice versa).

the vocabulary of the two documents are examined closely, there is sufficient evidence of the influence of [Ps.-]Markan redaction on the *Epistula*.

The *Epistula* seems to have been influenced by both the macro- and micro-structure of the LE. Not only does each text have three episodes (two disbelieved resurrection reports to the disciples followed by a group appearance), but within each episode the structure is similar as well. This can be illustrated in the chart below.

		Mark	<i>Ep. Apos.</i>
Episode 1	1. Appearance	16:9	10.1–2
	2. Report of Appearance	16:10	10.3
	3. Disbelief of Report	16:11	10.4–6
Episode 2	4. Appearance/Encounter	16:12	10.7
	5. Report of Appearance	16:13a	10.8a
	6. Disbelief of Report	16:13b	10.8b–9
Episode 3	7. Appearance/Encounter with Apostles	16:14a	11.1–3
	8. Rebuke for Doubt/Denial	16:14b	11.4–6

The first two episodes in each text include an identical sequence of specific actions: (i) the messengers “came/went”; (ii) reported to the disciples; and (iii) the disciples “did not believe”:¹³¹

She went and told
those who had been with him...
and they...did not believe [her].

Martha came and told¹³²
us...
and we did not believe her.

¹³¹ Although the languages are different, exact verbal links are still discernable in two out of the three key verbs, i.e., the double use of πιστεγε = πιστευε (*Ep. Apos.* 10.5, 8; Mark 16:11,13) and δεχοοο (*Ep. Apos.* 10.3, Ach) = δεχοο (*Mark* 16:10, Boh) = ἀπήγγειλεν (*Mark* 16:10). εω translates ἀπαγγέλλω in Sahidic Bible manuscripts as well, e.g., Ps. 54:17; Prov 12:17; Matt 11:4 (Crum, *Dictionary*, 754b, 755a). Although the third verb, πορευθεισα is translated with a different verb in Coptic versions of Mark 16:10, ει would not be an unusual translation (Crum, *Dictionary*, 70–71). Many of the other minor differences in wording can be accounted for by the change from a third-person to first-person point of view or by the peculiarities of translation from Greek to Coptic (see notes below).

¹³² The Ethiopic text has “Mary” instead of “Martha” in the first episode and “Sarah” instead of “Mary” in the second. Kelhoffer (*Miracle and Mission*, 59 n. 39) argues that the name “Martha” in Coptic is a corruption because the second episode in the Coptic has Mary coming “again.” If so, the original text had Mary coming two times and may reflect John 20, wherein Mary goes to the disciples twice, once at the discovery of the empty tomb and again after seeing Jesus. But the “again” can be explained in another way (see note below). More importantly, the theory of Mary going twice does not adequately account for the fact that both the Coptic and the Ethiopic have Jesus command “another” of the women to go (*Ep. Apos.* 10.7). If the Coptic reflects the original, its use of Martha’s name in the first episode followed by Mary’s in the second is probably modeled on John 11:19–33 (contra Ernst, *Martha*, 83). The title “Teacher” in *Ep. Apos.* 10.2 (“Come, the Teacher is risen from the dead”) may derive from the same pericope (“The Teacher is here and is calling for you,” John 11:28).

ἐκείνη πορευθεῖσα ἀπήγγειλεν
τοῖς μετ’ αὐτοῦ γενομένοις...
κάκεινοι... ἠπίστησαν [οἱ, καὶ οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν αὐτῆ].¹³³
(Mark 16:10–11)

ⲁ ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁ ⲉⲓ ⲁϢϢⲞⲞϢ¹³⁴
ⲛⲈⲚ...
ⲁⲐϢ ⲛⲓⲛⲓⲣⲓϢⲧⲉϥⲉ ⲛⲈϢ.
(*Ep. Apos.* 10.3–5)

And they went and told
the rest. *Neither*
did they believe them.
κάκεινοι ἀπελθόντες ἀπήγγειλαν
τοῖς λοιποῖς· οὐδὲ
ἐκείνοις ἐπίστευσαν.
(Mark 16:13)

Mary came and told
us *again*
and we did not believe her.
ⲁ ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁ ⲉⲓ ⲁϢϢⲞⲞϢ¹³⁵
ⲁⲛ ⲛⲈⲚ¹³⁶
ⲁⲐϢ ⲛⲓⲛⲓⲣⲓϢⲧⲉϥⲉ ⲛⲈϢ.¹³⁷
(*Ep. Apos.* 10.8, Copt.)

This compact, repeated threefold sequence is the author’s particular way of representing in summary form the appearance stories.¹³⁸ It may therefore be considered “[Ps.-]Markan redaction,” especially since the disbelief in the second

¹³³ Codex Bezae has καὶ οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν αὐτῆ in place of ἠπίστησαν.

¹³⁴ Coptic translations of Greek often replace a participle + finite verb construction with “two finite verbal forms without connecting conjunctions” (Plumley, “Limitations,” 151). Thus, ⲉⲓ ⲁϢϢⲞⲞϢ in *Ep. Apos.* 10.3 makes good sense as a rendering of πορευθεῖσα ἀπήγγειλεν in Mark 16:10a (see note on verbal equivalents above). Much the same can be said of the parallels in Mark 16:13a and *Ep. Apos.* 10.8a, except that verbs in the former differ in person and number from the latter. The significance of this change is discussed in the next note.

¹³⁵ The *Epistula* has the same verb (ⲉⲓ) in both 10.3 and 10.8, whereas the parallels in the LE have two different verbs (Mark 16:10a [πορευθεῖσα] and 16:13 [ἀπελθόντες]). If the second episode in the *Epistula* were drawing on Mark 16:12–13, we might expect a different verb. If, however, the *Ep. Apos.* 10.8 is replacing Mark 16:12–13, then conformity to *Ep. Apos.* 10.3 makes sense. Indeed, one Greek manuscript (Θ) of Mark has πορευθεντες in place of ἀπελθόντες in Mark 16:13, a variant that almost certainly arose under the influence of πορευθεῖσα in Mark 16:10.

¹³⁶ The adverb ⲁⲛ (“again”) in *Ep. Apos.* 10.8 may reflect οὐδὲ (“not even”) in Mark 16:13b, which in Sahidic and Bohairic manuscripts of the LE is translated ⲟⲩ, the equivalent of the Achmimic ⲁⲛ.

¹³⁷ The placement of the object after the verb in *Ep. Apos.* 10.8 (ⲛⲓⲛⲓⲣⲓϢⲧⲉϥⲉ ⲛⲈϢ), rather than before as in Mark 16:13 (ἐκείνοις ἐπίστευσαν), is to be expected in a translation of Greek into Coptic. Coptic syntax is known for maintaining a strict word order that normally requires a verb or a verbal prefix to occupy the first position in a sentence (Plumley, “Limitations,” 143).

¹³⁸ The pattern described above is not present in Matt 28 or John 20. And despite some similarities with the overall structure of Luke 24, the pattern in Mark 16:10–13 remains distinctive. Whereas in Luke the women and the Emmaus disciples are said to “return” to the apostles, in the LE they simply “come” – a change necessitated by the compression of the narrative in the LE. More importantly, Luke 24:33–35 seems to imply a positive reception of the Emmaus disciples. In the LE their message, in conformity with Mark 16:10–11, is explicitly rejected and disbelieved (16:13).

Another aspect of the *Ep. Apos.* 10 appears to reflect [Ps.-]Markan redaction. Mark 16:9–11 specifies the content of the message that is disbelieved whereas vv. 12–13 do not, leaving the reader to assume that the message is the same in each case.¹⁴⁴ The same is true of the first and second episodes in the *Epistula*:

And they, when they heard
that he was alive (ὄτι ζῆν)
and had been seen by her,
did not believe [her, D].
(Mark 16:11)

And we did not believe her, that the Savior had
risen from the dead. Then she went back to the
Lord and said to him, “None of them believed me,
that you are alive (ⲁⲉ ⲁⲕⲟⲛⲉⲗ = ὄτι ζῆν).”
(*Ep. Apos.* 10.5–6)

And they went back and told the rest,
but they did not believe them.
(Mark 16:13)

Mary came and told us again,
but we did not believe her.
(*Ep. Apos.* 10.8)

The content of the resurrection message is the same in each text: “[Jesus] is alive.” While the LE probably derives this detail from Luke, the wording of the *Epistula* (ⲁⲉ ⲁⲕⲟⲛⲉⲗ = ὄτι ζῆν) agrees with Mark 16:11 (ὄτι ζῆν) against Luke 24:23 (αὐτὸν ζῆν).¹⁴⁵ The location of the statement at this point in the *Epistula*’s narrative also agrees with LE against Luke. Moreover, Luke 24:23 refers, not to an appearance of Jesus as in Mark 16:11 and *Ep. Apos.* 10.5–6, but to a “vision of angels.” The *Epistula* and the LE differ from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in that they never mention angels at the tomb.¹⁴⁶ These agreements are difficult to explain apart from the *Epistula*’s dependence on the LE.¹⁴⁷ And each arguably reflects [Ps.-]Markan redaction. Additionally, both *Ep. Apos.* 9–11 and Mark 16:9–18, in contrast to their canonical parallels, do not include the name “Jesus.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ On the relationship between Mark 16:10–11 and 16:13, see Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission*, 90.

¹⁴⁵ In Coptic manuscripts of Mark ὄτι ζῆν is translated ⲁⲉ ϣⲟⲛⲉ (Sah) and ⲁⲉ ⲉϣⲟⲛⲉ (Boh). The only real difference in the Achmimic of the *Epistula* is the shift in the verb from the third person to the second person, but this is expected in context.

¹⁴⁶ Admittedly, if the LE is understood as a continuation of Mark 16:1–8, it could be said to presuppose that the “young man dressed in a white robe” is an angel. The problem with this is that Mark 16:9 appears to restart the narrative without any reference to angels.

¹⁴⁷ Contra Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre*, 121–24; Mohri, *Magdalena*, 164–65; Ernst, *Martha*, 84 n. 16. Additionally, the comment that the Savior “had risen from the dead” may also have been imported from the LE. The NA²⁸ text of Mark 16:14b has αὐτὸν ἐγγεγεμμένον, and many manuscripts also include ἐκ νεκρῶν (A C* Δ Φ^{1,13} 28 33 565 579 892 1241 1424 ℓ 844 ℓ 2211 vg^{ms} sy^h bo^p).

¹⁴⁸ Ἰησοῦς appears 5x in Matt 28, 1x in Mark 16:1–8, 3x in Luke 24, and 30x in John 20–21. The only time the name occurs in the LE is in reference to the ascension in v. 19. The name does not occur in the parallel in Luke 24:50–53 but does in the *Epistula*’s ascension scene (51.4). Notably, the LE has the double name “Lord Jesus,” or, in some manuscripts (W o bo^{ms}), the triple name “Lord Jesus Christ.” The latter also appears in *Ep. Apos.* 51.4.

Finally, there are similarities between the commissioning accounts in Mark 16:15–20 and in *Ep. Apost.* 30. The words of commission in *Ep. Apost.* 30.1 agree with Mark 16:15 against Matt 28:19, Luke 24:47–48, John 20:21–23, and Acts 1:8 in that they include the commands to “go” and “preach”:¹⁴⁹

And he said to them,
“Go (ΒΟΔΚ)...and preach (ΝΤΕΤΝΤΑΦΘΕΘΕΙΩ)
the gospel
to the whole (ΤΗΡῪ) creation.”
(Mark 16:15, Sah)

And he said to us,
“Go (ΒΟΔΚ) and preach (ΤΕΤΝΤΑΦΘΕΛΕΙΩ)
to the twelve tribes and...to the Gentiles
and the whole (ΤΗΡῪ) land of Israel.”
(*Ep. Apost.* 30.1)

Both accounts agree against all other first- and second-century parallels in that they share (i) a concern about those who will or will not “believe” the message of the apostles (Mark 16:16; *Ep. Apost.* 30.1–2); (ii) an expectation that miraculous “signs” will authenticate the message (Mark 16:20; *Ep. Apost.* 30.2–3); and (iii) an indication that Jesus is the ultimate cause of miracles done by the apostles (Mark 16:20; *Ep. Apost.* 30.3).¹⁵⁰ The *Epistula* also shares with the LE what Kelhoffer refers to as the LE’s “most distinctive feature,” i.e., that miracle-working power will be given to non-apostles as well (Mark 16:17–18; *Ep. Apost.* 30.3–5).¹⁵¹ The cumulative weight of evidence justifies the conclusion that the *Epistula* is literarily dependent on the LE of Mark.¹⁵²

If the similarities indicate dependence on the LE, the differences reveal the concerns of the author of the *Epistula*. The most significant modification that the author makes is to replace the Emmaus-like episode in Mark 16:12–13 with a doublet of Mark 16:10–11/*Ep. Apost.* 10.3–5. I posit two apologetic reasons

¹⁴⁹ Similarly Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission*, 191–92; Lunn, *Original Ending*, 75. Lunn observes a number of other thematic parallels: (i) belief and baptism (*Ep. Apost.* 41; Mark 16:16); (ii) the message designated as “the word” (*Ep. Apost.* 42; Mark 16:20); (iii) Jesus at the “right hand” (*Ep. Apost.* 19; Mark 16:19); (iv) and the ascension (*Ep. Apost.* 51; Mark 16:19). The first may be significant because Mark 16:16 is the closest parallel, but (ii) is practically ubiquitous in the NT, (iii) has a number of NT parallels, some of which draw the “right hand” language from Psalm 110:1, and (iv) has a closer parallel in Acts 1:9–11.

¹⁵⁰ Parallels to individual themes appear in Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; John 3:16–18; 20:29. But the combination of these themes in a commissioning scene is found only in the *Epistula* and the LE.

¹⁵¹ Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission*, 338. Kelhoffer traces this motif through a number of texts in the early Christian apologists and in the apocryphal acts of the apostles, but he does not comment on this aspect of the *Epistula* (*Miracle and Mission*, 281–339).

¹⁵² Given the range of possible dates for both documents (110–150 CE for the LE and 120–180 for the *Epistula*), it is just conceivable that the direction of dependence is the other way around. However, *pace* Ernst (*Martha*, 85), this is improbable. Most date the LE prior to and the *Epistula* after 140. More importantly, the differences between the LE and the *Epistula* are more readily explicable on the assumption that the *Epistula* has modified the narrative found in the LE for apologetic reasons (see below). As a parallel, we may cite the Freer Logion, interpolated into the LE so as to give the apostles a chance to offer an excuse for their persistent doubts.

for this change. First, the author found the comment that Jesus “appeared in another form” (Mark 16:12) susceptible to docetic interpretation (see above).¹⁵³ The antidocetic agenda can be detected at many points in the *Epistula*, but it is also present in the immediate context. Just prior to this, the author inserts the following question: “Is it possible for him to live who has died and been buried?” (*Ep. Apost.* 10.4). It is probably also for antidocetic purposes that the *Epistula* relates only one “appearance” (10.1) instead of three (Mark 16:9, 12, 14). In the *Epistula*, each of the women travels to the disciples and then back to Jesus, and then Jesus “comes” and “finds” the apostles.

Second, replacing two male messengers from Mark 16:12–13 with one female one helps protect the reputation of the apostles.¹⁵⁴ The rejection of the testimony of two male witnesses carried greater culpability than the dismissal of a single female witness.¹⁵⁵ In the *Epistula*, the lack of respect for female testimony may be reflected in the apostles’ response in the first episode: “What do you want with us O woman? Is it possible from him to live who had died and been buried?” (10.4).¹⁵⁶ The repetition of feminine indirect object

¹⁵³ Although the author of the *Epistula* is comfortable with a polymorphic account of the descent of the pre-incarnate Christ, he seems for antidocetic reasons to rule out the possibility of polymorphy between incarnation and ascension; the *Epistula* is explicit that Christ took on real flesh, died in the flesh, and rose in the flesh (3.10–13; 19.18; 21.1–3; 39.12). It also seems to presuppose that he ascended in the flesh (21.1–3; 14.8; 51.1–2). The tradition of the polymorphic descent is not necessarily inconsistent with an anti-polymorphic or antidocetic Christology. Even Irenaeus allows for the view that Jesus disguised himself during his descent (*Epid.* 84), though he might have objected to the *Epistula*’s expectation of a post-ascension change into the likeness of an angel (*Ep. Apost.* 14.8).

¹⁵⁴ Technically, the gender of the “two” in Mark 16:12 is not specified. Readers who know Luke can identify one of them as Cleopas. Interestingly, John 19:25 mentions a “Mary, wife of Clopas,” and some have speculated that she is the unnamed companion of Cleopas in Luke 24. It is possible that the author of the *Epistula* mentions “Mary” in the second episode (Coptic) for this very reason. *Epistula Apostolorum* 9.3 mentions three women, “Mary, Martha, and Mary Magdalene.” The fact that Magdalene is added here to distinguish the two Marys and yet “Magdalene” is not mentioned in *Ep. Apost.* 10.8 suggests that the other Mary, and not Mary Magdalene, is the one referred to in 9.3. If so, the author of the *Epistula* may be taking advantage of the lack of specificity in the LE and Luke to ensure that it is a female witness who is disbelieved by the apostles. In this case, the involvement of the male Cleopas was intentionally omitted.

¹⁵⁵ On ancient prejudices against women’s testimonies, see Allison A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness* (SNTSMS 31; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 54–55; Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 257–58, 268–77. See, especially, Josephus, *A.J.* 4.219, where the need for two male witnesses is contrasted with the inadmissibility of a female witness.

¹⁵⁶ So Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 269–71; Ernst, *Martha*, 77. The first “question echoes the wording of Jesus’s famous response to his mother in John 2:4 (τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γόναυ;)” (Hills, *Epistle*, 31). While γόναυ does not itself imply disrespect, the phrasing of the question

pronouns in 10.5 (“We did not believe *her*”) and 10.8 (“but we did not believe *her*”), may also have the purpose of emphasizing that the persistence of their unbelief was due to the gender of the messenger. The apostles are faulted not for disbelieving the women as they are in Mark 16:14 but for Peter’s denial and for not believing the pre-Easter message of Jesus (11.4, 6).¹⁵⁷

Allie M. Ernst proposes the following interpretation: “Rather than a means of increasing the culpability of the disciples, the double sending of the women more likely serves to redeem them from any charge of listening to the words of a foolish woman such as was leveled at the Christians by Celsus (Origen, *C. Cels.* 2.55, 59–60).”¹⁵⁸ While Ernst’s suggestion is intriguing, it has some weaknesses. First, it doesn’t explain why a “double” sending is necessary; a single instance of the apostles rejecting female testimony, already found in his sources (Luke 24:10–11; Mark 16:9–11), would suffice. In my view, the double sending reflects the influence of the LE. Second, it must be remembered that in the narrative the women are proven right and the men wrong. In other words, it is not the narrator who rejects the legitimacy of the women’s testimony but the apostles.

I therefore propose an alternative reconstruction. The author is not concerned that the apostles look foolish for *believing* women who turned out to be correct. Rather he is concerned that they look foolish in his sources for *disbelieving* the resurrection message (“Is it possible from him to live who had died and been buried?” [10.4]), and it is the female gender of the messengers

is abrupt. OT parallels show that this idiom “always distances two parties and frequently carries a reproachful connotation” (Koestenberger, *John*, 95). The sense must be determined by the context. While Jesus obliges his mother’s implied request in John 2, the disciples in *Ep. Apos.* 10.4 utterly reject Martha’s (or Mary’s) testimony as if it were nonsense.

¹⁵⁷ Ernst, *Martha*, 80; contra Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 276 n. 43.

¹⁵⁸ Ernst, *Martha*, 80. See the similar but independent assessment in Vinzent, *Resurrection*, 133. Ernst detects two other marginalizing tendencies. The women’s announcements are not given in direct speech. And even though Jesus invites the women to go with him to meet the apostles (11.1), only Jesus is said to go, and the women do not participate in the dialogue that follows (*Martha*, 77, 80–81). I would add that the motif of mourning and weeping may have been transferred from the men in Mark 16:10 to the women in *Ep. Apos.* 10.1 to protect the reputation of the apostles. Although the *Epistula* omits the reference to the apostles’ weeping in Mark 16:10, it reappears in *Ep. Apos.* 43.5. There they weep on behalf of unbelievers. In the Syriac *Didascalia*, Jesus appears to the apostles and finds them fasting, an activity associated with mourning, and says, “Are ye fasting for Me these days? or have I any need that ye should afflict yourselves? But it is for your brethren that ye have done this” (5.14). The implication is that mourning in response to Jesus’s death is inappropriate. The mourning of the apostles is therefore transformed into a pious response to Israel’s disbelief: “We ought then to take pity on them [the Jewish brethren], and to have faith and to fast and to pray for them. For when our Lord came ... they did not believe” (5.15, trans. R. Hugh Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum: The Syriac Version Translated and accompanied by the Verona Latin Fragments* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1929; repr., 1969], 183–85).

provides a convenient excuse for their skepticism. This is precisely how Hippolytus, who, like the author of the *Epistula* names only Martha and Mary as the resurrection messengers, defends the apostles' initial disbelief: "There was a reason for this [i.e., their doubt], however, for it was the custom of Eve to report deception and not truth" (*In Cant.* 25.8–9).¹⁵⁹ Hippolytus argues that Christ made Martha and Mary "apostles to the apostles" so that the post-Fall denigration of women's testimony might be reversed (*In Cant.* 25.6–10), but he still allows it to be a reasonable excuse for the unbelief of male disciples who were not yet aware of the new redemptive situation.¹⁶⁰ Replacing the presumably male witnesses in Mark 16:12–13 with another female witness in *Ep. Apos.* 10.7–9 makes this kind of excuse possible.

8.2.4 *Rewriting the Group Appearance Narrative (Ep. Apos. 11.2–12.2)*

The imitation of the LE of Mark largely fades in the third episode (*Ep. Apos.* 11.2–12.2), which is a patchwork of materials culled primarily from the group appearance narratives in the other Gospels:¹⁶¹

And *he came and found us inside* (cf. John 20:19, 26). He called us out. *But we thought it was a phantom* (cf. Luke 24:37, D); we did not believe that *it was the Lord* (cf. John 21:7, 12). Then [*he said*] to us, "*Come, do not fear* [I ... am your teacher], whom you, Peter *den[ie]d three times*; and now do you deny again?" (cf. Matt 14:27; 28:10; John 13:38, 21:12, 15–17). *But we went to him doubting* (cf. Matt 28:17) in [our] *hearts* (cf. Luke 24:38) whether it could somehow be he. Then he said to [us], "*Why do you doubt* (cf. Matt 14:31), *still not believing* (cf. Luke 24:41)? *I am he* (cf. Luke 24:39) who *told you* about my flesh, my death, and my resurrection (cf. Luke 24:44–46). That you may know *that it is I* (cf. Luke 24:39): Peter, *put your fingers in the nail-wounds in my hands* (cf. John 20:25, 27); and you too, *Thomas put your fingers in the spear-wounds in my side* (cf. John 20:25, 27); and you too, Andrew, *look at my feet and see* (cf. Luke 24:39) if they do not make contact with the ground. For it is written in the prophet: "The foot of a demonic phantom does not fasten on the ground." So we [tou]ched him, that we might know truly whether he [had risen] in the flesh, and we fell on our [faces] confessing our sins, *that we had been unbelieving* (cf. Mark 16:14; Luke 24:41).¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Trans. J. A. Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West: The Commentaries and the Provenance of the Corpus* (Oxford Theological Monographs; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 192. On Hippolytus's possible knowledge of the *Epistula*, see Cerrato, *Hippolytus*, 191–200. I must thank Brian Shelton for drawing my attention to this parallel.

¹⁶⁰ For a detailed analysis of this passage, see Ernst, *Martha*, 108–12.

¹⁶¹ Similarly Schmidt and Wajnberg, *Gespräche*, 218–23; Alsup, *Appearance Stories*, 118–23; Hills, *Tradition*, 67–69.

¹⁶² The italicized portions indicate those for which verbal connections can be established with the canonical gospels on the basis of a reconstruction of the original Greek of the *Epistula* and/or comparison with the Coptic versions of the NT.

The selection, rearrangement, and supplementation of traditional material can largely be explained by two apologetic motivations: (i) to counter docetism; and (ii) to mitigate potentially embarrassing portrayals of the apostles.¹⁶³

The beginning of the passage offers evidence of both motivations. First, to avoid a potential docetic reading of John 20:19, 26 – where the risen Jesus abruptly stands in their midst despite locked doors – the author of the *Epistula* has Jesus stay outside and call the disciples out to him:

His disciples were *inside* again.... Although the doors were locked, Jesus *came* and stood among them. (John 20:26)

And *he came and* found us *inside*. He called us out. (*Ep. Apos.* 11.2)

Other parts of the story are adjusted accordingly. Jesus invites them to “Come,” and they “went to him” (*Ep. Apos.* 11.4–5).

Second, in its rendering of Luke 24:37 the *Epistula* omits Luke’s statement that they were “terrified and frightened”:

But they were terrified and frightened and *thought* they saw a *ghost* (*phantom*, D). (Luke 24:37)

But we thought it was a phantom.
(*Ep. Apos.* 11.3)

Similarly, the echo of Luke 24:38 in *Ep. Apos.* 11.5 (see below) does not include the disciples’ fear.¹⁶⁴ That the author was aware of the fear motif is made clear by Jesus’s statement, “Come, do not fear.” Moreover, the apostles approach Jesus despite any potential fears. Consequently, the apostles come across as braver in the *Epistula* than they do in Luke or John. We may recall that Ignatius and Tertullian re-characterized the apostles as heroic martyrs.¹⁶⁵

The next part of the account conflates material from Luke 24:38, 41 and Matt 14:31; 28:17:

<p>But we...were doubting ἀλλὰν ἄε...ἐνῆ̄αῑκτᾱζε̄ = δὲ...ἐδίσταζομεν</p>	<p>but some doubted. ροινε ἄε ἀγᾶικτᾱζε̄ (Sah) οἱ δὲ ἐδίστασαν (Matt 28:17)</p>	<p>“Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise</p>
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<p>in our hearts ρ[ἠ̄πῆ̄]ρῆ̄τ = ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ἡμῶν ... Then he said to us,</p>	<p>in your hearts?” ε̄χῆ̄ν πετῆρῆ̄τ (Sah) ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν; (Luke 24:38)</p>	<p>And he said to him, “...</p>
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¹⁶³ The antidocetic motivation has been recognized since Schmidt and Wajenberg, *Gespräche*, 222.

¹⁶⁴ There is also no mention of “the fear of the Jews” from John 20:19.

¹⁶⁵ See Chapters 3 and 4.

“Why do you doubt

ΕΤΒΕ Ο ΤΕΤΗΡΑΙΣΤΑΖΕ

= εἰς τί διστάζετε;

still not believing?”

ΕΤΙ ΤΕΤΗΕ ΝΑΤΗΑΖΤΕ

= ἔτι πιστοὶ ἐστὲ ἄπιστοι;

(*Ep. Apos.* 11.5–6)¹⁶⁶

Why did you doubt?”

ΕΤΒΕ ΟΥ ΑΚΑΙΣΤΑΖΕ (Sah)

εἰς τί ἐδίστασας;

(Matt 14:31)

but still disbelieving...

ΕΤΙ ΔΕ ΕΓΟΙ ΝΑΘΗΑΖΤ ΠΕ (Boh)

ΕΤΙ ΔΕ ΕΓΑΠΙΣΤΕΙ (Sah)

ἔτι δὲ ἀπιστοῦντων αὐτῶν

(Luke 24:41)

The harmonization of doubt clauses from Luke 24:38 and Matt 28:17 is quite natural. The same is true of the use of the question from Matt 14:31, since διστάζω also appears there.¹⁶⁷ These modifications are relatively inconsequential.

More significant is the conflation of Luke 24:41 and Matt 28:17. In Luke the statement that the disciples were “still disbelieving (ἔτι ... ἀπιστοῦντων)” (24:41) occurs *after* Jesus has invited them to “touch” his body (24:39). In the *Epistula*, the ἔτι + ἀπιστ- construction from Luke 24:41 has been relocated to an earlier part of the story, i.e., prior to the invitation to touch Jesus.¹⁶⁸ The author of the *Epistula* may have found the disbelief at Luke 24:41 problematic. On the one hand, it may have been judged too open to docetic interpretation: if the apostles tried to touch him and still disbelieved, it could potentially be considered an argument *for* docetism.¹⁶⁹ The author of the *Epistula*, like other antidocetic writers but unlike the canonical evangelists, explicitly confirms that the apostles “touched” Jesus to prove that he “truly ... had risen in the flesh” (12.1). The *Epistula* differs from Luke’s account in that the touch-test is deemed sufficient; after this, the *Epistula* repeatedly insists that no unbelief remains in the apostolic circle.

On the other hand, the relocation of the disbelief from Luke 24:41 may also have been motivated by a desire to protect the reputation of the apostles. Disbelief in spite of the touch invitation could be construed as a stubborn refusal to believe in the face of clear evidence and so result in too negative a portrayal. It is, after all, immediately following the touch test – the very place in the story where Luke originally has the apostles “still disbelieving” – that the *Epistula* portrays them as piously repentant for their *former* disbelief (12.2).

¹⁶⁶ Another viable retroversion of ΕΤΙ ΤΕΤΗΕ ΝΑΤΗΑΖΤΕ – one that conforms more closely to Luke’s text – is ἔτι ἀπιστοῦντων ὑμῶν. Additionally, the Greek behind ΔΗΑΝ ΔΕ ... ΕΝΡΑΙΣΤΑΖΕ in *Ep. Apos.* 11.5 might also be δὲ ... (ἡμῶν) δισταζόντων.

¹⁶⁷ So Heimgartner, *Pseudojustin*, 181 n. 209. The same question in Matt 14:31 is imported into the post-resurrection story of the *Apocryphon of John* (see Chapter 5).

¹⁶⁸ [Ps.-]Justin makes a similar change in *Res.* 9.6 (see Chapter 6). And Irenaeus applies the same tactic to Matt 28:17 in *Epid.* 76 (see Chapter 4).

¹⁶⁹ See further Chapter 7.

Another consequence of the relocation of the doubt from Luke 24:41 is that the *Epistula* does not include (or require) Luke's additional proof that the risen Jesus could eat.¹⁷⁰ It does nevertheless include something additional. It offers an expanded, threefold touch-proof (*Ep. Apos.* 11.7–8) that conflates elements from Luke 24:39 and John 20:25, 27:

“That you may know
that it is I,
ξε ανακ πε
= ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι αὐτός

See my hands and my feet,
that it is I
ξε ανακ πε (Sah)
ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι αὐτός
(Luke 24:39)

Unless I see
in his hands
χι νεφσιχ (Sah)
ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν αὐτοῦ

Peter,
put your fingers
τωκε ν̄νεκ†βε
= βάλε τοὺς δακτύλους σου

the mark of the nails, and
put my finger
τανεχ πατηηβε (Sah)
βάλω τὸν δάκτυλόν μου

in the nail-wounds
ανειφτ
= εἰς τοὺς ἥλων

into the mark of the nails
εχ̄ν̄ νεφσ̄ᾱτ̄ ν̄ειβ̄τ̄ (Sah)
εἰς τὸν τύπον τῶν ἥλων
(John 20:25)

in my hands;
ν̄ναβ̄ιχ
= ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν μου
and you too, *Thomas,*
put your fingers
τωκε ν̄νεκ†βε
= βάλε τοὺς δακτύλους σου

He said to *Thomas*
“Bring your finger
χε αγ πεκτηηβε (Sah)
φέρει τὸν δάκτυλόν σου

in the spear-wound

in my side;
ν̄πασπιρ
= ἐν τῇ πλευρᾷ μου

here and see my hands
bring your hand, and
put (it) into my side.”
ν̄τ̄νοχ̄τ̄ εχ̄ν̄ πασπιρ (Sah)
βάλε εἰς τὴν πλευράν μου
(John 20:27)

¹⁷⁰ It is possible that the author found the eating-proof inappropriate because he did not consider “eating and drinking” to be part of resurrection life (*Ep. Apos.* 19.14). Alternatively, since Luke's meal scene was interpreted docetistically by some, the author of the *Epistula* may have thought that it was not even worth mentioning.

and you too, Andrew,

look

at my feet

and see

ΜΟΥΞ

ΑΝΔΟΥΡΗΤΕ

ΚΝΟ

= ἀτένιζε

εἰς τοὺς πόδας μου

ἴδέ

See...

my feet...

see

ΑΝΔΥ...

ΝΑΟΥΕΡΗΤΕ...

ΝΤΕΤΝΗΑ (Sah)

ἴδετε...

τοὺς πόδας μου...

ἴδετε

if they do not make contact
with the ground.

For it is written in the
prophet: “the foot of a
demonic phantom does not
fasten to the ground.”

for a spirit does not have flesh
and bone as you see me
having.

(Luke 24:39)

We touched him

Α[ΝΟΣΑΝ]ΟΗΣΕ ΑΡΑΦ

= ἐψηλαφήσαμεν αὐτόν

Touch me

ΣΟΜΟΜ ΕΡΟΙ (Sah)

ψηλαφήσατέ με

that we might know truly
whether he had risen in the
flesh, and we fell on our
faces confessing our sins

and see...
(Luke 24:39)

He rebuked...

*that we had been
unbelieving.*

ΧΕ ΑΝΡΩΠΕ Ν[ΑΤΝΑ]ΡΤΕ

= ὅτι ἤμεν ἄπιστοι.

(*Ep. Apos.* 11.7–12.2)

*but they were still
disbelieving...*

ΕΤΙ ΔΕ ΕΓΟΙ ΝΑΘΝΑΡ† (Boh)

ΕΤΙ ΔΕ ΕΓΑΠΙΣΤΕΙ (Sah)

ἔτι δὲ ἀπιστοῦντων αὐτῶν.

(Luke 24:41)

*because they had
not believed.*

ΧΕ ΜΠΟΥΝΑΡ† (Boh)

ΧΕ ΜΠΟΥΠΙΣΤΕΥΕ (Sah)

ὅτι...οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν.

(Mark 16:14)

The introduction echoes Luke 24:39 and the invitations to Peter and Thomas draw on John 20:25–27. The third proof, offered to Andrew, has no clear parallel in the canonical accounts and probably depends on an apocryphal text or tradition.¹⁷¹ The impetus for including a third proof is difficult to discern. One possibility is a desire to harmonize Luke’s account with John’s: while Luke 24:39 refers to Jesus’s hands and feet and John 20:20 refers to his hands and his side, *Ep. Apos.* 11.7 includes all three body parts.¹⁷² A similar harmonizing tendency can also be found in a number of NT manuscripts that add *καὶ τοὺς πόδας* to John 20:20.¹⁷³ That the third proof was prompted by Luke’s account

¹⁷¹ Hornschuh, *Studien*, 78–79 and n. 39; Hills, *Tradition*, 32. On possible sources of the saying in *Ep. Apos.* 11.8 and the choice of Andrew, see Hills, *Tradition*, 85–93.

¹⁷² Similarly Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre*, 122.

¹⁷³ E.g., 13, 346, 565, f¹³.

is confirmed by the fact the prophetic proof-text in 11.8 (“The foot of a *demonic phantom* [οὐφάντασια ἡ δαιμονίων = φαντασία δαιμόνων] does not fasten upon the ground”) responds to the identification of Jesus as a φαντασμα/φαντασία from Luke 24:37(D) / *Ep. Apos.* 11.3. In this sense, it replaces the proverb-like saying (“A spirit has not flesh and bones”) in Luke 24:39.¹⁷⁴

The author of the *Epistula* may have intended to improve on Luke’s account here. Given that his rendition of Luke 24:37 has οὐφάντασια = φαντασία, the author was probably following a version of Luke, like that of Marcion and Codex Bezae, which has φαντασμα in place of πνεῦμα. In this case, the author may have found Luke 24:39b (“a πνεῦμα does not have flesh and bone as you see me having”) to be an inadequate response to Luke 24:37 (“they ... thought they were seeing a φαντασμα,” D) and preferred “the foot of a demonic φαντασία does not fasten upon the ground” because it was verbally closer. And if the author was aware of a distorted, docetic interpretation of Luke 24:39 like that of Marcion, or at least recognized this verse to be open to such an interpretation, then he may have judged Luke 24:39 ineffective for antidocetic polemic.¹⁷⁵

Whatever the case may be, the third proof is probably designed to counter a specific claim made by docetist opponents. *AJ* 93.3 alleges that Jesus left no footprints. There are, in fact, a number of verbal similarities between *Ep. Apos.* 11.7–8 and *AJ* 93.3:

And often when I walked with him,
I wanted to *see* (ἰδεῖν) his footprint,
if (εἰ) it appeared
on the ground (ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς);
for (γάρ)
I saw him as it were lifting himself
up from the ground (ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς),
and I never saw (εἶδον) it.
(*AJ* 93.3)

And you too, Andrew,
look at my feet and *see* (κνο = ἰδέ)
if (ξε = εἰ) they do not make contact
with the ground (ἀπκαε = τῆ γῆ).
For (γάρ = γάρ) it is written in the prophet:
“The foot of a demonic phantom does not fasten
upon the ground (εἰς ἡ πκαε = ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς).”
(*Ep. Apos.* 11.7–8)¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Schmidt (*Gespräche*, 3*) posits that that μογετ in *Ep. Apos.* 11.7 is a corruption of μογετ = ψηλαφᾶν. If so, the third proof resembles even more closely the text of Luke 24:39.

¹⁷⁵ Vinzent argues that the term “phantom” suggests a targeted polemic against Marcion’s Christology (*Resurrection*, 134). This is just possible if the *Epistula* is dated in the 140s (see above), but Marcionites were by no means the only docetists who used this terminology. It is also used by the Simonians, the Carpocratians, the Basilideans (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.32.4; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 24.3.10), and the unnamed docetists of [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 2.14.

¹⁷⁶ The Ethiopic text of the *Epistula* is perhaps even closer to *AJ* in that it refers to Jesus’s “footprint” rather than simply to his foot: “And you too, Andrew, see if my foot treads upon the ground and there is a footprint. For it is written in the prophet: ‘The footprint of a demonic phantom does not fasten upon the ground.’”

Both texts employ the same criterion but claim different results. The same is true with respect to the touch-proof of Luke 24:39:

When I touched him (ψηλαφῶντός μου αὐτόν) the substance was bodiless and as if it existed not at all. (AJ 92.3)	So we touched him (ἐψηλαφήσαμεν αὐτόν), that we might know truly whether he had risen in the flesh. (Ep. Apos. 12.2) ¹⁷⁷
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Both also allude to the disbelief in Luke 24:41 and Jesus's exhortation to Thomas in John 20:27:

Jesus, the men you have chosen still do not believe (ἔτι...ἀπιστοῦσιν) in you. (AJ 92.2)	Then he said to us, "Why do you doubt, still not believing (εἰτι τετῆνε ἡἀτῆαζτε = ἔτι ἐστὲ ἀπιστοι)?" (Ep. Apos. 11.6)
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Do not be unbelieving (μὴ γίνου ἀπιστος)	It is not as unbelievers (οὐχὼς...ἡἀπιστος = οὐκ ὡς...οἱ ἀπιστοι) that we ask... but we truly believe (ἀλλὰ οὐτως [ε]ἠῆπιστεγε = ἀλλὰ ὄντως πιστεύομεν)" (Ep. Apos. 24.3)
but believing (ἀλλὰ πιστός). (AJ 90.16)	

Whereas *AJ* capitalizes on the doubt motif in order to argue that Jesus was "not a man" (see Chapter 7), the author of the *Epistula* assures the reader that the apostles overcame their doubts and arrived at an irrefragable faith.

As striking as they are, these parallels are probably insufficient to prove a direct literary relationship. Each topic addressed appears in a different order in each text and the vast majority of common vocabulary is drawn from the common sources, i.e., Luke and John. Only the footprint-proof is unique, but even here neither reads like a direct response to the other. As Lalleman observes:

Had the *Epistula* been a direct reaction to the *AJ*, it would surely have chosen another context for its statements, and would have had Christ address John instead of Andrew. A reverse order of influence, viz. that the *AJ* reacts against the *Epistula*, is also improbable, for in that case the *AJ* would quite possibly have responded to the belief that only spirits walk without leaving traces.¹⁷⁸

It may thus be safer to conclude that the footprints of Jesus were a matter of *oral* debate between docetists and anti-docetists, and that these two texts represent some of the literary remains of that debate. If, as I have argued in Chapter 7, *AJ* utilizes the proof as a docetic rereading of the ascension in Luke-Acts, the footprint proof may have first originated in docetic circles, but this is far from certain.

¹⁷⁷ On ψηλαφάω in the *Epistula*, see Hills, *Tradition*, 55.

¹⁷⁸ Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 148. Lalleman is here refuting Peter Weigandt ("Doketismus," 120–21), who maintains that the *Epistula* is responding directly to *AJ*.

Even without direct literary dependence, the numerous correspondences between these documents are significant in two ways. First, they help verify that both documents were written in the same milieu, and that the authors represent opposite sides of the same debate. Recent scholarship situates the composition of both texts in the same timeframe, i.e., toward the middle of the second century, and in the same location, i.e., Asia Minor. Independent studies of each document have narrowed the most probable provenance to Smyrna.¹⁷⁹ If so, it confirms that the debate between Ignatius and his docetic opponents in Asia Minor, raged on in the years following his martyrdom.

A fuller historical reconstruction of this debate will have to await a future study, but there is one aspect of the controversy that is especially relevant to the present investigation. At the center of the docetic/antidocetic debate lay the question of how to read post-resurrection appearance narratives of the Gospels, especially those of Luke and John.¹⁸⁰ It will be recalled that already with Ignatius there seems to have been a concern that the appearance tradition was, of all gospel traditions, the most vulnerable to docetic interpretation. Ignatius reasoned that if Jesus was in the flesh “*even* after the resurrection” then it would be absurd for docetists to claim that he was not in the flesh during his entire earthly life, including his passion. And so in his own retelling, Ignatius improved the narrative preserved in Luke by making explicit what was at most implicit in his source, namely, that the apostles “touched” Jesus.

The author of *AJ* (section B), possibly in response to Ignatius (see Chapter 7), capitalized on the same ambiguous aspects of Luke’s and John’s resurrection stories. The apostle John attempts to touch Jesus but finds that he is “bodiless.” In *AJ* the doubt/non-recognition motif also becomes the springboard from which to launch a polemic against Jesus’s real humanity. The author of

¹⁷⁹ Hill’s arguments (“*Epistula*,” 1–53) for the date and provenance of the *Epistula* have been received more enthusiastically (see note above) than those of Lalleman (*Acts of John*, 270) regarding *AJ*. Even if Lalleman’s dating of the final redaction of *AJ* is “a little too early” (Pearson, *Roman and Coptic Egypt*, 49 n. 154), the statement in question belongs to what is probably the earliest portion of the text, i.e., chs. 87–93. It was therefore probably written before or around the same time as the *Epistula*. Additionally, the correspondences between the *Epistula* and *AJ* delineated above suggest that Hill’s arguments for the provenance of the *Epistula* can corroborate Lalleman’s arguments for *AJ*.

¹⁸⁰ Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, no doubt also contributed to this debate. After blasting docetic opponents who deny that Christ came in the flesh, twist the sayings of the Lord, and claim that there is no resurrection, Polycarp calls for a “return to the word delivered to us from the beginning” (Polycarp, *Phil.* 7.1–2). This may well be an allusion to Luke’s preface, which describes an account “delivered” by “those who were *from the beginning* eyewitnesses and ministers of *the word*.” If so, Polycarp may be calling for a return to Luke’s account as a bearer of the authoritative gospel tradition of the apostles. In either case, the *Epistula*’s appeal to apostolic authority against heretics who “distort the words and the work, that is Jesus Christ” may well have been prompted by Polycarp’s exhortation to return to the apostolic tradition as a remedy against those who “twist the sayings of the Lord.”

AJ imports these themes from the resurrection narratives back into the pre-passion period, realizing thereby Ignatius's fear and turning Ignatius's own argument back on itself. The resurrection narratives of Luke and John thus become ammunition *for* rather than *against* docetism. The author of the *Epistula*, now unable to sidestep the doubt motif as Ignatius attempted to do, responds to docetists with a triple affirmation of the faith of the apostles and a triple touch-proof, making it explicit that the apostles believed that Jesus was "truly ... risen in the flesh." More importantly, instead of suppressing the disbelief in Luke 24:41 as Ignatius did, the *Epistula* must now relocate it to a point in the story before the touch-proof. The doubt is acknowledged, but no allowance is made for a docetic interpretation in which the apostles still disbelieve because Jesus couldn't actually be touched.

Part III

Rereading the Resurrection Narratives

Chapter 9

The Case Against the Antidocetic Hypothesis

At the outset of this study I observed that the question of whether or not Luke's and John's resurrection narratives are antidocetic continues to be debated in modern scholarship because there is an underlying disagreement over what constitutes antidocetic redaction. Both sides argue on the basis of unproven assumptions about what an antidocetic writer would or would not do to modify the group appearance stories for polemical purposes. To help move this conversation forward, previous chapters of this study have subjected a number of expressly antidocetic accounts to redaction-critical analysis in an attempt to identify key characteristics of antidocetic redaction. In order to be sensitive to the historical, cultural, and theological contexts, I have also surveyed the reception of the narratives among ancient apologists as well as the arguments of a variety of different types of docetists and gnostics.

This chapter and the next bring these findings to bear on the historical-critical exegesis of Luke 24:36–49 and John 20:24–29. However, it is important to note that in these final two chapters I attempt neither a full-scale reconstruction of the development of the group appearance tradition nor a comprehensive commentary on Luke's and John's resurrection narratives. While these chapters have, I think, something to contribute to both endeavors, my ambitions in the present study are more modest. In Chapter 9, I present a cumulative case against theories that attribute antidocetic intent either to the evangelists or to a source or sources on which they depend. Consequently, I examine in this chapter only those elements in the tradition and in Luke's and John's narratives that have direct bearing on the antidocetic hypothesis. Next, in light of the rejection of antidocetic readings, I propose in Chapter 10 new readings of Luke 24:36–49 and John 20:24–29. But the scope is again limited. The objective is to reinterpret the allegedly antidocetic elements in a manner that coheres with the distinctive ways in which the evangelists have conceived and executed their respective gospel-writing projects.

9.1 The Abrupt Appearance

9.1.1 The Abrupt Appearance in the Tradition and in Antidocetic Redaction

According to most commentators, Luke and John both rely on a common tradition regarding Jesus's abrupt appearance among the disciples:

While they were talking about these things,	When the doors were locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews,	Jesus came, although the doors were locked,
he himself <u>stood in their midst,</u> <u>and says to them,</u> “Peace be with you.”	Jesus came and <u>stood in the midst</u> <u>and says to them,</u> “Peace be with you.”	and <u>stood in the midst</u> <u>and said,</u> “Peace be with you.”

Ταῦτα δὲ αὐτῶν λαλοῦντων	καὶ τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων ὅπου ἦσαν οἱ μαθηταὶ διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων,	ἔρχεται ὁ Ἰησοῦς τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων
αὐτὸς <u>ἔσθη ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν.</u> <u>καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς</u> <u>εἰρήνη ὑμῖν.</u> (Luke 24:36) ¹	ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ <u>ἔσθη εἰς τὸ μέσον</u> <u>καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς</u> <u>εἰρήνη ὑμῖν.</u> (John 20:19)	καὶ <u>ἔσθη εἰς τὸ μέσον</u> <u>καὶ εἶπεν.</u> <u>εἰρήνη ὑμῖν.</u> (John 20:26)

As noted in Chapter 1, historical-critical scholarship disagrees over the significance of Jesus's ability to appear and disappear at will. According to some, these narratives cannot be antidocetic because an antidocetic redactor would surely omit any details that suggest Jesus's body was something other than normal flesh and bone. Others argue that an antidocetic redactor might retain the appearances and disappearances because they are traditional but attempt to

¹ Because one Greek manuscript (D) and four OL manuscripts (a b e ff2) of Luke do not include καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς εἰρήνη ὑμῖν, it has been suggested that these words were added as a harmonization with John 20:19. However, the external evidence is very strong, and accidental omission is quite plausible – the clause ends with the same letter (ὕμῖν) as the word that precedes the clause (αὐτῶν). This kind of parablepsis has been documented in Roysse, *Scribal Habits*, 667. An error made on the basis of single letter is not likely to have occurred often and may explain why so few manuscripts omit the phrase.

Theories that the “Western Non-Interpolations” are the result of christologically-driven modifications, e.g., omissions by docetists (Carter, “Marcion’s Christology.”) or antidocetic additions (Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption*, 247–72), are not persuasive with respect to this verse. This clause has no value in the docetic/antidocetic debate of the second century. If some, perhaps most, “Western Non-Interpolations” are best explained as deliberate scribal changes, they need not all be explained this way. The use of the historical present is certainly un-Lukan, but this indicates only that the clause itself is traditional. Luke, while he nearly always edits out Mark’s instances of the historical present, occasionally includes the historical present from other sources. And when he does so it is usually a verb of speaking, as in this verse.

guard against docetic readings of the tradition by adding physical proofs. Both theories seem plausible at first glance, but evidence from second-century anti-docetic writings strongly favors the first theory: all *expressly* antidocetic accounts of Jesus's resurrection remove all narrative traces of sudden appearances and disappearances.² Ignatius, who is drawing on either Luke 24 (most probably) or Luke's source and seems to recognize the story's susceptibility to docetic interpretation, replaces the abrupt "he stood in their midst" with the less suggestive "he came to those around Peter."³ [Ps.-]Justin omits all reference to Jesus's arrival on the scene. He starts awkwardly in the middle of the story, with the apostle's initial response to seeing Jesus.⁴ The author of the *Epistula Apostolorum* follows John's account by noting that the apostles are inside but modifies the story to avoid the impression that Jesus passes through locked doors: Jesus remains outside and calls the disciples to come out to him.⁵ Luke's and John's choice to preserve the abrupt appearance is contrary to standard antidocetic redaction.⁶

9.1.2 The Abrupt Appearance in Luke 24:36

In the LXX, ἔστη ("stood") is a standard way of indicating the appearance of an angel.⁷ Luke is aware of this angelophanic connotation (Luke 1:11, 19; 24:4; Acts 1:10; 10:30; 11:13; 12:7; 27:23), but chooses to retain the term to describe the appearance of the risen Jesus. To guard against a docetic reading, Luke might have replaced ἔστη with ἦλθεν ("he came"), as in Ignatius, *Symrn.* 3.2 (cf. *Ep. Apos.* 11.2), but he does not. Luke does make two minor wording changes to conform the sentence to his own characteristic style: he replaces ὁ

² Neither Luke nor John explicitly state that Jesus arrives on the scene "suddenly." However, certain contextual clues, e.g., the "startled" (πτοηθέντες; see BDAG, s.v. "πτοέω") response of the apostles in Luke 24:37 and the "locked doors" in John 20:26, have led most commentators to infer that the appearances happened suddenly (so already Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* [ICC; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920], 559; Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* [trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971], 691). Those who judge Luke and John antidocetic also characterize the appearances as "sudden," e.g., Alsup, *Appearance Stories*, 148; Robinson, "Easter to Valentinus." 15–16.

³ See Chapter 3.

⁴ See Chapter 6.

⁵ See Chapter 8.

⁶ In addition to the three examples noted above, it is worth noting that Tertullian, when refuting Marcion on the basis of his version of Luke 24, mentions neither Jesus's vanishing in v. 31 nor his appearing in v. 36. While it is possible that these elements were missing from Marcion's text, there is no obvious reason why Marcion would delete them – they are consistent with his Christology. Epiphanius, in his refutation of Marcion, defends the vanishing in v. 31 against possible docetic reading (*Pan.* 42 Elenchus 77).

⁷ E.g., Gen 18:2; 1 Chr 21:15–16; Dan 8:15; 12:5; Tob 5:4. The peace greeting may also have reminded the reader of angelophanies (Nolland, *Luke*, 3:1212; Culpepper, *Luke*, 485).

Ἰησοῦς with αὐτός and εἰς τὸ μέσον with ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν.⁸ He also introduces the tradition with his characteristic genitive absolute construction (“while they were talking about these things”).⁹ This added clause is significant because it heightens the abruptness of the appearance by implying that Jesus’s arrival unexpectedly interrupts the conversation. Thus Luke not only differs from antidocetic writers by depicting an abrupt appearance, his own redactional touches in v. 36 do nothing to mitigate, and may actually increase, the potential for a docetic reading.

9.1.3 The Abrupt Appearance in John 20:19, 26

John’s account seems to emphasize the miraculous even more than does Luke’s. Jesus is twice said to enter the room when the doors are locked. A number of commentators have suggested that an antidocetic author or redactor created the Thomas pericope by reusing phraseology from 20:19–23. If so, the phrase τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων has been taken over from the previous paragraph (20:19). In 20:19, the reason given for the locked doors is the disciples’ fear of the Jews, but the author of the Thomas pericope chooses not to repeat this motivation in 20:26. Instead, τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων is placed between ἔρχεται ὁ Ἰησοῦς (“Jesus comes”) and καὶ ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον (“and stood in their midst”). The net effect on both ancient and modern readers has been to infer that Jesus’s body could pass through closed doors.¹⁰ Thus most English translations interpret the same participle phrase (τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων) as circumstantial in 20:19 but as concessive in 20:26, e.g., NABR (below), GNT, ESV, NET, NIV, NRSV:

⁸So Marshall, *Luke*, 901. Compare Luke 2:46; 8:7 (cf. Mark 4:7); 10:3; 22:27 (cf. Mark 10:43–45) 22:55 (cf. Mark 14:54); Acts 4:7; 1:15; 27:21). It is also possible, perhaps probable, that Luke replaces ὁ Ἰησοῦς (cf. 20:19) with αὐτός in accordance with his redactional practice. The fact that most manuscripts include both terms is probably a later development for the sake of clarity or assimilation to John 20:19. It is unlikely that Luke knows but omits the mention of locked doors from John 20:19, 26 for antidocetic purposes. Luke is comfortable depicting Jesus vanishing into thin air (24:31) and depicts Jesus appearing so suddenly that the apostles assume he is a ghost (24:37). Consequently, the locked doors are of no consequence for Luke.

⁹Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1574; cf. Acts 4:1. On Luke’s genitive absolutes as a feature of his style, see already Cadbury, *Style*, 133–34.

¹⁰E.g., Irenaeus, frag. 52 (*ANF* 1:576); Hippolytus, *Noet.* 18; Origen, *Cels.* 2.62, 69; Chrysostom, *Hom. Jo.* 87; Pseudo-Justin, *Quaestiones et responsiones ad orthodoxos* 128; Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.* 10.169–79; 10.179; Bultmann, *John*, 690–91; Barrett, *John*, 568, 572; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003; repr., 2010), 2:1201; Koestenberger, *John*, 572, 578–79; Bruner, *John*, 1186.

On the evening
of that first day of the week,

when the doors were locked,
where the disciples were,
for fear of the Jews,
Jesus came and stood in their midst
and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

Now a week later his disciples were again
inside and Thomas was with them.
Jesus came,
although the doors were locked,
and stood in their midst
and said, “Peace be with you.”

οὔσης οὖν ὀψίας
τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκεῖνῃ τῇ μιᾷ σαββάτων

καὶ τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων
ᾧπου ἦσαν οἱ μαθηταὶ
διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων,
ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον
καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· εἰρήνη ὑμῖν. (20:19)

καὶ μεθ’ ἡμέρας ὀκτὼ πάλιν ἦσαν ἔσω οἱ
μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ Θωμᾶς μετ’ αὐτῶν.
ἔρχεται ὁ Ἰησοῦς
τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων

καὶ ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον
καὶ εἶπεν· εἰρήνη ὑμῖν. (20:26)

Given the omission of the fear motif, it appears that the purpose of repeating τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων in the Thomas pericope is to draw further attention to the fact that Jesus appeared miraculously despite the locked doors.¹¹ In direct conflict with standard antidocetic redaction, John’s Gospel not only includes this abrupt, supernatural appearance, it narrates it twice. And both times it includes a detail that seems to imply that Jesus’s body is something other than a normal human body. And the second, allegedly antidocetic, episode emphasizes this idea more than the first. The antidocetic hypothesis runs itself aground here. It is simply illogical for an antidocetic author (or redactor) to add, let alone repeat, a phrase that intimates the possibility that Jesus’s body could pass through locked doors.

9.2 The “Flesh”

9.2.1 The Emphasis on the Flesh in Antidocetic Redaction

One of the most prominent characteristics of antidocetic re-narrations of the group appearance tradition is the addition of glosses that include the term σὰρξ or close cognates.¹² In order to convey the regularity with which antidocetic

¹¹ Pace J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 1016–17. Michaels suggests that the purpose of the locked doors in v. 26 is to show that the disciples are still living in fear of the Jews and need Jesus to appear again to rid them of this fear once and for all. If this were the purpose, however, the author is more likely to have repeated the fear rather than to have omitted it (so Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:1020, 1033; Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:331).

¹² We may note here the observation of J. N. D. Kelly that the phrase “resurrection of the flesh” in the Old Roman creed seems to be an antidocetic modification of the phrase

writers add such glosses, I review here a range of examples that have been examined over the course of this study.

Ignatius includes the term when he introduces his brief appearance narrative and then twice more in editorial interpolations (in italics):

For I know and believe that he was *in the flesh* (ἐν σαρκί) even after the resurrection. (*Smyrn.* 3.1)

And when he came to Peter and those with him, he said to them: “Take, handle me and see, for I am not a bodiless daimon.” And immediately they touched him and believed, *having mingled with his flesh* (κραθέντες τῆ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ). (*Smyrn.* 3.2; cf. Luke 24:39–41)

And after his resurrection he ate and drank with them *as [does] one who is in the flesh* (ὡς σαρκικός). (*Smyrn.* 3.3; cf. Luke 24:31–43; Acts 10:41)

[Ps.-]Justin inserts a barrage of similar annotations, though with variations that include the σῶμα- word group as well:

While his disciples were wondering whether or not to believe that he had *truly risen in the body* (ἀληθῶς σῶματι ἀνέστη), while they were seeing and doubting.... (*Res.* 9.6; cf. Matt 28:17; Luke 24:37–38)

And he allowed them to touch him, and he showed the marks of the nails in his hands. And when they had observed him from every angle that it was he himself and *in the body* (ἐν τῷ σῶματι).... (*Res.* 9.6–7; cf. Luke 24:39–41; John 20:20, 25)

They invited him to eat with them, *that also through this they might come to know with certainty that he truly rose bodily* (ἀληθῶς σωματικῶς ἀνέστη). And he ate honeycomb and fish. And having thus shown them that *there truly is a resurrection of the flesh* (ἀληθῶς σαρκὸς ἀνάστασις ἐστὶ).... (*Res.* 9.7; cf. Luke 24:42–43)

And wishing to show them this also...*that it is not impossible even for flesh* (ὅτι οὐκ ἀδύνατον καὶ σαρκί) to ascend into heaven, he was taken up, while they were watching, into heaven, *while he was in the flesh* (ὡς ἦν ἐν τῆ σαρκί). (*Res.* 9.8; cf. Acts 1:2, 9, 11)

The author of *3 Corinthians*, while conflating various NT statements, also repeatedly inserts σὰρξ in his interpretive commentary on the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus:

For I myself delivered to you in the beginning that which I also received [cf. 1 Cor 15:3]...that our Lord Christ Jesus was born of Mary, of the seed of David [cf. 2 Tim 2:8], when the Holy Spirit was sent from heaven by the Father into her [cf. Luke 1:26–38], *in order that he might come into the world and set free all flesh* (ΣΑΡΚΑ) *through his own flesh* (ΣΑΡΚΟΣ) *and in order that he might raise us from the dead in the flesh*

“resurrection of the dead” found in the NT and other early Christian texts (*Early Christian Creeds* [3rd ed.; London: Continuum, 1972], 165, emphasis added).

(ΣΑΡΚΕΙΚΟΥΣ) as he showed himself as an example [cf. Luke 24:40; John 20:20, 25]. (3 Cor. 2.4–6)¹³

Two other antidocetic texts, though no longer extant in Greek, include σάρξ in redactional glosses on the appearance tradition. The Coptic translation of the *Epistula Apostolorum* has the Greek loanword σάρξ:

Then he said to [us], “Why do you still doubt and not believe? I am he who told you *about my flesh* (σαρξ = σάρξ), my death, and my resurrection.” (*Ep. Apos.* 11.6; cf. Matt 28:17; Luke 24:38–41, 44, 46)

“Peter, put your fingers in the nail-wounds in my hands; and you too, Thomas, put your fingers in the spear-wounds in my side.... *So we [touched him, that we might know truly whether he [had risen] in the flesh* (σαρξ = σάρξ). (*Ep. Apos.* 12.1; cf. Luke 24:39–41; John 20:25–29)

Similarly, in Irenaeus’s resurrection apologetic, which seems to be directed in part against docetists (*Haer.* 5.1.2), the Latin *caro* no doubt reflects σάρξ in the Greek *Vorlage*:

In the same manner, therefore, as Christ did rise *in the substance of flesh* (*in carnis substantia* = ἐν τῇ τῆς σαρκὸς ὑποστάσει), and showed to his disciples the mark of the nails and the opening in his side – *now these are proofs of that flesh* (*carnis* = σαρκός) which rose from the dead.... (*Haer.* 5.7.1; cf. John 20:20, 25)

then afterwards rising *in the flesh* (*in carne* = ἔνσαρκος), so that he even showed the print of the nails to His disciples.... (*Haer.* 5.31.2; cf. John 20:20, 25)¹⁴

Finally, it is worth noting that σάρξ-glosses are not limited to the resurrection appearance tradition. Antidocetic writers apply them to various parts of the Jesus tradition and to the NT epistles as well.¹⁵

9.2.2 The Absence of Sarx in John 20

In a remarkable contrast to antidocetic practice, the term σάρξ is absent from John 20. Also missing from John 20:19–29 (and Luke 24:36–49) are σῶμα, αἶμα, ἀληθῶς, and their various cognates. While the presence of these terms is

¹³ On the author’s reuse of Luke, see Chapter 4. On the allusions to the Pauline epistles in 3 *Corinthians*, see D’Anna, “Third Epistle,” 136–48; Pervo, *Acts of Paul*, 268–70; White, *Remembering Paul*, 114–34.

¹⁴ Greek retroversions in Rousseau, *Irénée V*, 2:85, 393. Tertullian also adds multiple references to the “flesh” in his comments on John 6:40 and 20:29 (*Res.* 34; see further Chapter 4).

¹⁵ Ignatius, *Eph.* 7.2; *Magn.* 1.2; *Phld.* 4.1; *Trall.* 8.1; *Smyrn.* 1.1–2; 12.2. [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 9.9 (cf. Mark 12:18–27 par.); Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.2.3 (cf. Eph 5:30); 5.3.3 (cf. 2 Cor 12:9); 5.6.2 (cf. 1 Cor 6:15–16); 3 *Cor.* 2.4–6 (cf. Luke 1:26–38; 24:40; John 20:20, 25; 1 Cor 15:3; 2 Tim 2:8); 2.24–26 (cf. 1 Cor 15:12, 37–38). On the significance of the “flesh” in the adaptation of 1 Cor 15 in 3 *Corinthians*, see D’Anna, “Third Epistle,” 140–48; Pervo, *Acts of Paul*, 268–70; White, *Remembering Paul*, 126–29.

by no means proof of antidocetic intent, the absence of all four word groups is unknown in antidocetic accounts.

9.2.3 The Single Occurrence of *Sarx* in Luke 24:36–49

Σάρξ does appear in Luke 24, but only once. And this occurrence in 24:39 is not redactional. As we have already seen in Chapter 3, the statement “A spirit does not have *flesh* and bones as you see me having” is traditional; indeed, it runs contrary to the conception of πνεῦμα in Lukan redaction. Here I add that the insertion of σάρξ also runs contrary to Lukan redaction. For whatever reason, Luke omits all Markan verses in which σάρξ occurs.¹⁶ Including Luke 24:39, σάρξ appears only five times in all of Luke-Acts. Three occur within OT quotations, and a fourth is derived from one of these quotations.¹⁷ Luke 24:39 therefore fits Luke’s practice of including this term only when he takes it over from a source.

The infrequent occurrence of σάρξ in Luke-Acts in general stands out in stark contrast to antidocetic writings. If we compare Luke-Acts to antidocetic works that are extant in Greek, the differences are extreme:¹⁸

	Occurrences of the root σάρκ-	Length (in words)	Frequency (per 1000 words)
Luke-Acts ¹⁹	5	37,969	0.13
Ignatius (7 letters) ²⁰	43	7,781	5.53
[Ps.-]Justin, <i>On the Resurrection</i> ²¹	53	3,392	15.63
3 Corinthians ²²	12	705	17.02

The frequency with which the root σάρκ- appears in Ignatius’s letters is almost 42 times greater than that of Luke. Statistically speaking, that is a 4,154% increase in use! And the percentage increase over Luke rises to astronomical heights with [Ps.-]Justin’s *On the Resurrection* (11,923%) and 3 *Corinthians*

¹⁶ Mark 10:8 (2x; cf. Luke 16:18); 13:20 (cf. Luke 17:22–37; 21:20–24); 14:38 (cf. Luke 22:39–46).

¹⁷ Luke 3:6; Acts 2:17; 2:26, 31.

¹⁸ σάρξ appears as a Greek loanword in the Coptic text of the *Epistula Apostolorum* at a frequency of about 3.89 times per thousand words (14 times in approximately 3600 words in the critical text of Schmidt and Wajnberg, *Gespräche*, 1*-25*). While this is lower than the other antidocetic texts listed in the table above, it still reflects a drastic (2,892%) increase over Luke-Acts. The root σάρκ- appears at frequency of 8.73 times per thousand words in the Greek fragments of bk. 5 of Irenaeus’s *Adversus Haereses* (2.35 times per 1000 words for all 5 books). It is in this final book that Irenaeus defends the resurrection of the flesh. The frequency in the Johannine Epistles, which are sometimes considered antidocetic, is 1.15, a 785% increase over Luke and a 39% increase over John’s Gospel.

¹⁹ Based on NA²⁸.

²⁰ Based on the text in Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*.

²¹ Based on the text of the extant fragments in the TLG.

²² Based on the critical text in Testuz, *Bodmer X–XII*.

(12,992%).²³ To be sure, we must be careful not to overestimate the significance of these remarkable statistics. After all, the subject matter of Luke-Acts is more diverse than that of these other works. But if we were to perform a more sophisticated analysis on each corpus and eliminate material that does not directly relate to Christology or the Jesus tradition, a massive gap between Luke and antidoctetic authors would remain. It may actually widen.²⁴ In any case, the infrequency of *σάρξ* and cognates in Luke-Acts and their absence from Lukan redaction is another indicator that Luke is not concerned with the debate to which Tertullian refers, and to which Ignatius, [Ps.-]Justin, Irenaeus, and the author of *3 Corinthians* bear witness.

Some might object that if the saying in Luke 24:39 is traditional, Luke has taken over a tradition that had already been modified for antidoctetic purposes. But the mere presence of the term *σάρξ* is not sufficient reason to exclude the saying from early tradition. Some docetists refer to Jesus's "flesh," but for the purposes of denying its reality. Most acknowledge the fact that apostolic tradition includes references to Jesus's flesh.²⁵ Valentinians and Apelleasts admit that Jesus has flesh but insist that it is a spiritual or celestial flesh rather than normal human flesh. Therefore, the claim that Jesus had flesh is not an insurmountable obstacle for some forms of docetism. Additionally, though Marcion excises some references to Christ's flesh from the biblical books (Tertullian, *Marc.* 5.17.14–15; cf. Eph 2:14) – possibly Luke 24:39 should be included here – he is nevertheless willing to accept that Christ was "in the *likeness* of sinful flesh" (*Marc.* 5.14.1; cf. Rom 8:3).²⁶

More importantly, at least two different groups of docetists chose to reinterpret rather than to reject the tradition that Jesus rose in the flesh. [Ps.-]Justin's opponents, who are probably responding to Luke 24, hold that the risen Jesus "presented the mere appearance of being in the flesh." And before the time of Marcion, the Ophites acknowledged on the basis of Luke 24 that the belief that Jesus rose in the flesh originated with the disciples of Jesus themselves, i.e., with eyewitnesses. Strikingly, the Ophites do not dispute the priority of the proto-orthodox view or the basic historicity of Luke's Gospel. They instead argue that the apostles misinterpreted Jesus's psychic-spiritual body for a body of flesh.²⁷ If these early docetists and their proto-orthodox opponents both

²³ 119 times and 131 times more frequent, respectively.

²⁴ Two of the five instances of *σάρξ* in Luke-Acts are concerned with the redemption of humanity in general rather than with Christology, whereas the majority of instances in Ignatius are christological. [Ps.-]Justin's *On the Resurrection* includes only two small sections (2.9–14; 9.1–9) that explicitly discuss the Jesus tradition and Christology, and *σάρξ* appears with a high degree of frequency in each.

²⁵ The major exception is *AJ*, which never mentions Jesus's flesh.

²⁶ Whether or not Marcion's version of Luke 24:39 included *σάρκα καί* is debatable (see Chapter 6).

²⁷ See Chapter 3.

claim that the notion that Jesus rose in the flesh goes back to the original eye-witnesses, we have independent attestation that the notion belongs to early tradition. All of this suggests that the saying in Luke 24:39 is pre-docetic.

Also telling is that proto-orthodox writers do not quote Luke 24:39 as if it were a ready-made antidocetic apologetic for Jesus's resurrection. As we have seen, Ignatius, who seems to be familiar with Luke's text, prefers the paraphrase "I am no bodiless daimon" because it better fits his own Christology and rhetorical strategy. The author of the *Epistula Apostolorum* conflates Luke 24 and John 20 and supplements them with additional antidocetic material, but chooses to omit the saying in Luke 24:39. Similarly, [Ps.-]Justin skips this statement when he refutes docetic interpretations of Luke 24. Indeed, the first time this saying appears in an antidocetic argument is Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.2.3. Surprisingly, however, Irenaeus quotes it as if it is a well-known proverb (rather than as a quotation of Luke), and in context Irenaeus is not discussing Jesus's resurrection (5.2.3).²⁸ The one apologist who does famously quote this saying in reference to Jesus's resurrection is Tertullian in his refutation of Marcion. But Tertullian's quotation demonstrates that Marcion affirmed the authority of the saying and did not consider it a problem for his docetic Christology.²⁹ If antidocetic writers generally do not quote the saying and docetists can affirm it, there is no basis for claiming that the saying originated as a response to the threat of docetism.

9.3 The Touch Test

9.3.1 The Touch Test in Antidocetic Redaction

Because antidocetic writers frequently appeal to the idea that Jesus could be touched, the presence of the same motif in Luke 24 and John 20 has convinced many that the evangelists were also combatting docetic Christology. However, a few dissenting voices have argued that Luke and John are not antidocetic because, contrary to what they would expect of antidocetic polemic, neither evangelist explicitly states that the apostles touched the risen Jesus.³⁰ Again,

²⁸ 3 *Corinthians* 2.24–32 draws on the vocabulary of Luke 24:39, but puts it to strange use (see Chapter 4).

²⁹ Although it is possible that Marcion omits *σάρξ* *kai* from the saying, he retains "bone," making the possible omission of *σάρξ* relatively inconsequential.

³⁰ E.g., Dillon, *Eye-Witnesses*, 194–95; Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:323, 329; Craig, *Assessing*, 337. Riley objects to this kind of argument against the antidocetic intent of John by noting that Luke's account, which Riley takes as antidocetic, also does not include an explicit confirmation of touch (*Resurrection Reconsidered*, 125 n. 68). But this is a specious counterargument because it depends on the unproven assumption that Luke's narrative is antidocetic.

the conclusions differ because both sides depend on unproven assumptions about what constitutes an antidocetic argument. The analysis of both docetic and antidocetic texts in previous chapters of this study supports the minority view.

Though the touch motif is often considered the strongest evidence for an antidocetic intention, it is ironically Luke's and John's treatment of the touch motif that most clearly distinguishes them from antidocetic writers. In contrast to Luke and John, antidocetic writers regularly add a statement that the apostles actually touched Jesus and confirmed the reality of his flesh:

And immediately *they touched him and believed having mingled with his flesh.* (Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3.2)

He allowed them to touch him, and he showed the marks of the nails in His hands. And when they had observed him from every angle that it was he himself and in the body.... ([Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 9.7)

So we touched him, that we might know truly whether he had risen in the flesh. (*Ep. Apos.* 12.1)

True and real also was the touch of the then-believing Thomas. (Tertullian, *An.* 17.14)

Thomas was also convinced *when he touched* the scars. (*Adamant. Dial.* 5.6)³¹

Luke's and John's accounts not only lack this standard antidocetic feature, the analysis below will show that both canonical narratives move in a direction opposite that of antidocetic polemic.

9.3.2 *The Touch Motif as Traditional: Preliminary Evidence*

Before examining Luke's and John's individual treatments, it will be helpful to consider some preliminary evidence indicating that the touch motif was already part of the appearance tradition prior to the composition of Luke 24:36–49 and John 20:24–29. First, tradition and redaction critics – including those who maintain the antidocetic theory – see the presence of the touch test in both Luke and John, which most consider literarily independent of one another, as an indication that the motif was present in the common tradition.³² The phrase

³¹ In addition to these examples, we might also consider 1 John 1:1: “that which we have perceived and our hands have *touched* (ἐψηλάφησαν).” If, as many scholars maintain, 1 John was written to combat some form of docetic Christology, it could be the earliest witness to the standard antidocetic practice of providing an explicit confirmation that the apostles touched Jesus. Because of the phrase “from the beginning,” most argue that 1 John 1:1 is alluding the incarnation, but a case can be made for an allusion to the risen Christ (so Jensen, *Affirming the Resurrection*, 47–72; cf. Didymus the Blind, *PG* 39:1775–76: “Many think these words apply to the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus”).

³² E.g., Dodd, “Appearances,” 145–46; Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:1031–34; George, “Appearances.”; Alsup, *Appearance Stories*, 173; Dillon, *Eye-Witnesses*, 159–63; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1573–74; Osborne, *Resurrection Narratives*, 246–51; Darrell L. Bock,

“Bring your finger here and see” in John 20:27 appears to be the Johannine equivalent to “Handle me and see” in Luke 24:39a and Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3.2.³³ If, contrary to my own view, Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3.2 is not dependent on Luke’s Gospel but on Luke’s source, then it also indicates that the touch proof belongs to pre-Lukan tradition.

Second, even if we posit that John and Ignatius both depend directly on Luke, Matt 28:9 provides independent confirmation that the tangibility of Jesus’s risen body is not yet a point of contention: “And they came up and took hold of (ἐκράτησαν) his feet and worshiped (προσεκύνησαν) him.” Antidocetic motives cannot be attributed to Matthew in this passage.³⁴ The purpose of grasping Jesus’s feet is not to emphasize his humanity but to bow to worship him as divine.³⁵ The touchability of Jesus’s body is not here a matter of dispute. It is casually assumed as an uncontroversial given.³⁶

Third, corroboration that the touch test did not originate as an antidocetic invention can be found among the docetists themselves. Many docetists had little problem with the notion that the risen Jesus could be touched. Cerinthus, the earliest known advocate of separationist Christology, rejected only the suffering of a heavenly Christ. His docetism did not extend to the human Jesus nor to his resurrection. Cerinthus affirmed that the same human Jesus who died also rose.³⁷ Therefore there is nothing in Thomas’s demand for tactile proof that can be construed as anti-Cerinthian.³⁸ While later separationists do extend their docetism beyond the heavenly Christ to Jesus, they claim that Jesus’s body was touchable because it was made of a mystical psychic substance.³⁹ In one text, the body of the risen Lord, who claims that he “never ... suffered,”

Luke (2 vols.; BECNT 3A-3B; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994–1996), 2:1927–28; Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered*, 97–98; Bovon, *Luke*, 3:387–88. See also a dissenting view in Neirynek, “Récit.” Neirynek, among others, argues that John depends directly on Luke rather than on a common tradition.

³³ Similarly Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (NCenBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 614.

³⁴ Contra Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus*, 278. Compare also *Test. Ab.* [A] 15.4: “And Sarah his wife came and embraced the feet of the bodiless one [i.e., the archangel Michael].” Apparently, in some circles even the ability to grasp someone’s feet is no absolute guarantee of corporeality. Contrast, however, Lucretius’s dictum: “For nothing can touch or be touched except a bodily substance” (*Rer. nat.* 1.304).

³⁵ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew* (2 vols.; WBC 33A–33B; Dallas: Word, 1993–1995), 2:874; Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered*, 96; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew* (3 vols.; Hermeneia; trans. James E. Crouch; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001–2007), 3:607; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NIGTC 2; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 1252–53.

³⁶ Cf. George, “Appearances,” 61: “Matthew is a Jew writing for Jews: neither he nor his readers would conceive the Risen Jesus as not having a very real body.”

³⁷ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.26.1; Gaius apud Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.28.2.

³⁸ On Irenaeus’s claim that John’s prologue is anti-Cerinthian, see Appendix.

³⁹ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.6.1; 1.9.3; Clement, *Exc.* 59; Tertullian, *Val.* 26. See also Chapter 2.

can be “embraced” and “kissed.”⁴⁰ Under closer scrutiny, we can therefore be certain that the touch invitation is not deployed as a refutation of the separatist type of docetism.⁴¹

Some proto-monophysite forms of docetism also made allowances for the tangibility of Jesus’s body. The author of *AJ*, for example, accepts that Jesus’s body could be grasped on some occasions, but claims, in an allusion to Luke 24:39, that it could *not* be felt on other occasions.⁴² Similarly, Marcion seems to have thought that Christ’s body was tangible.⁴³ Though it is possible that he omitted *ψηλαφήσατε* from his version of Luke 24:39, Marcion clearly retains other verses in which Jesus touches and is touched.⁴⁴ If the docetists themselves did not reject the idea that Jesus’s body could be touched, it is improbable that the touch motif originated as a late, *antidocetic* invention.

Indeed, the touch test itself can be docetized. In addition to the example from *AJ* just mentioned, *2 Apoc. Jas.* (NHC IV,5) 57.10–14 depicts the risen Jesus inviting touch. Yet when James attempts to do so, he is unable to take hold of Jesus’s body. In sum, it is safe to conclude that the touch motif belongs to a pre-docetic stage of the appearance tradition.

9.3.3 The Portrayal of the Touch Test in John’s Narrative

Despite Thomas’s requirement for tactile proof, John 20:24–29 seems to imply that the touch test was ultimately not that important, at least in that it was not necessary.⁴⁵ Thomas is not said to take Jesus up on his invitation to touch his wounds. And Jesus’s question in John 20:29 (“Do you believe because you have *seen* me?”) suggests that Thomas is convinced by sight alone and that he either doesn’t touch Jesus or doesn’t need to.⁴⁶ This is significantly different

⁴⁰ *1 Apoc. Jas.* (NHC V,3) 31.2–32.8.

⁴¹ Contra Talbert, “Anti-Gnostic Tendency,” 270–71.

⁴² See Chapter 7.

⁴³ Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel*, 83–84; Vinzent, “Pauline Basis,” 232; Smith, “Apologetic Interests,” 765 n. 66.

⁴⁴ E.g., Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.9.4 (cf. Luke 5:13); 4.20.8–9, 13 (cf. Luke 8:44–46).

⁴⁵ Similarly Lindars, *John*, 614; Anton Dauer, *Johannes und Lukas: Untersuchungen zu den johanneisch-lukanischen Parallelerikopen Joh 4, 46–54/Lk 7, 1–10 — Joh 12, 1–8/Lk 7, 36–50, 10, 38–42 — Joh 20, 19–29/Lk 24, 36–49* (FB 50; Würzburg: Echter, 1984), 293; DeConick, “Blessed,” 392–93; Dunderberg, “Conflict,” 377; Jörg Frey, “Die ‘*theologia crucifixi*’ des Johannesevangeliums,” in *Kreuzestheologie im Neuen Testament* (eds. Andreas Dettwiler and Jean Zumstein; WUNT 151; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 232; Peder Borgen, *The Gospel of John: More Light from Philo, Paul and Archaeology* (NovTSup 154; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 267; Lehtipuu, *Debates*, 43–44.

⁴⁶ Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:332; Lindars, *John*, 614; Glenn W. Most, *Doubting Thomas* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 57–58.

from antidocetic apologetic.⁴⁷ It makes no sense to attempt to prove the reality of Jesus's resurrection body by omitting the proof itself!⁴⁸ This is precisely the issue that later writers are forced to resolve before the Thomas pericope can be usefully employed in antidocetic argument.

The conclusion that the author thought the touch test was unnecessary is probably too neutral an assessment. According to the makarism in John 20:29, "seeing" is already more proof than is really necessary for faith. Commentators, observing that Thomas's statement in 20:25 ("Unless I see [ἐὰν μὴ ἴδω] ... I will never believe [οὐ μὴ πιστεύσω]") closely echoes Jesus's challenge to the royal official in 4:48 ("Unless you see [ἐὰν μὴ ... ἴδητε] signs and wonders ... you will never believe [οὐ μὴ πιστεύσητε]"), routinely suggest that the author of the Thomas pericope was himself critical of the touch test.⁴⁹ By framing the touch test with these phrases, the author portrays Thomas's skepticism as analogous to what Jesus himself disparages in 4:48. While it would be going beyond the evidence to suggest that the author reckons signs-based faith illegitimate – Jesus elsewhere pleads with his hearers to believe on the basis of the miraculous works he has shown them (e.g., 10:32–38; 14:10–11) – it is hard not to detect at least a subtle critique here.⁵⁰ Consequently, unless we are to think that the author (or redactor) invented the touch proof only to criticize it, we must conclude that the touch proof is already traditional by the time the

⁴⁷ In an antidocetic account we might expect instead: "Have you believed because you have *touched* me?" That Jesus does not say this makes Augustine wonder if Thomas really did "dare to touch" (*Tract. Ev. Jo.* 121.5).

⁴⁸ This fact is often overlooked by those who argue for an antidocetic interpretation, e.g., Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered*, 98. Schnelle (*Antidocetic Christology*, 141 n. 355) suggests that vv. 27–28 presume Thomas actually touched Jesus, but this is overly speculative in light of v. 29. Schnelle goes so far as to state that Thomas "expressly confirms that the Risen One exists in the same flesh in which he suffered and died" (143–44, emphasis added). This is a patently false assertion; the only things that are "expressly" confirmed by Thomas are his own skepticism (v. 25) and Jesus's deity (v. 28). Most argues that ἀπεκρίθη ("he answered") in v. 28 indicates that Thomas's confession is his only response to the touch invitation in v. 27, and so precludes the possibility that Thomas touches Jesus (*Doubting Thomas*, 57–58). This may be reading too much in to a single word – as nearly 2000 years of reception history attest (Most, *Doubting Thomas*, 69–70) – but it offers a strong point against Schnelle's presumption.

⁴⁹ E.g., Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:1045; Barrett, *John*, 574–75; Most, *Doubting Thomas*, 49; David J. Norman, "Doubt and the Resurrection of Jesus," *TS* 69 (2008): 804; Bultmann, *John*, 696; Koestenberger, *John*, 578; Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:330. See also the Jesus's prohibition against touching in John 20:17.

⁵⁰ Schnelle, though he argues against the theory that John shuns dependency on miracles, nevertheless recognizes that John criticizes the "demand for signs and wonders" in 4:48 (*Antidocetic Christology*, 85, emphasis added). If so, the use of the same phraseology in 20:25 also implies a criticism of Thomas's demand. Similarly, see the rhetorical analysis in Jo-Ann A. Brant, *John* (Paideia; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 273.

Thomas pericope was written.⁵¹ Regardless, antidocetic redaction can be ruled out in this instance. It is implausible that an antidocetic redactor intentionally undermined his or her own antidocetic argument (i) by choosing to introduce the touch test with phraseology that implies its impropriety; and (ii) by failing to narrate the test being carried out.⁵²

A negative assessment of Thomas's doubt is also confirmed by consistent reception in the early church.⁵³ Thomas's doubt is portrayed as an inappropriate curiosity (*AJ* 90.15–16; Tertullian, *Prax.* 25), a sign of inferiority (Valentinians *apud* Tertullian, *Res.* 34; Heracleonites *apud* Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 10.43.301–302), a sin that requires confession (*Ep. Apos.* 12.1), and a transgression of the biblical prohibition against putting the Lord to the test (*AJ* 90.21–22; *Prot. Jas.* 19.3–20.1).⁵⁴ Given these negative perceptions, it is not surprising that proto-orthodox apologists often omit (Theophilus, *Autol.* 1.14; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.7.1; 5.31.2; Tertullian, *An.* 17.14) Thomas's disbelief. In one instance, Origen explicitly denies that Thomas was disbelieving and proposes a more positive reading of Thomas's demand for proof.⁵⁵

More importantly, the conclusion that Thomas draws from the touch test is precisely the opposite of antidocetic apologetic. Antidocetic writers claim that the touch motif convinces the apostles that Jesus has “truly risen in the flesh.”⁵⁶ But nothing in Thomas's response to the touch invitation confirms the reality of Jesus's flesh or humanity. Thomas's only response is to proclaim that the risen One is divine (“My lord and my God,” v. 28).

There is one other *redactional* detail in John's account that still needs to be considered: the references to Jesus's wounds, particularly the wound in Jesus's side in John 20:25, 27. Whereas the Lukan Jesus draws attention to his hands and *feet*, Thomas and the Johannine Jesus refer to “the marks of the nails” in

⁵¹ Oddly, Grass himself recognizes the author's critique of the demand for proof (*Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 71), but still considers the proof evidence of antidocetic apologetic.

⁵² The echo of 4:48 in 20:25 also tells against Richter's suggestion that the Thomas pericope was created by a later, antidocetic redactor (*Studien*, 180–84). The similar phrasing *prima facie* suggests that the evangelist himself created the Thomas pericope (see further Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology*, 139–43).

⁵³ Contra Dunderberg, “Conflict,” 65. See further discussion in Chapters 4, 5, 7, and 8.

⁵⁴ Similarly Chrysostom, *Hom. Jo.* 87.1. See also Most, *Doubting Thomas*, 143–44. Most provides a number of examples of later church fathers who attempt to re-characterize Thomas's doubt more positively “because they are uncomfortable with the notion that one of Jesus's disciples might actually not have believed in him.”

⁵⁵ *Fr. Jo.* 106 (see Excursus in Chapter 5). In a later work, Origen admits Thomas's disbelief but limits its scope (*Cels.* 2.61). Compare also the attempts to rehabilitate Thomas in *Acts Thom.* 81.1; Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. Jo.* 12.1.

⁵⁶ E.g., *Ep. Apos.* 12.1; [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 9.6–7; cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. Jo.* 12.1.

Jesus's hands and to his *side*.⁵⁷ The latter are sometimes judged antidocetic. But given that so much of the story cuts against the grain of antidocetic polemic, this seems improbable. In Chapter 10, I will propose another explanation that, in my view, is more consistent with John's redactional interests.

9.3.4 The Portrayal of the Touch Test in Luke's Narrative

If John's account is incongruous with antidocetic apologetic, Luke's treatment of the touch test is utterly at odds with it. Whereas John implies that the test is unnecessary and inappropriate, Luke actually depicts it as a failure: the apostles "were still disbelieving" (24:41).⁵⁸ This, in my view, is one of the most telling indications that Luke is *not* combating docetism. Modern interpreters frequently overlook this one simple fact: in Luke's story, the apostles are given the opportunity to touch the risen Jesus and are still not convinced that his body is real. The notion that a failed touch test can function as an apologetic proof against docetism is nonsensical. Luke 24:39–41 is about as far removed from antidocetic apologetic as a resurrection narrative can get without actually advocating docetism. As we have seen, the docetist who wrote *AJ* 93.1–4 took advantage of the ambiguity of Luke's narrative at this point by claiming that the apostle John attempted to touch Jesus but found him to be immaterial and bodiless. In order to make Luke's narrative amenable to their arguments, antidocetic writers must not only embellish Luke's story by adding a notice that the apostles did indeed touch Jesus. They must also fundamentally contradict Luke's account of the touch proof itself: whereas Luke portrays the proof as unsuccessful, antidocetic writers insist it was successful. This is not a minor enhancement of Luke's account but a radical reversal of it at a crucial point. The significance of this change should not be underestimated. The touch proof has long been a key point of comparison that has led modern commentators to

⁵⁷ John's crucifixion narrative is distinctive among the Gospels in that it is the only one to mention the piercing of Jesus side with a spear (19:34–37).

⁵⁸ Luke's gloss, ἀπὸ τῆς χαρᾶς ("from joy"), may provide an excuse for the apostles but it does not negate their disbelief entirely. *Pace* Bock, who proposes that v. 41a is rhetorical and "does not express doubt" (*Luke*, 2:1934). The fact that ἔτι modifies ἀπιστούντων militates against any suggestion that "from joy" means that their disbelieving is really believing. The identical expression in Acts 12:14 ("she did not open the gate *from joy* [ἀπὸ τῆς χαρᾶς]) does not imply that Rhoda actually did open the gate for Peter. Nor does the similar expression in Luke 22:45 ("from sorrow [ἀπὸ τῆς λύπης]) mean that the disciples were not really asleep.

Moreover, Luke's θαυμάζω in 24:41 is "not to be confused with faith" (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation* [2 vols.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990], 1:279; cf. [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 3.18: "Let those outside the faith not marvel [θαυμαζέτωσαν]"). Rather, in Luke-Acts this word frequently denotes a lack of understanding or hostility to Jesus and his mission (Luke 4:22; 8:25; 9:43; 11:37; 20:26; 24:14; Acts 3:12; 4:13; 13:41). See further Dillon, *Eye-Witnesses*, 66–67, 196–197.

conclude that Luke 24 is antidocetic, and yet this is the very aspect of Luke's narrative that antidocetic writers consistently, and for obvious reasons, feel compelled to overturn. Consequently, the apostles' disbelieving response to touch proof in Luke 24:41 is a *crux interpretum*.

9.4 The Doubt Motif in Luke 24:41

9.4.1 The Reception of the Doubt of the Apostles and Luke 24:41

The first chapter of this study has documented the consistently negative views of doubt and unbelief in early Christian literature. No extant Christian text prior to 250 CE assesses doubt, unbelief, or skepticism as a positive indication of mental superiority or a lack of gullibility.⁵⁹ On the contrary, they are understood as signs of instability and foolishness, condemned as a moral shortcoming, and identified as a cause of shame.

Passages in the Gospels that attribute doubt or unbelief to the apostles proved controversial because they raised questions about the character of those who were considered the pillars of the church. As we have seen in previous chapters, some gnostics exploited the post-resurrection doubt of the apostles as a chance to criticize the apostles as spiritually inferior, which in turn provided a justification for gnostic claims to a secret revelation that differed from the publicly known apostolic tradition. Others saw the doubt, including Luke 24:41, as an opportunity to promote docetic Christology and/or to expound gnostic mythology.

By contrast, many proto-orthodox authors deliberately omitted the doubt of the apostles. The few exceptions all attempt to save face for the apostles by describing the doubt as short-lived and/or by portraying the apostles more positively through re-characterization. Indeed, these authors are willing to mention only the *initial* doubts of the apostles, i.e., either initial doubts in response to the testimony of others or initial doubts upon *seeing* the risen Jesus. No early, proto-orthodox writer willingly admits that the apostles continued in disbelief after being invited to touch the risen Jesus as stated in Luke 24:41.⁶⁰ While many refrain from appealing to the touch test, those who do refer to it all manage to transform its failure in Luke into a success. Some antidocetic accounts (Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3.2; [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 9; *Ep. Apos.* 11–12) directly contradict Luke by claiming that the touch proof convinced the apostles.⁶¹ Others subvert

⁵⁹ For a discussion of the one possible exception, see Excursus in Chapter 5.

⁶⁰ Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.38 is not really an exception. Tertullian is responding to Marcion's own use of Luke 24:41, and the context makes clear that Tertullian admits the apostles' disbelief only reluctantly (see Chapter 6).

⁶¹ Ignatius and [Ps.-]Justin make this change at the cost of internal inconsistency within their own narratives (see Chapters 3 and 6).

Luke 24:41 by means of a specious translation. The Arabic Harmony, the Old Syriac, and the Persian Gospel Harmony all rephrase Luke's "they were *still* (ἔτι) disbelieving" to indicate that the apostles are disbelieving only up "until" the point when Jesus invites touch, but not afterwards.⁶²

The disbelief in Luke 24:41 thus proved to be particularly problematic in the history of reception. On the one hand, it gave the impression that the apostles were particularly stubborn or hardhearted in their unbelief. They are given multiple types of evidence: the empty tomb, the testimony of others, visual sight of the risen one, and finally, first-hand tactile proof, but continue to disbelieve. On the other hand, their disbelief, because it implies the failure of the touch test, became a liability for antidocetic polemic in that it made Luke's narrative more vulnerable to heretical interpretation.

9.4.2 *The Doubt Motif in Lukan Redaction*

Modern scholars have frequently suggested that the post-resurrection doubt is an apologetic device that enhances the credibility of the apostolic witness by portraying the apostles as having a lack of gullibility or naïveté, but this theory stands in contrast to the judgment of the Lukan Jesus who proclaims the Emmaus disciples "foolish" and "slow of heart" for not believing (Luke 24:25). Luke's views are consistent with those of the rest of ancient Christianity: doubt and disbelief are not indications of a wise and respectable skepticism (as they are today) but of foolish hardheartedness. Elsewhere Luke attributes unbelief to stubborn, unreceptive hearts (Acts 19:9; 28:24, 27), associates it with satanic influence (Luke 8:12; 22:31–32; Acts 26:18), and portrays it as worthy of punishment and condemnation (Luke 1:20; 12:46; Acts 13:41). All of this suggests that modern theories of a positive, apologetic role for the doubt motif in Luke 24 are an anachronistic imposition of a post-Enlightenment value system onto an ancient Christian text that stands diametrical to such a system. Luke, as will become clear in a moment, sees the doubt as a liability rather than an asset to his apologetic program.

The notion that Luke invented the disbelief in v. 41 runs contrary to Luke's own redactional tendencies and to his high view of the apostles. As is well known, Luke views the apostles as uniquely authoritative witnesses to Jesus.⁶³ Luke therefore has ample motive to paint the apostles in the best possible light that the tradition will allow. Not surprisingly, Lukan redaction frequently

⁶² See Chapter 8.

⁶³ See, e.g., Schuyler Brown, *Apostasy and Perseverance in the Theology of Luke* (AnBib 36; Roma: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), 53–57; Samuel Byrskog, "The Apostolate in the Early Church: From Luke-Acts to the Pauline Tradition," *SEA* 76 (2011): 161–68.

softens the negative, and sometimes harsh, characterizations of the apostles in Mark.⁶⁴

Luke omits a number of Mark's depictions of the apostles' failures in understanding, e.g., Mark 4:13 ("Do you not understand?"); 6:52 ("they did not understand ... but their hearts were hardened"); 8:17–21 ("Do you not yet ... understand? Are your hearts hardened ...?"), 33 ("Get behind me, Satan!"); 9:9–10 ("questioning what this rising from the dead meant"). When Luke mentions the disciples' failure to understand the passion predictions, he inserts an excuse, e.g., Luke 9:45 ("it was concealed from them that they might not perceive it"); 18:34 ("this saying was hidden from them").⁶⁵ While Mark lays the blame for their failures on hardened hearts, Luke attributes their incomprehension to a supernatural cause.⁶⁶

Luke's re-characterization of the apostles also portrays their lack of faith in a more positive light. Whereas Mark 4:40 depicts the disciples as cowardly (*δειλοί*) and without faith ("Do you not yet have faith?"), Luke omits the accusation of cowardice and rephrases Jesus's question in such a way as to imply that the disciples already have faith but have temporarily misplaced it ("Where is your faith?" Luke 8:25; contrast also Matt 8:26).⁶⁷ Similarly, a Lukan addition portrays the apostles humbly asking Jesus to "increase" their "faith" (17:5), which again presupposes that the apostles have some faith already.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ So Brown, *Apostasy*, 57–81; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:95–96; Richard N. Longenecker, "Taking up the Cross Daily: Discipleship in Luke-Acts," in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 54–57; Culpepper, *Luke*, 27.

⁶⁵ Mark does not explicitly say that the apostles misunderstand the third passion prediction, but their lack of understanding is implicit in James's and John's presumptuous request to sit at the right and left hand of Jesus (Mark 10:35–41). Luke omits this scandalous episode, replaces it with a comment that the disciples did not understand, and then provides his customary excuse (Luke 18:34).

⁶⁶ Later church fathers also appeal to the divine plan to excuse Thomas's doubt (Most, *Doubling Thomas*, 144).

⁶⁷ Marshall, *Luke*, 334; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:730; Evans, *Saint Luke*, 381; Bovon, *Luke*, 1:318. Luke's attempt to re-characterize the apostles in this passage can also be seen in his omission of the disciples' disrespectful question ("Do you not care...?" [Mark 4:38//Luke 8:24]).

⁶⁸ So already Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 32.174. Jesus's response in Luke 17:6 does not reject the apostles' assumption that they have at least some faith, however small (so Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* [New York: Crossroad, 1982], 161; Nolland, *Luke*, 3:838–39; Bovon, *Luke*, 2:496; David E. Garland, *Luke* [ZECNT 3; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011], 680–81; see also the recent analysis in James W. Scott, "The Misunderstood Mustard Seed: Matt 17:20b; Luke 17:6," *TrinJ* 36 [2015]: 25–48).

On Lukan redaction in 17:5, see Marshall, *Luke*, 644; Jeremias, *Sprache*, 262; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1142–43; Nolland, *Luke*, 3:838; Bovon, *Luke*, 2:496. The request for increased faith in Luke 17:5 contrasts with the Matthean parallel, in which Jesus accuses the apostles of having "little faith" (Matt 17:20).

Additionally, just prior to the prediction of Peter's denial of Christ, Luke inserts a saying in which Christ discloses his prayer that Peter's "faith may not fail" when Satan sifts the apostles like wheat (22:31–32).⁶⁹ Luke thus draws attention not to the magnitude of Peter's failure but to the fact that his faith ultimately survives.⁷⁰ Luke also refrains from depicting the other apostles as losing their faith by systematically removing all references to the disciples' abandonment of Jesus at his arrest.⁷¹ Consequently, their faith will at most only need to be "strengthened" (22:32).⁷²

In sum, doubt or disbelief are never a positive character trait in Luke-Acts, and Luke's consistent practice is to defend, minimize, or omit instances of the apostles' unbelief or misunderstanding that he finds in his sources.⁷³ The notion

⁶⁹ The language of 22:32 and the theology of 22:31–32 are both Lukan. Prayer is a widely recognized theme in Lukan redaction, and Luke elsewhere depicts Satan as the enemy of faith (Luke 8:12; Acts 26:18). If Luke is drawing on a traditional source in vv. 31–32, he has chosen material that fits his redactional program.

⁷⁰ Similarly Brown, *Apostasy*, 69–70; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1122. Luke deemphasizes Peter's failure in another way as well. He replaces Peter's initial arrogant boast ("Even though they all fall away, I will not", Mark 14:29) and subsequent bravado ("Even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you," Mark 14:31) with a single, less insistent statement ("Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death," Luke 22:33). The latter reflects Lukan language and anticipates Peter's imprisonments in Acts (and probably also his eventual martyrdom). This makes Peter's words ring true in the time of the reader, even if in the original context Peter is not yet as "ready" as he thinks himself to be (similarly Nolland, *Luke*, 3:1073).

⁷¹ Luke omits Jesus's quotation of Zechariah's prophecy that predicts the flight of the disciples (Mark 14:27). Luke's concern to shield the apostles is so strong here that it overrides his normal redactional interest in the scriptural necessity of the events associated with the passion narrative. In fact, Luke replaces Jesus's prediction of their abandonment with a statement that affirms the disciples' faithfulness to Jesus: "You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Luke is also careful to omit the hypothetical suggestion in Mark 14:29 that the other apostles will be scandalized. Luke later omits the actual flight of the disciples in Mark 14:50–52. Moreover, Luke inserts a phrase at the end of the crucifixion narrative ("all who knew him personally [πάντες οἱ γνωστοὶ αὐτοῦ]," 23:49) that suggests that the male disciples, and not just the women as in Mark 15:40, remained and watched the events of his crucifixion from afar. However ambiguous γνωστοί may be here, πάντες makes it impossible to exclude the apostles.

⁷² It is not clear that the phrase "strengthen your brothers" (22:32) refers to the other apostles. It may instead refer to the broader Christian community (Brown, *Apostasy*, 72–74).

⁷³ Luke's portrait of the apostles in Acts is also telling. Absent from Acts is any further reference to the apostles' failures or their lack of faith. This silence is particularly striking in the speeches of Acts, passages which are often thought to function as Luke's most direct appeal to the reader. If Luke thought the skepticism of the apostles had apologetic value, Luke could have had Peter insist in his speeches: "We are not naïve fisherman who mistook an old wives' tale (cf. Luke 24:11) or a ghost story (cf. Luke 24:37) for an actual resurrection.

that Luke invented the disbelief in Luke 24:41 for apologetic purposes is therefore implausible not only in light of the uniformly negative view of doubt in the ancient church but also in view of Luke's own redactional tendencies.⁷⁴ The latter leads us instead to expect Luke to provide an excuse for the apostles' disbelief. And this is precisely what he seems to have done in 24:41: "but they were still disbelieving *from joy* (ἀπὸ τῆς χαρᾶς)."⁷⁵ As commentators often observe, ἀπὸ τῆς χαρᾶς resembles a number of other instances of Lukan redaction.⁷⁶ This gloss is unnecessary if disbelief is an apologetic enhancement designed to demonstrate the apostles' lack of gullibility. The excuse suggests instead that disbelief was already present in Luke's source and that Luke perceived it to be a liability rather than an asset to his apologetic program. The doubt of the apostles is not here or elsewhere an apologetic creation; it is rather *the problem that called for an apologetic ("from joy") to be created.*⁷⁷

You can trust us. We didn't believe until we had first-hand proof for ourselves, and even then we were skeptical." Of course, nothing even remotely resembling this kind of argument appears in Peter's speeches. At most, the speeches in Acts make passing references to the appearance narratives. They never mention doubt, much less appeal to it as a guarantee of the veracity of their claims.

⁷⁴ Contra Dillon, *Eye-Witnesses*, 192. The εἶτι + genitive absolute construction in 24:41 suggests not that Luke inserted an extra instance of disbelief but that Luke impressed his own characteristic style upon the tradition at this point. The absence of the doubt motif from the parallel in John 20:20 is the result of John's omission (see note below).

⁷⁵ This addition tells against Crossan's doubt-as-slander theory (see Chapter 2).

⁷⁶ Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1576; Bovon, *Luke*, 3:386. ἀπό as an indication of cause appears in Lukan redaction, e.g., Luke 21:26 ("from fear [ἀπὸ φόβου]"; cf. Mark 13:24–25); 22:45 ("from grief [ἀπὸ τῆς λύπης]"; cf. Mark 14:37–38, 40). The last example is particularly relevant because it provides an excuse for the apostles. ἀπό as cause also occurs in Lukan composition, e.g., Acts 11:19 ("because of the persecution [ἀπὸ τῆς θλίψεως]"). Further instances are in passages that are unique to Luke-Acts: Luke 19:3 ("because of the crowd" [ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄχλου]); Acts 12:14 ("from joy" [ἀπὸ τῆς χαρᾶς]); 22:11 ("because of the brightness [ἀπὸ τῆς δόξης]"). The phrase in Acts 12:14, which is identical to that in Luke 24:41, also excuses the character's actions.

⁷⁷ This is not to say that Luke simply invented the joy. Judging from the parallel in John 20:20, the motif of joy was already present in the appearance tradition at this point. Commentators have often noted that the demonstration of Jesus's hands and side in John 20:20 is unmotivated, and so have argued that the tradition behind John 20:19–23 probably also mentioned doubt (e.g., Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:1032–33; Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:322, 329–30; Lindars, *John*, 613). Therefore, both the doubt and joy were already traditional for Luke. Catchpole's insinuation that Luke added the joy to provide a "vener of piety" (*Resurrection People*, 89) is unwarranted. Luke himself may be responsible for explicitly linking the two motifs in a causal relationship, but the simultaneous mixture of doubt and joy was a known psychological phenomenon in the ancient world (Bovon, *Luke*, 3:392).

9.5 The Eating “Proof”

9.5.1 The Eating “Proof” as Traditional Even among Docetists

The fact that a number of post-resurrection appearance accounts involve or assume a meal setting suggests that the setting itself is traditional.⁷⁸ However, Luke’s group appearance narrative is the only one in which Jesus himself is explicitly said to eat food (Luke 24:43). Many take this as an indication that the tradition has been modified for antidocetic purposes, either by Luke himself or by one of his predecessors. Though plausible at first glance, this theory proves untenable under further scrutiny because it is based on a misunderstanding of both docetic and antidocetic polemic.

It is important to recognize that docetists accepted the meal as traditional but reinterpreted it along docetic lines. There is no evidence that any docetist ever accused the evangelists of antidocetic invention when they mention Jesus eating food either before or after the resurrection. Although Marcion and his followers claimed that the Gospel had been corrupted, they did not classify Jesus’s “desire to eat the Passover” (Luke 22:15) or his post-resurrection meal among the alleged interpolations. Instead they retained both as authentic to the original Gospel.⁷⁹ Indeed, the meal in Luke 24:41–43 is so firmly established as authoritative among Marcionites that they appeal to it as a proof-text for the legitimacy of eating fish despite their commitment to vegetarianism.⁸⁰ Marcion’s retention of the post-resurrection meal, despite his willingness to excise other passages that he judged to be later interpolations, is itself a testimony against modern theories that the meal was invented for antidocetic purposes.⁸¹ Neither Marcion nor his followers thought Jesus’s eating and drinking posed any real problem for their docetic Christology. They simply reinterpreted these stories as instances of mere “show-eating.”⁸²

Nor was this practice of affirming but docetizing Jesus’s meals limited to the Marcionites. According to the *Adamantius Dialogue*, Bardesanites and other unnamed docetists appealed to standard Hellenistic reinterpretations of the meal of the angels in Gen 18 as a precedent for their docetic reading of Gospels passages in which Jesus eats (5.4–5). As we have seen, [Ps.-]Justin’s opponents, who held to a different type of docetism, reinterpreted Luke 24:41–

⁷⁸ E.g., Luke 24:13–35; 24:36–49; Acts 1:4; 10:41; John 21:9–14; Mark 16:14–18; *Gos. Heb.* apud Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 2.

⁷⁹ Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.40.1; 4.43.8. Marcion’s retention of Luke 22:15 contrasts with the *Gospel of the Ebionites*, which negates the saying by inserting μή: “I do not (μή) earnestly desire to eat meat with you this Passover” (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.22.4).

⁸⁰ E.g., Eznik, *Deo.* 407–15; Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.14.

⁸¹ See Chapter 6.

⁸² Ephrem, *Hymn. c. haer.* 36.12–13; *Comm. Diat.* 21.3; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Hom. cat.* 5.8; cf. Tertullian, *Marc.* 3.8.4; 3.9.1–7. See further Chapter 6.

43 along the same lines, arguing for an angelomorphic resurrection and claiming that the risen Jesus was “no longer in the flesh but gave merely the appearance of being in the flesh.” Other church fathers attribute the same hermeneutical strategy to the Manicheans and to certain Valentinians.⁸³ Though the precise characteristics of Valentinus’s Christology are debated, he also seems to make a semi-docetic claim about Jesus’s meals.⁸⁴ According to Clement of Alexandria, Valentinus attributed to Christ a “psychic body” and interpreted Jesus’s meals as follows: “Jesus performed divinity, eating and drinking in a special way,” such that the food was not corrupted inside of him or excreted from his body.⁸⁵ Additionally, as I have argued in Chapter 3, the early docetists who troubled Ignatius of Antioch were probably already aware of the tradition that “Jesus ate and drank” after the resurrection, but claimed that “these things were done by our Lord *in appearance only* (τὸ δοκεῖν)” (*Smyrn.* 3.3–4.2).

In any case, it is clear that a wide variety of docetists accepted as authoritative traditions in which Jesus ate food, including the one preserved in Luke 24:41b–43. If the idea that Jesus ate food after the resurrection were a late, antidocetic invention, docetists could have simply rejected it as such. The fact that docetists chose a strategy of reinterpretation rather than one of outright rejection suggests that Jesus’s post-resurrection meal was established in the appearance tradition prior to the rise of docetism.⁸⁶ If there is no evidence that anyone in the ancient world, not even the docetists themselves, thought that Jesus’s post-resurrection meal was an antidocetic invention, then modern accusations of antidocetic embellishment in Luke 24:41b–43 begin to look anachronistic.

9.5.2 Luke vs. Antidocetic Writers on the Eating Proof

Since both the docetists and their proto-orthodox opponents accept the post-resurrection meal as belonging to early tradition, the ancient debate over

⁸³ Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Hom. cat.* 5.8; Titus of Bostra, *C. Manich.* 4.34.

⁸⁴ On Valentinus’s docetism, see Chapter 2.

⁸⁵ Clement, *Strom.* 3.17 [102.3] (τὸ σῶμα τὸ ψυκικόν); 3.8 [59.3] (θεόητα Ἰησοῦς εἰργάζετο, ἤσθιεν καὶ ἔπινεν ἰδίως). It is difficult to determine whether the quotation of Valentinus in 3.59 refers to a post-resurrection scene. Valentinus refers in the previous sentence to Jesus having “endured all things,” which may be a reference to the passion and crucifixion and so imply a post-resurrection setting. On the other hand, the imperfect form of the verbs for eating and drinking could be construed as customary or iterative, and so a pre-crucifixion setting might be a better fit. Of course, an iterative imperfect does not rule out a post-resurrection setting, especially since Acts portrays Jesus as appearing over a period of forty days, and some gnostics, including Valentinians, extend this period to 18 months or longer.

⁸⁶ In Chapter 7, I noted one other possible way in which the meal tradition may have been docetized. *AJ* 93.4–10 alludes to the Lukan motif of Jesus dining at the houses of Pharisees but indicates that Jesus gave his own portion to others (93.4–10). The purpose may have been to deny implicitly that Jesus himself ate.

docetism is not (as in the modern debate) about the authenticity of the meal scene, but about how the meal is to be interpreted. This may in part be why so many proto-orthodox authors do not even bother mentioning the eating proof. If docetists are able to explain it away as show-eating, some may have thought the meal a moot point. Of the many pre-250 CE texts that defend the resurrection of the flesh and/or refute docetic Christology only three appeal to the post-resurrection meal as a proof of Jesus's physicality. In each case, the authors are not simply asserting that Jesus ate but are making an exegetical claim about how the story is to be interpreted. As we have seen in Chapters 3 and 6, each author attempts to counter (or perhaps in Ignatius's case, to preempt) docetic interpretations of Jesus's eating by inserting interpretive glosses that ensure an alternative, antidocetic reading of the meal tradition:

Docetic Interpretation	Antidocetic Interpretation
...our Lord did these things <i>in appearance only...</i> (Ignatius, <i>Smyrn.</i> 4.2) ⁸⁷	After the resurrection, he ate and drank with them <i>as [does] one who is in the flesh.</i> (Ignatius, <i>Smyrn.</i> 3.3)
The Savior said, "They neither marry, Nor are given in marriage, but will be as angels in heaven." ... <i>The angels...have neither flesh, nor do they eat,... so that neither will there be a resurrection of the flesh...</i> Even Jesus himself appeared <i>as only spiritual, no longer in flesh, but presented the mere appearance of the flesh.</i> ([Ps.-]Justin, <i>Res.</i> 2.14)	They invited him <i>to eat</i> with them <i>that also through this they might come to know with certainty that he truly rose bodily.</i> And he ate honeycomb and fish. <i>And having thus shown them that there truly is a resurrection of the flesh...</i> ([Ps.-]Justin, <i>Res.</i> 9.7)
He <i>showed only images....</i> He ate <i>and did not eat.</i> (Ephrem, <i>Hymn. c. haer.</i> 36.12–13) ⁸⁸	He asked them [the disciples] for food <i>so as to show that he even had teeth.</i> (Tertullian, <i>Marc.</i> 4.43.8)

⁸⁷ In context, "these things" includes minimally the things done by the risen Jesus, but probably covers Jesus's life, ministry, and suffering as well (see further Chapter 3).

⁸⁸ I have chosen to include Ephrem's rather than Tertullian's account of the Marcionite position. Whereas Ephrem quotes the Marcionites directly, Tertullian seems to be uncertain as to exactly how Marcion docetized the eating passages. While some Marcionites appeal to the Hellenistic-Jewish precedent of docetizing the meal of the angels in Gen 18 (Tertullian, *Marc.* 3.9.1–7; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Hom. cat.* 5.8; Ephrem, *Comm. Diat.* 21.3), Tertullian doubts that Marcion himself employed this precedent because it seems inconsistent with Marcion's rejection of the God of the OT (*Carn. Chr.* 3.6–9). Elsewhere Tertullian claims that Marcion rooted his docetic interpretation in philosophical arguments about the unreliability of the senses (*An.* 17). See further Chapter 6.

By contrast, Luke provides a simple report of the meal with no explicit interpretive glosses such as we find among antidocetic writers:

...he said to them, “Do you have anything to eat here?”
They gave him a piece of broiled fish,
and taking [it] in their presence he ate. (Luke 24:41b-43)⁸⁹

Because all evidence suggests that the ancient docetic/antidocetic debate was not about whether the meal properly belongs to the appearance tradition but about how the meal should be interpreted, Luke’s lack of commentary is a strong indication that he is not participating in this debate.⁹⁰ Since docetists accept the meal as part of the authoritative tradition, an antidocetic writer cannot simply say, as Luke does here, that Jesus ate and assume that it is self-explanatory. This is why Ignatius, [Ps.-]Justin, and Tertullian all must add interpretive glosses to Luke’s tradition.

My contention that Luke’s simple report of the meal is insufficient as an antidocetic argument can be examined from another angle as well. Commentators who argue that Luke has Jesus eat in order to deny a docetic claim, that Jesus is an angel, regularly cite such texts as Tob 12:19; Philo, *Abr.* 118;

⁸⁹ The preposition ἐνώπιον (“in the presence of”) in 24:43 is characteristic of Lukan style. Some see this as evidence that Luke is implicitly presenting the meal as an antidocetic proof, but there are at least two problems with this interpretation. First, ἐνώπιον does not elsewhere in Luke-Acts have the probative sense implied by some translations of Luke 24:43, e.g., “as they watched” (CEV, NLT), “before their eyes” (Phillips). And the two closest parallels that refer to eating, Luke 13:26 (“We ate and drank in your presence [ἐνώπιόν σου], and you taught in our streets”) and Acts 27:35–36 (“He took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all [ἐνώπιον πάντων], he broke it and began to eat. Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves.”), clearly involve a shared meal. Acts 10:41 also interprets the post-resurrection meal as a shared meal. It is telling that the significance attributed to the meal in Acts 10:41 is not Christological but ecclesiological; it supports the apostles’ special authority as those who experienced the intimacy of a shared meal with the risen Lord (see further Chapter 10).

Second, even if ἐνώπιον in Luke 24:43 is exceptional and is to be understood in a probative sense, it need not be antidocetic. No antidocetic account of the meal includes this term. And whereas the antidocetic glosses mentioned above all explicitly indicate the purpose of the meal is to demonstrate the physicality of Jesus’s body, Luke’s ἐνώπιον offers no such specificity. Luke, in fact, offers no indication that the meal convinced the apostles of anything. It is Luke’s lack of explicit commentary that allows both Marcionites and Clement of Alexandria to interpret the meal as a proof not that Jesus had flesh, but that Jesus permitted the consumption of fish. Of course, the same lack of specificity also allows antidocetic writers to claim the meal as antidocetic proof.

⁹⁰ It will not do to object that Luke (or one of his predecessors) may have invented the post-resurrection meal to refute earlier docetists who knew nothing of a meal. If this were the case, we might expect docetists to reject the meal outright as a late interpolation. None do. Rather, a wide variety of docetists presuppose the meal was part of the original tradition and interpret it docetically.

Josephus, *A.J.* 1.197; *T. Ab.*[A] 4.9; *Tg. Neof.* Gen 18:8 as proof of a widespread belief that angels do not eat.⁹¹ The problem with this is that each of these proof-texts is an example of docetization of an earlier tradition in which angels are explicitly said to eat. Therefore, if we conclude with these modern commentators that Luke is familiar with the notion, conveyed by these texts, that angels do not eat, then we must also conclude that Luke is familiar with (and perhaps even agrees with) the Hellenistic-Jewish strategy, exhibited in these same texts, of docetizing stories in which angels are said to eat. In this case Luke could hardly fail to realize that his own narrative, which is suffused with stock angelophany motifs (e.g., peace greeting, standing position, sudden disappearances), could be docetized when it states that Jesus ate broiled fish. This is, after all, precisely the same food that Raphael was said to eat in Tobit 6:5 but is later reinterpreted as angelic *phantasia*:

They gave him a piece of *broiled fish* (ἰχθύος ὀπτοῦ), and...he *ate* (ἔφαγεν). (Luke 24:42–43)

Then *broiling the fish* (ἰχθὺν ὀπτήσαντες), they *ate* (ἔφαγον). (Tob 6:5 [G¹])

I did not eat or drink, but *you were seeing a vision* (ὄρασιν ὑμεῖς ἐθεωρεῖτε). (Tob 12:19 [G¹])

Though Luke is presumably aware of this standard practice of docetizing the meals of angels, he adds no interpretive comment to guard against a similar docetization of Jesus's post-resurrection meal.⁹²

⁹¹ E.g., Davies, "Docetism." 18 n. 1; Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 228; Craig A. Evans, *Luke* (NIBCNT 3; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1990), 355; Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts*, 64–69; Catchpole, *Resurrection People*, 89–91; similarly Edwards, *Luke*, 732.

⁹² It is improbable that Luke's lack of antidocetic commentary is a mere oversight in a polemic against angel Christology. Luke is clearly familiar with the notion, found in Tobit 12:19, that angels can do things that are not real but only seen in a vision (ὄραμα βλέπειν) (Acts 12:9). And contrary to antidocetic writers, Luke seems to encourage an angelomorphic interpretation of the resurrection. Luke strengthens the comparison between the resurrection state and angels in his version of Jesus's refutation of the Sadducees. Whereas in Mark 12:25 those who are resurrected will be "like angels (ὡς ἄγγελοι)," in Luke 20:36 they will be "equal to angels (ἰσάγγελοι)." The reader is therefore led to expect that the risen Jesus will in some sense be "equal to angels." And indeed, Luke fully meets this expectation by including – again contrary to the antidocetic writers we have examined – a number of standard angelophany motifs in the last chapter of his gospel.

Additionally, when the Pharisees suggest in Acts 23:9 that the risen Jesus is "a spirit or an angel," Luke makes no effort to refute this view. In fact, Luke portrays the Pharisees' view in a favorable light in this passage by aligning his hero Paul with the Pharisees rather than with the Sadducees (23:6–8). The absence of any antidocetic polemic in this passage is especially telling because Luke, in a rare aside to the reader, directly addresses the issue of conflicting doctrines of resurrection. Luke is clearly not worried that his readers might fall prey to docetic teaching. The most plausible explanation for Luke's silence here is that he has never encountered or even heard of docetic Christology.

Nor does he give any indication that the meal convinced the apostles of Jesus's physicality. There is nothing in Luke's account of the meal to prevent a docetist from arguing as follows: "Because Jesus was an angel like Raphael, he did not really eat broiled fish. Like Tobias, the disciples were seeing only a vision."⁹³ And as we have seen, this is not far from the way a number of early docetists actually do interpret Luke 24.⁹⁴

Furthermore, in the place where antidocetic writers normally provide a comment to guard against docetization of the meal, i.e., immediately following it, Luke inserts a statement that is alien to antidocetic apologetic: "He ate and said to them, 'these are my words that I spoke to you *while I was still with you...*'" (v. 43–44). The phrase "while I was still with you" could easily give the impression that the same Jesus who is said to have just eaten fish in their presence is nevertheless not actually there!⁹⁵ As I noted previously, at least one gnostic sect exploited this ambiguity by taking "while I was still *with you*" to mean "when I was still *in the body*" so as to suggest that the risen Jesus was bodiless.⁹⁶ Indeed, some modern commentators take the phrase this way.⁹⁷ More significantly, the phrase "while I was still with you" is redactional, which means that Luke has made a conscious choice to include it.⁹⁸ All of this is *not* to say that Luke was advocating some sort of naïve docetism such as Käsemann proposed for John.⁹⁹ But I find it highly implausible that an antidocetic author

⁹³ Cf. Nolland, *Luke*, 3:1215: "Eating cannot of itself 'prove' Jesus's genuine material humanity (the angelic figures representing the presence of the Lord in Gen 18 manage quite a substantial meal [and. cf 19:3], while in Tobit the angel Raphael gave every appearance of eating and drinking [see Tob 12:19])."

⁹⁴ At least one modern interpreter also argues that Luke himself did not intend Jesus's meal to be interpreted literally (O'Collins, "Did Jesus Eat?").

⁹⁵ On the awkwardness of Luke's wording, see also Marshall, "Resurrection." 92–93; idem, *Luke*, 904–5; Johnson, *Luke*, 402.

⁹⁶ See discussion on the *Letter of Peter to Philip* (NHC VIII,2) in Chapter 5. Cf. also Bede, *Hom. ev.* 11.15: "He said, 'These are the words which I spoke to you when I was still with you.' That means, 'When I still had a corruptible and mortal body like yours'" (trans. Arthur A. Just, Jr., *Luke* [ACCS New Testament 3; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003], 388)].

⁹⁷ David L. Tiede (*Luke* [ACNT; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988], 441) paraphrases: "was *bodily* still with you" (emphasis added). Similarly, Edwards (*Luke*, 773) understands the phrase to mean that Jesus is no longer with the disciples "in his earthly form." Cf. Johnson, *Luke*, 402: "The oddness of this last phrase indicates the difficulty for the narrator, who must at once emphasize that Jesus is truly 'present' to them, and also that he is not 'with them' in the same way he was before the resurrection."

⁹⁸ Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1580; Marshall, *Luke*, 904–5. Alsup, though he bucks the consensus and finds considerable non-Lukan material in vv. 44–49, nevertheless agrees that "while I was with you" is a Lukan construction (*Appearance Stories*, 185). See also the similar redactional phrase in Luke 24:6–7 (cf. Mark 16:6–7).

⁹⁹ Luke no doubt intended the phrase ἔτι ὄν σὺν ὑμῖν to have the same meaning as the parallel, also redactional, in Luke 24:6 ("Remember how he told you *while he was still in*

deliberately included, let alone composed, this ambiguous phrase – one that has since proven itself susceptible to docetic interpretation – and allowed it to stand unqualified.¹⁰⁰ A more plausible explanation is that Luke wrote in an unguarded manner because he was not yet aware of the threat of docetism.

There is a third problem with the theory that Luke included the meal for the purposes of antidocetic apologetic. Commentators who maintain this theory generally take it as a given that the eating proof convinces the apostles and removes all of their remaining doubts.¹⁰¹ But does it? Luke’s account gives no indication that Jesus’s consumption of fish convinces the apostles of anything. If Luke wants his readers to think otherwise, he does not say so. In fact, Luke’s silence on this matter is anticlimactic.¹⁰² Given that Luke repeatedly records unbelieving responses to the resurrection (vv. 11, 25, 37–38, and especially v. 41), modern readers might expect that now, after Jesus has eaten in their

Galilee [ἔτι ὦν ἐν τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ]). Thus the phrase is not meant to imply something about Jesus’s body. The awkwardness of the phrase in 24:44 is probably best explained as an intentional allusion to 4 Macc 18:10:

While he was still with you
(ἔτι ὦν σὺν ὑμῖν),
he taught you
the Law and the Prophets
(τὸν νόμον καὶ τοὺς προφήτας).

(4 Macc 18:10)

In 4 Macc 18:9–19, the mother of the seven martyrs reminds her sons how their late father had taught them from the Law and the Prophets. She then introduces a string of OT quotations and allusions indicating that the righteous suffer and that God can make them live again. One of these quotations comes from a psalm of David (cf. “the Psalms” in Luke 24:44). The allusion to 4 Macc 18 suggests that Luke envisioned Jesus expositing a similar set of passages for the disciples (cf. the juxtaposition of Jesus’s suffering with that of Moses and the prophets in Luke 13:33–34; Acts 7:51–52). Other possible allusions to 4 Maccabees are listed in McDonald, *Forgotten Scriptures*, 149; (cf. especially the more widely recognized allusion to 4 Macc 7:19, also redactional and associated with resurrection, in Luke 20:37–38).

¹⁰⁰ This discrepancy between v. 44 and the theory that Luke is antidocetic has rarely if ever been recognized in the history of scholarship. The fact that commentaries regularly treat vv. 36–43 and vv. 44–49 as independent paragraphs has no doubt contributed to the frequency of this oversight.

¹⁰¹ E.g., Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 41; Fuller, *Formation*, 115–16; Alsup, *Appearance Stories*, 148, 176; Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 148; Evans, *Saint Luke*, 920; Evans, *Luke*, 335; Bock, *Luke*, 2:1935; Culpepper, *Luke*, 486; Bovon, *Luke*, 3:386, 393 n. 42.

¹⁰² Similarly Dillon, *Eye-Witnesses*, 166–67 (cf. Fuller, *Formation*, 115–116).

presence, the doubt will finally be resolved.¹⁰³ But Luke records no such resolution, at least not with respect to the eating proof.¹⁰⁴

Curiously, some advocates of the antidocetic hypothesis argue that Luke's source included at this point a confirmation that the apostles were convinced, but that Luke omits it. According to Fuller,

The story presumes, though it does not expressly state, that the demonstration was successful and the disciples were convinced. One suspects that the pre-Lucan form of the story reached its climax in a statement to that effect. Luke is not prepared to jettison the demonstration.... But he does not wish to over-emphasize it either. He therefore removes the climax and substitutes the christological-kerygmatic discourse in verses 44–49.¹⁰⁵

Lüdemann, who offers a similar reconstruction of Luke's tradition, speculates that Luke does not "have to emphasize that the apostles are convinced" because he takes the "probative force" of the eating proof "for granted."¹⁰⁶ However, if Luke has omitted a statement explicitly indicating the success of the eating proof, then he has deliberately *de*-emphasized the probative force of the proof. In this case, Luke's redaction moves in precisely the opposite direction of antidocetic polemic.

9.6 Conclusion

A strong cumulative case against the antidocetic readings of Luke 24:36–49 and John 20:24–29 begins to emerge. Luke's and John's accounts repeatedly differ from those of antidocetic writers. First, antidocetic writers consistently omit Jesus's abrupt appearance. Luke and John not only include this traditional element, their redaction of the tradition at this point seems to heighten the sense of the miraculous. Second, *σάρξ*-glosses, which are arguably one of the most standard features of antidocetic redaction, are absent from Luke's and John's accounts. The single occurrence of the term *σάρξ* in these narratives (Luke 24:39) does not appear in a gloss, and it is traditional rather than redactional.

Third, we have seen that the notion of the tangibility of the risen Jesus pre-dates both the docetic/antidocetic controversy and the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John. Some docetists had no objection to a touchable Jesus, and others reinterpreted the touch test docetistically. Antidocetic writers, for their

¹⁰³ So Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:293: "Just at the point where we would expect to be told that the disciples are fully convinced by Jesus's demonstrations of his physical presence, we find instead Jesus's instruction concerning the divine plan in Scripture which is being realized through Jesus."

¹⁰⁴ I will argue below that Luke does ultimately resolve the doubt, but not by means of the eating proof.

¹⁰⁵ Fuller, *Formation*, 115–16; similarly Hug, *La finale*, 74.

¹⁰⁶ Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 148–49.

part, consistently modify the canonical stories to assure their readers that the apostles actually touched the risen Jesus and were able to confirm of the reality of his body. By contrast, both the act of touching and the confirmation are absent in Luke and John. Luke indicates that the apostles remained disbelieving in response to the touch invitation. Johannine redaction portrays Thomas's demand for tactile proof inappropriate and unnecessary – it is “seeing” Jesus that led Thomas to believe. And Thomas's confession suggests that John's apologetic concern is ultimately not with proving the physicality of the resurrection but the deity of Jesus. Contrary to antidocetic polemic, and to the assumptions of many modern readers, neither Luke nor John states that touch test convinced the apostles that Jesus rose in the flesh.

Fourth, both docetists and antidocetic writers accept Luke's account of Jesus's post-resurrection meal. Docetists interpret it as a mere “show-eating” on analogy with the standard interpretive practice of docetizing of the meal of the angels in Gen 18. Antidocetic writers are compelled to add interpretive glosses to the story to guard against docetic readings. Luke offers no equivalent and gives no indication that the meal convinced the apostles. Because Luke includes numerous angelophanic motifs in his account and adds an ambiguous phrase immediately following the meal, his lack of commentary leaves his story vulnerable to docetic interpretation.

In sum, Lukan redaction and Johannine redaction consistently differ from antidocetic polemic. Neither evangelist modifies the tradition in antidocetic direction, and in some cases their changes or omissions result in a narrative that is even more susceptible to docetistic exploitation. There is no evidence in either Lukan or Johannine redaction of an attempt to prove or to emphasize that Jesus rose in the flesh. Rather, both evangelists presuppose the physicality of Jesus's resurrection body as depicted in the pre-docetic appearance tradition on which they drew.

Chapter 10

Towards a New Reading of Luke 24 and John 20

The previous chapters of this study may in part be read as a ground-clearing exercise that discloses the implausibility of antidocetic readings. It is my conviction that rooting out these exegetical weeds and, indeed, exposing some modern biases makes it possible to reread Luke 24 and John 20 with fresh eyes.

10.1 Rereading Luke 24:36–49

10.1.1 *The Physical Proofs in Modern Bias*

Luke's silence regarding the effect that Jesus's eating had on the disciples creates a narrative gap that readers inevitably seek to fill. It is remarkable how often modern commentators claim, without any supporting evidence from Luke's text, that the eating proof "removes all doubt" for the apostles.¹ Having myself made the same assumption prior to the inception of this study, I posit two primary causes for this tendency in scholarship today. The first is the widespread influence of the antidocetic theory.² If we begin with the premise that Luke's purpose is antidocetic, it is natural to infer that the physical proofs are effective. This premise, I have argued, is flawed. Second, I suspect the tendency may in part be a reflex of our post-Enlightenment, scientific worldview:

¹ So Bock, *Luke*, 2:1935. Also Evans, *Luke*, 335: "their doubts are now dispelled." It is telling that otherwise careful exegetes resort to eisegesis to maintain this theory. I mention here just three examples. Alsup inserts "a pause, presumably for the transition to faith," between v. 43 and 44 (*Appearance Stories*, 148). Bovon makes an even bolder, and at the same time self-contradictory, assertion: "According to Luke, in this moment the disciples recognize the Risen One for who he is, but the evangelist does not bother to tell us" (*Luke*, 3:393 n. 42). Culpepper likewise claims that "it is the proofs that lead disciples to believe," but in the next sentence states that "there is no report at this point that the disciples believed" (*Luke*, 486). See also the more sophisticated theories of Fuller and Lüdemann discussed in Chapter 9.

² Most commentators who maintain the effectiveness of the eating proof also advocate or at least suspect that Luke is antidocetic.

we expect the physical proofs to have been successful because this is the kind of evidence that we ourselves would find convincing.³

Nevertheless, despite this bias, the failure of the touch proof ought to alert us to the fact that Luke's account does not conform to modern expectations. The disciples are given the opportunity to inspect Jesus's body for themselves and even to touch it (24:39–40), but they are still disbelieving (24:41). And if for some reason v. 41 does not register on our hermeneutical radar screens, then v. 45 should at least set off some alarm bells: "Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." There is perhaps nothing so foreign and so offensive to modern biblical criticism than the idea that the human mind requires supernatural renovation before it can properly understand the Bible. And yet the notion of direct supernatural influence, whether satanic or divine, on the mind or heart is commonplace in early Christian literature, and in Luke-Acts in particular.⁴

Luke 24:36–49 thus confronts us with the proverbial 2000-year chasm between the modern world and the biblical text. Reception history has the potential to help bridge this gap. However, as I have tried to demonstrate throughout this study, cursory comparisons of Luke's narrative with a limited selection of later texts can be misleading. I have therefore attempted, on the basis of contextual and redaction-critical analysis of a wide variety of texts, to identify consistent patterns of reception. Consistency in early reception can serve the exegete as reliable gauge for assessing the plausibility of proposed readings.⁵

³ Cf. Bruner, *John*, 1185: "Isn't the single service of this story the fact that the Risen Lord and his Evangelist took seriously the longing of human beings for the real, the bodily, and the factual? Isn't this exactly what the sciences of all responsible kinds most want and credit? Thomas is every generation's 'modern man': sincere inquirer, and honest seeker." Though Bruner here comments on the Thomas pericope, the same expectations apply to Luke 24.

⁴ Luke 8:12 [cf. Mark 4:15]; 9:45; 10:21–22; 18:34; 22:31–32; 24:16, 31; Acts 16:14–15; John 12:39–40; 2 Cor 4:4, 6; *Barn.* 10.12; *Herm. Mand.* 9.4–12 [39.4–12]; Freer Logion; *Acts Pet.* 7.15; *Testim. Truth* (NHC IX,3) 29.6–24. Apparently not recognizing the prominence of this notion, some commentators attempt to deny the supernatural connotations of Luke 24:45. Bock, for example, replies to v. 45 by claiming that it "is responding to Jesus in faith that enlightens" (*Luke*, 2:1938; similarly Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1583). But this is pure eisegesis. It turns the verse on its head, making what Luke depicts as an act of Jesus into an action of the disciples. Even less persuasive is Matthew W. Bates's forced claim that Jesus here opens the "meaning" of the Scriptures rather than the "mind" of the disciples ("Closed-minded Hermeneutics? A Proposed Alternative Translation for Luke 24:45," *JBL* 129 [2010]: 537–57). Ironically, Bates's own arguments demonstrate that the syntax, the lexical data, and the early reception of the verse all favor the traditional reading. When these factors are combined with an ancient Christian worldview in which both God and Satan can and do act to influence significantly the human mind – a worldview that Luke clearly shares – Bates's alternative reading begins to look like an anachronistic attempt to force Luke's theology into mold that is more congenial to modern values.

⁵ Bockmuehl, "Why Not Let Acts Be Acts?" 165.

My argument from reception history has thus far been largely negative: clear patterns in early docetic and antidocetic responses to the appearance tradition reveal that Luke's and John's treatments of the group appearance tradition are anything but antidocetic. This kind of negative argument that employs consistency in early reception to rule out implausible readings is one of the most promising aspects of reception-critical analysis for historical-critical exegesis. That being said, reception history can also make positive contributions to the exegetical task. Early reception may suggest alternative readings that modern exegetes, because of their historical and cultural distance from the biblical texts, might not normally consider but which on further analysis may prove exegetically superior. I believe this is the case with Luke 24.

As we have seen in Chapter 4, the vast majority of proto-orthodox apologists refrain from appealing to the physical proofs. One reason for this was the notion that miraculous events such as Jesus's resurrection were in themselves considered unreliable as proofs.⁶ The main problem was that naysayers and skeptics could dismiss miracles, including Jesus's resurrection, as nothing more than illusion or sorcery.⁷ Therefore, rather than reciting the physical demonstrations from Luke and John, the apologists appealed to the fulfillment of prophecy, which they held to be a superior form of proof. Here again we are confronted with the gap between ancient and modern worldviews. Modern readers whose worldview entails the presupposition of a closed universe may too readily assume that the physical demonstrations in Luke 24:39–43 would have themselves been sufficient proof, whereas ancient readers who believe in a variety of supernatural phenomena might assess these elements in Luke's narrative differently.⁸ Consequently, some modern readers may not even

⁶ E.g., Justin, *1 Apol.* 30; Tertullian, *Marc.* 3.3.

⁷ E.g., Justin, *1 Apol.* 30; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.32.3–4; Origen, *Cels.* 1.6, 68; 2.55; Pionius, *ActaSS* (February 1) 45B; cf. Lucian, *Philops.* 11–15; *Alex.* 5; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 1.18; 8.7. According to Tertullian, other heretics objected to the resurrection of the flesh because they thought it implied a body that needed to eat to survive and would therefore still be subject to corruption (*Res.* 4, 57–62). And so Tertullian, who argues that the resurrection body does *not* need food to survive, probably intentionally avoids Luke 24:43 in his treatise *On the Resurrection* (see Chapter 4). The antidocetic author of the *Epistula Apostolorum*, who denies eating and drinking in heaven (19.14), may omit Jesus's post-resurrection meal for similar reasons (see Chapter 8).

⁸ Ironically, this is true even of scholars who maintain that Luke 24 is written to combat magical-demonic interpretations of Jesus's resurrection, e.g., Hans Dieter Betz, *Hellenismus und Urchristentum: Gesammelte Aufsätze 1* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990), 247–50. Betz's argument has the same weakness as the antidocetic theory. A failed proof makes no sense as apologetic invention. The disciples "still disbelieve" in response to the touch test, and Luke never indicates that the meal convinced the apostles. More telling, the second-century apologists counter the accusation of magic by omitting the physical proofs and appealing instead to the fulfillment of prophecy. Oddly, Lüdemann, who argues for an antidocetic interpretation, also endorses Betz's argument (*Resurrection of Jesus*, 147–48). But

consider the possibility that the decisive proof for Luke lies not in the touching and eating motifs of vv. 39–43 but in the theme of prophetic fulfillment in vv. 44–47. This, I contend, is the best explanation as to why Luke allows the touch proof to remain ineffective and does not report the success of the eating proof. To argue this position, I propose below that the case for Jesus’s resurrection in Luke-Acts be reevaluated in light of Justin Martyr’s apologetic exegesis of Luke 24.

10.1.2 Rereading Luke 24 with the Help of Justin Martyr

As noted in Chapter 4, Justin Martyr declines to appeal to miracles because they can be attributed to “magical arts” and instead argues from the fulfillment of prophecy because it provides the “greatest and truest proof” (*1 Apol.* 30). For Justin proof from prophecy is God’s own apologetic strategy: “God disclosed beforehand through the prophetic Spirit that things which people supposed would be incredible (ἄπιστα) and impossible were going to happen, so that when they did happen they should not be disbelieved (μὴ ἀπιστηθῆν) but should rather be believed *because they had been foretold*” (Justin, *1 Apol.* 33.2).⁹ Given these stated principles, it not difficult to see why Justin, in his own reading of Luke 24, concludes that the apostles were convinced not by the physical proofs in v. 39–43 – which he always omits – but by the reminder of passion predictions in v. 44 and the fulfillment of prophecy in vv. 46–47.¹⁰

The resurrection is one of the “incredible” and “impossible” events to which Justin refers.¹¹ These events are likely to “be disbelieved” when they “happen” unless they are shown to have been predicted in advance. Justin therefore has an epistemological framework that can explain why the apostles are “disbelieving” (Luke 24:41) after the risen Jesus appears and initially offers *only* physical proofs. It can also account for the fact that Luke is silent about whether the eating proof was successful (24:42–43). As we have seen, all these things could be and often were dismissed as *phantasia* or sorcery.¹² But for Justin the resurrection cannot be so easily explained away if it “had been foretold.” Thus it was only natural, given the failure of the touch proof and Luke’s silence about the effect of the eating proof, for Justin to conclude that the apostles were

the accusation of magical illusion cannot be equated with the docetist claim that Christ’s body was mere *phantasia*. The former assumes Jesus’s humanity and attributes his resurrection appearance to necromancy, whereas the latter denies Christ a human body on the basis of his divinity.

⁹ Irenaeus echoes the same view in *Epid.* 42.

¹⁰ See discussion of *1 Apol.* 50.12; *Dial.* 53.5–6; 106.1 in Chapter 4.

¹¹ *1 Apol.* 19.3–6.

¹² Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 4.2; [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 2.14; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.32.3–4; Pionius, *ActaSS* (February 1) 45B; Origen, *Cels.* 2.49, 55; Porphyry apud Augustine, *Ep.* 102.2; Ephrem, *Hymn. c. haer.* 36.12–13.

ultimately convinced by appeals to the passion predictions and to the fulfillment of Scripture (Luke 24:44–47).

Other ancient Christian writers, discussed already in Chapter 4, exhibit a similar view. In *I Clement's* account of the appearance tradition, which bears striking similarities to that of Luke, the apostles are “persuaded to believe by the word of God” (42.3). Similarly, according to the *Preaching of Peter*, which I have argued depends on Luke 24, the apostles come to believe because they open the Scriptures and recognize that Jesus’s death and resurrection were prophesied (frag. 9). Theophilus suspects that seeing a man risen from the dead will not be as convincing as the fulfillment of prophecy (*Autol.* 1.13–14). And responding to the claim that Jesus’s miracles, including his resurrection, were performed by “magical phantasy,” Irenaeus promises to “take up the prophetic writings and demonstrate from them that all these things concerning him were thus foretold and truly came to pass” (*Haer.* 2.32.3–4). Additionally, Celsus’s Jew, another early reader of Luke’s Gospel, suggests that the physical proofs may be attributed to sorcery and posits that the only reason why any Jews would believe in Jesus was that “he foretold” his death and resurrection.¹³ Only antidocetic writers who contradict Luke’s account of the apostle’s doubt in response to the touch test place the primary burden of proof on the physical demonstrations.¹⁴

I am not advocating that we simply equate Luke’s own view with that of the apologists. But the consistency among these authors, at least some of whom are among the earliest known readers of Luke’s Gospel, demonstrates *that the epistemic priority of prophecy over physical proofs is common enough among ancient Christians that it cannot be ignored in analyses of Luke 24:36–49*. Moreover, it must be acknowledged that Justin’s interpretation does no violence to Luke’s narrative. Since Luke does not indicate that the physical proofs convinced the apostles, nothing about Justin’s conclusion, that it was the fulfillment of prophecy that led the apostles to believe, contradicts the details of Luke 24. More importantly, there is evidence to suggest that Luke’s apologetic strategy is not all that different from that of Justin.

10.1.3 Physical vs. Scriptural Proofs in Acts

While Luke at times attributes an evangelistic role to miracles (Acts 2:22; 5:12–14; 9:32–42), his narratives make clear that miracles do not necessarily

¹³ Origen, *Cels.* 2.54–55. Origen, after quoting from the Thomas pericope, argues that we can be sure that Jesus’s resurrection, as the greatest of all miracles, really happened because it fits with the prophecies made about him (2.62; 3.43). On Celsus’s Jew as a reader of Luke, see e.g., Origen, *Cels.* 2.32 (on Luke 3:38).

¹⁴ Ignatius, for his part, recognizes the persuasive function of “the Law of Moses” and “the prophets” in Luke 24, but he observes that appeals to them are ineffective in arguments with docetists (*Smyrn.* 5.1; cf. 7.2; *Magn.* 8.1–9.2; see Chapter 3).

lead to faith (Luke 6:6–11; 8:26–39; 11:14–15; Acts 14:8–18; 16:16–22), even when acknowledged as undeniable (Acts 4:15–17). Thus for Luke, miracles are evidence but not necessarily compelling proof. And Luke, like Justin and other ancient writers, is fully aware that miracles can be attributed to magic, demons, or false prophets. He also knows that these kinds of accusations can be laid against Jesus himself (Luke 11:14–15; Acts 8:9–24; 13:6–12).¹⁵ More significantly, Justin’s practice of omitting the physical proofs and appealing to the fulfillment of Scripture is paralleled in Acts.

Since the work of Dibelius the speeches of Acts have often been seen as a vehicle through which Luke is able to preach more or less directly to the reader and convey his own perspective and concerns.¹⁶ If so, it is remarkable that the defense of the resurrection in these speeches rests primarily on Scripture, whereas the physical proofs are all but non-existent.¹⁷ In Acts 2:29–35, when

¹⁵ On Luke’s understanding of magic, see Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke’s Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989). On this issue in early Christianity in general, see Anton Fridrichsen, *The Problem of Miracle in Primitive Christianity* (trans. Roy A. Harrisville and John S. Hanson; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), 85–118.

¹⁶ Martin Dibelius, *Die Reden der Apostelgeschichte und die antike Geschichtsschreibung* (SHAUPH 1; Heidelberg: Winter, 1949). See also, more recently, Loveday Alexander, *Acts in its Ancient Literary Context* (LNTS 298; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 183–206.

¹⁷ The only passage in Acts where it might be said that significant epistemic weight is given to the physical proofs is Acts 1:3, which refers to the “proofs (τεκμηρίοις)” that Jesus is alive. Commentators often detect here an allusion to the touch and eating proofs in Luke 24, and understand τεκμήριον in the restricted, technical sense that Aristotle assigns to the term. For Aristotle, a τεκμήριον was a piece of physical evidence that in and of itself provides irrefutable proof, e.g., a fever proves that a man is ill, milk in a woman’s breasts proves she that has a child (*Rhet.* 1.2.16–18 [1357b]). This definition was sometimes employed by rhetoricians in the courtroom. However, the semantic range of τεκμήριον is by no means limited to Aristotle’s definition. It can refer to evidence in general and often means proof, “properly of an argumentative kind, opp. direct evidence” (LSJ, s.v. “τεκμήριον”).

Three factors indicate that Luke does not have the Aristotelean sense in mind. First, Luke refers to “many proofs.” According to Aristotle’s definition, only one τεκμήριον would be needed to convince the apostles. The doubt in Luke 24:41 proves this is not the case. So unless Luke is depicting the apostles as so obtuse that they disbelieve in the face of irrefutable proof, his understanding of τεκμήριον differs from Aristotle’s. Second, in Greek literature, the phrase “many proofs” is rare and generally limited to Hellenistic historiography (David L. Mealand, “The Phrase ‘Many Proofs’ in Acts 1,3 and in Hellenistic Writers,” *ZNW* 80 [1989]: 134–35, though see the legal use in Isaeus, *Aristarch.* 6). The second, “argumentative kind” of proof is the norm in these cases (e.g., Lysias, *Or.* 12.51; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. Rom.* 1.90.2; 5.18.1; Diodorus Siculus, *Bibl. hist.* 3.66.4; Josephus, *A.J.* 3.15.3 [3.318]).

Third, Luke specifies in the immediate context what he means by the phrase: “by many proofs, appearing to them over forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God (ἐν πολλοῖς τεκμηρίοις, δι’ ἡμερῶν τεσσαράκοντα ὄπτανόμενος αὐτοῖς καὶ λέγων τὰ περὶ τῆς

Peter refers to David's (occupied) tomb, we might expect him to appeal to Jesus's empty tomb, but he does not. Instead, he appeals to Scripture. He makes only the briefest allusion to the appearance stories ("we are witnesses"). The apostolic witness to the *fact* of the resurrection is important here, but there is no mention of touch or eating demonstrations to verify the *physicality* of the resurrection body. Rather, people are "cut to the heart" because of Peter's scriptural arguments.¹⁸ Peter's speech in Acts 3 makes the same brief allusion ("we are witnesses," 3:15) and calls for conversion on the basis of the fulfillment of prophecy (3:17–26). The speech in Acts 4 does not even hint at the appearances, but it does allude to Scripture (4:10–12; cf. Ps 118:2).

Though Luke never again mentions the touch test, Peter's Acts 10 speech does allude to a post-resurrection meal. This reference, however, is the exception that proves the rule. In this context the meal is not as a *Christological* proof but an *ecclesiological* one; it reinforces the special authority of the apostles by noting that they alone had the intimate privilege of dining with the risen Lord.¹⁹ He appeared "not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he commands us to preach to the people and to bear witness that he is the one appointed by God to be the judge of the living and the dead" (10:40–42). The apostles (rather than Christ) are the subject of the verbs of eating and drinking in this passage.²⁰ And they "bear witness" to Christ as divine "judge" (10:42). The Christological conclusion is thus not about the physicality of the risen

βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ)." If the appearances are among the τεκμήρια, the syntax implies that the things spoken by Jesus about the kingdom of God are also among the many proofs (so Dillon, *Eye-Witnesses*, 198–99; contra Kevin L. Anderson, "But God Raised Him from the Dead": *The Theology of Jesus' Resurrection in Luke-Acts* [Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006], 189–90). The phrase "kingdom of God" is Luke's shorthand for the message about Christ's death and resurrection in Luke 24:44–47 (Acts 17:1–3//19:8; 28:23; so already C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments: Three Lectures with an Appendix on Eschatology and History* [New York: Harper & Row, 1964], 46–47). Consequently, Jesus's claim in Luke 24:44–47, that his death and resurrection fulfill prophecy, is also a τεκμήριον for Luke.

¹⁸ Peter does briefly mention Jesus's miracles in 2:22, but it is the scriptural argument that is decisive. Scriptural proof leads to a similar turning point in the account of the Jerusalem council. Peter appeals to the reception of the Holy Spirit by the Gentiles (Acts 15:7–11), and Paul and Barnabas appeal to "signs and wonders" done among the Gentiles (15:12). But it is not until James demonstrates that the "words of the prophets agree" (15:15–21) that the full assembly of apostles and elders is finally persuaded (15:22). For Luke, like Justin, miracles need to be validated by prophecy.

¹⁹ Contra Talbert, *Luke and the Gnostics*, 31.

²⁰ Ignatius, who echoes Acts 10:41 in *Smyrn.* 3.3, makes Jesus the subject of the verbs (see Chapter 3).

Jesus but about his eschatological role. In keeping with the standard pattern in Acts, everything is validated by prophecy (10:43).²¹

Paul's sermon at Pisidian Antioch briefly refers to the post-resurrection appearances to the apostles (13:30–31; cf. 1:3). But there is again no hint of physical proofs, and the weight of the argument rests on the scriptural proofs (13:32–37). According to Luke, this type of argumentation was not merely occasional; it was Paul's "custom" to argue "*from the scriptures*, explaining and proving that it was necessary (ἔδει) for Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead" (Acts 17:2–3). Luke also reveals his epistemic values in his personal assessment of the Bereans: they were "more noble" because they employed the "Scripture" as the ultimate criterion for determining the truth of the Christian message (17:11). As a result, "many" Bereans "believed" (17:12). The reason Paul himself accepts the "hope" of resurrection is that he believes "everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets" (Acts 24:14–15).²²

Justin's notion that "incredible (ἄπιστα)" events are made plausible only if they were foretold is perhaps most clearly paralleled in Acts 26 – a passage that for Luke constitutes the climax of Paul's defense, not only of himself but of the resurrection as well.²³ It is because resurrection is a "promise made by God" that Paul is able to ask, "Why is it thought incredible (ἄπιστον) by any of you that God raises the dead?" (26:6–8). Paul next defends his claim about the resurrection by insisting that he is "saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass" (26:22–23). So also, when he is accused of having gone mad, Paul turns to Agrippa and attempts to persuade him on the basis of the prophets (26:24–28).

The pattern in Acts is clear and consistent. The defense of the resurrection rests primarily on appeals to prophecy. Though there is an appeal to the apostles as witnesses to the resurrection, little apologetic significance is assigned to the physical proofs of Luke 24.²⁴ If the physical proofs are intended to bear the full weight of the argument in Luke 24, then Luke has reversed his

²¹ Though, the entirety of Peter's speech "is clothed in the garb of scriptural echoes" (Osvaldo Padilla, *The Acts of the Apostles: Interpretation, History and Theology* [Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016], 169–72, 229), it may be significant that it is when Peter explicitly mentions the prophets that the "Holy spirit fell on all who heard" (10:44).

²² When Paul draws attention to this scriptural "hope," the Pharisees, who had previously been calling for his execution, come to his defense and entertain his claim to have spoken with the risen Jesus (Acts 23:6–9).

²³ On this last point, see Paul Schubert, "The Final Cycle of Speeches in the Book of Acts," *JBL* 87 (1968): 1–16; Robert F. O'Toole, *Acts 26: The Christological Climax of Paul's Defense (Ac. 22,1–26,32)* (AnBib 78; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1978); Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:315–29.

²⁴ The appearance story that bears the most significant apologetic weight in Acts is the appearance to Paul. It is this story, which is anything but antidoetic (it includes no physical proofs and indicates instead Christ's transcendence of the physical), that Luke chooses to recount in detail three times.

apologetic program in Acts. But if the physical proofs in Luke 24 are insufficient and the apostles are ultimately convinced by the appeal to prophecy in vv. 44–47, then Luke’s resurrection apologetic is consistent.

10.1.4 Physical vs. Scriptural Proofs in Luke: The Doubt Motif, Again

The Scriptures bear the weight of the argument for the resurrection throughout Luke’s Gospel as well. The passion predictions appeal to the scriptural necessity (δεῖ) of Christ’s resurrection (Luke 9:22; 18:33). Luke also places Jesus’s debate with the Sadducees in the final position of a series of controversy stories reported by Mark. As a result, the closing, decisive argument – after which “they no longer dared ask him another question” – is an appeal to Scripture in defense of the resurrection of the dead (20:34–40).

More significant is the arresting conclusion to the Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man. Although the rich man suggests that seeing someone risen from the dead would be persuasive (Luke 16:30), this view is rejected as naïve: “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead” (16:31). This statement, which is conveyed through the authoritative voices of both Abraham and Jesus, expresses in thoroughly Lukan style the principle that we have seen in the apologists: whereas extraordinary miracles have limited persuasive power in themselves, listening to the testimony of the prophets is decisive. This principle underlies the pattern of preaching in Acts discussed above.²⁵ But Luke 16:31 also foreshadows the responses to Jesus’s resurrection in Luke 24.²⁶ Indeed, the latter look like uncannily like illustrations of the former.²⁷

Luke 24 seems to be designed to impress upon the reader the importance of fulfilled prophecy for overcoming doubt and unbelief. The insufficiency of

²⁵ Nolland, *Luke*, 2:831; Anderson, *Resurrection in Luke-Acts*, 282; John T. Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary* (NLT; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 338.

²⁶ The verbal links with Luke 24 appear to be deliberate:

<p>He said to him, “If they do not listen to <i>Moses and the Prophets</i> (Μωϋσέως καὶ τῶν προφητῶν), <i>neither will they be persuaded</i> (οὐδ’ . . . πεισθήσονται [πιστευσοσιν, D lat sy^{s.c.p} I^{lat}]) if someone should <i>rise from the dead</i> (ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῆ).” (16:31)</p>	<p>And while they still <i>disbelieved</i> (ἀπιστούντων).... He said to them, “...everything written about me in <i>in the law of Moses and the Prophets</i> (ἐν τῷ νόμῳ Μωϋσέως καὶ τοῖς προφήταις) and the Psalms must be fulfilled.... Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day <i>rise from the dead</i> (ἀναστῆναι ἐκ νεκρῶν).” (24:41, 44, 46)</p>
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²⁷ Similarly Hays, “Reading Scripture,” 232; Anderson, *Resurrection in Luke-Acts*, 179.

physical evidence and the necessity of recognizing the fulfillment of prophecy are, respectively, the traditional warp and the redactional woof of all three stories in Luke 24.²⁸ In the first pericope, Luke makes various changes to Mark's account of the empty tomb. While most of these are stylistic, Luke makes three redactional insertions that are particularly instructive for understanding Luke's overall approach to the resurrection traditions. In Luke's account, when the women enter the tomb they do not immediately see the angel(s) as in Mark. Rather, just prior to the appearance, Luke inserts a note that the women "did not find the body." Although this may at first appear to be an emphasis on physical proof of the resurrection, Luke makes clear with his next redactional comment ("while they were perplexed about this") that this physical evidence was not in itself sufficient to convince the women that Jesus has been raised from the dead.²⁹

Then, as if on cue, the angels appear to provide the missing argument.³⁰ At this point Luke makes his third and most important redactional insertion. Luke's angels validate/corroborate the claim that Jesus is risen (cf. Mark 16:6) by appealing to the passion predictions: "Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must (δεῖ) be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise" (Luke 24:6–7).³¹ The implication is that if they had "remembered and believed what Jesus said, they would not be looking for a corpse" or be perplexed about its absence.³² Additionally, in Luke it is after (or because) "they remembered his words" that the women, who in Mark 16:8 are too afraid to speak, become confident enough to "return" and "proclaim" the resurrection message to the Eleven (24:8–11).³³

²⁸ See already the seminal essay of Schubert, "Structure," 165–77. Schubert concludes that "Luke pulls the three major items of his materials together by furnishing each of them with the same climax which we may briefly call 'the proof from prophecy'" (173, though see the criticism of this description in Darrell L. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology* [JSNTSup 12; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987]). According to Schubert, prophecy rather than the empty tomb and the appearances themselves provides for Luke "the decisive proof" (174–76). This argument is taken up and advanced with some modifications in Dillon, *Eye-Witnesses*, 157–207.

²⁹ Similarly Xavier Léon-Dufour, "Apparitions du ressuscité et herméneutique," in *La résurrection du Christ et l'exégèse moderne* (Lectio Divinia 50; Paris: Cerf, 1969), 159; Green, *Luke*, 836; *pace* Talbert, *Luke and the Gnostics*, 30.

³⁰ So Carroll, *Luke*, 476.

³¹ The phrase οὐκ ἔστιν ὄδε, ἀλλ' ἠγέρθη is absent from some Western manuscripts (e.g., D it) of Luke. If it is not original, then Luke has given even greater weight to the passion predictions by omitting ἠγέρθη, οὐκ ἔστιν ὄδε from Mark's account.

³² Tiede, *Luke*, 432; Dillon, *Eye-Witnesses*, 132–33.

³³ Readers of Mark 16:8 ("They said nothing to anyone for they were afraid") must infer that the women at some later point overcome their fear and told their story. The other evangelists fill out the story to account for this. In Matthew, the risen Jesus himself meets the women and exhorts them not to fear (28:8, 10). For Luke, it seems that remembering the

The fulfillment of prophecy is not simply a special theological interest for Luke; it is pivotal epistemically.

The Emmaus disciples are fully acquainted with the traditional facts about Jesus. They know all about his miraculous-prophetic ministry, his trial, and his crucifixion (24:19–20). They have confirmation that the tomb is empty, and they know that women have seen a vision of angels proclaiming that Jesus is alive (24:22–24). The Emmaus disciples suppose that only one critical piece of evidence is missing: “they did not see” the risen Jesus (24:24).³⁴ But for Luke this is a “foolish” (24:25) reason not to believe because, as he has already informed the reader, “Jesus himself” is standing right in front of them and yet they are unable to “recognize him” (24:15–16). Thus the Emmaus disciples have already been given the missing proof that they thought they needed, but ironically it does convince them of anything. Why? Because, as Jesus says, they are “slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken” (24:25). Like the women at the tomb, they need to be reminded of how Moses and the prophets wrote of the necessity (ἔδει) of Christ’s death and resurrection (24:26–27). The fulfillment of prophecy is again crucial.³⁵ At the end of the story, the Emmaus disciples show they have learned the main lesson: they realize that the Scriptures must first be “opened” before dull, unbelieving hearts can begin to burn with faith (24:33).³⁶

And so a pattern begins to emerge in Luke 24.³⁷ By itself, the evidence of the empty tomb leads only to “perplexity” (Luke 24:4). It cannot produce Easter faith without an understanding of the divine “must” in the passion predictions. And for those who thought that seeing the risen Jesus himself would banish all doubt, the Emmaus story reveals that this too is insufficient (Luke 24:12–24).³⁸ Again, the Scriptures are needed. Then, in his final episode, Luke presents what might seem to be an irrefutable physical proof. This time the disciples are given unfettered access to perform what amounts to an autopsy on the risen body of Jesus: they will not only see but also have the opportunity

passion predictions kindles in them enough hope to preach to the men. It may be going too far to conclude that this act of “remembering” implies full faith (so Dillon, *Eye-Witnesses*, 51). But it clearly signals a turning point in the story and in their understanding (so Johnson, *Luke*, 391; Edwards, *Luke*, 710–11; cf. the similar turning point in Acts 11:16–17).

³⁴ Similarly Judith M. Lieu, *The Gospel of Luke* (Epworth Commentaries; London: Epworth, 1997), 203.

³⁵ So Crüsemann, “Scripture,” 91–92.

³⁶ Similarly John Gillman, “The Emmaus Story in Luke-Acts Revisited,” in *Resurrection in the New Testament* (eds. R. Bieringer, V. Koperski, and B. Lataire; BETL 165; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 183.

³⁷ Similarly Dillon, *Eye-Witnesses*, 197.

³⁸ So Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 1:279.

to inspect and to touch the body of the risen one (24:36–40).³⁹ But even this is not enough; the apostles are “still disbelieving” (24:41). On the one hand, this reaction seems to cause “a frustrated momentum in the narrative.”⁴⁰ The seemingly irrefutable proof is met by further disbelief. On the other hand, the failure of the touch proof follows the pattern of the previous two stories. For the discerning reader, it should now be clear that no amount of physical evidence for the resurrection will persuade someone to believe until he or she recognizes the Scriptural necessity of the death and resurrection.⁴¹ And this is precisely what follows in 24:44–47. For “if they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead” (Luke 16:31).

10.1.5 What about the Eating “Proof”?

The only objection that could be raised against this reading is the alleged effectiveness of the eating proof. If Luke understood the meal to remove all doubts, then the references to the passion predictions and to the Scriptures in vv. 44–47 are exposition for apostles who have already been convinced rather than further attempts at persuasion. In response to this objection, I offer four counterarguments.

The first is one that I have already mentioned. Luke is silent about what effect, if any, the eating proof had on the disciples. The claims of modern interpreters, that it convinced the disciples, have no basis in Luke’s text.

Second, given that Luke does not report the effect of the eating proof, it seems reasonable at this juncture to invoke the principle of the analogy of Scripture. The apologetic strategy and literary patterns we have seen elsewhere in Luke and Acts suggest that it is more probable that Luke considered the eating proof insufficient without the corroborating testimony of the prophets.

Third, the touch proof arguably had greater probative value than the eating proof for the physicality of the resurrection body.⁴² In the ancient world, while ghosts were sometimes thought capable of eating, the touch test was the standard for determining whether or not the being in question was a disembodied spirit.⁴³ Sight can confirm what an object looked like (color, shape, etc.), but

³⁹ The disciples are, as Luke 1:2 calls them, ἀπόπται (“eyewitnesses”) in the fullest sense of the term.

⁴⁰ Dillon, *Eye-Witnesses*, 166.

⁴¹ Similarly Dillon, *Eye-Witnesses*, 196–97, 270; Green, *Luke*, 854.

⁴² Similarly Keener, *John*, 2:1210.

⁴³ So Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered*, 67–68. See, e.g., Homer, *Il.* 23.99–104; *Od.* 11.151–154, 204–208; Virgil, *Aen.* 2.792–793; 6.697–702; Lucian, *Ver. hist.* 2.12–14; Philostratus, *Vit. Apol.* 8.12.

only the sense of touch can confirm that something was indeed a body.⁴⁴ Nor, as already noted, does *seeing* Jesus eat necessarily rule out for ancient readers the possibility of angelic *phantasia*, a concept known to Luke (Acts 12:9–11).⁴⁵ It therefore seems illogical to conclude that *seeing* Jesus eat provided the conclusive proof for the apostles after the touch test failed to convince them.⁴⁶

My fourth counterargument is from the structure of the group appearance narrative. Having presupposed that the eating proof must have been effective, many commentators conclude that v. 43 marks the end of Jesus's attempt to convince the apostles. Consequently v. 44 is frequently characterized as the beginning of a new section in which Jesus gives "instructions" rather than as a continuation of the apologetic of vv. 38–43.⁴⁷ Because it introduces the theme of scriptural fulfillment, v. 44 does in some sense mark a shift in the narrative. But it would be a mistake to characterize it as a non sequitur. The shift is not from apologetic to instruction but from one type of apologetic to another. Since Luke does not record a response to the eating proof, v. 44 may be read as yet another attempt to convince the apostles of the same things he has been trying to persuade them of since v. 39, namely, that he is the same Jesus who was crucified ("See my hands and feet, that it is I myself") but now risen from the dead ("Touch me and see").⁴⁸ The allusion to the passion predictions stresses

⁴⁴ Aristotle, *Gen. corr.* 2.2.329b7–11; *De an.* 423b27–29; 434b9; Lucretius, *Rer. nat.* 1.304; Origen, *Cels.* 2.61. See especially Lucian, *Ver. hist.* 2:12: "Really, if one did not touch them, he could not tell that what he saw was not a body." Touch provides closer inspection that can verify what the eye sees (John M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists, 80 BC to AD 220* [Cornell University Press, 1977], 64–65). Also relevant here is the sequence of sense verbs (heard, seen, beheld, touched) in 1 John 1:1. The progression "from the most abstract" and "remotest in apprehension" (i.e., hearing) "to the most material" and "most immediate" (i.e., touching) (Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John: The Greek Text* [London: Macmillan, 1985], 4–5; similarly Alfred Plummer, *The Epistles of St. John* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1883], 14; Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* [AB 30; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1982], 175), suggests that touch is apologetically definitive.

⁴⁵ We may recall that Tobias sees Rafael eat broiled fish, but it turns out to be a mere vision (Tob 6:5 [G¹]; 12:19).

⁴⁶ Even Grass expresses reservations about this (*Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 41).

⁴⁷ E.g., Fuller, *Formation*, 114; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1572; Fred B. Craddock, *Luke* (Int; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), 288; Evans, *Saint Luke*, 917–21; Robert H. Stein, *Luke* (NAC 24; Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 619; Bovon, *Luke*, 3:385.

⁴⁸ Similarly Dillon, *Eye-Witnesses*, 193, 204. Eusebius offers a very similar interpretation to the one I have proposed here. In Eusebius's reading of Luke 24, the eating proof in v. 43 did indeed fail to convince the apostles, and it is for that reason that Jesus reminded them of the passion predictions in v. 44: "For while they were still unbelieving He asked for food; and *not being satisfied with eating the fish, He establishes them by words, reminding them of His former teaching, according to Luke. But afterwards when they were persuaded and convinced that it was truly He, and were filled with joy, He then bestows on them a second peace, other and greater than the former, and exhorts them to be ready for their apostolate, promising that they would be all but like Himself through doing like work*" (*ad Marinum*,

continuity of identity (“These are *my* words which *I* spoke to you”).⁴⁹ And because the passion predictions refer to the scriptural necessity not only of Christ’s death but also of his resurrection (9:22; 18:33) – a scope that is reiterated in 24:46–47 – the appeal to them in v. 44 can also function as a resurrection apologetic that renders more believable what the apostles, despite the physical proofs they have been offered, are having trouble believing. This reading reveals Luke 24:36–49 not to be a diptych joining two loosely related scenes – as the division between vv. 36–43 and 44–49 in most commentaries seems to suggest – but a single narrative with a tightly woven plot.⁵⁰

Furthermore, I would argue that v. 45 rather than v. 43 constitutes the true climax or turning point of the narrative. It is only after Jesus appeals to the fulfillment of Scripture in v. 44 that Luke provides any indication of change in the apostles: “Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (v. 45).⁵¹ Luke frequently employs verbs of “opening” to describe the point of conversion to faith and other turning points.⁵² As commentators often observe, the “opening” of the minds of the disciples in v. 45 echoes the climax of the Emmaus pericope in which the “opening” of the eyes is linked with the “opening” of the Scriptures (vv. 31–32).⁵³

That Luke 24:45 serves as the pivot of the group appearance narrative can also be confirmed by discourse analysis. Whereas nearly every statement in

Suppl. 9 [trans. Smith, *Ante-Nicene Exegesis*, 6:134–35, emphasis added]). Augustine, though he softens “disbelieving” in v. 41 to “hesitating,” likewise sees the disciples as still in need of further confirmation from Scripture: “To demonstrate to them that faith in the reality of his body was true, he was even willing, as a matter not of need but of power, to take some food. All the same, as they were still trembling and hesitating for joy, he provided confirmation for their hearts and minds from the holy scriptures, and he said to them: *These are the words I spoke to you while I was still with you; that it is necessary for everything to be fulfilled that was written in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms about me*” (*Hom.* 242.12). Translation from Edmund Hill, *Sermons* (The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century; ed. John E. Rotelle; New York: New City, 1993), III/7:82, emphasis original.

⁴⁹ Stein, *Luke*, 619. Oddly, though Stein recognizes that v. 44, like v. 39, “indicates that the risen Christ is the same person as the ‘historical Jesus,’” he does not consider the possibility that v. 44 is a continuation of Jesus’s attempts to prove his identity to the apostles. This is probably because he presupposes that the eating proof was sufficient (616). By contrast, Dillon (*Eye-Witnesses*, 198–99) concludes: “The risen Lord persuaded his followers he was ‘alive’ by his *appearance* and by his *instruction*. The two steps were necessary *together* to show that this was truly he.”

⁵⁰ I here borrow the image of a diptych from the characterization of Luke 24:36–49 in Bovon, *Luke*, 3:385–86.

⁵¹ So Dillon, *Eye-Witnesses*, 194.

⁵² Luke 24:31–32; Acts 14:27; 16:14–15; 26:18; cf. Num 22:31–34; 2 Kings 6:17. See also “openings” in Luke 1:64; Acts 9:40; 10:34; 12:16.

⁵³ E.g., Nolland, *Luke*, 3:1218–19; Stein, *Luke*, 619; Bock, *Luke*, 2:1935; Bovon, *Luke*, 3:394–95.

Luke 24:36–49 is linked by καί or δέ, v. 45 opens with the stronger structural marker τότε: “Then (τότε) he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.” English translations can be misleading here. The NRSV, for example, leaves every δέ in vv. 36–43 untranslated, but then renders both δέ at the beginning of v. 44 and τότε at the beginning of v. 45 “Then.” By doing so the NRSV draws emphasis away from the stronger τότε in v. 45 and creates the false impression of a decisive break between v. 43 and v. 44. The same false impression is produced by nearly all English Bibles and so reinforces the modern tendency to presume that the eating proof convinces the apostles.

Luke employs τότε fairly sparingly, at least compared to Matthew, and when he does, it nearly always marks a significant transition, a turning point, or the beginning of a new action.⁵⁴ In Luke-Acts, τότε “most commonly signals divisions of an episode into subsections” but can also introduce “conclusions that fulfill the (at times delayed) goal or prediction of earlier events.”⁵⁵ τότε in v. 45 potentially serves both of these purposes. If it divides the pericope into subsections, then it confirms that vv. 44 belongs with the attempts to persuade the apostles in vv. 36–43.⁵⁶ Alternatively, it may introduce a “concluding speech complex.”⁵⁷ If so, vv. 45–49 fulfills the delayed goal of convincing the apostles, who are repeatedly said to disbelieve in the earlier parts of the narrative.⁵⁸ In either case, Luke’s τότε in v. 45 suggests that he judged the eating proof insufficient.

10.1.6 Conclusion

The physical proofs are not emphasized in Lukan redaction. Like the doubt motif, they are traditional for Luke. As Luke himself indicates in his prologue, the testimony of the eyewitnesses is already traditional for many by the time he writes: πολλοὶ ἐπεχείρησαν ἀνατάξασθαι διήγησιν ... καθὼς παρέδοσαν ἡμῖν οἱ ... ἀυτόπται. To provide Theophilus “certainty” about these traditions, Luke offers “a narrative about the things fulfilled” (Luke 1:1–4). In Luke-Acts, as with Justin and other apologists, the primary apologetic and redactional

⁵⁴ Luke 5:35; 11:26; 13:26; 14:9, 10, 21; 16:16; 21:20–21, 27; 23:20; Acts 1:12; 4:8; 5:26; 6:11; 8:17; 10:46; 13:3, 12; 15:22; 17:14; 21:26, 33; 25:12; 26:1; 27:21.

⁵⁵ Stephen H. Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek* (Dallas: SIL International, 2000), 97–98.

⁵⁶ Levinsohn (*Discourse Features*, 97–98) seems to suggest that v. 44 constitutes its own subsection, distinct from vv. 36–43. But given that this subsection would consist of but one verse, I can’t help but wonder if this suggestion has been unconsciously influenced by the standard way of dividing the passage in commentaries. That v. 44 belongs with vv. 36–43 is also suggested by a stylistic shift that occurs at v. 45: in vv. 36–44 Jesus speaks in the first person, but in vv. 46–47 he begins to refer to himself in the third person.

⁵⁷ Levinsohn, *Discourse Features*, 98 n. 5.

⁵⁸ Cf. Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.* 10.179: “By saying, ‘Then he opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures,’ he also declares that the disciples believed.”

emphases lie in the fulfillment of the Scriptures. The latter validates for Luke's readers the eyewitness testimony to the otherwise incredible event of the resurrection of Jesus – an event that the eyewitnesses themselves had difficulty believing despite the proofs offered to them. "Every doubt is finally brushed aside because it had been foretold."⁵⁹

10.2 Rereading John 20:24–29

The rejection of the antidocetic interpretation of John 20:24–29 leaves us with some important unanswered questions. Why does the author even bother mentioning the touch test if he does not intend to narrate it being carried out? Moreover, if the account is not antidocetic, what is the purpose of the graphic references to Jesus's wounds? And most importantly, how do we account for the awkward transition from these apparently gratuitous physical details in v. 27 to the exalted Christology of Thomas's confession in v. 28?

To do justice to the Thomas pericope, it is essential that we come to terms with the thorniness of this final question. The narrative as it stands implies that the touch invitation convinced Thomas of Jesus's deity (rather than of the physicality of resurrection body). While v. 29 suggests that Thomas comes to believe on the basis of *seeing* Jesus, it does not specify what he saw in the risen One that leads him to confess Jesus to be God. Immediately before Thomas's confession, Jesus draws Thomas's attention to his wounds and then exhorts him to believe. Unless we resort to speculation, we have little choice but to conclude that it is Jesus's invitation to touch and see his wounds that convinces Thomas of Jesus's deity.⁶⁰ And yet to many readers, both ancient and modern, this seems illogical.⁶¹ How does the "grossly" physical persuade Thomas that

⁵⁹ So Grundmann (*Lukas*, 449), who ironically does not seem to realize that it undermines his own claim that Luke 24:39–43 is antidocetic.

⁶⁰ Most (*Doubting Thomas*, 56) postulates that Thomas's confession is motivated by fear of the numinous. While Jesus's abrupt appearance is bound to cause a fearful reaction as it did for the disciples in Luke 24:36–38, in the latter passage the disciples conclude that Jesus is a ghost, not that he is God. Nor would Jesus's knowledge of Thomas's previous statement (John 20:25, 27) necessarily lead to this conclusion (*pace* Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971], 853). The display of supernatural knowledge led the Samaritan woman to believe only that Jesus was a prophet (4:17–19).

⁶¹ E.g., Gregory, *Hom. Ev.* 26.8; Augustine, *Serm.* 145A; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Comm. Jo.* 7.20.27–29; Jean Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John* (2 vols.; trans. William Pringle; Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847), 2:276; Osborne, *Resurrection Narratives*, 254; Ignace de La Potterie, *The Hour of Jesus: The Passion and the Resurrection of Jesus according to John* (trans. Gregory Murray; New York: Alba House, 1989), 184–85; cf. Most, *Doubting Thomas*, 57.

Jesus is divine? Is Thomas making here an unwarranted “giant leap of faith” from the material to the spiritual, from humanity to divinity?⁶²

There is a satisfying resolution to this paradox, but it requires a re-examination of John’s redactional reference to the wound in Jesus’s side in light of broader Johannine themes and theology. Ironically, it is the part of the narrative that is so often judged an antidocetic proof of Jesus’s true humanity that in Johannine logic provides the ground for Thomas’s confession of his divinity.

10.2.1 *The Presupposition of Humanity and the Argument for Divinity*

In John’s Gospel, it is usually Jesus’s opponents who draw attention to his humanity. The opponents refer to Jesus as an ἄνθρωπος far more frequently (John 5:12; 7:46; 9:16, 24; 10:33; 11:47, 50; 18:14, 17; 18:29; 19:5) than those who are sympathetic to him (4:29; 7:51).⁶³ Those skeptical of or hostile to Jesus refer to his earthly origins, e.g., “Can anything good come *from Nazareth?*” (1:46), “Search and see that no prophet arises *from Galilee?*” (7:52).⁶⁴ By contrast, the emphasis of Jesus and the narrator is on Jesus’s heavenly origins and divinity. He is “from above” (3:31; 8:23), “from heaven” (3:13, 31; 6:33, 38, 41, 42, 51), “from the Father” (1:14; 16:27), “from God” (6:46; 8:42; 13:3; 16:27), and “not of this world” (8:23). To these we might also add the numerous times when Jesus refers to God as “my Father,” for according to the narrator, by doing so Jesus was “making himself equal with God” (5:17–18).⁶⁵

More importantly, Jesus’s humanity is the basis of the opponents’ rejection of his divinity. In response to the bread of life discourse, they say, “*Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?* How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” (6:41–42). Likewise, “*You are not yet fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham?*” (8:57). And when Jesus responds by applying the divine name to himself (“before Abraham was, *I am* [ἐγὼ εἰμι]”), they attempt to stone him for blasphemy (8:58–59). Later, after he says, “I and the Father are one,” they attempt to stone him again “because you, *being a man, make yourself God?*” (10:30, 33). In the passion narrative, when Pilate brings forward Jesus and calls him “the man (ὁ ἄνθρωπος),” the Jews accuse Jesus of making himself “the Son of God” (19:5–7). Given the parallels in John 8:57–59 and 10:30–36, “Son of God” must here be understood as claim to

⁶² I borrow here a phrase from Wright, *Resurrection*, 668; similarly Morris, *John*, 854.

⁶³ The latter use the term only when speaking to others who do not yet believe in Jesus. Jesus himself does the same on one occasion (8:40).

⁶⁴ Similarly, Pilate’s crucifixion inscription reads, “Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews” (19:19). The soldiers who arrest Jesus also twice call him “Jesus of Nazareth” (18:5, 7), but sandwiched in between this double reference the narrator offers a brilliantly ironic aside alluding to Jesus’s divine identity: “When Jesus said to them, ‘I am (ἐγὼ εἰμι),’ they drew back and fell to the ground” (18:6).

⁶⁵ 6:32; 6:40; 8:19 (2x), 38, 49, 54; 10:18, 29, 37; 14:7, 20, 23; 15:1, 8, 15, 23 (2x); 20:17.

divinity.⁶⁶ The underlying logic of the opponents is that Jesus's humanity must de facto render this claim blasphemous.

These examples are all part of a debate within John's narrative over Jesus's divine origins. Within this debate, Jesus's true humanity is *never* in question; it is assumed as a given.⁶⁷ The opponents appeal to it as the primary evidence against his divinity. Over against their arguments, the Johannine Jesus repeatedly asserts his divine origin and oneness with the Father. This is precisely the opposite of the docetic/antidocetic controversy in the second century: whereas docetists appeal to Christ's true divinity to deny his humanity, the opponents in John's narrative appeal to Jesus's true humanity to deny his divinity. Remarkably, the Johannine Jesus rebukes his opponents for judging him "according to outward appearance (κατ' ὄψιν)," that is, "according to the flesh (κατὰ τὴν σάρκα)" (7:24; 8:15). It is because of this worldly criterion that they are not able to recognize his divine origin (7:16, 27–29; 8:14, 16–19). Jesus even says, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world" (8:23). It is difficult to imagine an antidocetic editor, let alone an antidocetic author, letting these statements in John 7 and 8 stand without any modifications, caveats or explanatory glosses.⁶⁸ Not that the Fourth Evangelist is himself a docetist, naïve or otherwise. *Pace* Käsemann, Jesus's humanity is taken for granted by all characters in John's Gospel, including Jesus and the narrator. The primary question being addressed throughout John's Gospel is: how can Jesus, being a man, also be God?⁶⁹

The Thomas pericope can be fitted perfectly within the framework of the ongoing debate in John's narrative. The touch motif is already traditional in the resurrection appearance tradition known to John. Jesus's humanity and so also the tangibility of his body is presupposed. This is why the author has no need to confirm that Thomas actually touches Jesus and can imply that it is unnecessary for him to do so. Something about the experience of seeing the risen Jesus and his wounds enables Thomas to do what the rest of the Jews in the Fourth Gospel are unable to do, namely, to stop judging the one who stands before him "according to the flesh" and recognize his divinity. In this way, the

⁶⁶ Pilate responds in fear at the prospect that Jesus could be Son of God in a divine sense and asks the question that is reiterated in various ways throughout John's Gospel: "Where are you from?" (19:8; cf. 7:27–28; 8:14; 9:29–30).

⁶⁷ See already the ancient tradition preserved by Clement of Alexandria: "Last of all John, having perceived that the bodily facts had been made clear in the gospels, being urged by his acquaintances, and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual gospel" (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.7).

⁶⁸ The absence of clarifications is especially telling in a Gospel that repeatedly offers narrative asides to explain matters to the reader.

⁶⁹ Similarly Ulrich Wilckens, "Monotheismus und Christologie," *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* 12 (1997): 87–97; Borgen, *More Light*, xi–xii. Notably, Borgen admits that he was previously an advocate of the antidocetic interpretation but has since changed his mind.

Thomas pericope provides not a later antidocetic correction but an indispensable climax to John's original narrative.

10.2.2 *The Thomas Pericope and John's Conception of Theophany*

While the notion that the flesh of Jesus would convince Thomas of his deity may seem counterintuitive, it is by no means inconsistent within Johannine thought. The entire narrative of John's Gospel up to this point seems designed to reset the reader's expectations about how God reveals himself. Already in the Prologue, both through allusions to OT theophanies in vv. 14 and 17 and a more or less direct statement in v. 18, the author indicates that Jesus's entire life is to be understood as an extended theophany:

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (cf. Exod 40:34), and we have seen his glory (cf. Exod 33:18), glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (cf. Exod 34:6) For the law was given through Moses (cf. Exod 34:32); grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God (cf. Exod 33:20); the only Son, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. (John 1:14, 17–18)⁷⁰

The author also here provides his understanding of theophany: God is not seen directly but is revealed through the Son.⁷¹ As the Johannine Jesus later puts it, "Whoever sees me sees him who sent me" (John 12:45).⁷² The author's implicit claim in vv. 14 and 17 to have been like Moses and seen the divine glory follows immediately after the statement that "the Word became flesh." If this means that God is somehow revealed in Jesus's flesh, then Thomas's confession of Jesus's deity in response to his resurrection in the flesh is not as strange as it might first appear.

The Evangelist recognizes that his concept of indirect revelation is difficult to grasp. As we have seen, Jesus's humanity is the biggest stumbling block to the recognition of his divinity. The difficulty can be seen most acutely in the dialogue between Jesus, Thomas, and Philip in ch. 14. Jesus tells Thomas that he has "seen" the Father because knowing Jesus means knowing the Father also (14:7). Philip, not understanding, asks for a theophanic experience like

⁷⁰ In v. 18, some of the best manuscripts read "only God (*μονογενὴς θεός*)." As this is the hardest reading, it most likely represents the original text. However, the context makes clear that a reference to the Son, as attested in the majority reading (*μονογενὴς υἱός*), is intended (cf. John 6:46).

On the allusions to OT theophanies and the intermediary influence of Jewish interpretive traditions, see Craig A. Evans, *Word and Glory: On the Exegetical and Theological Background of John's Prologue* (JSNTSup 89; Sheffield: JSOT press 1993).

⁷¹ So already, Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.6.6 (*ANF*): "And through the Word Himself who had been made visible and palpable, was the Father shown forth, although all did not equally believe in Him; but all saw the Father in the Son."

⁷² This principle also applies to Jesus's enemies: "They have seen and hated both me and my Father" (15:24).

that of Moses such as has already been alluded to in the prologue: “Show us the Father” (14:8; cf. “Show me your glory,” Exod 33:18).⁷³ But Jesus reiterates, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (14:9).

Although they are having difficulty with the concept, Jesus promises that they will eventually understand: “Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me because I live. And you too will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father” (14:19–20).⁷⁴ This admittedly cryptic statement is best understood as a proleptic reference to Jesus’s death (“yet a little while and the world will see me no more”) and resurrection (“I live”).⁷⁵ The Farewell Discourse thus sets the expectation that when Thomas, Philip, and the other disciples “see” the risen Jesus, then they will finally recognize that they have seen God. Accordingly, when Thomas is said to believe because he has “seen” (20:29) and confesses “My Lord and my God” (20:28), we may infer that Thomas has at last understood the indirect concept of theophany that Jesus has been teaching him all along.⁷⁶ Jesus’s flesh is no longer an obstacle to recognizing his deity; it is the means by which this recognition can take place.

It is therefore unnecessary to posit that the emphasis on Jesus’s humanity in vv. 25 and 27 is antidocetic. It is rather part and parcel of the Johannine concept of theophany. And yet this does not explain how Thomas is now able to perceive what he failed to understand during the Farewell Discourse. Something has changed that allows Thomas to recognize Jesus’s divinity. Judging from John’s redactional emphasis, I would suggest that the difference is that Thomas can now see the spear wound in Jesus’s side. To understand the significance of the wound, however, we must turn to John’s story of the piercing.

⁷³ λέγει ... δεῖξον ἡμῖν τὸν πατέρα (John 14:8); λέγει δεῖξόν μοι τὴν σεαυτοῦ δόξαν (Exod 33:18 LXX). Nearly all commentators perceive an allusion here, but see especially the arguments for it in Keener, *John*, 2:944–45.

⁷⁴ The punctuation of v. 19 in some English translations, e.g., ESV, NIV, NKJV, CEV, HSCB, may be misleading. It is arguable that ὅτι ἐγὼ ζῶ should not be taken as the beginning of a new sentence but as a continuation of what precedes. In this case, ὅτι can be taken to indicate either the content of what they will see (they will see *that* he is alive) or the cause (they will see Jesus *because* he will be alive) (so Barrett, *John*, 464). Cf. the translation in Michaels, *John*, 785: “The world *will* no longer see me, but you *will* see me, because I *will* live – and you too *will* live” (emphasis original; similarly NABR, LB, Philipps).

⁷⁵ So Barrett, *John*, 464; Carson, *John*, 501–2; Keener, *John*, 2:974; Michaels, *John*, 786–87. On this and other prolepses in the farewell discourse that are fulfilled in John 20, see Jean Zumstein, “Jesus’ Resurrection in the Farewell Discourses,” in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (eds. Craig R. Koester and R. Bieringer; WUNT 222; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 103–206.

⁷⁶ Eusebius offers a similar interpretation in *Eccl. theol.* 2.27.14–16.

10.2.3 Theophany of the Pierced God

The piercing of Jesus, and the flow of blood and water from his side in particular, is frequently judged antidocetic.⁷⁷ On the one hand, it must be admitted that this passage, which is distinctive to John’s passion narrative, is designed to carry special persuasive weight.⁷⁸ It is reinforced with an aside addressed directly to the reader: “He who saw it has borne witness – his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth – that you may also believe” (19:35). On the other hand, evidence for a specifically antidocetic purpose is far from decisive. Verse 35 indicates that the piercing is mentioned so that the reader “may also believe,” but it does not specify what exactly the reader is supposed to believe. The humanity of Jesus is never the object of πιστεύω in the Fourth Gospel.⁷⁹ There is therefore no basis within the Fourth Gospel for concluding that this passage is antidocetic.

Any case for antidocetic intent must be built on external parallels, and even here the evidence is ambiguous. Irenaeus appeals to John 19:34 to counter the docetic Christologies of the Marcionites and Valentinians. However, Irenaeus is arguing only that the passage is incompatible with docetism, not that it was written with antidocetic intent.⁸⁰ Incompatibility does not necessarily imply intent. In fact, elsewhere Irenaeus himself, like other church fathers, interprets the water that flowed from Christ as a symbolic reference to the Holy Spirit.⁸¹ Additionally, Irenaeus’s argument against the Valentinians is significant because the Valentinians themselves accepted the passage as authoritative. Although Irenaeus claims they are unable to fit John 19:34 into their doctrinal system (4.35.3), he is poorly informed in this case. The Valentinians, who maintained that Christ’s body was made of a mystical psychic substance, had no problem allegorizing the flow of blood and water (Clement, *Exc.* 61.3) and interpreting the passage along docetic lines: “But they pierced *the appearance*

⁷⁷ E.g., Richter, *Studien*, 130–36; Barrett, *John*, 556; Carson, *John*, 623–24; Paul N. Anderson, “Why This Study is Needed,” in *Critical Appraisals of Critical Views* (vol. 1 of *John, Jesus, and History*, eds. Paul N. Anderson, Felix Just, and Tom Thatcher; SymS; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 35.

⁷⁸ Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:290.

⁷⁹ Objects of πιστεύω in John include the Scriptures, Jesus’s messianic identity, his divine Sonship, his being sent by the Father, his oneness with the Father, etc. But the reader is never called to “believe” that Jesus was a man. It is not something that requires faith; all the characters in John’s Gospel, believing and unbelieving, know that Jesus is human.

⁸⁰ *Haer.* 4.33.2. On Irenaeus’s claims about the purpose of the Fourth Gospel, see Appendix.

⁸¹ *Haer.* 3.24.1. A letter preserved in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.1–63, which was probably written by Irenaeus or under his direction, mentions the “heavenly spring of the water of life that proceeds from the belly (νηδύς) of Christ” (5.22). This alludes to John 7:37–38 but may also be a reference to 19:34.

(τὸ φαινόμενον)” (62.2).⁸² The gnostic portion of the *Acts of John* also docetizes the passage, claiming that the piercing of Christ was only how it appeared “to the crowd”; it did not actually happen to him, and no blood actually flowed from him (97, 101). These accounts, which represent two of the earliest known responses to John 19:34 by docetists, do not reject the piercing as a late, antidocetic interpolation but accept it as belonging to early tradition and reinterpret it in accordance with their own theologies. Again, the docetic/antidocetic debate is a hermeneutical one. Both sides agree that the piercing is traditional; they differ over how the tradition is to be interpreted.

To support an antidocetic reading some appeal to an ancient Jewish belief that the human body was composed of water and blood (*Lev. Rab.* 15.2).⁸³ However, the combination of these two elements may have had other significance for ancient Jews. For example, in rabbinic interpretation of Num 20:11, Moses is said to have struck the rock in the wilderness twice, with blood coming out the first time and water the second.⁸⁴ Given that Paul and other early Christian writers identified this rock as Christ, John may have interpreted the blood and water not as a reference to Jesus’s humanity but as a miracle and/or a scriptural allusion to his Messiahship.⁸⁵

Other ancient readers who interpret the flow of blood and water literally understand it as a sign of Jesus’s divinity. Celsus’s Jew mocks John’s account of the crucifixion by asking if the mixture of blood and water is meant to represent ichor, the special, immortal liquid that allegedly flowed through the veins of the pagan gods (Origen, *Cels.* 2.36).⁸⁶ Origen rejects the association with the mythical ichor, but he argues that the flow of blood and water out of a dead body was so unusual that it could not be understood as anything other than a miracle, and thereby a further indication of “the divinity of Jesus” (2.36).⁸⁷ Celsus and Origen are both aware of docetic Christologies, but neither concludes that the “blood and water” are intended as antidocetic apologetic.

⁸² Similar Valentinian readings of the same passage appear in *Interp. Know.* (NHC XI,1) 10.34–37; Heracleon apud Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 10.19.

⁸³ Richter, *Studien*, 136; Carson, *John*, 623–24; Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology*, 209.

⁸⁴ *Exod. Rab.* 3.13 on Exod 4:9; *Tg. Onq.* Num 20:11.

⁸⁵ See already John Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica* (4 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1859; repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1989), 3:349–41; so also Koestenberger, *John*, 552. Irenaeus (frag. 52) explicitly connects 1 Cor 10:4 and John 4:14.

⁸⁶ Cf. Homer, *Il.* 5.339–342; Plutarch, *Mor.* 180e. Keener plausibly proposes that the combination would suggest that Jesus is a demigod (*John*, 2:1152 n. 747).

⁸⁷ So Christopher Rowland and Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament* (CRINT 12; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 384.

On the contrary, each infers that the flow of “blood and water” is a supernatural indication of Jesus’s deity.⁸⁸

This brief reception history should caution modern readers against too easily assuming that John’s account of the piercing of Jesus is antidocetic. But the main reason why scholars today find an antidocetic interpretation so appealing is the fact that 1 John, often thought to have been written against some form of docetism, includes a striking parallel to John 19:34:

But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out *blood and water*. (John 19:34)

This is he who came by *water and blood* – Jesus Christ; *not by the water only but by the water and the blood*. (1 John 5:6)

The latter verse is notoriously difficult to interpret and may not even be antidocetic.⁸⁹ But if we assume for the sake of argument that 1 John 5:6 was written to combat either separationist or proto-monophysite Christology, it still does not support an antidocetic interpretation of John 19:34. The polemic in 1 John 5:6 implies that the opponents could readily accept the water but not the blood, which means that each element has its own distinct significance for the Johannine community. While the blood may have been objectionable to the docetists,

⁸⁸ According to Tertullian, Apelles, a former disciple of Marcion who accepts John’s Gospel and claims that Christ has a special astral flesh, interprets the blood as a “celestial” sign (*Carn. Chr.* 9). Some later church fathers, e.g., Ethymius Zigabenus and Theophylact, also understood the blood and especially the water as a miracle and as an indication that Jesus was divine (see quotations in Westcott, *Epistles*, 330–31). We may also compare the allusion to John 19:34 in *Mart. Poly.* 16:1, in which Polycarp is stabbed and “there came out a dove and much blood.” The dove, like “water” in John’s Gospel, is presumably symbolic of the Spirit (cf. Luke 3:22 parr.).

⁸⁹ Surveys in Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 174–79; Streett, *They Went Out*, 256–337. Streett exposes numerous weaknesses in the theory that 1 John 5:6 is written to counter either “docetism” (i.e., proto-monophysite Christology) or “Cerinthianism” (i.e., separationist Christology).

the water was not.⁹⁰ Consequently, the water is almost certainly not included in John 19:34 for antidocetic purposes.⁹¹

This is significant because the water, rather than the blood, is emphasized in John 19:34. In contrast to 1 John 5:6, where the rhetorical emphasis falls on the blood (“not by the water only, but the water *and the blood*”), John 19:34 places the water in the emphatic final position (“immediately there came out blood *and water*”).⁹² This difference indicates that John 19:34 was not written to counter the same opponents as those of 1 John 5:6.⁹³ The flow of *water* from the wound would have been most peculiar and striking element in John 19:34.⁹⁴ While in ancient literature the shedding of blood is regularly associated with death, water is not.⁹⁵ Not surprisingly, commentators both ancient and modern

⁹⁰ If the opponents are separationists, the water in 1 John 5:6 probably refers to Jesus’s baptism, which the opponents affirm as the point when the heavenly Christ possessed the human Jesus. The blood would then refer to Christ’s death, which the opponents deny by claiming that Christ departed from Jesus prior to the crucifixion. Alternatively, if 1 John attacks proto-monophysite docetism, then both blood and water probably allude to the piercing of Christ. In this case, the opponents affirm the water as the single component of Jesus’s spiritual/supernatural body and deny the blood as an indicator of Christ’s humanity (so Richter, *Studien*, 130–31; see also Tom Thatcher, “‘Water and Blood’ in AntiChrist Christianity [1 John 5:6],” *Stone-Campbell Journal* 4 [2001]: 235–48). This appears to be the position of the docetist who wrote *AJ* 101.7–9, which explicitly denies the flow of blood but offers no opposition to the water (Lalleman, *Acts of John*, 249–50; but see Streett, *They Went Out*, 264–65).

⁹¹ Furthermore, it is unnecessary to take the blood in 19:34 as polemical; it may simply be traditional. It would be difficult to find anything that has a stronger claim to early tradition about Jesus’s death than his blood. The NT, including Matthew’s passion narrative, frequently employs Jesus’s blood as shorthand for his death (Matt 27:6, 24–25; Acts 5:28; 20:28; Rom 3:25; Col 1:20; Heb 9:14; 1 Pet 1:19; Rev 5:9). The Synoptics even describe it as being “poured out” (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; cf. 1 Cor 11:25).

⁹² So Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 203.

⁹³ So already Bultmann, *John*, 678 ns. 7 and 1.

⁹⁴ Similarly Eduard Schweizer, *Neotestamentica: Deutsche und englische Aufsätze 1951–1963* (Zurich: Zwingli, 1963), 379; Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:948–49; Martinus C. de Boer, *Johannine Perspectives on the Death of Jesus* (CBET 17; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996), 294–95; Keener, *John*, 2:1153; Michaels, *John*, 969.

⁹⁵ Despite frequent claims to the contrary (e.g., George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* [WBC 36; Waco, Tex.: Word, 1987], 357; Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology*, 209; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles* [rev. ed.; Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2005], 254), there does not appear to be any evidence to suggest that the flow of blood and water from a corpse would have been considered normal or ordinary in the ancient world. To support this idea, some of these commentators appeal to texts (e.g., Homer, *Il.* 5.334–42; Plutarch, *Mor.* 180e) cited in Schweizer, *Neotestamentica*, 382–83. But these texts refer only to the notion that the gods had ichor rather than blood flowing through their veins. No text cited by Schweizer mentions a flow of both blood and water, let alone suggests that it was a normal human occurrence.

suggest that the water denotes something supernatural or has some deeper spiritual meaning.⁹⁶

Celsus's and Origen's view, that the piercing is meant to indicate Jesus's divinity, makes sense in light of the expectation that the Johannine Jesus sets for the passion narrative: "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that *I am* (ἐγώ εἰμι)" (John 8:28). This "lifting up" is, of course, John's euphemistic way of referring to the crucifixion. By alluding to this theme of paradoxical glorification repeatedly in the chapters leading up to the passion narrative (e.g., 3:13–14; 12:23–24, 32–34, 41; 13:31), the author sets the expectation that the story of Jesus's crucifixion will in some way reveal Jesus's glorification/divinity.⁹⁷ While the crucifixion narrative itself surprisingly has no *explicit* references to this theme, there are two possible *implicit* indicators of Jesus's deity. The first, already discussed, is the potentially miraculous import of the flow of water from Jesus's side. The second is the quotation of Zech 12:10 at the conclusion of the crucifixion story: "They will look on him whom they have pierced" (John 19:37).

This quotation provides the only explicit indication of what the evangelist takes to be the specific significance of the piercing itself.⁹⁸ Zechariah 12:10 was particularly controversial among ancient Jews, because in the Hebrew text God himself, who is speaking, appears to be the one who is pierced: "They will look on me, the one whom they pierced (והביטו אלי את אשר־דקרו)." Ancient interpreters and translators frequently attempt to circumvent this awkward

Moreover, if modern medicine has only with difficulty been able to produce viable explanations for the flow of water (Anthony F Sava, "Wound in the Side of Christ," *CBQ* 19 [1957]: 343–46; W. D Edwards, W. J. Gabel, and F. E. Hosmer, "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 255 [1986]: 1455–63), it hardly seems plausible that the ancients would have judged it commonplace. As noted above, Celsus and Origen clearly think it abnormal and thus an indication of Jesus's divinity. Though he does not quote Celsus or Origen, Schweizer draws a similar conclusion from the parallels he does cite: while the blood implies Jesus's humanity, the water suggests a comparison with divine ichor and so would imply Jesus's deity. Though Schweizer himself prefers a sacramental reading of the blood and water, he concludes that the water tells against an antidocetic interpretation (*Neotestamentica*, 380–81).

⁹⁶ If the close parallel in 7:38–39 ("Out of his belly will flow streams of living water." He said this about the Spirit ... for as yet the Spirit had not been given because Jesus had not been glorified") is any indication, the water is meant to remind the reader of the Spirit which was to be given after Jesus's glorification, i.e., his death. The parallel is so striking that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that 19:34 is meant to recall 7:38–39.

⁹⁷ On Jesus's death as his glorification, see D. Moody Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John* (New Testament Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 115–22; John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (2nd ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 14, 467–76.

⁹⁸ The combined quotation of Exod 12:46/Num. 9:12 and Ps. 34:20 in 19:36 refers to the fact that the soldiers did not break Jesus's legs.

anthropomorphic implication. The LXX and OG completely remove the idea of piercing: “They shall look to me because they have danced triumphantly (καὶ ἐπιβλέψονται πρὸς με ἀνθ’ ὧν κατωργήσαντο)” (apparently reading ἰδῶν for ἰδῶν). The more popular and less radical strategy took advantage of a syntactical ambiguity in the Hebrew that made it possible (though by no means natural) to make an interpretive distinction between the object looked upon, which in all possible renderings of the MT must be God himself, and the object of the piercing, which some later interpreters identified as a messianic figure.⁹⁹ John’s Greek unambiguously equates the two objects, in effect identifying God with the pierced one for any Jewish readers familiar with the controversy.¹⁰⁰ Consequently, those who *see* the pierced one *see* God.¹⁰¹ This aligns perfectly

⁹⁹ See Adam Kubiś, *The Book of Zechariah in the Gospel of John* (EBib 64; Pendé, France: Gabalda, 2012), 115–71. Kubiś cites as examples Aquila, Symmachus, two distinct Targumic readings (*Tg. Neb. Zech 12:10* and a marginal note in *Codex Reuchlinianus*), and three Talmudic readings (*b. Mo’ed. Qat. 28b*, *b. Sukkah 52a*, and *y. Sukkah 5.2*). The paraphrase of *Tg. Neb. Zech 12:10* not only distinguishes between the objects of the verbs; it also replaces the notion of piercing with the concept of “exile.” While it is generally difficult to date interpretive traditions found in the Targums and the Talmud, Kubiś makes a strong case that these particular traditions can be traced back to the first century CE. Kubiś also notes some Hebrew manuscripts that bear witness to a later scribal emendation of אֵלַי (“to me”) to אֵלָיו (“to him”), which he attributes to a desire to avoid anthropomorphism. The fact that the reading אֵלַי is not supported by Greek versions, the Peshitta, or the Targums, suggests that it is a relatively late variant.

¹⁰⁰ Similarly Kubiś, *Zechariah in the Gospel of John*, 179–80, 189–90. Brown (*Gospel according to John*, 2:938, 956) rejects the idea that John’s quotation of Zech 12:10 is intended to hint at Jesus’s deity. In his view, if this were John’s intention, the evangelist would have retained the phrase “to me” from the MT. Yet as Kubiś has shown, this is not the only way to interpret the omission. John may have omitted the phrase to avoid the ambiguity of the Hebrew text and ensure that God, the one upon whom the people look, is identified with the one who is pierced. Given that John’s Gospel consistently portrays Jesus’s life as a theophany (John 1:14–18; 12:45; 14:9) and suggests that his deity will be recognized in the crucifixion (8:28), Kubiś’s explanation is more compelling.

Additionally, John may have avoided the first-person reference (“to me”) because it would have been awkward in the immediate context, in which he refers to Jesus in the third person (similarly Bruce G. Schuchard, *Scripture within Scripture: The Interrelationship of Form and Function in the Explicit Old Testament Citations in the Gospel of John* [SBLDS 133; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992], 148; Franklin Johnson, *The Quotations of the New Testament from the Old Considered in the Light of General Literature* [Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1896], 78–82). This kind of adaptation was standard practice in antiquity and appears in some of John’s other OT quotations, e.g., 12:40 (cf. Isa 6:10); 15:25 (cf. Ps 35:19/69:4); 19:36 (cf. Exod 12:46/Num 9:12/Ps 34:20). If John omitted the phrase “to me” for contextual rather than theological reasons, a reference to Jesus’s divinity is still probable in light of the evangelist’s Christology.

¹⁰¹ So Schuchard, *Scripture within Scripture*, 149; similarly Klaus Wengst, *Das Johannevangelium* (2 vols.; Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 4; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000–2001), 2:267; Keener, *John*, 2:1156.

with the Johannine concept of theophany already discussed: “Whoever sees me sees him who sent me” (John 12:45); “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).¹⁰² While the narrator does not expressly state this theme within the crucifixion narrative itself, the earlier parts of the Gospel have set the expectation.¹⁰³ Again, if the piercing is not a revelation of Jesus’s deity, John’s crucifixion narrative is anticlimactic in light of John’s otherwise consistent interpretation of Jesus’s death as his glorification.

We are now prepared to answer the question that prompted this discussion of the piercing story: how and why does Jesus’s invitation to touch and see his wounds lead Thomas to confess that Jesus is God? If we assume the author’s redactional reference to Jesus’s side is antidocetic, then Thomas’s confession becomes a non sequitur. But if the piercing of Jesus is itself the revelation of his deity, then Thomas’s confession is a valid inference from seeing the wound in Jesus’s side. In Johannine logic, Thomas sees the pierced one and therefore he sees God.

10.2.4 Conclusion

This reading permits us to recognize the full internal unity of the Thomas pericope and its integral role within the Fourth Gospel as whole. The graphic elements of vv. 25 and 27 that seem to stress the physicality of the risen Jesus are not only fully compatible with the high Christology in v. 28, they are the very basis of Thomas’s confession. This is the pinnacle of Johannine irony and the resolution of John’s paradoxical statements about the crucifixion. The scandal of the cross, when seen through the resurrection of the pierced one, is itself the proof of Jesus’s divine exaltation. The redactional emphasis on Jesus’s pierced side is not the result of a late, antidocetic interpolation designed to prove Jesus’s true humanity; it is the lynchpin of the original narrative (chs. 1–20) and its case for divine Christology. Inversely stated, the antidocetic interpretation of 20:25, 27 can lead only to the disintegration of both the narrative and the theology of the Fourth Gospel as a whole. It is to be abandoned. It is historically implausible in light of careful comparison with docetic and antidocetic texts and exegetically unwarranted in light of narrative-critical and redaction-critical analysis.

¹⁰² So already Johnson, *Quotations*, 80–81; similarly Kubiś, *Zechariah in the Gospel of John*, 179.

¹⁰³ Similarly Bruner, *John*, 1132.

Chapter 11

Some Final Reflections

11.1 The Resurrection Faith of the Early Church

I began this study by noting a question that is often lurking behind modern study of Luke 24 and John 20: was the “proto-orthodox” church justified in its claim that Jesus rose in the flesh, or did the various “lost Christianities” that argued for a docetic/spiritual notion of resurrection reflect the more original form of Easter faith? I suggested that approaching the resurrection narratives with this question in mind may be unhelpful because it can lead the exegete down a path that the evangelists themselves did not walk. This study has in large part been an attempt to demonstrate that an early church debate over docetic Christology is indeed the wrong historical context in which to place the composition of Luke 24 and John 20. Both narratives were written independently of the docetic/antidocetic controversies, and the evangelists’ apologetic interests lie elsewhere.

The extant remains of early docetic/antidocetic debates suggest that it was not Luke and John who were responding to docetism, but docetists who were responding to Luke and John. The docetists themselves did not perceive an antidocetic intent in Luke’s and John’s narratives. Rather, they accepted them as authentic, apostolic tradition and even appealed to them to support their arguments for docetic Christology. The modern question about the “original form of Easter faith” thus proves to be a red herring. As we have seen, this is a question on which docetists, gnostics, and proto-orthodox Christians agree. Both sides agree that the proto-orthodox position reflects the “original” view of the apostles, but gnostics and docetists reject as invalid the proto-orthodox principle that “truth precedes error.”

The principle of the gnostics is that apostolic error precedes gnostic truth. According to early gnostics, who understood Luke’s Gospel to be written “according to the statements of [Jesus’s] disciples,” the apostles did initially conclude that Jesus had risen in the flesh, but their conclusion was mistaken:

But when the disciples saw that he had risen from the dead, *they did not recognize him*; no, not even *Jesus himself* [did they recognize], namely, in what manner he rose from the dead. This they claim was a very great error among the disciples: they [the disciples] thought he had risen in a worldly body, since they were ignorant of the fact that *Flesh and blood do not inherit the kingdom of heaven*. (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30.13)

Gnostic accounts vary, but there is a clear pattern: sometime after the Easter experiences reported in the Gospels, Jesus corrects their initial (mis)perceptions by revealing secret gnosis to one or more of the apostles.

The docetistic argument consists not in a rejection of the resurrection appearance traditions preserved in Luke and John but in a reinterpretation of them. For docetists, the physical demonstrations are not to be taken literally but docetized: he “did these things in appearance only” (Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 4.2); he “appeared only as spiritual, and no longer in flesh, but presented the mere appearance of flesh” ([Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 2.14); he “showed only images.... He ate and did not eat” (Ephrem, *Hymn. c. haer.* 36.12–13). The slogan “in appearance only” at the heart of the docetism presupposes and responds to established, authoritative traditions in which Jesus is portrayed in physical terms.¹ But again, docetists do not reject these traditions but the literal interpretation of them in proto-orthodox circles. There is no evidence that any early docetist or gnostic ever accused Luke or John of invention or historical embellishment with respect to their physical depictions of the risen Jesus. Rather than denying the historicity of these details, docetists argued either that they were instances of divine *phantasia* or that Jesus’s body was made of a mysterious psychic or spiritual substance that merely gave the appearance of being made of flesh.

Ironically, the docetists and gnostics themselves do not agree with the materializing-trajectory theories of Grass, Robinson, and others, who posit that (i) the original appearances were luminous; and (ii) that those reported in the Gospels have undergone revisions to portray the risen Jesus in more bodily and concrete terms.² The docetists and gnostics examined in this study accept that

¹ It would be counterproductive to contend that “it only appeared to be so” if the traditions could be rejected outright as late fabrications.

² There is, as Robinson argues (“Easter to Valentinus,” 5–37), evidence for the existence of materializing and spiritualizing trajectories across the various ancient accounts of Jesus’s resurrection. But Robinson’s reconstruction is in need of some major adjustments. I mention just a few that are of direct relevance to the present study. First, Robinson’s model is too simple. There are at least two distinct spiritualizing trajectories. I have labeled these proto-monophysite and separationist, respectively. And these two trajectories intersect and branch out into a variety of others. Second, what Robinson refers to as a “spiritualizing” trajectory would be more accurately called a “docetizing” trajectory. The nomenclature is important because of the concepts that are conveyed. Gnostics and docetists were not simply making bald christological assertions; they were arguing for what they believed was the proper way to interpret the resurrection appearance tradition. This leads to the third and most significant problem: Robinson has misplotted the data. The references to Jesus’s physicality in Luke 24 and John 20 are not points along the *middle* of a line graphing the materializing trajectory. Rather they are the *origin* points from which the various trajectories, both materializing and docetizing, can be traced. Again, both docetic and antidocetic writers begin by assuming the apostolic origin of the physical depictions of the risen Jesus in the Gospels. Each then interprets and modifies the story according to their own distinctive hermeneutical and theological principles.

the Gospel accounts reflect the original experiences of the apostles. Their argument was that the reality behind these experiences was not what it appeared to be on the surface. Unlike modern debates about the resurrection, which are primarily driven by the question of the historicity of Luke's and John's narratives, the second-century debates were hermeneutically driven. In the ancient church, both sides agreed that the Gospels tell the story as it happened, or *at least as it appeared* to have happened. They differed on how to *interpret* what happened. As Hippolytus reports, the "Docetists" affirm that Jesus did "all things as it has been written in the Gospels," but every detail is reinterpreted in accordance with their own heretical system.³

Much modern skepticism about the reliability of Luke's and John's narratives has been fueled by suspicions that the touch invitation and the meal were fabricated for the purposes of antidocetic polemic. But as we have seen throughout this study, these suspicions are based on a host of false and anachronistic assumptions about docetism, antidocetic polemic, early Christian apologetics, and Lukan and Johannine redaction.

11.2 The Stigma of Doubt and the Origins of Easter Faith

Some colleagues of mine who have been gracious enough to read and provide constructive feedback on earlier drafts of this book have responded with questions along the following lines: "Well, if the physical depictions of the risen Jesus did not originate in antidocetic polemic, where did they come from? And what bearing does all this have on the question of historicity?" These are important questions, and my colleagues have rightly perceived that I have not really addressed them in the preceding chapters of this study. Indeed, I have intentionally avoided them up to this point for a number of reasons.

Although I do believe that the present study has something to contribute to what might be called the modern quest for the historical Easter, I found it methodologically necessary for this project to put these kinds of questions on the back burner. First, I suspect that our modern anxiousness to fill in the gaps of our historical knowledge – an anxiousness that seems to be particularly acute with respect to the resurrection of Jesus – has clouded the discussion in the secondary literature. The antidocetic hypothesis, in all its variations, is the result of premature attempts to fill these gaps by means of cursory comparisons with second-century parallels and by the unconscious imposition of a post-Enlightenment view of doubt onto the ancient texts. These mistakes reflect not so much a failure of the historical-critical method itself, but a failure to apply it carefully. The widespread popularity of the antidocetic hypothesis, therefore,

³ *Haer.* 8.10.6–11; similarly, 7.26.8–7.27.13; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.3.6; 3.2.1; 3.15.2; Clement, *Strom.* 7.16 [94.1–105.5]; Tertullian, *Praescr.* 14.14; 17; 38–39; *Val.* 1.

suggests to me that modern scholarship has, at least with respect to the resurrection narratives, probably been a little too eager for fuller historical reconstructions and the greater certainty that they seem to promise. Accordingly, I thought it prudent to attempt a fresh analysis that was not burdened by, or driven by, the modern preoccupation of the question of historicity.

Second, the end goal of this study has throughout been exegetical rather than historical. Although I noted at various points that early readers, both orthodox and heterodox, generally had a positive assessment of the historical reliability of the Luke's and John's accounts, I refrained, for the most part, from attempting my own evaluation. The primary objective of my reception history analysis has been to facilitate the comparison of the Gospels and second-century parallels at a redactional level. Comparison at this level is more exegetically meaningful because redaction is a more reliable indicator of authorial purposes. In this case, it allowed for greater impartiality in the assessment of modern readings that attribute antidocetic motives to the evangelists. Whatever one makes of the historicity of various details in Luke 24 and John 20, redactional level-comparisons with second-century writers show that neither Luke nor John have reshaped their source material for antidocetic purposes.

The third reason why I have been reluctant to address questions of historicity is that historical-critical attempts to get behind the Gospels can in many cases only realistically hope to recover the state of the tradition, whether oral or written, just prior to an evangelist's receipt of it. Even with this more modest goal, it can often be a challenge to avoid overly speculative reconstructions. This is why I have, for the most part, tried to limit my own conclusions about the state of appearance tradition prior to the compositions of Luke 24 and John 20 to a small set of anchor points derived from the available evidence. While these anchor points do not offer enough for a full historical-critical reconstruction, they are sufficient to help expose the implausibility of the antidocetic hypothesis (Chapter 9) and to provide a basis for brief exegetical sketches of what Luke and John do with the tradition (Chapter 10).

Having noted these caveats, I nevertheless maintain that in the case of the resurrection narratives we may safely push the limits of historical-critical inquiry a little further. The ground-clearing work of the previous chapters of this study has uncovered, or at least made more discernible, the outline of a seldom-traveled – and as we shall see, surprisingly ancient – historical-critical path that leads back toward the origins of the group appearance tradition. It is, to be sure, a narrow path with trip hazards and a partially obstructed view, but the glimpse that it offers is worth the effort.

While investigating ancient Christian views of doubt and disbelief, it occurred to me that the doubt of the apostles would be an excellent candidate for the criterion of embarrassment. This has been suggested before, but not very frequently. And as far as I can tell, the few who have appealed to the criterion of embarrassment to authenticate the doubt motif have, for whatever reason

(space constraints?), provided little evidence to validate their claims.⁴ Because I think my study provides this missing element, I outline here an argument for the authenticity of the post-resurrection doubt motif and of one other interrelated aspect of the group appearance tradition.

According to its most popular exponent, John P. Meier, the criterion of embarrassment can be summarized in the following way:

The early Church would hardly have gone out of its way to create material that only embarrassed its creator or weakened its position in arguments with opponents. Rather, embarrassing material coming from Jesus would naturally be either suppressed or softened in later stages of the Gospel tradition, and often such progressive suppression or softening can be traced through the Four Gospels.⁵

Meier's definition includes three sub-criteria: (i) embarrassment; (ii) weakened polemic against opponents; and (iii) redactional suppression or softening.

The first sub-criterion, though "straightforward" and "common-sensical," has been criticized as unreliable.⁶ Embarrassment is inherently subjective. As Meier himself warns, "What we today might consider an embarrassment to the early church was not necessarily an embarrassment in its own eyes."⁷ Moreover, the evangelists do not have a habit of confessing to the reader that they find a particular tradition embarrassing. Embarrassing things are, by definition, things that people are reluctant to talk about, and even more so in the honor-and-shame culture of the Ancient Near East. Consequently, the claim that the evangelists mentioned something even though it was "embarrassing to the early Church... is very difficult" to prove.⁸

Nonetheless, I would argue that with respect to the doubt motif a credible case can be made from the broader historical context. As we have seen, doubt and disbelief are consistently condemned by a wide variety of early Christian

⁴ E.g., Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 220; Gary R. Habermas, "Why I Believe the Miracles of Jesus Actually Happened," in *Why I Am a Christian: Leading Thinkers Explain Why They Believe* (eds. Norman L. Geisler and Paul K. Hoffman; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 131; Craig S. Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 331, 345; Licona, *Resurrection*, 354–55. To these we could add others who have made comparable claims without explicitly naming the criterion of embarrassment, e.g., Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* (trans. John Bowden; New York: Scribner, 1971), 302–3; Carson, *John*, 657–58.

⁵ John P. Meier, *The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (vol. 1 of *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 168.

⁶ E.g., Rafael Rodríguez, "The Embarrassing Truth about Jesus: The Criterion of Embarrassment and the Failure of Historical Authenticity," in *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity* (eds. Chris Keith and Anthony Le Donne; London: T&T Clark, 2012), 132–51.

⁷ Meier, *Roots*, 170.

⁸ Mark Goodacre, "Criticizing the Criterion of Multiple Attestation: The Historical Jesus and the Question of Sources," in *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity* (eds. Chris Keith and Anthony Le Donne; London: T&T Clark, 2012), 166.

authors, including the evangelists themselves.⁹ More importantly, some of these ancient Christian texts explicitly indicate that doubt/unbelief is a source of shame, which is an extreme form of embarrassment. Perhaps the criterion of embarrassment should be renamed “the criterion of shame.” This would be less susceptible to the subjectiveness of modern perceptions of what is or is not embarrassing. Semantics aside, the previous chapters of this study provide ample evidence to conclude that the doubt of the apostles would have been perceived as embarrassing or shameful in an ancient Christian context.

The second sub-criterion is nearly impossible to satisfy because the evangelists say little explicitly about opponents that they or their communities may have been facing. However, the examples from *Acts of Peter* and Origen discussed in Chapter 2 demonstrate that Peter’s reputation came under attack because of Matthew’s portrayal of his doubt. Therefore, Peter’s doubt did, at least in the second and third centuries, weaken the Church’s “position in arguments with opponents.” And as discussed in Chapters 3, 5, 6, and 7, a variety of docetists and gnostics in this same period appeal to the post-resurrection doubt motif in the Gospels to bolster their own positions vis-à-vis proto-orthodoxy. While this later evidence cannot speak directly to the time of the evangelists, it does make it unlikely that the doubt was invented as part of an apologetic against an incipient form of docetism or gnosticism.

The third sub-criterion, which Stanley E. Porter describes as a “movement against the redactional tendency,” is less subjective than the first sub-criterion and requires less historical speculation than the second.¹⁰ If Markan priority can be assumed, then it is in some cases a relatively straightforward task to observe whether allegedly embarrassing material is “either suppressed or softened in later stages of the Gospel tradition.” In other cases, we also have evidence of early church fathers (and/or their opponents) who modify Gospel stories. The third sub-criterion therefore provides a litmus test to determine if the material identified using the first or second sub-criteria was actually treated as problematic by early Christian writers.

The question, then, is what happened to the doubt of the apostles “in the later stages of the Gospel tradition”? As we have seen in this study, the doubt was regularly “suppressed” and/or “softened” by early Christian writers. In Chapters 3 and 4, I examined numerous proto-orthodox texts, beginning already in the first century, that omit the doubt from the group appearance stories. In Chapters 6 and 8, I scrutinized other proto-orthodox texts that retain but “soften” the evangelists’ portrayal of the apostles’ doubt. Lastly, and most importantly, I argued in Chapter 9 that the presence of the doubt motif in Luke

⁹ See, especially, Chapter 2.

¹⁰ Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals* (JSNTSup 191; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 106.

24 runs contrary to Luke's own redactional tendencies, and that the Lukan version of the group appearance narrative includes in v. 41 an attempt to excuse the apostles' disbelief.

I also observed that this last instance of the doubt motif proved to be the most problematic for the early church. One of the reasons for this is contextual. Even after being invited to touch the risen Jesus, Luke tells us that the disciples were "still disbelieving." That they continue to disbelieve despite the touch invitation was a problem both because it made the apostles look stubborn or foolish in their disbelief and because it made the story more susceptible to docetic readings. The widespread negative assessment of unbelief in the ancient church, the patterns in early reception of Luke's narrative, and Luke's own redactional tendencies all suggest that the apostles' disbelieving response to the touch test satisfies even the most stringent application of the criterion of embarrassment.

Luke's redactional phrase "from joy" also implies that the touch test was already portrayed as a failure in the pre-Lukan tradition.¹¹ Its failure at this early stage makes it unlikely to be an apologetic invention of any kind, anti-docetic or otherwise. It makes no sense for the early church to invent a story of a proof that does not even convince the apostles themselves ("they were still disbelieving") and at the same time shames them in such a way that it prompts the need to include an excuse ("from joy").¹²

If therefore invention can be ruled out on historical-critical grounds, it seems reasonable to conclude the touch test and its failure may be traced back to the origins of the group appearance tradition—that is, back to what one or more of the disciples initially communicated about their experience(s) of the risen Jesus. An important clarification is needed at this point. This conclusion pertains only to the content of the communicated experience. It says nothing about the nature or kind of experience(s) that the disciples originally had, i.e., whether they should be classified as subjective hallucinations, objective visions, or physical experiences involving the ordinary use of the senses of sight, hearing, and touch. Scholars will no doubt continue to debate the merits of these and other possibilities. My point is simply this: once apologetic invention has been ruled out as historically implausible, there is little reason to suspect that the touch invitation is a later embellishment of the appearance tradition. Even hallucinations and objective visions are capable of including a touch invitation that fails to convince. Whatever one makes of these theories, I would be remiss in a study like this one if I did here reiterate the lesson of reception history: though many early docetists claimed that the disciples experienced some form of *phantasia* – the ancient equivalent of the objective vision theory – the docetists also recognized that their claim was a rejection of an earlier and more

¹¹ See Chapter 9.

¹² Pace Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1574–76.

literal understanding of resurrection that they readily admit originated with Jesus's own disciples.

While it has been necessary for the most part to limit this study's analysis of reception history to the responses of the first three generations of readers, the fourth-century church father John Chrysostom offers some remarks that provide a fitting conclusion to the present discussion. When preaching on Matt 28, Chrysostom pauses to make some brief tangential comments about the doubt of the apostles in v. 17: "And if 'some doubted,' herein again admire the Evangelists' truthfulness. Even up to the last day, they were determined not to conceal even their own shortcomings."¹³ Chrysostom here intuitively employs a criterion of embarrassment and applies it to the doubt of the apostles. Though Chrysostom's remarks are prompted by Matt 28:17, it is worth noting that he refers to "Evangelists" in the plural. His comments are thus meant to apply to the post-resurrection doubt motif in the other gospels as well. For Chrysostom, the doubt is in hindsight a clear indicator that the gospel writers cannot be accused of conspiring to cover up the shortcomings of the apostles.

If Chrysostom's assessment is correct—and the preceding analysis largely confirms its validity—the openness and transparency of the evangelists regarding the post-resurrection doubt of the apostles sets their work apart from the standard proto-orthodox practice of suppressing the doubt motif during the second and early third centuries.¹⁴ The evangelists' choice not to excise the doubt and various other elements that later proved controversial suggests an earnest attempt to be faithful even to those aspects of the tradition that were more problematic. In other words, the fact that the evangelists preserve the doubt suggests to me that they deserve, if I may reuse an apt expression, to be given the benefit of the *doubt* in their handling of Easter traditions more generally. This is not to claim that the canonical accounts offer historically precise reports or that the evangelists were merely dispassionate compilers of tradition. But the above analysis does, in my view, render implausible modern claims that the group appearance tradition was radically reshaped by apologetic concerns prior to being incorporated into Luke's and John's Gospels.

¹³ *Hom. Matt. 90.2 (NPNF¹ 10:531)*.

¹⁴ Chrysostom seems to equate the evangelists and the apostles in a way that modern scholars might find problematic, but the gist of his argument remains sound. Interestingly, though Chrysostom himself does not suppress the doubt motif, he does like many before him add an explicit confirmation, absent from the canonical text, that the apostles were convinced: "Nevertheless, even these are assured by what they see" (*Hom. Matt. 90.2 [NPNF¹ 10:531]*). Chrysostom's uneasiness with the post-resurrection doubt of the apostles can be detected in the way his words in effect overturn those of Matthew. Whereas Matt 28:17 indicates that the apostles "doubted" in response to "seeing" Jesus, Chrysostom says they are "assured by what they see."

Appendix

Other Alleged Antidocetic Passages in Luke and John

As we have seen, the question of how Luke and John relate to the christological controversies of the second century has many moving parts. First, there is the seemingly exponential growth in the diversity of heterodox sects and doctrines over the course of the second-century. A bewildered and frustrated Irenaeus complained that some heretics changed their views daily. While no doubt hyperbolic, Irenaeus's comment should caution us against any analysis of early Christian texts that tacitly presupposes there are only two sides to early christological debates. To complicate matters further, some of the sources that bear witness to these controversies are extant only in fragmentary manuscripts, in languages other than Greek, and/or in the tendentious quotations of opponents. And, of course, most of the relevant texts are difficult to date with precision.

This is just a sampling of the factors that this study has had to consider. Therefore, in order to streamline the argument and spare the reader an overly complex discussion, it seemed best to set aside one set of ancillary issues and address them in an appendix. While the scope of the preceding chapters has for the most part been limited to refuting the antidocetic hypothesis with respect to the resurrection narratives, there are other portions of Luke's and John's gospels that modern scholars have sometimes judged antidocetic. There are, as well, some textual variants within the resurrection narratives themselves that have been explained as antidocetic interpolations. I group all of these under the broad heading "Other Alleged Antidocetic Passages in Luke and John" and address them below.

A.1 Luke

A.1.1 Luke 1–2

In modern scholarship, two different antiheretical purposes have been proposed for Luke 1–2. One theory suggests that the infancy narratives were composed as a counter to early gnostic Christology, while another claims these chapters are a late anti-Marcionite addition to Luke's text.¹ It is not possible in

¹ Talbert, *Luke and the Gnostics*, 111; Knox, *Marcion*, 87; Tyson, *Defining Struggle*, 90–100; Vinzent, *Marcion*, 106.

this short appendix to address the long-standing question of whether the infancy narratives were part of Luke's Gospel from its first publication.² However, original or not, it is my contention that neither of the theories of antiheretical origins is plausible in light of the early reception of Luke 1–2.

If the infancy narratives were late, antignostic compositions, we might expect the heretics to reject them as such. But the authenticity of these chapters is presupposed by a wide variety of early heterodox groups who appeal to them to support their own Christologies. In Chapter 3, I observed that the Ophites of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30 unapologetically assume that Luke's Gospel, including its infancy narratives, is an authoritative account of Jesus's life that reliably presents the earliest teaching of Jesus's own disciples. Far from perceiving an antidocetic intent in Luke 1–2, the Ophite author draws on details in these chapters to explain his separationist Christology. Similarly, both the "Basilideans" and the "Docetae" of Hippolytus affirm everything written in the Gospels, including Luke's account of Jesus's birth, but reinterpret the details in light of their own doctrine (*Haer.* 7.26.8–7.27.13; 8.10.6–11).

Valentinian reception is even more telling. The Valentinians accept Luke's account as apostolic and appeal to specific details in Luke 1–2.³ These chapters were considered so inviolable that intense intramural debates over the proper interpretation Luke 1:35 led to a major split within the Valentinian school.⁴ This kind of controversy can only arise within a community for which it is unthinkable to question the authority of the text that is being interpreted.

In sum, the theory that the first two chapters of Luke were composed to combat early gnosticism is implausible because it is incompatible with the views of the early gnostics themselves. If the above examples are at all representative, then the gnostics themselves did not view Luke's infancy narratives as *anti*-gnostic but as *ante*-gnostic, i.e., as early apostolic tradition that needs to be reinterpreted in light of gnosis that was revealed later.

The main problem with the theory of anti-Marcionite origin has to do with the dating of the infancy narratives. As noted in Chapter 3, extant evidence suggests that the Ophite account, including its use of Luke 1–2, predates the rise to prominence of Valentinus in the 140s. Even if the Ophite account is

² On this question, see, e.g., Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* (The Anchor Bible Reference Library; 2nd ed.; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 239–43; Edwards, *Luke*, 97–99.

³ See, e.g., the quotation of Luke 2:14 in Clement, *Exc.* 74: "Therefore the Lord came down bringing the peace from heaven to those on earth, as the *Apostle* says, 'Peace on earth and glory in the highest.'"

⁴ Hippolytus, *Haer.* 6.35.2–7. Although the accuracy of Hippolytus's depiction of the differences between the eastern and western schools of Valentinianism has been questioned (Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 40–45), the existence of rival interpretations of Luke 1:35 shows that the Valentinians took for granted the authority of Luke's account – a fact that is also clear from Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.15.3; Clement, *Exc.* 60.1.

dated a little later, the fact that the authority of these narratives is presupposed by a wide variety of early groups, both orthodox and heterodox, indicates that they were an established part of Luke's narrative well before Marcion's text-critical work.

This, of course, does not rule out the possibility that Marcion had seen or heard about an early version of Luke's text that did not include the infancy narratives, but it does indicate that these chapters cannot have been added *in response to* Marcion. Moreover, if Marcion was familiar with Luke 1–2, it is implausible that he would have perceived in these chapters a late, counterresponse to his own teaching.⁵ The accounts of the church fathers indicate that Marcion, when complaining about the corruption of the Gospel by means of interpolations, dated the origin of these interpolations back to the apostolic period.⁶ In other words, just as the gnostics understood Luke 1–2 to be *pre*-gnostic rather than *anti*-gnostic, so also Marcion probably viewed these chapters as *pre*-Marcionite rather than as *anti*-Marcionite in origin.

A.1.2 Textual Variants in Luke 24:36–53

Since the discovery of P⁷⁵, most scholars have rejected the so-called Western non-interpolations in Luke 24 as secondary omissions and accepted the authenticity of the more widely attested longer readings. The shorter readings are nevertheless still championed by some, and two recent challenges to the majority view are especially relevant to question of Luke's relationship to the docetic/antidocetic debates of the second century. According to Bart Ehrman and Michael Wade Martin the longer readings are best explained as antidocetic additions to Luke's text.⁷ Though their arguments share much in common,

⁵ Contra Vinzent, *Marcion*, 100–10 (see further Chapter 6).

⁶ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.12.12; Tertullian, *Marc.* 1.20.1–4; 4.2–4; 5.3.1–2.

⁷ Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption*, 230–272; Michael Wade Martin, "Defending the 'Western Non-Interpolations': The Case for an Anti-Separationist *Tendenz* in the Longer Alexandrian Readings," *JBL* 124 (2005): 269–94. For the opposite view, that variants are the result of omissions by scribes of a docetic bent, see, e.g., Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 247*; Carter, "Marcion's Christology," 550–82; Arie W. Zwiep, *Christ, the Spirit and the Community of God: Essays on the Acts of the Apostles* (WUNT 2/293; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 7–37. These proposals raise an important methodological weakness in Ehrman's and Martin's application of the rule of *lectio difficilior potior*. Their text-critical analyses generally seem to presuppose that all scribes were orthodox. As a result, the most difficult reading is often by default the one that is most difficult for orthodox theology (similarly, Philip M. Miller, "The Least Orthodox Reading Is to Be Preferred," in *Revisiting the Corruption of the New Testament: Manuscript, Patristic, and Apocryphal Evidence* [ed. Daniel B. Wallace; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001], 57–90). However, if early Christianity was as wildly diverse as – and the NT text as unstable as – Ehrman suggests, then it is reasonable to expect that heterodox scribes also made intentional changes that are occasionally preserved in the extant manuscript tradition. In these cases the most difficult reading would be, contrary to the standard assumption in much modern textual criticism, the most orthodox

Ehrman and Martin differ with respect to the specific type of docetism that they see targeted in the longer readings. Ehrman detects an apologetic response to proto-monophysite Christology. Martin argues that a confrontation with separationist Christology better explains the full set of longer readings.⁸

As the foregoing chapters have shown, proto-orthodox writers regularly find it necessary to supplement, and in some cases even contradict, Luke's stories when attempting to refute docetism. So we might naturally expect the same to be true of proto-orthodox scribes who were copying Luke's text. If so, the longer readings would offer further evidence to support one of major conclusions of the present study, namely, that early readers found Luke 24 inadequate for antidocetic polemic and susceptible to docetic interpretation. To my surprise, however, when I examined the longer readings in the group appearance narrative more closely, I found that none cohere with the kinds of editorial changes introduced by the various antidocetic writers examined in this study.

For the sake of brevity, I limit the scope of my analysis in two ways. First, I discuss only the four variants that are directly relevant to this study, i.e., those that occur in the group appearance narrative (vv. 36–53). Second, since my primary goal is not to establish the precise extent of the original text but to assess claims that the longer text reflects an antidocetic *Tendenz*, I do not here attempt a full-scale text-critical investigation of both external and internal evidence.

A.1.2.1 Luke 24:36

According to Ehrman, καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς εἰρήνη ὑμῖν (“And he said to them, ‘Peace to you’”) was added to v. 36 by an antidocetic scribe to clarify “at the outset the disciples’ foolish mistake” of thinking that the risen Jesus was a ghost.⁹ Ehrman correctly notes that the peace greeting in v. 36 makes the

reading. While these instances are bound to be rare, it is methodologically problematic to ignore the possibility of heterodox corruption when analyzing variants that are not widely attested and appear to be theologically-charged. This is especially true with respect to Ehrman's claims about the Western non-interpolations in Luke. Ehrman supports his argument that antidocetic scribes added the longer readings by claiming that scribes rarely, if ever, intentionally omit material from the biblical text. But, as Ehrman himself observes, Marcion, a docetist, systematically omitted passages from his text of Luke. If so, Ehrman's generalization about the rarity of intentional omission in the manuscript tradition cannot be applied wholesale to variants in Luke.

⁸ Cf. the seminal studies of Mikeal C. Parsons (“A Christological Tendency in P75,” *JBL* 105 [1986]: 463–79; *The Departure of Jesus in Luke-Acts: The Ascension Narratives in Context* [JSNTSup 21; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987]). Both Ehrman and Martin praise Parsons's work but rightly judge it inadequate for its lack of distinction between the proto-monophysite and separationist forms of docetism.

⁹ *Orthodox Corruption*, 258. Martin, for his part, does not offer any evidence of an anti-separationist agenda in this particular variant. Martin's silence here is not surprising given

disciples' fearful reaction in v. 37 seem less reasonable. But his claim that this variant is antidocetic is problematic for at least two reasons. First, it is implausible that a proto-orthodox scribe with an apologetic bent would intentionally make the apostles look more "foolish." As we have seen, the consistent redactional tendency among proto-orthodox writers working with the resurrection narratives is to provide a more positive characterization of the apostles. To reiterate one especially pertinent example, antidocetic writers working with Luke's account often omit the fear of the disciples mentioned in v. 37.¹⁰

Second, peace greetings appear in a number of angelophany stories, including one in Luke's Gospel.¹¹ Consequently, given that other angelophanic themes (e.g., standing, fear, sudden appearances and disappearances) are present in the immediate literary context, the addition of the peace greeting only increases the likelihood that ancient readers would be encouraged to compare the body of the risen Jesus with that of angels. By contrast, antidocetic writers and early church apologists typically omit angelophany-like elements when they recount this story. The peace greeting is notably absent from antidocetic retellings of the same story, e.g., Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3; [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 9; *Ep. Apos.* 11. The only post-resurrection account examined in this study that retains the peace greeting is one that promotes a more docetic understanding of resurrection and a more critical view of the disciples, namely, the *Gospel of Mary*.¹²

In sum, Ehrman's analysis has it backwards. When we compare the variants to known docetic and antidocetic accounts, it is the shorter reading that most resembles a proto-orthodox or antidocetic *Tendenz*. If anything, the longer reading, by making the disciples' fear seem unreasonable and adding yet another angelophanic theme, makes Luke's text *more* susceptible to heretical interpretation. All of this leads me to conclude either that the peace greeting is original to Luke's Gospel or that it was added for some other reason.¹³ In the latter case, a simple desire to harmonize Luke's text with John 20:19 offers a far more plausible explanation than antidocetic apologetic.

that the longer reading in v. 36 does not itself offer anything distinctive to antiseparationist polemic. Martin finds Ehrman's argument sufficiently generic enough to demonstrate an attempt to refute either type of docetism ("Anti-Separationist *Tendenz*," 290).

¹⁰ See discussions of Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3.2–3; [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 9.6; *Ep. Apos.* 11.3 in Chapters 3, 6, and 8, respectively.

¹¹ E.g., Judg 6:23; Dan 10:19; Tob 12:17; Luke 2:14; *T. Isaac* 2.2.

¹² See further Chapter 5.

¹³ Accidental omission by parablepsis cannot be ruled out: αὐτῶν καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς εἰρήνη ὑμῖν. Though the use of the historic present (λέγει) in this variant seems to be non-Lukan, this is insufficient grounds to discount the variant as a later addition. There are many instances of the historic present with verbs of speaking in Luke-Acts (λέγει: Luke 11:45; 13:8; 16:7, 29; 19:22; Acts 12:8; 21:37; φησὶν: Luke 7:40; Acts 8:36; 10:31; 19:35; 22:2; 23:18; 25:5, 22, 24; 26:24, 25).

A.1.2.2 Luke 24:40

Luke 24:40 (“And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet”) does not appear in D, the Old Latin or the Syriac. Since there is little orthographic evidence to support an accidental omission in this case, it is probably safe to assume that the omission or addition was deliberate. In Ehrman’s view, Jesus’s presentation of his hands and feet in v. 40 reflects a “heightened emphasis” on *physicality* over against proto-monophysite Christology.¹⁴ In response to Ehrman, Martin contends that the verse stresses not so much physicality itself but the *physical continuity* between the body of the crucified Jesus and the body of the risen Jesus. Martin argues that since proto-monophysite docetists did not question this continuity – they understood Jesus to be non-physical both during the crucifixion and after the resurrection – v. 40 is better understood as antiseparationist.¹⁵

Against both Ehrman and Martin, it is far from certain that the purpose of v. 40 is to emphasize either physicality or physical continuity. Presumably, the hands and the feet are singled out because they bear the scars of the crucifixion.¹⁶ In the ancient world, the primary probative function of scars was to confirm a person’s *identity*.¹⁷ This is clearly the purpose of the close parallel in v. 39a: “See my hands and my feet, *that it is I*.” Martin is therefore correct in perceiving a stress on *continuity* between the risen Jesus and the crucified Jesus, but he goes beyond the evidence when he specifies that Luke 24:40 is making a claim about *materiality*. The mere act of presenting scars proves neither the *physicality* of the resurrection body nor its *physical continuity* with the crucified body. Even ghosts of the recently deceased could be identified by their scars. This is why antidocetic writers, in stark contrast to the author of Luke 24:40, consistently add at this point in the story either an explicit statement that the disciples actually “touched” Jesus’s body to confirm its physicality or an interpretive gloss that directly asserts its materiality.¹⁸

The key parallel to which Ehrman appeals as evidence of an antidocetic *Tendenz* is a case in point. Tertullian attempts to refute Marcion’s docetism from the text of Marcion’s Gospel by asking: “Why again did he offer his hands and feet for them to examine – and these members consist of bones – if he had no bones?” (*Marc.* 4.43.8 [Evans]). Tertullian’s interpretive gloss, “and these members consist of bones,” may seem superfluous, even pedantic, to the

¹⁴ *Orthodox Corruption*, 254–56; similarly, Parsons, *Departure*, 488–49.

¹⁵ Martin, “Anti-Separationist *Tendenz*,” 290.

¹⁶ This is presupposed by Martin’s argument.

¹⁷ E.g., Homer, *Od.* 19.357–475; Aeschylus, *Eum.* 103; Plato, *Grg.* 524–525; Aristotle, *Poet.* 1454b; Virgil, *Aen.* 1.355; 2.272–279; 6.450–458; Ovid, *Met.* 10.48–49; Apuleius, *Met.* 8.8. On the role of scars in Greek literature, see Jan N. Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 70–84.

¹⁸ See Chapters 3, 6, 8, and 9.

modern reader, but in an ancient context it is necessary for antidocetic polemic. The arguments of docetists consisted not in a denial that risen Jesus showed his hands and feet, but in the assertion that the disciples' experiences of the risen Jesus were mere *phantasia*.¹⁹ In other words, without a gloss like "and these members consist of bones" or a declaration that the apostles touched the risen one, the simple assertion that Jesus showed his hands and feet remains susceptible to docetic interpretation. It is probably for this reason that Marcion sees no need to eliminate this idea from his gospel text.²⁰ Though it is unclear whether Marcion's Gospel included v. 40, it certainly does preserve the parallel in v. 39a.²¹ That fact that Marcion retains v. 39a suggests that Marcion would not have considered v. 40 an antidocetic interpolation had his *Vorlage* included it. Ehrman's rejection of v. 40 as an antidocetic interpolation therefore seems unwarranted.

Similar things may be said of Martin's characterization of the verse as anti-separationist. First, separationists were by no means the only people who made a distinction between the composition of Jesus's crucified body and his risen body. Certain Ebionites, for example, believed in a spiritual resurrection in which bodies of flesh would be dissolved and transformed into bodies of light (*Ps.-Clem. Recog.* 3.30; *Hom.* 17.16). The basis for this Ebionite belief was not a separationist schema, but Jesus's teaching that in the resurrection people will be "like angels."²² So even if Martin were correct in perceiving an emphasis on *physical continuity* in Luke 24:40, it need not be directed against separationist Christology.

Second, only a subset of separationists made a distinction between the crucified body and the risen body.²³ And their basis for doing so did not involve a

¹⁹ E.g., Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 4.1; [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 2.14; Origen, *Cels.* 3.22; *Adamant. Dial.* 5.4–12. Some explicitly offer a docetic reinterpretation of the wounds of the risen Jesus, e.g., Origen, *Cels.* 2.61; Augustine, *Ep.* 102.2. Additionally, the docetist who wrote *Acts Pet. 12 Apos.* (NHC VI,1) 2.19–25 seems to allude to the hands and feet in Luke 24:40 and the side in John 20:20 in order to identify a mysterious pearl merchant as Jesus (see further Stephen J. Patterson, "Sources, Redaction and *Tendenz* in the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles* [NH VI, 1]," *VC* 45 [1991]: 13; Andrea Lorenzo Molinari, "The Existence of a Unique, Non-canonical Petrine Resurrection Appearance: Evidence from the Gospel of Luke, Ignatius of Antioch, the *Epistula Apostolorum* and Nag Hammadi," *Proceedings, Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies* 20 [2000]: 125–26).

²⁰ Contra Carter, "Marcion's Christology," 570–71.

²¹ The context indicates that Tertullian is referring to Marcion's version of v. 39a (Roth, *Text*, 182 n. 455). Tertullian does not say whether or not v. 40 appeared in Marcion's text.

²² [Ps.-]Justin's opponents in *Res.* 2.9–14 had a similar belief (see Chapter 6).

²³ Of the various separationist Christologies promoted in the second century, only the Ophites and one branch of eastern Valentinianism explicitly make a distinction between the compositions of the crucified body and the risen body of Jesus (see Chapter 2). Cerinthus, the earliest known separationist, makes no distinction between Jesus's body before and after the resurrection (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.26.1). The same is true of western Valentinian teaching,

rejection of Luke's Gospel but a reinterpretation of it. As already noted, the Ophites of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30 – whom Martin cites as his primary example – treat Luke's account as an authoritative and accurate account of the eyewitness experiences of Jesus's disciples. This early separationist account takes it for granted that these experiences led the disciples themselves to conclude that Jesus rose in the flesh. The Ophite author does not dispute this. Instead, he claims that a select few of the disciples later received a special revelation explaining to them that their initial understanding of Jesus's resurrection was false and that the risen body was psychic and spiritual but not fleshly.²⁴

Luke 24:40 offers nothing to negate this separationist claim to additional revelation. In fact, v. 40 is perfectly compatible with separationist Christology. Separationists do not object to the visibility of the risen Jesus. They deny only that his body was composed of flesh. For the separationist, there is no reason why the risen Jesus could not display the hands and feet of his psychic body. Since separationists believe in a continuity of personal identity between the crucified Jesus and the risen Jesus, they might see v. 40 as nothing more than a confirmation of a belief that they held in common with proto-orthodox Christians.

Finally, the close similarity between v. 39a (“see my hands and my feet”) and v. 40 (“he showed them his hands and his feet”) points to a more significant weakness in the theories of Ehrman and Martin. Because v. 40 virtually repeats what is said in v. 39a, it contributes nothing conceptually new to the Christology of Luke's account. Consequently, the insertion of this verse does not – indeed, it cannot – enhance or improve an argument against either proto-monophysite or separationist docetism.²⁵ Since neither the insertion nor the

which became the most popular form of separationist Christology in the second century. According to western Valentinians, neither the crucified nor the risen Jesus had a body of flesh. They claimed instead that a psychic body was crucified and raised. Similarly, some eastern Valentinians held that both the crucified and risen body were composed of a special “spiritual” flesh.

Martin also appeals to Ignatius's *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, but he has misidentified Ignatius's opponents as separationists. Whereas the separationists posited by Martin claim that the divine Christ “began to indwell the human, fleshly Jesus from the moment of his baptism” (“Anti-Separationist *Tendenz*,” 289), Ignatius's opponents deny that “the Lord bore flesh (σαρκοφόρον)” (*Smyrn.* 5.2).

²⁴ See Chapter 3.

²⁵ It is hard to imagine why an antidocetic writer would even bother to insert v. 40 (similarly, Frans Neirynek, “A Supplementary Note on Lk 24,12,” *ETL* 72 [1996]: 428–29). Ehrman himself admits that the command “touch me and see” in v. 39b would be sufficient for most readers to recognize that Luke understands the risen Jesus to be physical (*Orthodox Corruption*, 255). But in comparison to the touch motif in v. 39, the mere display of the hands and feet in v. 40 can hardly count as evidence, as Ehrman claims, of a “heightened” emphasis on the physical.

deletion of v. 40 would have any significant effect on the Christology of the narrative, I find it hard to avoid the conclusion that all attempts to attribute this particular textual variant to christological controversies in the early church are misguided.²⁶ Text critics searching for motivating factors behind the addition or omission of this verse should avoid this blind alley and look elsewhere.²⁷

A.1.2.3 Luke 24:51, 52

All manuscripts that lack the longer reading in v. 52 (“worshiped him”) also lack the longer reading in v. 51 (“and he was taken up into heaven”).²⁸ Probably, these two phrases were added or omitted by the same scribe.²⁹ In arguing for an antidocetic *Tendenz*, Ehrman and Martin both assume that the purpose of the longer reading in v. 51 is to emphasize a physical, material ascension.³⁰ This assumption is, however, highly questionable. The phrase in question, καὶ ἀνεφέρετο εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν does not itself include any terms or phrases that suggest an emphasis on physicality.³¹

The theories of Ehrman and Martin are implausible for another reason as well. They require the scribe to have chosen to insert this redundant statement at a point in the story that renders it ineffective as a proof. The next verse indicates that disciples were “still disbelieving” (v. 41). If it did not convince the witnesses, how much apologetic value can it really add for readers?

²⁶ This includes those who argue for the opposite view, namely, that the shorter readings are the result of omissions by docetists, e.g., Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium*, 247*; Carter, “Marcion’s Christology,” 550–82; Zwiep, *Community*, 7–37.

²⁷ It is possible that v. 40 was deleted as a superfluous repetition of what is said in v. 39a (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 160). However, this explanation remains speculative because this kind of omission does not appear to have been a tendency in the extant manuscripts that lack v. 40 (so Juan Hernández, Jr., “The Early Text of Luke,” in *The Early Text of the New Testament* [eds. Charles E. Hill and Michael J. Kruger; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012], 136). Alternatively, in the case that v. 40 is a later addition, it is not necessary to posit a christologically oriented *Tendenz*. A simple desire to harmonize Luke’s account with John 20:20 offers sufficient motivation for the insertion of the verse.

²⁸ D a, b, d, e, ff², l, syr^s.

²⁹ So Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption*, 269; Martin, “Anti-Separationist *Tendenz*,” 271–85. Codex Sinaiticus has the shorter reading in v. 51 but the longer reading in v. 52. However, in this case, homoeoteleuton may have led to an accidental omission of the longer reading in v. 51 (Juan Hernández, Jr., *Scribal Habits and Theological Influences in the Apocalypse* [WUNT 2/218; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006], 70–75; idem, “Early Text,” 137; Dirk Jongkind, *Scribal Habits of Codex Sinaiticus* [TS 3/5; Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias, 2007], 246).

³⁰ Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption*, 271; Martin, “Anti-Separationist *Tendenz*,” 279, 288–89.

³¹ ἀναφέρω does not here imply the physicality of its object. The same term is employed to describe the soul of a person being taken up into heaven (*T. Abr.* [A]14.7–8), Adam’s spirit leaving his body and being brought up to God (*Apoc. Mos.* 32.4), the shade of a dead person being brought up from Hades (*Jan. Jam.* [A] 5.46–47), and a demon being brought up from the Abyss (*T. Sol.* [A] 6.5).

Especially telling is the absence in Luke 24:51–52 of *σάρξ*-glosses that occur so frequently in antidocetic retellings of various aspects of the Jesus tradition, including accounts of the ascension, e.g.,

And wishing to show them ... *that it is not impossible even for flesh* (ὅτι οὐκ ἀδύνατον καὶ σαρκί) to ascend into heaven, he was taken up, while they were watching, into heaven, *while he was in the flesh* (ὡς ἦν ἐν τῇ σαρκί). ([Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 9.8; cf. Acts 1:2, 9, 11)

For the Church ... received from the apostles and their disciples the faith in one God ... and in one Christ Jesus ... and in the Holy Spirit who proclaimed through the prophets ... the birth from a virgin, the passion, the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven *in the flesh* (ἐνσαρκων) of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord.” (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.10.1)³²

Just as he has left us the deposit of the Spirit, so also he has received from us the deposit of *the flesh* (*carnis*) and has carried it into heaven. (Tertullian, *Res.* 51.2)

And thus was He, *with the flesh* (σὺν τῇ σαρκί), received up in their sight unto Him that sent Him, *being with that same flesh to come again* (σὺν αὐτῇ πάλιν ἐρχόμενος), accompanied by glory and power. (Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 3, longer recension)³³

In contrast to these overt comments about the composition of the ascended body in antidocetic accounts, the longer reading in Luke 24:51 (“and he was taken up into heaven”) merely states that the ascension happened, nothing more, nothing less. It may be legitimate to infer from the preceding context, especially vv. 39–43, that Jesus ascended in a physical body, but it does not follow that the *purpose* of the longer reading is to encourage the reader to make that inference. Nor is this inference the only one possible. The preceding context also depicts the risen Jesus appearing and disappearing at will (vv. 31, 34, 36), and so it is not surprising that some modern interpreters come to the opposite conclusion, namely, that Jesus did not enter heaven in the flesh.³⁴ Unlike the *σάρξ*-glosses added by antidocetic writers, the longer reading in Luke 24:51 does not itself emphasize physicality and so does little to resolve this tension.

There are at least two reasons why antidocetic writers find it necessary to include explicit references to the flesh. The first is that a variety of docetists

³² Similarly Irenaeus, *Epid.* 84; *Ep. Apost.* 21; Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 21.13.2–24; *Serm.* 242.6. Hippolytus states that Jesus ascended in the flesh as part of his exposition of Ps 24:7 (*Fr. Ps.* 24.7 [CPG 1.1882.5]). This probably reflects an antidocetic emphasis against the Naassenes’ denial of the ascension of the flesh in their interpretation of the same verse (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.8.18).

³³ *ANF* 1:87, emphasis added.

³⁴ E.g., Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 794–96; Turid Karlsen Seim, “The Resurrected Body in Luke-Acts: The Significance of Space,” in *Metamorphoses: Resurrection, Body, and Transformative Practices in Early Christianity* (eds. Turid Karlsen Seim and Jorunn Økland; Ekstasis 1; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009).

accepted the tradition that Jesus ascended into heaven.³⁵ They differed from their proto-orthodox opponents over how the ascension should be interpreted. There is no evidence that docetists objected to the simple phrase “and he was taken up into heaven” in Luke 24:51.³⁶ In fact, the docetist who wrote the *Letter of Peter to Philip* (NHC VIII,2), drawing from the same passage in Luke 24, interpreted the ascension docetistically:

“These are my words that I spoke to you while I was *still with you*”

...

he parted from them and was taken up into heaven And they worshiped him

and they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God. (Luke 24:44, 51–52)

“As I previously [said to] you when I was *in the body*”

...

and *what appeared to them* in that place was taken up to heaven. Then the apostles gave thanks to the Lord with every blessing, and they returned to Jerusalem.

(*Ep. Pet. Phil.* 138.2–10)³⁷

The later author seems to have accepted the longer reading in Luke 24:51 and had little trouble adapting it to his own Christology by interpreting it as something that happened when Jesus was no longer “in the body.” It was merely an apparition (“what appeared to them”) that was taken up to heaven.³⁸

There is also no evidence that separationists objected to the ascension of the risen Jesus. The Ophite account of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30 relates two ascensions, one of the spiritual Christ before the crucifixion, and another of the “psychic and spiritual” body of the risen Jesus. The separationist doctrine of the Ophites thus included rather than excluded belief in a bodily ascension. More importantly, although the Ophite author follows a text of Luke that may not have included the longer reading in v. 51, he nevertheless inserts an account of the ascension drawn from the wording of Mark 16:19.³⁹ Here, it is a *separationist* author who felt compelled to supplement Luke’s Gospel with a brief narration

³⁵ E.g., Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.24.4; Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.38.4–5; Ephrem, *PR II* 81, 16–24; Eznik, *Deo.* 358; *Three Forms* (NHC XIII,1) 50.12–18. Irenaeus’s brief account of Cerinthus’s teaching does not mention the fate of the risen Jesus, whether he dies again or ascends into heaven.

³⁶ Though it is possible that Marcion’s Gospel did not include the longer reading of v. 51, Marcion’s followers affirm Jesus’s ascension into heaven (Ephrem, *PR II* 81, 16–24; Eznik, *Deo.* 358; Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.38.4–5). It is therefore improbable (*pace* Carter, “Marcion’s Christology,” 571) that Marcion deliberately omitted this reading from his *Vorlage*.

³⁷ Trans. Meyer, “Letter,” 245. No Christological significance should be attributed to the absence in *Ep. Pet. Phil.* 138.2–10 of the longer reading (“worshiped him”) of Luke 24:52. The disciples are said to worship in *Ep. Pet. Phil.* 137.13–17.

³⁸ See further Chapter 5.

³⁹ See Chapter 3.

of Jesus's ascension – precisely the kind of change that Martin attributes to an *antiseperationist* scribe. In other words, the Ophite account, which is Martin's primary example of the separationist Christology, stands in direct conflict with Martin's own theory of an antiseperationist *Tendenz* in the longer readings.

The second reason why antidocetic accounts explicitly mention the flesh is the need to distinguish Jesus's ascension from commonplace notions about ascension in the ancient world. Ascending into heaven is the kind of activity expected of angels, deities, and human souls, but not of normal human bodies of flesh and bone. There are, to be sure, ancient stories in which humans ascend to heaven. However, these stories, whether they be Hellenistic-Jewish accounts of biblical characters or Greco-Roman accounts of the apotheosis of human rulers, generally entail as a matter of necessity either a bodily transformation or a change to a bodiless existence.⁴⁰

Ancient parallels suggest that the longer reading's brief, non-descript reference to Jesus's ascension ("and he was taken up into heaven") may serve purposes significantly different from those of antidocetic polemic. One possibility is that the longer reading is intended to promote an angelomorphic Christology. Angelophany stories sometimes include an ascent into heaven, a motif known to the Third Evangelist (Luke 2:15). Given the presence of other angelophanic themes in Luke 24, it would not be unreasonable to conclude that the purpose of the longer reading in v. 51 is to depict the resurrected one as angel-like. The Lukan Jesus does, after all, assert that resurrected people are "equal to angels" (20:36). Of course, in the second and third centuries, it is docetists rather than

⁴⁰ E.g., *1 En.* 39.14; 71.11; *2 En.* 22.8–10; 37.1–2; 56.2; *3 En.* 15.1; 53.2–7; *2 Bar.* 50.1–51.13; *Ascen. Isa.* 7.4–5; 9.30; Philo, *QE* 2.40; *Somn.* 1.36; *QG* 1.86; Ovid, *Met.* 14.824–28; 14.845–51; Plutarch, *Rom.* 27–28; Lucian, *Hermot.* 7; Antonius Liberalis, *Met.* 25; cf. the argument that normal human bodies are not suited for life in heaven in Macarius, *Apocriticus* 4.2. On these and other texts, see Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 29–91; James R. Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot: The People behind the Hekhalot Literature* (JSJSup 70; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 154; Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (STDJ 42; Leiden: Brill, 2002); Philip S. Alexander, "The Dualism of Heaven and Earth in Early Jewish Literature and Its Implications," in *Light Against Darkness: Dualism in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and the Contemporary World* (eds. Armin Lange et al.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 160–85; David M. Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (NovTSup 141; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 148–81; James Buchanan Wallace, "Benefactor and Paradigm: Viewing Jesus's Ascension in Luke-Acts through Greco-Roman Ascension Traditions," in *Ascent into Heaven in Luke-Acts: New Explorations of Luke's Narrative Hinge* (eds. David K. Bryan and David W. Pao; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 90–107.

proto-orthodox writers who appeal to angelophanies as precedents for their depictions of the risen Jesus.⁴¹

Alternatively, in light of Greco-Roman mythology and the popularity of apotheosis traditions, it would be surprising if ancient readers did not interpret the longer reading in Luke 24:51 to mean that Jesus was either divine or a divinized human. Some of the earliest known readers explicitly compare Jesus's ascension to Greco-Roman parallels.⁴² An implicit claim of deity in the longer reading of v. 51 makes sense in light of the longer reading in v. 52, especially since both readings are tightly connected in the manuscript tradition. The longer reading in v. 52 has the disciples respond to the ascension not by marveling at the idea that the flesh could enter heaven but by worshiping Jesus. If these two longer readings were, as Ehrman and Martin imply, first introduced together by a later scribe, then it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the purpose is to point to Jesus's divinity and to worship as the appropriate response.⁴³

At this point Martin's argument for an antiseperationist bias in the longer reading of Luke 24:52 is a little more coherent than Ehrman's case for a polemic against proto-monophysite docetism. Martin argues against Ehrman that proto-monophysite docetists, who consider Jesus divine, were not opposed to worshiping him, whereas separationists, who distinguished between a divine Christ and a human Jesus, would have objected to the worship of the latter. Martin rightly identifies a flaw in Ehrman's logic here, but there is a weakness in Martin's argument as well. Martin's claim that separationists would have protested the worship of Jesus is more speculative than it first appears. In reality, it is difficult to find evidence of any separationists explicitly refusing to worship the ascended Jesus. In fact, there is some evidence that points in the opposite direction.

The Valentinians, though they are separationists, consider Jesus a divine aeon.⁴⁴ And according to Irenaeus, the Valentinians "confess with the tongue one Lord Jesus Christ, the son of God" but in doing so falsely claim to hold doctrine similar to that of the "ecclesiastical" Christians.⁴⁵ Similarly, Justin Martyr writes of Valentinians and other heretics who "instead of worshiping Jesus in reality, confess him in name only" (*Dial.* 35.5–6). Justin's accusation

⁴¹ [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 2.14 (see Chapter 6); Tertullian, *Chr. Chr.* 6; *Marc.* 4.38.5–6; 4.43.2; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Hom. cat.* 5.8; Ephrem, *Comm. Diat.* 21.3; *Adamant. Dial.* 5.4–12; *Soph. Jes. Chr.* (NHC III,4) 91.10–13.

⁴² E.g., Justin, *I Apol.* 21; Tertullian, *Apol.* 21.23.

⁴³ Jesus's quotation of Deut 6:13 in Luke 4:8 would seem to confirm this.

⁴⁴ See further April D. DeConick, "Heavenly Temple Traditions in Valentinian Worship: A Case for First-Century Christology in the Second Century," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism* (JSJSup 63; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 308–41.

⁴⁵ *Haer.* 3.15.2; 4.33.3; similarly, Tertullian, *Val.* 1.

seems to assume that the Valentinians participate in some kind of worship of Jesus and have no formal objection to the practice.

We may also question the assumption that separationists like the Ophites would have objected to the longer reading in Luke 24:52. The Ophite distinction between a divine Christ and human Jesus did not preclude the Ophites from portraying Jesus in the most positive light possible. More importantly, as Martin himself observes, the Ophites insist that the human Jesus undergoes a significant change with the resurrection. And their account of the risen and ascended Jesus hardly depicts him as a mere human:

Then he was assumed into heaven, where Jesus sits at the right hand of his Father, Jaldabaoth, in order to receive unto himself the souls of those who knew them, after they had put off the worldly flesh. This Jesus enriches himself while the Father remains ignorant of him; in fact, he does not even see him. And so, insofar as Jesus enriches himself with holy souls, ... his Father suffers loss and becomes inferior, being emptied of his power by the souls.⁴⁶

In this early separationist account, the ascended Jesus takes on a divine status that is explicitly superior to that of the Demiurge. Martin's appeal to the separationist denial of Jesus's divinity appears to be misplaced. While the denial is true with respect to the crucified Jesus, it does not apply to the ascended Jesus. A related sect, known as the Naassenes, taught that as a consequence of the transformation in the resurrection from an earthly body to a non-carnal spiritual body a man "becomes a god" when he goes into heaven.⁴⁷ The Ophites may have had no scruples about worshiping the *ascended* Jesus as a divine being. In any case, there is no compelling evidence that the Ophites or other separationist sects objected to the practice.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30.14 (Unger and Dillon).

⁴⁷ Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.8.18–24; cf. the Naassene hymn about Jesus in *Haer.* 5.10.2.

⁴⁸ Origen's claim that some Ophites required initiates to curse Jesus (*Cels.* 6.28, 30) is highly suspect since the practice is attested in no other Ophite or gnostic source (so Birger A. Pearson, "Did the Gnostics Curse Jesus?" *JBL* 86 [1967]: 302). In fact, all other accounts of the Ophites have a highly positive view of Jesus (Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 225–242). This is especially true of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30, which introduces Jesus as "wiser and purer and holier than all men," as a revealer of gnosis, and as one who is exalted over the Demiurge. Tellingly, even Origen's "Ophites" describe Jesus as a "wise person." If Origen's "Ophites" belong to the same school of thought as those of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30 (so Rasimus, "Ophite Gnosticism," 240–44), then Origen's claim about the curse of Jesus must reflect either a misunderstanding or a polemical invention of Origen (so Pearson, "Curse," 303–05; Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 238–42).

On the other hand, if there is a grain of truth to Origen's claim, the curse is probably directed not at the risen or ascended Jesus but at the crucified Jesus – possibly derived from Gal 3:13: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us." The Coptic *Apocalypse of Peter* (NHC VII,3) does not have any Ophite features or explicitly pronounce a curse on Jesus, but it calls the crucified man a "home of demons" and refers to him as one "under the law" (82.21–26). The latter may be an allusion to Gal 3:10, 13. Despite

Martin's argument for an antiseperationist *Tendenz* in the longer reading of Luke 24:52 also depends on his misleading claim that "only the separationists denied the divinity of Jesus."⁴⁹ While Martin probably intends to say that the separationists were the *only docetists* to deny the divinity of Jesus, the fact remains that there were a variety of other people in the ancient world who rejected Jesus's deity and against whom Luke 24:52 could have been directed. Non-Christians, both Jews and pagans, as well as certain Jewish Christians and others who maintained an adoptionist Christology all denied Jesus's divinity.⁵⁰

Of course, if the reference to worship in the longer reading is indeed a later addition, it may have been inserted for reasons other than Christology. The phrase "worshipped him (προσκυνήσαντες αὐτόν)" could have been added in order to bring Luke's group appearance story into greater harmony with Matt 28:17, which indicates that the disciples "worshiped (προσεκύνησαν)." This possibility cannot be easily dismissed given that the secondary literature on the Western non-interpolations discusses harmonization as a possible motivation for nearly all of the longer readings. While the strength of the case for deliberate harmonization varies from instance to instance, the fact that all but one of the longer readings have a clear parallel in another NT text hardly seems coincidental: Matt 27:49b (cf. John 19:24); Luke 22:19b–20 (cf. 1 Cor 11: 24b–25); 24:6a (cf. Matt 28:6; Mark 16.6); 24:12 (cf. John 20:3, 5–6,10); 24:36b (cf. John 20:19, 26); 24:40 (cf. John 20:20); 24:51 (cf. Acts 1:2).⁵¹ Given the

the negative characterization of the crucified one, the separationist Christology of the *Apocalypse of Peter* offers an exalted view of the "living Jesus" that depicts him as the recipient of worship (81.18; 82.9–14).

⁴⁹ Martin, "Anti-Separationist *Tendenz*," 293.

⁵⁰ Jesus's Jewish opponents in the Gospel of John repeatedly reject Jesus's implicit claims of deity (see Chapter 10). The pagan Celsus and his Jewish interlocutor both read the Gospels and found the case for Jesus's divinity wanting (Origen, *Cels.* 2. 33, 49, 63, 68, 74; 3.26, 31–32, 41–43; similarly, Justin, *Dial.* 67.2; Macarius, *Apocriticus* 3.1). Adoptionist rejection of Jesus's deity is also well documented, e.g., Justin, *Dial.* 48.4; 49.1; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.21.1; 5.1.3; Tertullian, *Praescr.* 30.11; *Carn. Chr.* 14; Hippolytus, *Haer.* 7.35; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 54.1.3–8; Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.27.2–3; 5.28.

⁵¹ Deciphering the relationship between the longer reading in Luke 24:51 and the depiction of the ascension in Acts 1 is especially difficult. On the one hand, it is possible that a scribe *omitted* the reference to the ascension in Luke 24 in order to harmonize with the forty day period mentioned in Acts 1:3. On the other hand, it is also possible that a scribe *added* it in order to harmonize Luke's account with Acts 1:2, which seems to presuppose that Luke mentioned the ascension at the end of the Gospel. Though this interpretation of Acts 1:2 is not without problems (Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption*, 268–69), the fact that a number of OL witnesses omit the reference to the ascension in Acts 1:2 suggests that some scribes may well have perceived a tension with Luke 24:51 (so Parsons, *Departure*, 133).

The single exception noted above is the additional phrase "of the Lord Jesus" in Luke 24:3. Because the combination "Lord Jesus" does not appear in the parallel passages in other gospels (Matt 27:58; Mark 15:43; John 19:40, 42), some have suggested that the Western text omits the phrase for the purpose of harmonization. However, harmonization by omission

frequency with which other variants in NT manuscripts can be sufficiently explained by harmonization, it seems unnecessary to attribute manuscript variation in Luke 24 to christologically motivated changes.

In conclusion, I find no clear evidence for antidocetic influence on the longer readings in Luke 24:36–53. In fact, antidocetic motives can be ruled out as logically incoherent in light of known docetic and antidocetic arguments. Not only do the longer readings lack distinctively antidocetic elements, they also include little, if any, content that would be clearly objectionable to known docetists of either the proto-monophysite or separationist variety. Most importantly, in some cases the longer readings actually align better with docetic accounts than with antidocetic redaction.

A.2 John

As I noted in Chapter 10, no one in the narrative world of the Fourth Gospel ever questions Jesus’s humanity. The primary conflict between Jesus and his

is relatively rare in NT manuscripts. An antidocetic motivation for the insertion of the longer reading is at least plausible in this particular instance, but the theory has three weaknesses.

First, Luke 24:3 is a less-than-ideal insertion point for the phrase if it is intended as an antidocetic gloss. The verse with the longer text reads: “but they *did not find the body* of the Lord Jesus.” There is no reason why either a proto-monophysite docetist or a separationist would object to a statement indicating that the body could not be found. Marcion, for his part, retains the reference to the body in this verse (Roth, *Text*, 435). A more effective insertion point for antidocetic polemic would be following the burial of the body in Luke 23:55.

Second, the evidence that separationists would have been directly opposed to the phrase “Lord Jesus” is meager at best. Both Ehrman (*Orthodox Corruption*, 190) and Martin (“Anti-Separationist *Tendenz*,” 292) appeal to Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.1.3. and claim that the Valentinians “refused” to call Jesus “Lord.” But this is a tendentious reading of Irenaeus’s text: καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τὸν Σωτῆρα λέγουσιν (οὐδὲ γὰρ Κύριον ὀνομάζειν αὐτὸν θέλουσι) τριάκοντα ἔτεσι κατὰ τὸ φανερὸν μηδὲν πεποιηκέναι, ἐπιδεικνύντα τὸ μυστήριον τούτων τῶν Αἰώνων. Irenaeus here merely indicates that the Valentinians prefer the title “Savior” to that of “Lord.” He does not imply that they “refuse” to call Jesus “Lord.” In fact, Irenaeus elsewhere says that the Valentinians publicly confess the full title “Lord Jesus Christ” (*Haer.* 4.33.3) – a significant concession to tradition for separationists. Accordingly, there is nothing distinctively antiseperationist about the title “Lord Jesus.”

Third, an antiheretical agenda is not the only plausible explanation for manuscript variation. It could instead be the result of two separate attempts at harmonization. Some manuscripts have “of Jesus” instead of “of the Lord Jesus.” It is possible that τοῦ Ἰησοῦ was added first in assimilation to Luke 23:52 (τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ), and that κυρίου was inserted later – either as an expression of piety or as an assimilation to general usage (cf. the three-stage development posited in Parker, *Living Text*, 166). Although the combination “Lord Jesus” occurs nowhere else in the Gospels – except for one instance in the LE of Mark – it does appear frequently in Acts (1:21; 4:33; 7:59; 8:16; 9:17; 11:17, 20; 15:11, 26; 16:31; 19:5, 13, 17; 20:21, 24, 35, 13; 28:31) and about eighty more times throughout the rest of the NT.

opponents is over the question of his divinity. In general Jesus's opponents object to Jesus's claims about his heavenly origins and deity by pointing to his earthly origins and humanity. None of this makes sense as antidocetic polemic. There are nevertheless a handful of passages in which someone other than Jesus's adversaries refer to some aspect of his humanity, e.g., 1:14; 6:51–58; 19:34–37; 20:24–29. Commentators often perceive in these passages an antidocetic agenda. Some attribute this agenda to the evangelist himself, while others posit the influence of an antidocetic redactor who sought to counterbalance a perceived overemphasis on Jesus's divinity in an earlier version of the Fourth Gospel. In Chapters 9 and 10, I argued that the antidocetic hypothesis is untenable with respect to John 19:34–37 and 20:24–29. Below, I assess its validity for John 1:14 and 6:51–58. I also offer a brief response to the theory that the Gospel's purpose statement in 20:31 is directed against a separationist form of docetism.

A.2.1 John 1:14

A wide variety of Johannine scholars have detected antidocetic polemic in John 1:14.⁵² There can be no doubt that the statement “The Word became flesh” is, formally speaking, incompatible with docetic Christology. But incompatibility does not necessarily imply intent. I contend that an antidocetic origin can be ruled out as implausible in light of the literary context and the early reception of the verse. I consider each in turn below.

John 1:14 plays an integral role both in the prologue and in the broader literary context. With respect to the latter, the statement “the Word became flesh” coheres perfectly with – and is indeed foundational to – the concept of indirect theophany that is woven throughout the Fourth Gospel.⁵³ As we have seen, it is precisely because they believe Jesus to be a mere man and judge him “according to the flesh” that people are unable to recognize his divine origin (7:16–29; 8:14–19; 10:33). It is this same problem that is previewed in the prologue: “He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not recognize him” (1:10). In other words, the christological concern expressed in the prologue is not a failure to recognize Jesus's humanity as in

⁵² E.g., Rudolf Karl Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols.; trans. Kendrick Grobel; London: SCM, 1955; repr., Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 2:40, 127; Richter, *Studien*, 149–98; Hartwig Thyen, “Entwicklungen innerhalb der johanneischen Theologie und Kirche im Spiegel von Joh 21 und der Lieblingsjüngertexte des Evangeliums,” in *L'Évangile de Jean: Sources, rédaction, théologie* (ed. Marinus de Jonge; BETL 44; Leuven: Peeters, 1977), 259–99; Schnackenberg, *John*, 1:170, 218; Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology*, 221–22; Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John* (NICNT; Rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 90–91; Catchpole, *Resurrection People*, 175–89; Koestenberger, *John*, 41; Talbert, *Reading John*, 77; Johannes Beutler, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (trans. Michael Tait; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 23, 49.

⁵³ See Chapter 10.

docetic Christology, but a failure to recognize his divinity. The difficulty that Jesus's humanity presents for the recognition of his deity is presupposed in the wording of John 1:14: "The Word became flesh ... and *we perceived* (ἐθεασάμεθα) his glory." In this context θεάομαι means "to perceive something above and beyond what is merely seen with the eye."⁵⁴ As in the narrative that unfolds in later chapters, so also here in the prologue the σάρξ is the obstacle to recognition and the reason why the glory must be perceived rather than merely seen.⁵⁵ In contrast to the author of John 1:14, the world judges according to the flesh and so is not able to look beyond the flesh to see the divine reality behind it.⁵⁶ This problem is the opposite of that posed by proto-monophysite docetism, where a recognition of Jesus's divinity leads to a rejection of the reality of his flesh.

The early reception of this verse illustrates once again the hermeneutical nature of the early church debates over docetic Christology. Unlike some modern interpreters, second-century docetists did not reject John 1:14 as belonging to a late, antidocetic revision of John's Gospel. On the contrary, they accepted it as authoritative but interpreted in ways that allowed them to maintain docetic Christology. The Valentinians, for example, took John 1:14 as the word of "John, the disciple of the Lord" but – much to the frustration of proto-orthodox writers like Irenaeus – refused to interpret it according to its plain, literal sense.⁵⁷ Some interpreted it allegorically as referring to an Aeon of the Pleroma named "Word-become-flesh," and also docetistically, explaining that the "Word did not *directly* become flesh; but Savior put on an ensouled body ... which was fashioned out of the Economy by an unutterable forethought, so that he might become visible and tangible."⁵⁸ Others docetized John 1:14 by claiming that it was not referring to normal human flesh but to some sort of "spiritual flesh." They even defended this interpretation by appealing to the previous verse: "flesh like ours would have needed to be born like us, not of the Spirit, nor of God, but of the will of a man" (Tertullian, *Carn. Chr.* 15.1–3; 18–19; cf. John 1:13: "born, not ... of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but

⁵⁴ BDAG, s.v. "θεάομαι." See also similar uses of the same verb in John 1:32 and 4:35.

⁵⁵ While Käsemann (*Testament*, 9–10) presses the evidence too far when he accuses the Evangelist of naïve docetism, he is certainly correct to conclude that v.14b circumscribes the meaning of v.14a.

⁵⁶ Verse 14 completes the contrast laid out in the previous verses: though the world did not recognize his divinity or receive him (1:10–11), the believers who did receive him perceive his divine glory (1:12–14).

⁵⁷ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.8.5.

⁵⁸ Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.8.5; 1.9.3 (Unger and Dillon, emphasis added). See also Epiphanius, *Pan.* 31.27.14–16. Theodotus, another Valentinian, interpreted John 1:14 allegorically, but identified the "flesh" of the "Logos" as the "spiritual seed" of the church (Clement, *Exc.* 1).

of God”).⁵⁹ If John 1:14 was written to discourage docetic Christology, it was strikingly unsuccessful at doing so in the second century. And if the reception history is any indication, it is the docetists who respond to John 1:14 rather than vice versa.⁶⁰

In support of an antiseperationist, or more specifically an anti-Cerinthian, origin for the Fourth Gospel, scholars sometimes appeal to Irenaeus’s claim about the purpose of John’s prologue and of v. 14 in particular: “John, the disciple of the Lord, . . . wishes (*volens* = βουλόμενος) to remove the error that was disseminated among people by Cerinthus” (*Haer.* 3.11.1–3).⁶¹ However, Irenaeus is not here making a historical claim on the basis of oral tradition about the origins of John’s Gospel. He did not get this information from Polycarp or other elders of a previous generation. It is rather Irenaeus’s own speculation. The verb βούλομαι is conventional for introducing one’s own interpretation of an author’s intent.⁶² Irenaeus implicitly acknowledges this by adding a caveat

⁵⁹ The *Gospel of Truth* (NHC I,3), another text associated with the eastern branch of Valentinianism, also appears to have docetized John 1:14:

When many had received the light,
they turned to him. For the material ones
were strangers and did not see his likeness
and had not known him. For
he came by means of fleshly form (ἄσματος),
while nothing blocked his course because
incorruptibility is irresistible...the Father
having brought forth his flawless Word.
(*Gos. Truth* 31.1–12)

The true light, which gives light to everyone,
was coming into the world. He was in the
world and the world was made through him,
yet the world did not know him.... And
the Word became flesh and
dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory,
glory as of the only Son from the Father,
full of grace and truth.
(John 1:9–14)

In the above quotation I have added emphasis to the translation in Harold W. Attridge and George W. MacRae, “The Gospel of Truth,” in *Nag Hammadi Codex I [The Jung Codex]* (2 vols.; ed. Harold W. Attridge; NHS 22–23; Leiden: Brill, 1985), 1:101. The term σματ could also be translated “likeness” or “appearance” and was employed by Coptic translators for ὁμοίωμα, εἶδος, ὄψις, μορφή, and the docetic slogan τὸ δοκεῖν (Crum, *Dictionary*, 340–41). The first is perhaps most probable here because of a parallel in Rom 8:3 (“sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh [ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκός]”). If so, the author of the *Gospel of Truth* has interpreted John 1:14 in a docetic direction on the basis of Rom 8:3. Other Valentinians seem to have appealed to Rom 8:3 as a proof-text for docetic Christology (Tertullian, *Carn. Chr.* 16). On the probable influence of the wording of Rom 8:3 in *Gos. Truth* 31.1–12, see Williams, *Biblical Interpretation*, 115–17.

⁶⁰ For additional docetic interpretations of this portion of John, see Majella Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings* (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1996), 72–74, 78.

⁶¹ E.g., Alfred Wikenhauser, *New Testament Introduction* (trans. Joseph Cunningham; New York: Herder and Herder, 1958), 307; Marie-Joseph Lagrange, *Évangile selon Saint Jean* (EBib 4; 3rd ed.; Paris: Gabalda, 1964), lxxii–lxxiii; Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 291–292; Talbert, *Reading John*, 77. Though Schnackenburg judges it unlikely that John 1:14 is directed specifically against Cerinthus, he claims that “there can be little doubt” that the intention is to refute some form of docetic Christology (*John*, 1:170, 268).

⁶² Philo, *Opif.* 138. *Leg.* 1.4; 1.35, 63; *Cher.* 60; *Gig.* 60; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.21; 4.57, 142; 5.218; Heb 6:17; Justin, *Dial.* 88; [Ps.-]Justin, *Res.* 9.6; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.6.3; 4.18.1;

to his concluding statement: “John himself removed all controversy, *as far as we are concerned*” (3.11.2). The Valentinians, one of the groups to whom Irenaeus is responding in context, employ the same convention: “This is what they say: ‘John, the disciple of the Lord, *wishes* (βουλόμενος) to narrate the origin of all things’” (*Haer.* 1.8.5). This statement is followed by an allegorical interpretation of John 1:1–18 in which the phrase “Word became flesh” is understood to be a proper name rather than a reference to a historical event.

Furthermore, some of Irenaeus’s other statements indicate that he knows that Cerinthus did not begin his public teaching until after the Fourth Gospel was written. In *Haer.* 5.30.3, Irenaeus says that the Apocalypse of John, written in part against the Nicolaitans, was composed “not a long time ago (οὐδὲ ... πρὸ πολλοῦ χρόνου), but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian’s reign” (5.30.3), i.e., in the late 90s. But according to 3.11.1, the Nicolaitan heresy arose “long before (*multo prius* = πολὺ πρότερον)” the heresy of Cerinthus. Irenaeus must therefore not date the beginning of Cerinthus’s teaching until well into the second century, and thus after Irenaeus’s own dating of John’s Gospel. This is confirmed by 3.16.5, in which Irenaeus states that John wrote his Gospel because he “foresaw (*providens* = προιδόν) these blasphemous rules that divide the Lord.” Thus, according to Irenaeus, John wrote prophetically *in anticipation* of future heresies and not in response to a separationist Christology that had already arisen.⁶³ In other words, Irenaeus *interpreted* the Fourth Gospel’s incompatibility with separationist Christology to be the work of divine providence rather than a targeted response to an already existing problem.⁶⁴

There is one final reason why the theory of antidocetic origin is to be rejected. If it is necessary to posit that John 1:14 was written to combat an early opponent of the Johannine community, there are better candidates. It must be remembered that the docetists were not the only ones to deny a real incarnation. The adoptionist Christology of early Jewish Christian sects would have been just as opposed to John 1:14 as any docetist might have been. For example, Irenaeus says the Ebionites reject the “incarnation (*incarnationem*)” (*Haer.*

Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.7.32; *De resurrectione ad Mammaeam imperatricem*, lines 2–7; see further Ayres, “Exegetical Origins,” 160.

⁶³ Similarly Streett, *They Went Out*, 70.

⁶⁴ According to Irenaeus, Cerinthus’s Christology involved a rejection of the virgin birth and an assertion that Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary, conceived through ordinary human means. John’s prologue, which does not mention Joseph, Mary, or a virginal conception, does not read like a response to this teaching (similarly, Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:170). In this respect John’s account stands in contrast to the explicitly anti-Cerinthian *Epistula Apostolorum*, which inserts a reference to the virgin Mary into its echo of John 1:13–14: “the Word who became flesh in the womb of the virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, and was born not by the lust of the flesh but by the will of God” (3.10–11 [Hills, *Epistle*, 23–24, emphasis added]).

5.1.3). Tertullian also cites John's prologue against the Ebionites (*Carn. Chr.* 24).⁶⁵

Of course, it is not necessary to posit an antiheretical *Tendenz* of any kind. John 1:14 is perfectly explicable without recourse to early Christian heresies. Non-Christian Jews in John's day also rejected the claim of John 1:14. Like Jesus's adversaries within the gospel narrative, they too would have insisted that Jesus was a mere man and denied that he was God in the flesh.⁶⁶

A.2.2 John 6:51–58

It is not hard to see why many scholars have detected antidocetic polemic in these verses.⁶⁷ Jesus repeatedly refers to his "flesh" and does so in the most graphic of ways. Jesus's audience is clearly offended by his teaching about eating his flesh and drinking his blood. Explicit references to the flesh are a characteristic of antidocetic writings, and some docetists were known to have been offended by the Eucharist.⁶⁸ So antidocetic intent does, at least at first glance, seem plausible in this case.

The problem with this theory is that it does not adequately account for the immediate literary context. In the verses that follow, Jesus says, "Do you take offense at this? ... It is the Spirit who gives life; *the flesh is of no use*. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (6:61–63). As the narrative now stands, vv. 61–63 explicitly refer back to what Jesus has just said ("Do you take offence at this?" and "The words I have spoken to you") and hence provide Jesus's own interpretation of the offensive teaching in vv. 51–58: "the flesh is of no use." This statement, which negates the importance of flesh, is more amenable to docetism than to antidocetic polemic.⁶⁹ And reception

⁶⁵ Cf. the claims that the Gospel of John was written against Ebion in Victorinus, *Comm. Apoc.* 11.1; Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 9; *Comm. Matt.* pref.

⁶⁶ E.g., Justin, *Dial.* 48.4; 67.2. See also Trypho's comparison of Jewish expectations of the Messiah with that of (Ebionite?) Christians who assert that Jesus "was a man, and that he was anointed by election, and so became the Christ" (49.1).

⁶⁷ E.g., Richter, *Studien*, 170–77; Ernst Haenchen, *John: A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (2 vols.; Hermeneia; trans. Robert W. Funk; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 298–99; Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology*, 194–208; Paul N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6* (Eugene, Oreg.: Cascade, 2010), 242–43.

⁶⁸ E.g., Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 6.2.

⁶⁹ It is special pleading to argue, as Schnelle (*Antidocetic Christology*, 194–95) does, that $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\kappa\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ in 6:63 "is to be understood anthropologically" and "not christologically" as in 6:51–56. At one time, Borgen actually claimed that 6:63 was itself antidocetic (*Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo* [NovTSup 10; Leiden: Brill, 1965], 187), though he later changes his mind (*More Light*, 21).

history bears this out. Early docetists appeal to v. 63 as a proof-text for their denial of the flesh, e.g., Tertullian, *Res.* 37; *Testim. Truth* (NHC IX,3) 34.25–26.⁷⁰

Verses 51–58 are sometimes attributed to a later antidocetic redactor, but there is no manuscript evidence to support this. Moreover, the negatory reference to the “flesh” in the backward-glancing v. 63 is virtually inexplicable without presupposing the existence of vv. 51–58, especially since no other verses in John 6 even mention the term σάρξ. And why would an antidocetic redactor go to all the trouble of inserting eight verses (vv. 51–58) only to allow their graphic emphasis on the flesh to be neutralized by vv. 61–63? It makes no sense to leave the statement “the flesh is of no use” completely untouched when it could have been omitted or at least nuanced during the editorial process. Unless we are to posit an inept redactor, it seems safe to conclude that vv. 51–58 belong to the original composition and were written by an author who was either unaware of or unconcerned about the dangers of docetism.

A.2.3 John 20:31

Finally, it is necessary to consider briefly the Gospel’s purpose statement: “These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (John 20:31). According to Schnelle, this verse is targeting separationist Christology: “The obvious emphasis on the identity between Ἰησοῦς and ὁ Χριστός is aimed at the docetists within the Johannine school who deny that identity.”⁷¹ On the one hand, the identification of Jesus and the Christ in John 20:31 is incompatible with a separationist Christology that construes Jesus and Christ as two distinct beings. It is no doubt for this reason that Irenaeus quotes John 20:31 as a proof-text against all “blasphemous systems which divide the Lord” (*Haer.* 3.16.5).

On the other hand, this incompatibility is coincidental rather than intentional. As already noted, Irenaeus himself does not think that John wrote against an already existing heresy, but as one who prophetically foresaw the rise of separationist Christologies. While some modern readers may balk at the notion of supernatural foresight, one need not deny John’s prophetic powers to see that Irenaeus is mistaken here. From an exegetical point of view, both Schnelle’s and Irenaeus’s claims of antiseparationist intent require ripping John 20:31 out of its literary context and anachronistically imposing later ideas onto John’s text. While the Fourth Evangelist would undoubtedly want to insist that the human Jesus is divine, his usage of the term “Christ” indicates that he is not yet acquainted with separationist Christology and its distinction between

⁷⁰ It was probably on the basis of v. 63 that the Naassenes interpreted the flesh and blood in v. 53 as a reference to a spiritual man (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.8.11). Similarly, the Valentinians understood the flesh in v. 51 to be “spiritual food” (Clement, *Exc.* 13).

⁷¹ Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology*, 138; similarly, Thyen, “Entwicklungen,” 260–61.

a heavenly Christ and a human Jesus. The meaning of the term “Christ” in separationist Christology is foreign to John’s narrative. Whereas for separationists “Christ” refers to a divine being, in John’s Gospel “Christ” regularly denotes the human figure of Jewish messianic expectations.⁷² The claim that John 20:31 is antiseperationist is therefore nonsensical. The Evangelist and the separationists are not even participating in the same conversation.

⁷² John 1:20–21, 25, 41; 4:25, 29; 7:25–26, 40–42. See further Marinus de Jonge, “Jewish Expectations about the ‘Messiah’ according to the Fourth Gospel,” *NTS* 19 (1973): 246–70; Francis J. Moloney, “The Fourth Gospel’s Presentation of Jesus as ‘the Christ’ and J. A. T. Robinson’s *Redating*,” *DRev* 95 (1977): 239–53; Ashton, *Understanding*, 143–44; Larry W. Hurtado, “Christ,” *DJG*: 114–17.

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