

Running header: THE RESURRECTION

The “Minimal Facts of the Resurrection” Argument Applied to Islam

Jacob Kounter

A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for graduation
in the Honors Program
Liberty University
Spring 2017

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the “minimal facts” argument, an argument established by Dr. Gary Habermas concerning the minimal historical facts surrounding the death of Jesus of Nazareth that a majority of scholars, both Christian and non-Christian, attest to. It will specifically address mainstream Islamic arguments against the historicity of the resurrection. The Islamic view maintains that Jesus of Nazareth was either not crucified or that he survived his crucifixion, while Christianity posits that Jesus was crucified and resurrected. The essay examines scholarship from Muslims, Christians, and secular Atheist/Agnostics, and concludes that the biblical view of the resurrection is backed by historical data, whereas Islamic objections to the resurrection hypothesis are inadequate.

Outline

- I. Habermas' Minimal Facts of the Resurrection
- II. The "Minimal Facts of the Resurrection" Argument Applied to Islam
 - A. Minimal Fact #1: Evidence from The Crucifixion of Christ
 - 1. The Islamic Substitutionary Theory
 - 2. Historical Accounts of the Crucifixion
 - B. Minimal Fact #2: Evidence from Jesus' Disciples Transformation
 - 1. Islamic/Secular Explanations for the Resurrection Appearances
 - 2. Naturalistic Explanations Answered
 - C. Minimal Fact #3: Evidence from Paul's Conversion
 - 1. Islam's Understanding of Paul vs. The Historic Paul
 - 2. The New Testament Account of Paul's Conversion
 - D. Minimal Fact #4: Evidence from Church Tradition in Paul's Writings

The “Minimal Facts Of The Resurrection” Argument Applied To Islam

Jesus of Nazareth is an important religious figure in many of the world’s major religions,¹ but is particularly prominent in two of the three major monotheistic religions, Islam and Christianity. These two religions have much in common. They both believe that there is only one God, that this God has spoken through prophets, and they both hold Jesus in high esteem. Islam teaches that Jesus was one of the five “*ul al-‘azm*” (the Possessors of Steadfastness) who were prophets of Allah. These prophets are the highest spiritual rank of all human beings and are recipients and conveyors of the divine laws of God through the angel Gabriel.² The Qur’an also refers to Jesus with many other reverential titles, such as the Messiah (4:171-72), the blessed one (19:31), the Word of God (4:171), and a spirit from God (21:91).³ Although Muslims do not view titles such as “Messiah” or “the Word of God” in a Christian sense, at the very least these descriptors convey a deep sense of reverence and respect for Jesus.

Likewise, Christianity holds Jesus in the place of highest honor (Phil 2:10). The Bible, like the Qur’an, teaches that Jesus is the Messiah (Matt. 16:16) and the Word of God (John 1:1). Rather than uniting Christianity and Islam, however, the commonalities between the two religions serve to highlight their drastic differences. Muslims revere Jesus and consider him a great prophet⁴, but they abhor the Christian teaching that Jesus

¹ See Gregg, Stephen E. and Gregory A. Barker. *Jesus Beyond Christianity: The Classic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) for a compilation of texts regarding Jesus in Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

² Zeki Saritoprak. *Islam’s Jesus*. (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2014), 1.

³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴ Colin Chapman quotes M. Ali. Merad at length, who says, “Islam rejects the idea of the death of Christ. This attitude safeguards at one and the same time the idea found in the Qur’an of God’s honor and of man’s dignity. *For in Jesus mankind attains its supreme dignity, its consummation*” (emphasis mine). Colin Chapman. *Cross and Crescent: Responding to the Challenge of Islam* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 248.

should be worshiped as God. While Islam, like many world religions, teaches that ultimately one's good works will be measured against one's bad works, and the final sway of the scales determines one's eternal destination, there is one unforgivable sin in Islam called "*shirk*", which is to associate partners with God (Qur'an 5:72).⁵ This is the very sin that Christians are accused of committing. Not only do they worship Jesus as God, but they also claim that *everyone* must recognize that Jesus' divinity and worship him (Phil. 2:10). Muslims view this as a perverse distortion of the historical Jesus, who they believe was a messenger of Allah, not Allah in the flesh.

Central to the Christian belief that Jesus should be worshiped is the account of his death and resurrection. In the Gospel of John, the disciple Thomas tells the other disciples that, unless he sees Jesus for himself and can confirm his identity by touching his wounds, he will never believe that Jesus was resurrected. When Jesus appears to Thomas he says, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve but believe," to which Thomas responds by saying, "My Lord *and my God!*" (John 20:24-29, emphasis mine). Elmer Towns calls Thomas' response "the apex of the Gospel, because it gives the strongest or highest expression of Old Testament deity. Thomas identified Jesus with both *Jehovah*, the Old Testament 'I am,' and *Elohim*, the Creator-God."⁶ Although some might object to this interpretation of the disciple Thomas' exclamation, even Bart Ehrman, an agnostic professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina, acknowledges that at least in the book of John Jesus is portrayed as divine.⁷

⁵ David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times: The Collision of Today's Competing Worldviews*. (Manitou Springs, CO: Summit Press, 2006), 52.

⁶ Elmer Towns, *The Gospel of John: Believe and Live* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2002), 207-208.

The resurrection of Christ is crucial to the Christian belief and worship of Jesus as God, a belief that is deeply offensive to Muslims. The resurrection is in fact so vital to Christianity that according to Paul, the New Testament's most prolific writer, Christianity would completely fall apart if Christ had not been raised from the dead. In 1 Corinthians he writes, "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Cor. 15:17-18).

According to Paul, if Christ was killed and resurrected, Christianity must be true. If he was not resurrected after his murder, Christianity is a false religion. All of Christianity depends on an actual resurrection. It is the basis of Christianity's understanding of who Jesus is and the authority that he holds over his followers. To put this into perspective, Tim Keller writes, "If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all he said; if he didn't rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what he said? The issue on which everything hangs is not whether or not you like his teaching but whether or not he rose from the dead."⁸ This means that if Jesus did in fact resurrect, Islam can be demonstrably shown to be a false worldview and religion.

Determining the legitimacy of the historical resurrection is the key to establishing the truth of Christianity, so if Christians continue to insist that Christianity is true and Islam is false they must provide evidence that the resurrection was a real event in history rather than a fictitious legend or myth. In order to establish the resurrection as a historical event, this essay will examine the minimal facts agreed upon by the majority of scholars

⁷ Bart Ehrman, "Jesus as God in the Synoptics" The Bart Ehrman Blog: The History & Literature of Early Christianity, <https://ehrmanblog.org/why-i-actually-discuss-hallucinations/>. (accessed March 8, 2017).

⁸ Timothy Keller. *The Reason for God: Belief in God in an Age of Skepticism*. (New York, NY: Dutton, 2008), 202.

from varying philosophical, theological, and historical persuasions. This argument, known as the “minimal facts argument,” was developed by Gary Habermas and expounded upon by his student Michael Licona, and has been growing in popularity for the last 40 years.⁹ Habermas’ argument is often used by Christian apologists to support the resurrection hypothesis, the hypothesis that they believe provides the most convincing explanation for the historical data surrounding the death and apparent resurrection of Jesus. These facts are attested to by a majority of scholars, so in order to demonstrate that Jesus did not rise from the dead skeptics must provide a convincing alternative explanation for the “minimal facts,” one that does not involve Jesus’ resurrection. The thesis of this work is that Islamic objections to the historical resurrection of Christ fail to give a convincing alternate explanation for Habermas’ “minimal facts,” which provide persuasive evidence that Jesus’ death and his subsequent resurrection is historically verifiable.

Habermas’ Minimal Facts Of The Resurrection

The minimal facts argument developed by Gary Habermas and his student Michael Licona has become the leading argument for the resurrection hypothesis. These “minimal facts” are important because they transcend religious and secular boundaries and are undisputed by the majority of scholars who study the subject of the resurrection. Habermas defines these minimal facts as facts in which “...there is a significant body of data that scholars of almost every religious and philosophical persuasion recognize as being historical. The historicity of each ‘fact’...is attested and supported by a variety of

⁹ Gary Habermas, “The Minimal Facts Approach to the Resurrection of Jesus: The Role of Methodology as a Crucial Component in Establishing Historicity.” <http://www.garyhabermas.com>.

historical and other considerations.”¹⁰ They are minimal because there are very few biblical facts that are agreed upon across the board. Nevertheless, these minimal facts may be used by Christians to build a convincing argument for Jesus’ resurrection.

The “minimal facts” argument does not address many of the other important debates between Christians and non-Christians, such as the inerrancy or infallibility of scripture. While these are issues that are important and should be debated, Licona argues that when presenting evidence for the resurrection one must stick to the topic of Jesus’ resurrection.¹¹ This means that side arguments concerning the Bible’s reliability or seeming contradictions between biblical authors should be avoided. The reliability of the Bible and the inerrancy of scripture are not necessary in order to establish firm evidence for the resurrection. In fact, one of the greatest advantages to the “minimal facts” argument is that it allows proponents of the resurrection to avoid making any claims that the Bible is inerrant, or that the resurrection even happened.¹² Instead, those arguing for the resurrection need only to explain the facts surrounding the resurrection, facts that are strongly evidenced and granted by virtually all scholars on the subject. After exposure to these facts, individuals can be left to decide for themselves what hypothesis makes the most sense of the historical data. This does not mean that Christians should abandon belief in the inerrancy or infallibility of the Bible. These topics are important matters and

¹⁰ Habermas, “The Minimal Facts Approach to the Resurrection of Jesus,” <http://www.garyhabermas.com>.

¹¹ Habermas, Gary R. and Michael Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004), 45.

¹² “Debate: Did Jesus Rise Bodily from the Dead (Arif Ahmed vs Gary Habermas)” Filmed [October 2011]. YouTube video, posted [October 2011]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mg7rYJxHA4Y>

should be discussed and debated in the appropriate setting. For those discussing the resurrection, however, the inerrancy of the Bible need not be addressed.

Although Christians do not need to establish the inerrancy of scripture in order to argue for the resurrection hypothesis, they do not need to shy away from using the Bible in order to ascertain historical data. The New Testament is a key resource when ascertaining the “minimal facts” of the resurrection because it offers such a wealth of information regarding the events surrounding the resurrection. Many people mistakenly argue that evidence for the resurrection found in the New Testament should not be considered because it is so clearly biased in favor of Christian teachings. They believe that New Testament cannot be trusted to provide objective historical evidence because it was written by Christians with a high degree of bias. Muslims in particular will argue that Christian writings have been distorted over time, that only the Qur’an has been perfectly preserved, and therefore only the Qur’an can be fully trusted to provide accurate historical and theological truths.¹³

This objection to the use of the New Testament in establishing the historical resurrection does not take into account how historians collect historical data. Licona writes that “Historians recognize that most writings of antiquity contain factual errors and propaganda. They still can identify kernels of historical truth in those sources. If they eliminated a source completely because of bias or error, they would know next to nothing about the past.”¹⁴ The New Testament should be used as a historical document the way that any document from antiquity would be used. The Roman historian Tacitus is considered by many scholars to be the greatest Roman scholar, and yet scholars also

¹³ Qureshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*, 131-132.

¹⁴ Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 45.

recognize that there exists within his writings a heavy cultural bias. Over time historians have developed study techniques in order to weed through the bias. These techniques allow them to be relatively certain about which historical events actually occurred and where ancient historians embellished or omitted details.¹⁵

Furthermore, it must be noted that the “minimal facts” presented are facts attested to by the *majority* of biblical scholars and historians. Within biblical scholarship there are very few facts or theories granted by every scholar, and some fringe scholars continue to hold radical opinions where there exists little to no support.¹⁶ Unlike these scholars, proponents of the “minimal facts” argument deal with what is the most probable explanation of the facts granted by the majority of biblical scholars.

This thesis will explore four of the facts that are strongly evidenced and are granted by essentially all Christian and non-Christian scholars on the subject of the resurrection. It will examine both the evidence used to establish these facts as well as alternative explanations for the “minimal facts” that do not involve a miraculous resurrection. These four facts are as follows: 1. Christ was crucified by Pontius Pilate; 2. The disciples had transformative experiences with a man whom they believed to be the risen Jesus; 3. Saul of Tarsus, a persecutor of the Church, converted to Christianity after having experiences with whom he believed was the risen Jesus; 4. Within five years after the death of Christ stories of his resurrection had begun circulating.

Minimal Fact #1: Evidence From The Crucifixion of Christ

That Jesus was crucified on the cross until dead in the early first century is a main point of contention between Christians and Muslims. Muslims believe that Allah would

¹⁵ Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 46.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.

not have allowed Jesus, his prophet, to be killed in such a way, and that if Jesus had been crucified it could only mean that Allah had failed to protect him.¹⁷ Christians argue that God *ordained* for Christ to go to the cross in order to be crucified (Acts 4:27-28). In order to establish the truth or falsehood of the Christian claim that Christ was crucified, the historical data pertaining to this event must be thoroughly examined.

The Islamic substitutionary theory. Unlike much of Western thought, which is largely secular and naturalistic, Islamic objections to the veracity of the resurrection include supernatural interventions from God. For example, while most secular thinkers result to naturalistic explanations for the resurrection appearances, such as the hallucination theory, a belief that the disciples and other witnesses hallucinated the appearances of Jesus, Muslims are more likely to believe that Jesus did not go to the cross and die at all. A considerably more popular belief among Muslims is the belief that one of Jesus' disciples was made to look like Jesus and died in his place. This is largely due to the translations of the verse in Qur'an which states "As for their [the Christians'] claim that they [the Jews] killed the Messiah Jesus....the truth is they did not kill him nor did they crucify him. *They were under the illusion that they had...* (4:157-58). Many modern translations translate the italicized portion in such a way that would make it seem as if someone other than Jesus died in his place. The italicized portion literally reads, "*wa-lakin shubbiha la-hum,*" which A. J. Arberry translates as "Only a likeness of that was shown to them," and nearly all classical exegetical traditions of the Qur'an explain that someone other than Jesus was transformed to look like him and died in his place.¹⁸

¹⁷ Mona Siddiqui, *Christians, Muslims, and Jesus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 227.

¹⁸ Gabriel Said Reynolds, "The Muslim Jesus: Dead or Alive?" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 72.2 (June 2009), 227.

The reason Muslims are ardently against the death of Christ is mainly theological. Muslims cannot except the death of Christ, because this would imply that God was unable to save Jesus from the cross. The Muslim scholar Ali Merad says, “In the Qur’an everything is aimed at convincing the believer that [Jesus] will experience victory over the forces of evil. Islam refuses to accept this tragic image of the Passion...because the Passion would imply in its eyes that God had failed.”¹⁹ In the mind of the modern Muslim, the crucifixion of Christ could not have happened because God could not have failed to protect Jesus. They must, therefore, turn to alternative explanations, such as The Substitutionary Theory. The Substitutionary Theory posits that any historical evidence of Christ’s crucifixion must be viewed through this lens, that Allah would neither have desired nor allowed Christ to go to the cross because Jesus’ mission was to defeat the forces of evil, not succumb to them. This viewpoint can be challenged on two fronts: 1) issues of historicity and 2) issues of exegesis within the Qur’an.

The first issue with this belief is that it does not take into account all of the minimal facts of the resurrection. The Substitutionary Theory may explain why ancient historians and authors believed that Jesus had died on the cross, but it cannot explain the radical life transformation that the disciples experienced as a result of the resurrection appearances. Those closest to Jesus did not believe someone had taken his place on the cross, and there is no historical reason to think that someone was substituted for Jesus. The transformation of the disciples and the birth of Christianity would not have happened if the disciples knew that Jesus had not been crucified and raised to life (this will be explained below).

¹⁹ Siddiqui, *Christians, Muslims, and Jesus*, 227.

The second issue with this theory are the teachings found in the Qur'an about the death of Jesus. Within the Qur'an there are four key verses that deal with the death of Jesus. First, God says to Jesus, "O Jesus, I am causing you to die and raising you to myself, and cleansing you of those who do not believe until the Day of Resurrection" (Quaran 3:55). The next verse has already been discussed at length, in which it is written in the Qur'an that Jesus was not killed by the Jews, but it only seemed as if he had. The third verse occurs in the fifth Surah,²⁰ where Jesus speaks to God, saying, "I was a witness over them as long as I was among them, and when you caused me to die, you were their Overseer, and you are Witness over everything" (Qur'an 5:117).²¹ The final verse in the Qur'an that references Jesus' death comes from Jesus himself. In this verse, Jesus speaks miraculously as an infant, saying, "Peace upon me on the day I was born, on the day I die, and on the day I will be sent forth alive" (Qur'an 19:33).²² These four verses must be addressed by Islamic proponents of the Substitutionary Theory, as they give every indication of affirming Jesus' death.

The verse found in 5:117 is possibly the clearest verse in the Qur'an regarding Christ's death. When Jesus says in this verse, "You became the watcher of them when you made me die," the word translated die is *tawaffaytanī*. Reynolds writes that the verb *tawaffā* has caused immense confusion among Muslim exegetes. *Tawaffā* is used in the Qur'an twenty five times, and two of those are used directly in relation to Jesus. In the twenty three instances that do not relate to the death of Christ, Muslim commentators follow the same definition of the term, which is "God's act of separating the soul from

²⁰ A Surah is the name for a chapter in the Qur'an.

²¹ Siddiqui, *Christians, Muslims, and Jesus*, 229.

²² Reynolds, "The Muslim Jesus," 239.

the body, or making someone die.”²³ When the word is used in reference to Christ, however, Muslim exegetes use a secondary definition of *tawaffā*. Reynolds shows that when *tawaffā* is used in reference to Christ, it is translated something along the lines of “took me” or “You took my soul.”²⁴ This implies that God made Jesus die and then made him ascend to heaven (3:55). That Jesus died at all is not in keeping with the Substitutionary Theory, which has been proposed in order to combat any belief that Jesus’ death was a result of Allah’s failure to protect him. The Qur’an does not deny the death of Jesus as many modern Muslims do, but instead denies that he died on the cross at the hands of the Jews.

Historical accounts of the crucifixion. The Substitutionary Theory fails because it does not give an explanation for the disciples transformed lives, nor does it address the Qur’anic teachings concerning Jesus’ death. The Qur’an itself seems to negate the Muslim belief that Allah would not have allowed Jesus to die. However, while the Qur’an may not deny Jesus’ death, it does seem to imply that he did not go to the cross, a teaching which is in direct contradiction to the biblical account. Not only does the Qur’an contradict the Bible in this way, but if Jesus was not executed on the cross then Christians cannot be certain that he resurrected, because the historical documents that record his resurrection also record his death by crucifixion. If the accounts of Jesus’ death are inaccurate then there is no reason to suppose that the accounts of his resurrection are accurate. In order to make a compelling case for the resurrection, the historicity of his death on the cross must be firmly established. In order to establish Jesus’ death on the

²³ Reynolds, “The Muslim Jesus,” 240.

²⁴ Ibid., 240.

cross, the historic evidence for Jesus' crucifixion will be examined alongside a brief survey of the Roman method of crucifixion.

There are many ancient sources, both Roman and Jewish, within the first century of the crucifixion event that attest to Jesus' death.²⁵ Josephus, an ancient historian, writes, "At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus...Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them after his crucifixion and that he was alive; accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders."²⁶ Likewise, the Roman historian, Tacitus, writes that, "Christus...suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus...".²⁷ Although Tacitus does not use Jesus name explicitly, Ehrman notes that essentially every trained classicist and scholar of ancient Rome believes this is a reference to Jesus. Jesus was after all called the Christ, was executed at the order of Pontius Pilate, and this occurred during the reign of Tiberius.²⁸ That neither Tacitus nor Josephus were Christians lends credence to the belief that Jesus' died on the cross. These two historians had nothing to gain by affirming Jesus' death by crucifixion, which leads historians to believe that they are telling the truth. The evidence suggests that those living near the time of Jesus' believed he had been crucified.

²⁵ Bart D. Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?: The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth*. (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2012), 54-57.

²⁶ Paul L Maier, *Josephus: The Essential Writings*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1988), 264-265.

²⁷ P.E. Easterling, E. J. Kenney, *The Cambridge History of Latin Literature*, (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 892.

²⁸ Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?*, 55.

In keeping with the writings of Tacitus and Josephus, the modern scholarly consensus is that Jesus died by crucifixion. According to Licona, essentially every modern biblical and historical scholar attests to the historicity of Jesus' death by crucifixion.²⁹ Gerd Lüdemann, a German New Testament scholar and atheist, writes that "Jesus death as a consequence of crucifixion is indisputable."³⁰ John Dominic Crossan, the Co-founder of the Jesus Seminar³¹ writes, "Jesus' death by crucifixion under Pontius Pilate is as sure as anything historical can ever be," and Robert J. Miller, also a member of the Jesus Seminar, writes that, "We can be certain that Jesus really existed (despite a few highly motivated skeptics who refuse to be convinced), that he was a Jewish teacher in Galilee, and that he was crucified by the Roman government around 30 CE."³² The modern consensus concerning the death of Jesus does not contradict that of the ancient historians, and the writings of Tacitus and Josephus concerning Jesus remain largely undisputed.

In light of the near universal consensus that Jesus was crucified, there are some Muslims who do not deny that Jesus went to the cross but that he *died* on the cross. Many Muslims that are not proponents of the Substitutionary Theory hold instead to the Swoon Theory, the theory that Jesus went to the cross but somehow survived his crucifixion. Proponents of this theory use biblical passages found in the Gospels as justification for

²⁹ Micahel R. Licona. *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 306.

³⁰ Gerd Lüdemann. *The Resurrection of Christ* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2004), 50.

³¹ The Jesus Seminar was an organization that consisted of 150 secular scholars who worked to discover the "historical Jesus." The historical Jesus is the phrase used by these scholars in order to speak about the actual Jesus of history, rather than the religious version of Jesus who they believe has been developed over time.

³² John Dominic Crossan. *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 145 and Robert J. Miller. *The Jesus Seminar and its Critics* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 1999), 38.

this hypothesis.³³ For instance, the Bible records that the entire crucifixion process, including his flogging, took 9 hours, and indicates that Jesus was likely on the cross for only 3 hours. This was a relatively short amount of time considering that some people were on the cross for days before they died. They claim that Pontius Pilate, in an effort to appease his wife, ordered Jesus to be taken down before he died. Jesus was then removed from the cross not by his disciples, but by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who placed him in Joseph's tomb. God then used the three days in which Jesus laid in the tomb to miraculously heal him, which led to the disciples' faulty assumption that Jesus had died on the cross. When they saw him they believed that he had risen from the dead because they were unaware that he had survived his crucifixion.³⁴

While some Muslim scholars, like Mirza Ghulam in his book *Jesus in India*, continue to maintain that Jesus was crucified but not killed on the cross, this belief has become increasingly implausible. The Swoon Theory ultimately stems from an improper understanding of the Roman method of crucifixion and how successful crucifixion was as a method of execution. Despite the belief of many modern day Muslims, the idea that Jesus did not die on the cross strains the bounds of credibility.

The method of crucifixion was too brutal and too effective to have failed. The Romans were expert executioners and had perfected the act of crucifixion, so much so that there is only one account of anyone surviving the crucifixion process. This individual did not survive by lucky chance, but was instead taken down at the request of Josephus who held political sway with leaders of his time. In fact, Josephus requested that three of his friends be taken down, a request that was granted, but the injuries sustained by two of

³³ Nabeel Quereshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 86.

³⁴ Quereshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*, 85, 86.

the men were so severe that they could not recover.³⁵ Turning to the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion, it becomes clear that, unlike the friends of Josephus, Jesus was not taken down from the cross until they were certain that he had died.

All four Gospel accounts report that Jesus was severely flogged before his crucifixion (John 19:1, Matt. 27:26, Mark 15:15, Luke 23:16). Historic evidence suggests that those who were to be crucified endured torture so severe that their veins, arteries, bones, and intestines became visible. Licona writes that, “In the first century, Seneca described crucified victims as having ‘battered and ineffective carcasses, ‘maimed,’ ‘misshapen,’ ‘deformed,’ ‘nailed’ and ‘drawing the breath of life amid long drawn out agony.’”³⁶ It is also reported in the Gospel of John that Jesus was stabbed in the side after the Roman centurions observed that he had died.

This was to ensure that he was truly dead before he was removed from the cross. Some object to the historical accuracy of this event on the grounds that John is the only Gospel in which it is mentioned, but this objection is not sound. John is the only Gospel to mention Jesus being stabbed, but John is also the only Gospel to mention that Jesus was nailed to the cross, which was the usual mode of crucifixion.³⁷ The addition of details omitted from the synoptic gospels does not automatically rule this event as being historically inaccurate.

David Strauss, a respected non-Christian scholar, argues that not only is Christ’s survival unlikely due to the extreme nature of the torture and execution, but if Christ had barely survived the crucifixion then the Christian movement would have come to a

³⁵ “Life of Flavius Josephus.” Perseus Projects. <http://perseus.uchicago.edu/perseus-cgi/citequery3.pl?dbname=GreekFeb2011&getid=1&query=Joseph.%20Vit.%20422>. (accessed February 7, 2017).

³⁶ Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 303-304.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 310.

complete halt.³⁸ Although Muslims may maintain that Jesus had miraculously recovered from his crucifixion in the three days that he was in the tomb, there is absolutely no historical or biblical evidence to corroborate this theory, and there is therefore every reason to believe that if he had somehow survived his flogging and crucifixion he would have left the tomb with all the injuries he sustained during the crucifixion process. An unresurrected body that had undergone crucifixion would not have been enough to convince the disciples that Jesus was the sovereign God who ruled over life and death. Strauss writes that, "It is impossible that a being who had stolen half dead out of the sepulchre, who crept about weak and ill and wanting medical treatment... could have given the disciples the impression that he was a conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of life: an impression that lay at the bottom of their future ministry."³⁹ Along this same vein of thought, N.T. Wright writes:

Even if the Roman soldiers, seasoned professionals when it came to killing, had unaccountably allowed Jesus to be taken down from the cross alive, and even if, after a night of torture and flogging and a day of crucifixion, he had managed to survive and emerge from the tomb, there is no way he could have convinced anyone that he had come *through death and out the other side*.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, modern scholarship maintains that the disciples believed they had seen Jesus crucified, and that they believed they had seen him post-crucifixion. The Swoon Theory, therefore, does not do justice to the historical data, because it does not provide an explanation for the radical life change that the apostles underwent after their Rabbi's death.

³⁸ Quereshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*, 149, 153.

³⁹ David Strauss, *The Life of Jesus for the People*, vol. 1, 2nd edition (London: Williams and Norgate, 1879), 412.

⁴⁰ N.T. Wright. *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense*. (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 112.

Minimal Fact #2: Evidence From Jesus' Disciples Transformation

Islamic/secular explanations for the resurrection appearances. The transformation of the lives of the apostles is evidence that the apostles genuinely believed they had seen the risen Christ after his death. As noted above, scholars like David Strauss who do not hold to the resurrection hypothesis vehemently oppose the idea that Jesus could have survived his crucifixion, and yet history relates that very soon after the crucifixion of Christ, the disciples had several different experiences with the man whom they genuinely believed to be the risen Jesus.⁴¹ E.P. Sanders, a secular scholar and member of the Jesus seminar, writes, “That Jesus’ followers (and later Paul) had resurrection experiences is, in my judgment, a fact. What the reality was that gave rise to the experiences I do not know.”⁴² How can scholars be so certain that the disciples actually believed they saw the risen Jesus?

Bart Ehrman says that the reason for this assurance is that there is simply no other explanation for the origin of Christianity. He writes, “If no one had thought Jesus had been raised, he would have been lost in the mists of Jewish antiquity and would be known today only as another failed Jewish prophet. But Jesus’s followers – or at least some of them – came to believe that God had done a great miracle and restored Jesus to life.”⁴³ Keller follows a similar line of reasoning, writing, “It is not enough to simply believe Jesus did not rise from the dead. You must then come up with a historically

⁴¹ Gary Habermas, “The Resurrection of Jesus: A Rational Inquiry” (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1976), 314.

⁴² E.P. Sanders. *The Historical Figure of Jesus*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 279-280.

⁴³ Bart Ehrman. *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2014), 174.

feasible alternate explanation for the birth of the church.”⁴⁴ Ultimately, without a genuine belief in the resurrection, the Christian movement would have never gotten off the ground. Modern skeptics and Muslims alike must, therefore, provide an alternative explanation for the birth of Christianity.

Secular scholars have offered up a few tentative explanations for the disciples’ genuine belief in the resurrection, but none are convincing or even remotely likely. While there are currently no convincing naturalistic explanations for the transformation of the disciples, scholars like Ehrman claim that no matter how unlikely a naturalistic scenario may be, it *must* be considered as more valid than a miraculous resurrection, because a miracle occurring in history is by definition the least likely event possible. He claims that we must therefore be willing to accept any feasible naturalistic explanation, no matter how unlikely, before we accept a miraculous explanation.⁴⁵

The most common (and according to Ehrman, the only possible) naturalistic explanation given for the disciples’ experiences with the risen Jesus is that they collectively hallucinated. This theory is espoused by Gerd Lüdemann, who believes that the hallucinations were a result of the disciples’ attempts to cope with the death of their beloved Rabbi. Concerning Peter’s experiences with the risen Jesus, Lüdemann writes, “Peter’s vision would be delusion or wishful thinking. Indeed, his vision is an example of unsuccessful mourning, because it abruptly cuts off the very process of mourning, substituting fantasy for unromantic reality.”⁴⁶ Likewise, Ehrman spends some time arguing why it may be possible that the disciples did not actually see Jesus and yet truly

⁴⁴ Keller, *The Reason for God*, 202.

⁴⁵ Bart Ehrman vs William Lane Craig Debate: “Did Jesus Rise From The Dead?” Filmed [July 2008]. YouTube video, posted [July 2008]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhT4IENSwac>.

⁴⁶ Lüdemann. *The Resurrection of Christ*, 497.

believed they saw Jesus. In his blog, he writes, “If I’m going to argue that it was the visions that convinced the disciples that Jesus was raised, I have to show how that can be a historical claim rather than a theological one, and to do that I have to talk about hallucinations.”⁴⁷ Although he goes on to explain that he is not necessarily claiming that the disciples hallucinated, he writes that if someone does not think that the visions the disciples had were authentic, then they must believe the disciples hallucinated.⁴⁸ Is it possible, then, that the disciples only thought that they had seen the risen Jesus? Modern scholarship and research strongly oppose this view.

Naturalistic explanations answered. Psychologists Leonard Zusne and Warren Jones have demonstrated instances in which mass hallucinations have occurred, such as mass sightings of the Virgin Mary. In these instances, however, there were certain prerequisites for the mass sightings that do not exist in the case of the New Testament resurrection account. Zusne and Jones document that whenever there were mass hallucinations there also existed expectation and emotional excitement. There were no documented instances in which mass hallucinations occurred unexpectedly.⁴⁹ These emotional conditions directly contradict the state of the disciples after the crucifixion of Jesus.

According to William Lane Craig, “The great weakness of the hallucination hypothesis is that it does not take seriously either Jesus’ death nor the crisis it caused for

⁴⁷ Bart Ehrman, “Why I (Actually) Discuss Hallucinations.” The Bart Ehrman Blog: The History & Literature of Early Christianity. <https://ehrmanblog.org/why-i-actually-discuss-hallucinations/>. (accessed February 6, 2017).

⁴⁸ Bart Ehrman, “Why I (Actually) Discuss Hallucinations.” (accessed February 6, 2017).

⁴⁹ Gary Habermas, “Explaining Away Jesus Resurrection: Hallucination.” Christian Research Institution. <http://www.equipt.org/article/explaining-away-jesus-resurrection-hallucination/>. (accessed February 6, 2017).

the disciples.”⁵⁰ Rather than being in a state of expectant excitement, the apostles had just witnessed the execution of their Rabbi whom they believed would deliver them from Roman oppression. The disciples fled from the Roman guards when Jesus was being arrested, and at least one of the disciples hid his identity in order to avoid any association with Jesus (Mark 14:66-72). These disciples were fearful and distraught, not excited or expectant.

The mass hallucination theory also fails to explain the number and various circumstances surrounding the resurrection appearances. The record of appearances indicates that “...different individuals and groups on different occasions and no doubt in different places saw appearances of Jesus.”⁵¹ Not only that, but Jesus appeared separately to both James, his brother, and to Paul, a former persecutor of the Church. Finally, if everyone had in fact hallucinated the resurrection of Jesus, the enemies of Christianity would have only needed to open the tomb of Christ and reveal his mangled corpse. The variance in the number of people who must have hallucinated, the time in between the hallucinations, the different circumstances under which groups must have hallucinated, and the lack of Christ’s body makes the hallucination theory an incredibly unlikely explanation for the disciples’ experiences.⁵²

The hallucination theory is not an explanation backed by any objective evidence, but rather the only logical explanation for the disciples’ genuine belief that they saw the risen Jesus, *if* one begins with the premise that a resurrection could not possibly have taken place. Any unusual sighting can be explained away using the hallucination theory.

⁵⁰ William Lane Craig, *The Son Rises: Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1981), 120.

⁵¹ Craig, *The Son Rises*, 121

⁵² Quereshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*, 166.

It is not an explanation of the facts. It is a deduction from the belief that either supernatural events do not occur, or else that, for other theological reasons as in the case of Islam, God would not have allowed Jesus to die and therefore would not have needed to resurrect him.

There has yet to be an adequate naturalistic explanation for why the disciples believed they saw the risen Jesus. Although Bart Ehrman contends that we must accept any naturalistic explanation, no matter how unlikely, before we accept the Christian claim of a resurrection, the resurrection hypothesis is the best possible explanation of all the facts surrounding the death of Christ, and until a better hypothesis is offered, Christians should continue to follow the evidence to its logical conclusion.

Minimal Fact #3: Evidence From Paul's Conversion

Islam's understanding of Paul vs. the historic Paul. Muslims are often trained to despise Paul. They believe that he hijacked the message of Jesus, turning his message about God into a message about himself. In doing so they believe that Paul has led literally billions of people to commit the unforgivable sin of *shirk*, by convincing them to worship a man alongside God. Many Muslims believe Paul did this in order to secure power for himself by taking advantage of the leadership vacuum left by the death of Jesus. Paul saw the disarray left by the death of Christ, convinced the other disciples that he too was a disciple of Christ (even though he had never met Jesus), and promoted his own Gospel rather than Christ's Gospel.⁵³ The challenge to this hypothesis is that it does not address modern scholarly consensus concerning the conversion of Paul, nor does it properly take into account the suffering Paul experienced post-conversion, as attested to in his own writings.

⁵³ Quereshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*, 186-188.

That the Apostle Paul (formerly Saul) converted to Christianity after having experiences with Jesus Christ is a historical fact attested to by most critical scholars, and is crucial to establishing the legitimacy of the resurrection claim.⁵⁴ Paul was held in high esteem as a high ranking Jewish official prior to his conversion, one who passionately persecuted the church. This made the total life transformation he experienced following his conversion extremely surprising, especially to the other apostles (Gal. 1:23). Paul's conversion is unique because, unlike the other resurrection appearances, Paul's experience occurred *after* Jesus ascended into heaven (Acts 1:1-19). Paul's testimony is also crucial for historians because he is the earliest known author to mention the resurrection of Jesus.

As was noted earlier, even extreme skeptics like E.P. Sanders do not deny that the disciples or Paul had legitimate experiences with the man whom they believed was the risen Jesus.⁵⁵ Habermas comes to the same conclusion, writing, "...it is an unquestionable historical fact that one of the most avid persecutors of the Christian church, Saul of Tarsus, was converted to Christianity by what he also believed was an appearance of the risen Jesus."⁵⁶ Licona notes that the only explanation for why Paul, who was vehemently opposed to the Church, would convert to Christianity, is that he genuinely believed he had seen the risen Jesus.⁵⁷ Still, Muslims maintain that Paul faked his life-transformation in order to secure power among the disciples and other early church members. This hypothesis is unlikely, because it does not take into account the extreme suffering Paul experienced as a result of his conversion.

⁵⁴ Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 373.

⁵⁵ Sanders. *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, 279-280.

⁵⁶ Gary Habermas, "The Resurrection of Jesus: A Rational Inquiry" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1976), 315.

⁵⁷Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 400.

The New Testament account of Paul's conversion. Before his conversion, Luke writes that Paul was a young a respected Pharisee who took Christians from their homes and put them in jail. He also records that Paul received his vision of Jesus on his way to Damascus, where he was going to find Christians living in the city and drag them back to Jerusalem (Acts 7:58-8-1, 9:1-6). In his letter to the church in Galatia, Paul says that as many as 10 years passed before he met the other apostles after his conversion, and that their reaction to seeing him and hearing him preach the Gospel was to say, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy" (Gal. 1:23). Paul was not a passive Pharisee. Before he converted to Christianity, he vehemently opposed Christ's followers and had developed a reputation among Christians for his brutality. This is why the disciples found his transformation so surprising.

Paul writes of his own conversion experience in his letters to the churches in Galatia, Corinth, and Philippi.⁵⁸ In his letter to the church of Philippi he writes that before he came to know Christ he was a top ranking Jewish official, both by the nature of his heritage as well as through his zeal for following Jewish laws and customs (Phil. 3:5-6). Amazingly, however, the letter of Philippians seems to have been written from a jail cell, where Paul was being kept for preaching the Christian Gospel.⁵⁹ Not only was he jailed for his faith, but Paul also outlines many of the miseries that he experienced specifically because of his Christian ministry. Paul tells the church at Corinth, "Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at

⁵⁸ Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 374.

⁵⁹ Moisés Silva, *Philippians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 2.

sea...” (2 Cor. 11:24). To top it all off, the book 1 Clement seems to indicate that Paul, along with the Apostle Peter, suffered greatly for his faith, and was possibly martyred.⁶⁰

The suffering Paul underwent after his conversion makes it unlikely that Paul converted to secure power a place of power among the early Christians. Rather than gaining influence among the Jews Paul was rejected by them because of his conversion, which was followed by intense suffering and eventually execution. The Muslim belief that Paul converted to Christianity for selfish reasons does not fit with the historical data. A more likely explanation is that Paul really did believe he had seen the risen Jesus. This is crucial, because Paul’s experience with the risen Jesus would have taken place much later than those of the other disciples. If his conversion experience is genuine, which both Paul and the historian Luke attest to, then Paul was not influenced by any sort of mass anticipation or excitement concerning the return of Christ. On the contrary, immediately prior to his conversion he violently tried to prevent the rise of Christianity.

Minimal Fact #4: Evidence From Church Tradition in Paul’s Writings

Post-conversion, Paul expounded on complex Christian teachings in letters that were sent to many different churches all over the ancient world. In these writings he teaches on the theological importance of the resurrection while addressing those who doubted its legitimacy. Paul wrote directly to people who were not certain that the resurrection had happened in order to convince them that it had. For this reason, the writings of Paul provide valuable information about the early church tradition regarding the resurrection. Paul’s first letter to the church of Corinth contains a passage that has been especially useful for determining what early Christians believed about the resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 Paul writes:

⁶⁰ Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 369.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. (1 Cor. 15:3-7)

This passage contains one of the oldest Christian creeds concerning the resurrection of Jesus. Some scholars such as Bart Ehrman doubt whether or not verses 6-7 were in the original tradition. Ehrman writes, “There are very good reasons, in fact, for thinking that the original form of the creed was simply vv. 3-5, to which Paul has added some comments of his own based on what he knew. One reason for restricting the original pre-Pauline creed to just these three verses is that doing so produces a very tightly formulated creedal statement that is brilliantly structured.”⁶¹ Even if those verses are excluded, there is no doubt about the early date of verses 3-5, which specifically outline details of the resurrection.

In ancient times, before the printing press and typewriters were readily available, societies would use oral tradition to pass down important information. Timothy Paul Jones writes that, “Especially among the Jews, important teachings were told and retold in rhythmic, repetitive patterns so that students could memorize key truths. As a result, it was possible for a rabbi’s oral teachings to remain amazingly consistent from one generation to the next.”⁶² Amazingly, 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 shows the signs of having been an early oral history *before* it was a written creed in Paul’s letter to Corinth. The evidence is found in the two Greek words *paradidōmi* (translated “delivered to you”) and *paralambanō* (translated “received”). Jones writes that these two words used together

⁶¹ Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 139.

⁶² Timothy Paul Jones, *Misquoting Truth: A Guide to the Fallacies of Bart Ehrman’s Misquoting Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 89.

would have indicated to Paul's audience that he was quoting words that were an oral tradition.⁶³

An important aspect of this oral tradition is that Paul writes that he passed down "what I also received" (v. 3). Paul was not creating this oral creed; he was passing on something that was delivered to him. Paul recorded the creed after he received it, which was about three to eight years after the Crucifixion. Habermas writes, "According to most scholars, Paul received this creed from the apostles, which makes it even earlier, and a creed has to be repeated before it becomes stylized. So now we're right on top of the Crucifixion, and note, it's the eyewitnesses who transmitted this information; it's not hearsay testimony."⁶⁴ Likewise, Jones writes that, "Within months of Jesus' death, a consistent oral account of Jesus' resurrection emerged among his followers. What's more, this tradition did not change from person to person... To the contrary, the tradition remained relatively unchanged throughout the first two decades of the Christian faith."⁶⁵

This passage allows proponents of the resurrection to argue the resurrection without having to prove the reliability of the entire New Testament. Adherents to Islam may make the claim that the Gospels are unreliable, and therefore the resurrection accounts within the Bible cannot be trusted. The early date of the resurrection creed in 1 Corinthians 15, however, allows proponents of the resurrection to concede those points, even if they actually do hold to the reliability of the canonical Gospels. It cannot be that the resurrection event was a late Christian myth. The belief in the resurrection arose

⁶³ Jones, *Misquoting Truth*., 91.

⁶⁴ Gary R. Habermas, Antony G. N. Flew, & Terry L. Miethe, *Did Jesus Rise From the Dead?: The Resurrection Debate* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1987), 43.

⁶⁵ Jones, *Misquoting Truth*, 94.

incredibly quickly after the death of Christ. Even if the canonical Gospels espouse different details concerning the resurrection, the crucial facts have remained the same.⁶⁶

Another reason why this is relevant to the Muslim/Christian debate is that many modern skeptics, Muslims included, say that Jesus did not claim to be God. They believe that the deity of Christ was a later evolution in Christian thought, and that Jesus only ever claimed to be a prophet of god.⁶⁷ As has already been demonstrated, however, the worship of Christ was intimately tied to the belief in his resurrection of Christ. If the disciples did not believe that Christ had been raised from the dead, Christianity would not have emerged as the dominant world religion that it is today. Everything hangs on the resurrection. Therefore, if it can be demonstrated that the resurrection was an early Christian belief, it becomes much more plausible that from Christians have always worshiped Jesus as God, one of the main beliefs separating Christians from Muslims.

For most Muslims there are extreme obstacles that must be overcome before there is any hope of conversion, and presenting the historical data concerning Christianity is but one step in that process. Nevertheless, it is an absolutely crucial ingredient. If Muslims are willing to engage in civil discourse and debate about the truth of Christianity, Christians must be prepared to defend their faith with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3:15). Islam is the world's fastest growing religion with the amount of Muslims living in the U.S. expected to double by the year 2050. It is therefore vital that the Christian know the research regarding the historicity of the resurrection and how to use it to engage with modern Islamic apologetics. The facts surrounding the resurrection lay the burden of proof firmly on the shoulders of those who deny the resurrection. If Christ was

⁶⁶ Jones, *Misquoting Truth.*, 94.

⁶⁷ Quereshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*, 187 and Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 125.

not raised from the dead, Muslims and skeptics must provide an alternative explanation for these minimal, historical facts.

Nearly every critical scholar (with the exception of some Muslim scholars) accepts Jesus' death by crucifixion, and those who deny the crucifixion do not do so because of a lack of historical evidence. The death of Christ by crucifixion is a well-established historical fact, as is the transformation of his disciples, which includes Paul (a former enemy of the Church). Alternate explanations for the historical data, such as the hallucination and substitutionary theories, fail to provide compelling arguments for the origin of Christianity. Biblical evidence found in 1 Corinthians 15 contradicts the belief that the resurrection was a theological development that occurred long after the time of Christ, and instead demonstrates that belief in the resurrection was widespread within 3-5 years of Christ's death. A historical resurrection holds greater explanatory power for these facts than any of the hypotheses provided by skeptics of Christianity.

While there may remain intellectual doubts in the mind of the reader concerning many aspects of Christianity, it must always be remembered that the truthfulness of Christianity rests on the resurrection of Christ. Apparent contradictions between gospel narratives, the bible's many difficult teachings on the social issues such as slavery, homosexuality, and the role of women, as well as parts of scripture that seem to be historically inaccurate must not become the focal point of the skeptic's doubt. In order to convincingly demonstrate that Christian beliefs are false and irrelevant, skeptics must first address the evidence surrounding the historical resurrection of Jesus and the explosion of Christianity that began in the first century. The evidence for the resurrection is compelling, and strongly suggests that Christians have every reason to confidently

rejoice with Paul who writes, “Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Chapman, Colin. *Cross and Crescent: Responding to the Challenge of Islam*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.
- Craig, William Lane. *The Son Rises: Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1981.
- Crossan, John Dominic. *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*. San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994.
- Easterling, P.E., E. J. Kenney (general editors). *The Cambridge History of Latin Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Ehrman, Bart. *Did Jesus Exist?: The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2012.
- _____. *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee*. New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2014.
- _____. "Jesus as God in the Synoptics ." The Bart Ehrman Blog: The History & Literature of Early Christianity. <https://ehrmanblog.org/why-i-actually-discuss-hallucinations/>. (accessed March 8, 2017).
- _____. "Why I (Actually) Discuss Hallucinations." The Bart Ehrman Blog: The History & Literature of Early Christianity. <https://ehrmanblog.org/why-i-actually-discuss-hallucinations/>. (accessed Feb 6, 2017).
- _____. vs William Lane Craig Debate: "Did Jesus Rise From The Dead?" Filmed [July 2008]. YouTube video, posted [July 2008]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FhT4IENSwac>.
- Gregg, Stephen E. and Gregory A. Barker. *Jesus beyond Christianity: The Classic Texts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Habermas, Gary vs Arif Ahmed Debate: "Did Jesus Rise Bodily from the Dead?" Filmed [October 2011]. YouTube video, posted [October 2011]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mg7rYJxHA4Y>
- _____. "The Minimal Facts Approach to the Resurrection of Jesus: The Role of Methodology as a Crucial Component in Establishing Historicity." <http://www.garyhabermas.com>.
- _____, Antony G. N. Flew, & Terry L. Miethe. *Did Jesus Rise From the Dead?: The Resurrection Debate*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1987.

- _____. "Explaining Away Jesus' Resurrection: Hallucination." Christian Research Institution. <http://www.equip.org/article/explaining-away-jesus-resurrection-hallucination/>. (accessed February 6, 2017).
- _____. "The Resurrection of Jesus: A Rational Inquiry." PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1976.
- Jones Timothy Paul. *Misquoting Truth: A Guide to the Fallacies of Bart Ehrman's Misquoting Jesus*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007.
- Keller, Timothy. *The Reason for God: Belief in God in an Age of Skepticism*. New York, NY: Dutton, 2008.
- Licona, Michael R. *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010.
- "Life of Flavius Josephus." Perseus Projects. <http://perseus.uchicago.edu/perseus-cgi/citequery3.pl?dbname=GreekFeb2011&getid=1&query=Joseph.%20Vit.%20422>. (accessed February 7, 2017).
- Lipka, Michael. "Muslims and Islam: Key Findings in the U.S. and around the world." Pew Research Foundation. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/22/muslims-and-islam-key-findings-in-the-u-s-and-around-the-world/>. (accessed February 7, 2017).
- Lüdemann, Gerd. *The Resurrection of Christ*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2004.
- Maier, Paul L. *Josephus: The Essential Writings*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1988.
- Miller, Robert J. *The Jesus Seminar and its Critics*. Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 1999.
- Mohamed, Besheer. "A New Estimate of the U.S. Muslim Population." Pew research Center. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/01/06/a-new-estimate-of-the-u-s-muslim-population/> (accessed Feb. 9, 2017).
- Noebel, David A. *Understanding the Times: The Collision of Today's Competing Worldviews*. Manitou Springs, CO: Summit Press, 2006.
- Quereshi, Nabeel. *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014.
- Saritoprak, Zeki. *Islam's Jesus*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2014.
- Sanders, E.P. *The Historical Figure of Jesus*. New York: Penguin Books, 1993.

Siddiqui, Mona. *Christians, Muslims, and Jesus*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013.

Silva, Moisés. *Philippians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005.

Strauss, David. *The Life of Jesus for the People*, vol. 1, 2nd edition. London: Williams and Norgate, 1879.

Towns, Elmer. *The Gospel of John: Believe and Live*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2002.

Wright, N.T. *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense*. San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006.

_____. *The Resurrection of the Son of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God vol. 3* Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.