

# RECONCILIATION AND HOPE

*New Testament Essays on  
Atonement and Eschatology*

*presented to*

*L. L. Morris on his 60th Birthday*

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## CHAPTER XIII

# THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

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CONSIDERATION OF THE FORM AND FUNCTION OF RESURRECTION appearances in early Christian gospels must begin with the work of C. H. Dodd, *The Appearances of the Risen Christ: an Essay in Form-Criticism of the Gospels*.<sup>1</sup> Dodd perceived two classes of resurrection narrative, concise and circumstantial, with a common pattern:

- A. The situation: Christ's followers bereft of their Lord.
- B. The appearance of the Lord.
- C. The Greeting.
- D. The Recognition.
- E. The Word of Command.<sup>2</sup>

Here a wider range of material will be surveyed<sup>3</sup> and a more precise analysis attempted.

### I *Form*

The relevant material may be classified as follows.<sup>4</sup>

#### A. *Epiphanies*

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| (a) Fuller form | (b) Shorter form |
| Mt. 28: 1-8     | Lk. 24:1-9       |
| Mk. 16:1-8      | Mt. 28:8-11      |
| GN 13:1         | GP 50-57         |

#### B. *Commissions*

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| (a) Fuller form | (b) Shorter form |
| Jn. 20:19-23    | Mt. 28:16-20     |
| Jn. 20:26-29    | Mk. 16:14-18     |
|                 | GN 14:1          |

<sup>1</sup> In D. E. Nineham (ed.), *Studies in the Gospels* (1955), 9-35; reprinted in C. H. Dodd, *More NT Studies* (1968), pp. 102 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Studies in the Gospels*, p. 11. Concise narrative: Mt. 28:8-10; Mt. 28:16-20; Jn. 20:19-21; Jn. 20:26-29; Mk. 16:14-15. Circumstantial narrative: Lk. 24:13-35; Jn. 21:1-14; Gospel of the Hebrews. Mixed type: Lk. 24:36-49; Jn. 20:11-17.

<sup>3</sup> From outside the NT, Dodd considers only Gospel of the Hebrews and Gospel of Peter.

<sup>4</sup> Abbreviations for apocryphal works: Ep. Ap. = Epistle of the Apostles; GH = Gospel of the Hebrews; GN = Gospel of Nicodemus; GP = Gospel of Peter.

C. *Recognition Scenes*

Lk. 24:13-32

Jn. 20:14-16

Jn. 21:1-14

D. *Other*

GN 15:6

Lk. 24:33-53

GH

Ep. Ap. 9-12

GP 35-44

This list includes appearances not only of the risen Jesus but also of angels, since, formally, there is no distinction between angelophanies and Christophanies.<sup>1</sup> However, narratives sometimes regarded as pre-dated resurrection appearances, such as the Transfiguration, feeding miracles, and the miraculous catch of fish in Lk. 5 corresponding to Jn. 21, are excluded from consideration, because, functionally, the evangelists have not used them as resurrection narratives, and, formally, they do not have the characteristics of resurrection appearances.<sup>2</sup>

A. *Epiphanyes*

	Lk. 2:8-14	Rev. 1:10-19	Mt. 28:1-8	Mk. 16:1-8	Dan. 10:1-2
(i) Introduction of situation	8	10-11	1	1-4	10:2-4
(ii) Messenger and his appearance	9a	12-16	2-3	5a	10:5-6
(iii) Terror of viewers	9b	17a	(4)	5b	10:7,8,9
(iv) Command: "Fear not"	10a	17b	5a	6a	10:12a
(v) Reason	10b	18	5b	—	10:12b
(vi) News	11	—	6	6b	10:13-15; 10:20-12:3
(vii) Charge	(12)	19	7	7	12:4,9-13
(viii) Response	15	—	8	8	—

<sup>1</sup> While *ministering* angels occasionally appear in the gospels, as at the Temptation (Mk. 1:13 and parallel Mt. 4:11) and in Gethsemane (Lk. 22:43), such active and *interpretative* angels as appear in the resurrection narratives have not been in evidence since the infancy narratives of Mt. and Lk.

<sup>2</sup> For more detailed treatment of these passages, see Dodd in *Studies in the Gospels*, 22-26. On Lk. 5:1-11 Dodd comments, "practically every *formal* feature of post-resurrection narratives has been eliminated. . . . The features which are common to Lk. 5 and Jn. 21 . . . are those which, even as they occur in John, are not characteristic of post-resurrection appearances" (p. 23).

It is notable that the fuller Epiphany form not only occurs in resurrection narratives, but is also used with the appearance of the angel to the shepherds in Lk. 2:8-14 and with the appearance of one "like a Son of Man" in Rev. 1:10-19. The appearance to Daniel (Dan. 10-12) also contains all the elements in the appropriate order, though in a diffuse and elaborated form. Characteristic of the messenger's appearance (ii) is the brightness of his face and clothing (Rev. 1:16b; Mt. 28:2; Mk. 16:5; Dan. 10:6). The terrified response of the viewers (iii) is exhibited particularly by their becoming feeble (Dan. 10:8) or sleepy (Dan. 10:9) or as if dead (Rev. 1:17a; Mt. 28:4). In Mt. the fearful response is reported only for the tomb-guards, who otherwise play no part in this pericope, and not for the women, who are properly the receivers of the epiphany. Of course, that the women too showed fear, is implied by the *μη φοβεῖσθε* and especially by the additional *ὑμεῖς* (Mt. 28:5, expanding Mk. 16:6). The heavenly messenger regularly supports his command not to fear (iv) with some good reason (v), which may be introduced by *γάρ* (Lk. 2:10b; Mt. 28:5b) or *ὅτι* (Dan. 10:12b; Hebrew: *ki*). Although Mt. 28:5 and Mk. 16:6 are parallel at this point, Mark lacks the Matthaean introductory phrase, "for I know that", before "you seek the crucified Jesus (of Nazareth)". Thus, despite the parallel, there is no reason given in Mark. GN 13:1 follows Mt. closely. But whereas Mt. has only a trace of his tomb-guard material in this pericope (at Mt. 28:4) and tells the story entirely from the point of view of the women, GN has quite reversed the situation and tells the story as a report from the guards to the Jewish authorities. GN thus has all the elements of the epiphany form except the final Response, but while (i), (ii) and (iii) refer, properly, to the guards, the latter simply overhear elements (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii), which are directed only to the women. (The final response of the guards, though not a literary element of the narrative, consists in their coming to make their report about what has happened.)

The shorter version of this Epiphany form differs only in that the angelic announcement cannot readily be subdivided into the elements (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii) of the fuller form.

	Lk. 24:1-9	GP 50-57	Mt. 28:8-10
(i) Introduction of of situation	1-3	50-54	8
(ii) Messenger and his appearance	4	55	9a
(iii) Terror of viewers	5a	—	(9b)
(iv) Message	5b-7	56	10
(v) Response	8-9	57	(11a)

As will be seen later, Luke's special proclivity for the motif of prophecy fulfilled is the reason why in Lk. 24:1-9, although like Matthew he is following Mk. 16:1-8, he has nevertheless departed from the fuller form of Epiphany. There is no command to refrain from fear, and hence no reason given for doing so. Nor is there any charge to pass on the news of the resurrection; but the women depart to report to the other followers of Jesus in any case. In GP 50-54, more convoluted than its Marcan parallel (Mk. 16:1-4), a dominant motif is the women's fear of the Jews. And that is perhaps why the author has not made further use of the element of fear in response to the appearance of the angel. Like Lk., GP has no charge to the women to inform the disciples. And the final response of the women is reported even more abruptly than in Mk. - they simply "fled in fear." Matthew goes beyond the Synoptic and Petrine empty tomb pericopes in adding an appearance of Jesus himself, who meets the women on their way to tell their news to the disciples. This Christophany is a doublet of the angelophany which immediately precedes it; and that may be the reason why the second epiphany not only is of the shorter form, but also has a much less detailed presentation of the individual elements. First, Mt. 28:8 does double service as the conclusion to the preceding angelophany and the introduction for the Christophany. Then, unlike the angel, Jesus' appearance does not have the apocalyptic accompaniment of an earthquake. And since there is no description of his face or clothing, there is no reason to assume the usual dazzling brightness in this instance. In keeping with this difference, the women respond not with fear but with a more positive obeisance (*προσελθοῦσαι*, Mt. 28:9). The final response of the women appears only briefly in the Genitive Absolute which begins the following paragraph: they went their way (*πορευομένων δὲ αὐτῶν*, Mt. 28:11).

### B. Commissions

While the Message or Charge was no doubt the most important element in the Epiphanies, this element attains even greater prominence in the Commissions. The Johannine examples form a distinctive sub-type.

	Jn. 20	
(i) Situation	19a	26a
(ii) Arrival of Jesus	19b	26b
(iii) Greeting	19c	26c
(iv) Showing of wounds	20a	27
(v) Response of disciple(s)	20b	28
(vi) Commission	21-23	29

In these two passages items (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) are virtually identical. Then to the disciples' response of joy (v. 20b) corresponds Thomas' confession of faith (v. 28). And in place of the apostolic commission (vv. 21-22), Jesus addresses through Thomas a blessing on all actual and potential believers (v. 29). The prominence of the commission and the blessing is emphasized in that these elements are left standing as the culminating points of their pericopes without any further response recorded.

In the remaining Commissions, the charge achieves its prominence by being the only considerable element; there is otherwise a minimum of introduction. Mt. 28:16-20 ends with Jesus' commission and promise, without recorded response. In Mk. 16:14-19 the commission is followed by Jesus' ascension. GN 14:1 quotes Mk. 16:15-18 verbatim, and also concludes with the ascension, but in terms as much reminiscent of Acts 1:9 as of Mk. 16:19.

### C. Recognition Scenes

In a third group of appearances the distinctive feature is not the unfolding of an epiphany according to an orderly pattern, nor the emphasis on a climatic commission, but the recognition of Jesus by his followers. In some accounts the risen Jesus is at first mistaken for a ghost and only subsequently recognized as the crucified and risen master, but this feature is not definitive for the appearances here classed as Recognition Scenes. Rather the designation is applied to scenes in which Jesus appears without apocalyptic accompaniments as a perfectly normal human being and rather unobtrusively, but where he is not immediately recognized as himself. So in Lk. 24:13-32 as the two disciples walk to Emmaus Jesus joins them as an unknown stranger — *οἱ δὲ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτῶν ἐκρατοῦντο τοῦ μὴ ἐπιγνῶναι αὐτόν*, Luke explains (v. 16). Only at the end of the scene as he breaks bread is Jesus recognized: *αὐτῶν δὲ διηνοίχθησαν οἱ ὀφθαλμοί, καὶ ἐπέγνωσαν αὐτόν* (v. 31). Thereupon Jesus' disappearance is reported in technical epiphanic terminology (*καὶ αὐτὸς ἄφαντος ἐγένετο ἀπ' αὐτῶν*, v. 31) which dispels the impression of a normal human being. In Jn. 20:14-18 Jesus is at first unrecognizable to Mary, but his appearance is ordinary enough for Mary to mistake him for the gardener. However, after he has been recognized in the simple address "Mary", the command "Touch me not" again indicates the abnormality of this person. Likewise in Jn. 21 Jesus at first appears unrecognized on the shore (v. 4); the miraculous catch of fish convinces the Beloved Disciple that "it is the Lord" (v. 7); and, though Jesus remains on the scene, the mystery of his presence is now indicated in the attitude of the disciples, none of whom dared ask him who he was, knowing it was the Lord (v. 12).

*D. Other*

The appearance to Joseph of Arimathea at GN 15:6 might also have been classed as a Recognition Scene, were it not for an equal preponderance of apocalyptic and magical elements along with the recognition motif. At the beginning Joseph's house is magically raised by its four corners, and at the end Joseph is magically replaced in his house after visiting the tomb. The account includes the usual auditory and visual elements of an epiphany, and the fearful response. But besides sight and sound, this account also has the elements of touch and smell. Here Jesus is first mistaken for a ghost. Once that impression is dispelled, he is mistaken for Elijah. Then Jesus proceeds to prove his true identity by recalling his burial by Joseph, and by taking Joseph to the tomb and showing him the burial cloths.

Lk. 24:33-53 contains remnants of the usual epiphanic elements: introduction of the situation (vv. 33-35), arrival of Jesus (v. 36), fearful response (v. 37). But the whole account, and especially the address of Jesus, is elaborated in line with Luke's special interests. First, to counter the disciples' impression (v. 37b), it is shown that Jesus is not a ghost (vv. 38-43). Luke divides the process of convincing into two stages. First Jesus shows his hands and feet and invites the disciples to touch him and see that, unlike a ghost, he has flesh and bones (v. 39). The disciples cannot believe their eyes for joy and wonder (v. 41a). Their reaction is to be distinguished from the disbelief motif of Jn. 20:24-29, Mk. 16:9-20 and Ep. Ap. 9-12. In Lk. 24:41 the idea is not "It cannot be true" but "It is almost too good to be true": Luke here presents not disbelief, but a stage on the way to full acknowledgement. The second part of Jesus' proof that he is not a ghost consists in his asking for something to eat and eating "before their eyes" (vv. 41b-43).<sup>1</sup> Luke now proceeds to the second major theme of this appearance, the fulfilment of prophecy (Lk. 24:44-48), which he had also employed in his two preceding pericopes. The motif occurred in relation to Jesus' own prediction of his passion and resurrection, as recalled by the angels to the women at Lk. 24:6b-7; then Jesus expounded the scriptures concerning himself to the Emmaus disciples (Lk. 24:25-27); and this exposition is now repeated for the benefit of the Eleven and their associates. This lengthy appearance concludes with the promise of an apostolic commission (v. 49), and the departure of Jesus (vv. 50-51), to which is added a notice of the interim activity of the disciples.

<sup>1</sup> Later occurrences of the ghost motif add variety to the proofs offered. In Ep. Ap. 11 Jesus invites Andrew to check his footprints, since the foot of a ghost or demon does not touch the ground (Coptic), or at least leaves no print (Ethiopic). In GN 15:6 Joseph recites the Commandments to scare away the supposed ghost. But the latter joins in the recitation. "Now as you well know, a phantom immediately flees if it meets anyone and hears the Commandments." So it could not be a ghost.



GH is unique in portraying the fulfilment of a vow of abstinence.<sup>1</sup> One suspects that the author has constructed the whole incident by letting his imagination play on the traditions that appear in Mk. 10:38 (cf. Mt. 20:22) and especially Mk. 14:25 (cf. Mt. 26:29). If GH has used the latter tradition, then it has transferred the vow from Jesus to James, and has substituted bread for wine, and the resurrection of Jesus for the coming of the Kingdom of God as the limit of the vow. At any rate, Jerome's reporting shows that Jesus appeared to James, that there were others present (*adferte*, plural), and that Jesus dramatically released James from his vow. The fragments hint at a skilful creation of suspense, with the appearance of Jesus, his command to bring table and bread, his taking the bread, giving thanks and giving the bread to James, and finally his telling pronouncement: *frater mi, comede panem tuum, quia resurrexit filius hominis a dormientibus*.

In Ep. Ap. 9-12 Jesus appears first to the women at the tomb. He sends two of them in turn to take news of the resurrection to the disciples. But the disbelieving response of the disciples brings it about that finally Jesus himself goes to convince them. The persistent disbelief of the disciples recalls Mk. 16:9-20, where they first reject Mary's report (v. 11), then the report of the Two (v. 13), and are finally rebuked by the appearance of Jesus himself (v. 14). The two passages thus correspond not only as to the motif of disbelief, but also in the threefold pattern of witnesses, of whom the last is Jesus. Such triplicity is probably a folk-literary device, which may be compared with its different uses in the Synoptic parables of the Wicked Husbandmen (Mk. 12:1-12 and pars.).

Only the addition to Mk. 16:3 in the Old Latin version k and GP attempt to portray the resurrection itself. The editor of the addition to Mk., while manifestly desiring to provide an explicit account of the resurrection, has failed to integrate it into the Marcan record. For the insertion merely interrupts the progress of the women to the tomb without having any effect on them; the time designation *ad horam tertiam* does not correspond well with Mark's *λίαν πρωί* (Mk. 16:2); and there is nothing in the Marcan pericope to evoke the description of sudden and universal darkness and the subsequent return of light.<sup>2</sup> Such features suggest that the insertion was not specially composed for this context but had an independent existence elsewhere. Because of the common elements of attendant angels and the visible resurrection-ascension, it is natural to think of GP 35-42. But the time and the change of light-darkness-light fit

<sup>1</sup> It is not easy to assess this isolated pericope, nor even to determine the boundary between Jerome's quotation of GH and his own explanatory comment. Editors vary in assigning the sentence *irauerat enim... resurgentem a dormientibus* to the present context of GH, or to Jerome's explanation of an earlier context therein. If the sentence belongs to the present context of GH, the fullness of its explanation almost precludes the possibility that GH contained a pre-passion scene in which James took his vow. But it is perhaps more likely that such a scene was described by GH, and that Jerome now refers back to it in an explanatory note.

<sup>2</sup> *subito... tenebrae diei factae sunt per totum orbem terrae... et continuo lux facta est.*

no better with GP than with the Marcan context. Moreover, *k* lacks characteristic details of GP: the presence of the cross, the great height of the figures, and the support of Jesus by the angels. On the other hand, as regards the actual description of the ascension from the tomb in the manner of *k* and GP, the lack of further examples is striking.<sup>1</sup>

The Old Latin insertion at Mk. 16:3 is scarcely an appearance in the strict sense, since it is not clear that anyone actually sees the event. The same is true of GP 35-44, if to a lesser degree. For it is of the essence of an appearance that it includes communication with those who witness it. Here, however, the Jews and Roman soldiers are mere onlookers.<sup>2</sup> The structure of the pericope is determined not by the formal requirements of an epiphany, but by the angelic descent and ascent. In addition to the descent of the two angels and their implied return with Jesus, GP has another angel descend to the tomb in preparation for the meeting with the women. Because GP excludes communication between the angelic figures and the soldiers, the account readily falls into two sets of material linked by adverbial phrases at most of the joints: what the soldiers saw (GP 35-37; 39-42; 44), and what the soldiers did (GP 38; 43).

Finally, mention may be made of Jn. 20:4-9, which develops the empty tomb in the direction of an appearance. Elsewhere the empty tomb as such is scarcely allowed any positive significance; and where it is, it occurs in relation to an angelic appearance. Thus in Mk. the women do not find an *empty* tomb, but an open tomb with an angel, whose message, to be sure, includes the empty tomb. This is also the pattern of Mt., GP and GN. Luke differs only in making the empty tomb set up the situation for the appearance of the angels: *καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ ἀπορεῖσθαι αὐτὰς περὶ τοῦτου καὶ ἰδοὺ ἀνδρῶν δύο ἐπέστησαν αὐταῖς* (Lk. 24:4). The empty tomb does not accomplish anything in itself. Its lack of significance is most pronounced in Ep. Ap. 9-10. On their way to the tomb the women are "mourning and weeping over what had happened" (i.e. the passion). They inspect the tomb and fail to find Jesus' body. And they continue "mourning and weeping" as before, with no apparent reaction to the empty tomb. Indeed the author builds up the motif of mourning over

<sup>1</sup> Even in the Ascension of Isaiah 3:16-17, while two angels support Jesus as he emerges from the tomb, there is no reference to Jesus' ascent to heaven but only to his sending out of the twelve disciples etc. The ascensions or assumptions of OT figures do not seem to provide literary models for the accounts in *k* and GP. What the OT itself and the apocryphal writings provide is either a mere notice that a figure was taken up; or a description such that as of the taking up of Elijah (2 Kings 2:1-12); or a description of a journey around the heavenly realms.

<sup>2</sup> The amount of apocalyptic imagery in this passage of GP makes it worth asking whether it might be classed as an apocalyptic vision. The apocalyptic elements are as follows. Loud voice in heaven: *μεγάλη φωνή* occurs twenty times in Rev. which in turn reflects OT revelation passages; cf. also Mk. 1:11 and pars. (baptism of Jesus) and Mk. 9:7 and pars. (Transfiguration). Heavens opened (GP 36, 44): Is. 64:1; Ez. 1:1; Mk. 1:10 and pars; Ac. 10:11; Rev. 4:1; 6:14; 19:11. Descent of angels (GP 36, 44): Rev. 10:1; 18:1; 20:1. Brightness (GP 36): Rev. 1:16; 15:6; 19:8; 22:16. Extreme height of figures (GP 40): Rev. 10:1-6; Herm. *sim.* 9:6; 4 Esr. 2:43; Book of Elchasai, fr. 1 (= Hipp. Ref. 9.13.1-3).

the passion as a foil to the imminent appearance of Jesus himself. As a result the empty tomb has become rather superfluous, though that in itself shows that the empty tomb was by now such an established piece of tradition that it could not be omitted.

Jn. 20 makes considerably more out of the empty tomb. In Jn. 20:1 it is not actually said that Mary Magdalene inspected the tomb, only that she saw the stone removed. But in the light of v. 2, John probably intends the reader to assume that Mary actually found the body missing. Moreover, her statement, "We do not know where they have put him", is already a development beyond other empty tomb passages. And this in turn prompts the visit of the two disciples to the tomb. John is the only evangelist to make explicit mention of the grave cloths in the tomb. Peter sees them; the Beloved Disciple saw and *believed*. The grave cloths constitute a sort of negative appearance. It might be objected that the empty tomb already does this; but that is not true for John. And therein is seen the artificiality of his scheme: John *could* not mention the interior of the tomb in v. 1, because he was reserving the impact of the grave cloths for the Beloved Disciple in v. 8.

In summary, the Epiphanies have the most detailed formal structure; they occur within the Synoptic empty tomb pericopes, and the equivalent passages of GN and GP; thus the one who appears is an angel (or angels), except for the appearance of Jesus himself in the Matthaean doublet (Mt. 28:8-11). In the Commissions, Jesus appears, and the absence of epiphanic appurtenances throws the emphasis more forcibly on the message itself, especially in the shorter form. One would expect the Commissions, because of their content, to be the final appearance in any writing. This is the case in Mt. and it becomes the case for the longer ending of Mk. GN, however, extends some way beyond the report of the Commission, though it can no longer go on quoting canonical gospel material, except by further retrospects to the life of Jesus before his passion. As for John, it is somewhat problematical that he has two appearances of the Commission type - they cannot both be last. The Recognition Scenes show a less rigid form, though, so long as the risen Jesus is appearing to disciples, the presence of certain basic structural elements is inevitable. Any clearer understanding of the literary purpose of the appearances will only be achieved by seeing how the various types of appearance are used in each writing.

## II *Function*

### *Mark*

If Mk. 16:8 is taken as the end of the gospel, a very heavy burden is placed on the sole appearance, that of the angel. Nevertheless, this is a

burden which the appearance is able to bear. For the message with which the angel entrusts the women includes the promise of an appearance of Jesus himself. The nature of this message suggests that Mark envisages a single appearance, not a series of them. Moreover, it is not clear that the appearance of Jesus is to be a resurrection appearance in the sense of proving the resurrection. The resurrection is in any case already established, from Mark's point of view, by the angel's announcement and his interpretation of the empty tomb (Mk. 16:6). The content of the angel's charge confirms Jesus' own prediction to the Twelve at Mk. 14:28. But neither Mk. 14:28 nor its recapitulation at Mk. 16:7 provides a clear interpretation of the promised appearance of Jesus. Much depends on the significance of Galilee for Mark. Certainly the emphasis on Galilee throughout the gospel is Mark's own work. C. F. Evans sees Mark's Galilee as "the land of the Gentiles, which is symbolic of the world-wide mission".<sup>1</sup> But that is rather a Matthaean emphasis: "Galilee of the Gentiles" in Mt. 4:15, quoting Is. 8:23, is a Matthaean addition to the Marcan source; and the world-wide mission appears in Mt. 28:19 without Marcan basis. The odd thing about Galilee in Mk. is that, although its presence is redactional, nothing much is made of it. This gives plausibility to Marxsen's view that Galilee is where the Marcan community now is. Moreover, if

Mark inserts 16:7 into an already existing context, then we are dealing with the latest stratum reflecting the evangelist's own situation. *But then this redactional note cannot deal with an appearance of the Risen Lord awaited in Galilee; in Mark's context this passage can only refer to the expected parousia.*<sup>2</sup>

This understanding may be supported by tying Mk. 14:62 in with Mk. 14:28 and Mk. 16:7. It is notable that Mk. 16:7 adds to Mk. 14:28: *ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε, καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν*. But Jesus did not tell the disciples that. However, in response to the High Priest's question, *σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ εὐλογητοῦ*; he did say, *ἐγὼ εἰμι, καὶ ὄψεσθε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκ δεξιῶν καθήμενον τῆς δυνάμεως καὶ ἐρχόμενον μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ* (Mk. 14:62). *ἐγὼ εἰμι* is a proper form of reply to the question; the rest is not. Moreover, the plural *ὄψεσθε* seems uncalled for in addressing the High Priest (singular). It may be suggested that *ὄψεσθε κ.τ.λ.* is secondary to the context, and that the plural *ὄψεσθε* once applied to the disciples; and that Mark betrays awareness of this in Mk. 16:7.

On this interpretation, what Mark envisages as happening in Galilee is not merely a resurrection appearance, nor even the one and only resurrection appearance, but the coming of Jesus as Son of Man on clouds of

<sup>1</sup> *Resurrection in the NT* (London, 1970), p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> W. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist* (ET Nashville, 1969), p. 85.

glory to preside at the last judgement. That would be enough to frighten anyone, even the faithful (Mk. 16:8).<sup>1</sup>

The longer ending of Mk. has been added to supply what was felt to be a lack. The extremely awkward relation of Mk. 16:9 to Mk. 16:8, both grammatically (*ἀναστάς*, with Jesus as subject) and in content (virtual doublet of Mary Magdalene at the tomb), shows that vv. 9–20 were not composed specially for the “completion” of the gospel. At the same time, the addition as a whole is held together at least by the motif of disbelief.<sup>2</sup> Thus the first function of the appearance of Jesus in vv. 14–18 is to dispel the disbelief of the disciples. The second and main function, for which the disbelief has served as a foil, is the mission charge. The propagators of the longer ending must have felt that Mark had been too secretive about this important motif, and desired to make it quite explicit. This desire is shown by the fact that Jesus’ words in vv. 15–18 are not confined to a charge proper, but spill over into propaganda. The emphasis is maintained in the final verse (Mk. 16:20), where the carrying out of the charge is recorded.<sup>3</sup>

### Matthew

After the angelophany of Mt. 28:2–7, Matthew introduces a Christophany (Mt. 28:9–10), whose function is not immediately obvious. That the women have already accepted the fact of the resurrection on the basis of the angel’s announcement is clear from v. 8, where they run in fear and joy to tell the disciples. Moreover, the angel’s charge already contained the promise of an appearance of Jesus in Galilee. Consequently in the Christophany in vv. 9–10 neither Jesus’ presence nor his message adds anything to what is already known and believed. It might almost be said that he merely interrupts the women in the task which they are already hastening to perform. However, the appearance at least confirms the news of the angel; and the women’s worship of the risen Jesus is an appropriate gradation beyond the angelophany. Moreover, Jesus’ repetition of the charge concerning Galilee serves a multiple purpose: it throws greater emphasis on to the Galilean appearance; it plays down the present appearance as subordinate to the later one; and it relativizes the significance of the empty tomb as such – the actual presence of Jesus in Mt. supersedes the Marcan argument from silence.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Whatever its prehistory, the account of Mk. 16:1–8 as it now stands cannot mean that the women disobeyed the angel’s charge. The clause, *καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν*, in v. 8 means that they ran away in a fright “without saying a word to anybody”, not that they failed to deliver the message to the disciples.

<sup>2</sup> Besides the disbelief of the disciples afforded to Mary Magdalene at v. 11 and to the Two at v. 13, and rebuked by Jesus at v. 14, the issue of belief is also prominent within the mission charge, v. 16 and v. 17.

<sup>3</sup> After Mk. 16:14 the Washington Codex inserts a short conversation between Jesus and the disciples concerning eschatological problems. By this means Mk. 16:9–20 is transformed into a miniature gnostic gospel.

<sup>4</sup> “He is not here,” Mk. 16:6 (= Mt. 28:6).

Mt. 28:16-20 gives an explicit description of a Galilean appearance to fulfil the promise of Mt. 28:7 (parallel to Mk. 16:7). In making this appearance of outstanding importance, Matthew still adheres to the gist of his Marcan source. Thus apart from Matthew's special tomb guard material (Mt. 28:4, 11-15), Mt. 28 as a whole is closely related to Mk. 16:1-8. While it would be going too far to take Mt. 28:16-20 as an account of the parousia of the Son of Man, yet the appearance is oriented in that direction. For Matthew has merely acknowledged that the parousia is not so imminent as Mark had thought, and has made corresponding adjustments. Thus, while the parallel to Mk. 14:28 is maintained verbatim at Mt. 26:32, the parallel to Mk. 14:62 at Mt. 26:64 is modified by the addition of ἀπ' ἄρτι to the prediction ὄψεσθε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Matthew has thereby transformed the parousia from the strictly future event, which it is in Mk., into an eschatological process beginning right now. This is Matthew's way of dealing with the "delay" of the parousia. Mt. 28:16-20 is, however, precisely a preview of the parousia in its fulness: it exhibits to the faithful the sovereign position, which Jesus already occupies (Mt. 28:18), but which will not be fully revealed until the last day. *συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος* is a common Matthaean phrase (Mt. 13:39, 40, 49; 24:3) with clear judgemental implications. So in Jesus' promise to be with his disciples (Mt. 28:20) the phrase indicates not a blissful indefiniteness, but a critical limit. Meantime the disciples are commissioned to win over "all peoples everywhere", so that they will be on the right side when the judgment comes (vv. 19-20).

The three appearances in Matthew's narrative thus build towards a climax. The preparatory appearances of the angel (Mt. 28:2-7) and of Jesus (Mt. 28:9-10) have served to reconstitute the band of the disciples. In the final appearance (Mt. 28:16-20) Jesus commissions them for their task as missionaries to the whole world.

### Luke

Luke begins his resurrection narrative with the shorter form of Epiphany, despite the fact that he is following Mark, who has the fuller form. The reason for this alteration seems to hinge on the mention of Galilee. Luke had already omitted the pre-passion prediction of a Galilean appearance at Mk. 14:28 (and the parallel Mt. 26:32). That is consistent with the fact that Luke wants to confine appearances of the risen Jesus to the vicinity of Jerusalem. Thus, although Luke is clearly aware of the reference to Galilee at Mk. 16:7, he radically changes its application. Instead of the message, *προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε, καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν* (Mk. 16:7), Luke has: *μνήσθητε ὡς ἐλάλησεν ὑμῖν ἔτι ὢν ἐν τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ, λέγων τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὅτι δεῖ παραδοθῆναι εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων ἀμαρτωλῶν καὶ σταυρωθῆναι καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἀναστῆναι* (Lk. 24:6-7). This altered

message now picks up Jesus' prediction of his passion and resurrection at Lk. 9:22 (cf. Mk. 8:31, Mt. 16:21). In keeping with the alteration the angel's opening words are not the usual *μὴ φοβεῖσθε* (or its equivalent, *μὴ ἐκθαμβεῖσθε*, Mk. 16:6), but the slightly censorious question: *τί ζητεῖτε τὸν ζῶντα μετὰ τῶν νεκρῶν* (Lk. 24:5). They should have known better!

In Lk. the women report the resurrection to the disciples without being commanded to do so, but the disciples do not believe them (Lk. 24:11). The motif of disbelief opens the way for further appearances. First comes the Emmaus appearance to the Two (Lk. 24:13-32). In the passion and resurrection prediction at Lk. 18:31-34,<sup>1</sup> Luke has added both to the previous Lucan prediction (Lk. 9:22) and to the Marcan source at this point (Mk. 10:33) the notion that these events are to take place as the fulfilment of scriptural prophecy. Within the Emmaus appearance the prophecy-fulfilment motif is picked up at Lk. 24:25-27, where Jesus is said to have rebuked the slowness of wit of the Two, and to have expounded at length the scriptural prophecy concerning himself. The same motif is stressed again at the end of this appearance, where the Two reflect on their experience (v. 32). The disciples' slowness of wit allows Luke to fill out the appearance with kerygmatic expansion: introductory device (Jesus' assumed ignorance), vv. 17-18; kerygmatic content, vv. 19-24. Luke's own literary activity is prominent here. The risen Jesus and his disciples become a pedagogical device for the instruction of Luke's readers.

Lk. 24:33-35 is a single appearance, but it readily falls into three parts: the ghostly appearance of Jesus (vv. 33-43); the scriptural basis for the current stage of divinely directed history (vv. 44-49); and Jesus' departure and the disciples' response.<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to account for the first part. Why does Jesus create such a ghostly impression at first (v. 37), when in the previous pericope (Lk. 24:13-32) he had appeared as a normal human being (until his departure)? How is the ghostly impression to be reconciled with the solid flesh-and-bone state which Jesus claims (Lk. 24:39)? Conversely, if the risen Jesus behaves in a physiologically normal way, how is one to account for his mysterious disappearance at Emmaus (Lk. 24:31), and his mysterious arrival and departure at Jerusalem (Lk. 24:36, 51)? Moreover the nature of Jesus' resurrection body does not otherwise seem of interest to Luke. We must suppose an apologetic, anti-docetic concern, which was nevertheless not an issue for the main line of Luke's treatment of the resurrection.

<sup>1</sup> If the phrase, *ἔτι ὧν ἐν τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ* (Lk. 24:6), is taken strictly, it cannot refer to Lk. 18:31-34, since by that stage Jesus was well on his way to Jerusalem according to the Lucan arrangement (almost to Jericho, in view of the following pericope, Lk. 18:35 ff.).

<sup>2</sup> Lk. 24:50-53 is taken as belonging to the gospel, except for the last clause of v. 51 ("and was taken up into heaven") and the phrase at the beginning of v. 52 ("having worshipped him").

The second part (Lk. 24:44-49) of this appearance takes up again the theme of fulfilment of scriptural prophecy. One aim of the theme is to make the resurrection more acceptable. But it is more important that Luke's emphasis on scriptural prophecy sets the resurrection of Jesus in the context of divinely ordered history. Thus in the final Lucan appearance, Jesus' exposition of scripture goes beyond his own passion and resurrection to include the apostolic preaching of repentance and forgiveness in a universal mission beginning from Jerusalem (Lk. 24:27). This aspect of the appearance corresponds closely to the Commission of Mt. 28:16-20. But there are radical differences. In the Matthaean appearance there is both a finality in relation to what has gone before and a sense of imminence in the mention of the "end of the age". Luke, on the other hand, only indicates that there will be an apostolic commissioning (Lk. 24:49), without recording it in his gospel. And for Luke the commissioning does not include Jesus' promise to be with his disciples in their teaching ministry until the end comes. Instead Jesus' earthly work, now complete, gives way to a new era of the Spirit and the church.<sup>1</sup> The prophecy-fulfilment motif in the Lucan resurrection appearances is intended to bring the disciples, and Luke's readers, to understand that, while Jesus' work is now completed and confirmed, there remains the mission of the church, in which the disciples, empowered by the Spirit, must play their part.

### *John*

In Jn. 20:1-18 there are spliced together an empty tomb story involving the two disciples, which is now represented in vv. 3-10, and an appearance to Mary Magdalene, which is now represented in vv. 1 and 11-18, v. 2 being an editorial joint. The result of this literary workmanship is an ascending movement: the empty tomb is a mere puzzle to Mary (vv. 1-2); but the grave cloths lead to faith for the Beloved Disciple (v. 8); the angels challenge Mary's sorrow (v. 13); and the appearance of Jesus himself confirms his resurrection (vv. 15-16). Then follows the gift of the Spirit and the apostolic commission (vv. 19-23). According to a Matthaean or Lucan pattern, this should be the climax of the resurrection appearances and of the gospel. But John now adds the story of Thomas. The purpose of the story is not to prove the real bodily resurrection of Jesus, a tendency perceptible in Lk. 24:36-43. Any correspondence with Lk. exists rather in relation to Luke's limitation of the resurrection appearances to a short period. According to John the gap between the later church and Jesus is bridged not by resurrection appearances but by faith. The appearance to Thomas is thus scarcely on a level with the other Johannine appearances. It is rather a piece of theological apologetic, conveyed by means of an

<sup>1</sup> Ac. 1:4-5 and 2:38-39 identify "the promise of my Father" (Lk. 24:49) as the gift of the Spirit; cf. Ac. 1:8; 2:17 (quoting Jl. 2:28); 2:33; 5:32.



appearance, but which precisely limits the function and value of such appearances.

Jn. 21 is an appendix from a different hand. There are problems of internal construction, which suggest the combination of separate strands of tradition concerning a miraculous catch of fish, an appearance to Peter, and a meal at which the risen Jesus officiates. Particularly vv. 1-14 are marked off as appearance by the editorial terminology: *μετὰ ταῦτα ἐφανερώσεν ἑαυτὸν πάλιν Ἰησοῦς τοῖς μαθηταῖς . . . ἐφανερώσεν δὲ οὕτως* (v. 1); *τοῦτο ἤδη τρίτον ἐφανερώθη Ἰησοῦς τοῖς μαθηταῖς ἐγερθεὶς ἐκ νεκρῶν* (v. 14). Such language, especially *πάλιν* (v. 1) and *ἤδη τρίτον* (v. 14), shows that appearances are thought of as proofs of the resurrection, and value is assigned to the mere number of appearances. However this appearance is mainly a vehicle for the apologetic motifs of the restoration of Peter and his apostolic authority both in general and especially in relation to the Beloved Disciple.

### *Apocryphal Writings*

The appearance in GH must have had as a major function the proof of the resurrection. This is indicated by the fact that the account is clearly marked at the beginning as an appearance,<sup>1</sup> by the wording of James' vow,<sup>2</sup> and by Jesus' words releasing him from it,<sup>3</sup> as by the very notion of a vow of abstinence.<sup>4</sup>

The mention of Jesus' contact with the priest's servant in GH is a hint that in that gospel the "enemies" were among the first witnesses of the resurrection. Such a motif is fully developed in GP, where the resurrection takes place before the Roman soldiers and the Jews. The aim is to produce incontrovertible testimony in favour of the resurrection. For the Roman authorities are depicted as notably fair and impartial throughout GP, just as the Jewish authorities are hostile. When both these sources admit the resurrection, who can deny it? In contrast to an Epiphany proper, the guards register no fear at these astounding events, but calmly take note of what happens. If the Jewish observers<sup>5</sup> are very worried (*ἀγωνιῶντες μεγάλως*, GP 45), that is not the reaction of a believer granted an

<sup>1</sup> *iiit ad Iacobum et apparuit ei.*

<sup>2</sup> *donec uideret eum resurgentem a dormientibus.*

<sup>3</sup> *quia resurrexit filius hominis a dormientibus.*

<sup>4</sup> Since the James fragment begins with the words, *dominus autem cum dedisset sindonem seruo sacerdotis*, it is possible that the preceding pericope in GH also functioned as a proof of the resurrection. Of course the presence of Jesus himself should be enough to carry conviction. But, as with James there was the token of the bread, so with the priest's servant there is the linen cloth.

<sup>5</sup> That *οἱ περὶ τὸν κεντυρίωνα* (GP 45) are not the *στρατιῶται* (GP 35, 38) but the *πρεσβύτεροι* (*παρῆσαν γὰρ καὶ αὐτοὶ φυλάσσοντες*) (GP 38), is shown by Pilate's response to their report: *ἐγὼ καθαρῶν τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ ὑμῖν δὲ τοῦτο ἔδοξεν* (GP 46).

epiphany, but the result of rational reflection on the implications of the scene: ἀληθῶς υἱὸς ἦν θεοῦ (GP 45).

In the next pericope (the women's visit to the tomb, GP 50-57), the fear of the Jews (50, 52, 54) and the women's purpose in going to the tomb (rites and lamentation for the dead, 50, 52, 53, 54) are peculiar to GP. Yet these motifs yield no result in what follows. The angel informs the women of the resurrection, draws attention to the absence of the body, and announces the departure of Jesus for his place of origin, which, in view of the preceding pericope, means heaven. Then the women flee in fear. Thus GP 50-57 does not carry the action any further, but merely creates suspense.<sup>1</sup> This interpretation is supported by the condition with which the angel prefaces his invitation to inspect the place where the body had lain: εἰ δὲ μὴ πιστεύετε (GP 56; not in Synoptics). Thus doubt is thrown on the women's credulity. This motif then ties in with the visible occurrence of the resurrection before impartial and hostile witnesses: what even the followers of Jesus find hard to believe, really did happen!

The angel's message lacks any charge to tell the disciples that Jesus will appear to them in Galilee, or even that he is risen. Nevertheless, in the following pericope, the disciples do return to Galilee; and the scene is set for an appearance, when the manuscript breaks off (GP 58-60). GP has its own means of getting the disciples to the new location: they simply return home at the end of the festival of unleavened bread. Thus if the disciples are to be convinced of the resurrection, it will not be because of the empty tomb or the angel's announcement to the women. The similarity of GP 58-60 to Jn 21:1 ff. tempts one to postulate a parallel appearance, in which Peter would now predominate without any competition from the Beloved Disciple. But detailed speculation is idle. Even the significance of a concluding apostolic commission would be modified by the structure of GP, where the Romans and the Jews have already seen the light. The arrangement of the appearances in GP is thus drastically different from that of the canonical gospels. For GP begins with what in Mt., Lk. or Jn. could only be the envisaged result of a Christian mission not recorded in the gospels themselves: the conversion of the Gentiles and of the unbelieving Jews.

The Pilate literature in general exhibits a developed form of the desire, evident in GP, to establish the certainty of the resurrection by appeal to the most impartial or even hostile witnesses. In GN, which draws on the earlier Pilate literature, the unimpeachable evidence of the Roman investigations is played off against the consistently stubborn unbelief of the Jewish authorities. Because of this approach the appearances are never

<sup>1</sup> This motif occurs briefly at Lk. 24:3-4, where the women, failing to find the body of Jesus, are in a state of ἀπορεῖσθαι; and in Jn. 20:2, 11-15, where Mary's discovery of the empty tomb causes her puzzlement and tears. In GP the angel's message has a corresponding effect.

related in simple narrative but are always the subject of a report by witnesses. So the tomb guards report to the "synagogue" the appearance of the angel to the women, largely according to Mt. 28:1-8. Similarly a priest, a teacher and a Levite report from Galilee an apostolic commission in the words of Mk. 16:15-18. GN provides a new setting for the Marcan commission. Mk. 16:14 gives no specification of place, but has the Eleven reclining (at table) - a detail which is reminiscent of Lk. 24:34, and therefore suggests Jerusalem. GN has the disciples sitting on a mountain in Galilee. That is an adjustment to Mt. 28:16. But GN has not used the Matthaean commission, perhaps only because Mark gives a more detailed description of what the mission will involve. At any rate, by taking these appearances out of their original context and making them the subject of a second-hand report, GN has transformed their function. Their purpose is now generalized, so that regardless of their own peculiarities of form and content, they are merely proofs of the resurrection offered by reliable witnesses to the Jewish authorities. The tendency is thus exactly opposite to that of Jn. 20:24-29.

The appearance to Joseph of Arimathea (GN 15:6) makes no use of canonical material. It seeks to establish the reality of Jesus' bodily resurrection and to show that it really is Jesus and not someone else. The main purpose, however, from the point of view of the Jewish interrogation, is the proof that the resurrection really did happen. There is no attempt to plumb the meaning of the resurrection; it is a brute fact which is the fulcrum for a contest over its truth or falsity.

In Ep. Ap. the women's observation of the empty tomb has no apparent effect on them, since their mourning and weeping is not a response to the absence of the body (as in Jn. 20:13), but a continuation of their previously reported response to the passion (Ep. Ap. 9). The initial function of Jesus' appearance is as a general assurance to the women that he is indeed risen: "Do not weep; I am he whom you seek" (Ep. Ap. 10). To this assurance is immediately added the command that one of the women should pass on the news to the disciples. The elaboration of this motif plays up the disbelief of the disciples: repeated visits of the women do not convince them. The theme of disbelief is apologetic: yes, it is hard to believe that Jesus rose from the dead; even the disciples did not believe it at first; (but it is true!) Even Jesus' own presence (Ep. Ap. 11) does not immediately convince the disciples. In proving his resurrection, Jesus interweaves the two aspects found separately in GN 15:6: it is Jesus and not a ghost; it is Jesus and not somebody else. Finally (Ep. Ap. 12) the disciples are convinced that it is really Jesus, truly risen, in the flesh.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> At this point Jesus commences the teaching section, which aligns Ep. Ap. with the gnostic gospel form. Within this section Ep. Ap. retains one further common function of appearances: the apostolic commission. This occurs at several points, either in the form of a command by Jesus (Ep. Ap. 19, 30, 41, 46; cf. 31), or in the form of a spontaneous undertaking by the disciples (Ep. Ap. 40).

### III *Conclusion*

In conclusion, it is possible to make a distinction between the canonical and the apocryphal appearances. The form of the canonical resurrection appearances gives primary emphasis to the heavenly message which they convey. The function of the appearances depends on the content of the message, and on the way in which the appearances fit into the structure of the resurrection narrative as a whole in each gospel.

Among the canonical additions, the longer ending of Mark attempts to assimilate Mark to the other canonical gospels, with prime emphasis on the missionary motif; Jn. 21 is mainly the vehicle of apologetic concerning apostolic authority. As for the canonical gospels in their original form, since each has its own particular theological emphasis, the resurrection appearances are in each case subordinated to a wider theology of history in which Jesus' ministry, passion and resurrection play a part. Neither the Christophanies nor the angelophanies are intended to prove the resurrection. In the Marcan and Matthaean empty tomb pericopes, the angel's announcement makes clear that the resurrection itself is a mere preliminary to the further eschatological action of Jesus. Mark ends with that ominous promise. Matthew confirms the angelic pronouncement by an ancillary appearance of Jesus himself, and then moves on to the main appearance of Jesus, which is both a mission charge and a proleptic manifestation of the exalted Son of Man. In the Lucan empty tomb pericope the angel announces not just the fact of the resurrection, but the necessity of the resurrection in keeping with Jesus' earlier prediction. This theme is developed in the subsequent appearances of Jesus himself. Jesus brings home to the disciples not the mere fact of his resurrection, but its necessary place in the order of history ordained by God. Indeed the function of the resurrection appearances in Luke is to prevent the disciples from looking backwards at the resurrection itself, and to require them to look forward to the coming of the Holy Spirit and the part which they themselves must now play in God's history.

John has attempted to interpret the resurrection in more clearly defined stages. He presents in order the empty tomb as theologically mute (Mary); the grave cloths as a sign to faith (Beloved Disciple); an appearance which takes the puzzlement and distress out of the empty tomb and focuses on the positive aspect of the risen Jesus (for Mary); an apostolic commission to the assembled disciples; and a final blessing on the individual believer. Here are two distinctive features: John does in a sense attempt to prove the resurrection (Beloved Disciple at the tomb, and appearance to Mary); and he is unwilling to end with the apostolic commission. There is probably a connexion between these two features. For "proving the resurrection by appearances" cannot mean the same for John as it would for the Synoptics. In the Synoptics, Jesus predicts his own resurrection in

the body of the gospels, though the disciples do not understand what he is talking about. In John, Jesus already in the body of the gospel interprets the meaning of the resurrection as – himself! – “I am the resurrection and the life” (Jn. 11:25). So already resurrection has been de-eschatologized and interpreted in terms of the individual’s relation in faith to Jesus. This may help to explain why John ends not with the apostolic commission but with an appearance which seeks out an individual and demands and receives his faith. The retention of the apostolic commission shows that for John there still is a Christian missionary commission. But it does not have the same eschatological focus as in the Synoptics. In the Synoptics, the Christian church is a community of eschatological prophets; in John it is a group of Christian existentialists.

The apocryphal material has a common emphasis on the attempt to prove the resurrection. This is particularly clear in the tribunal atmosphere of GN, and in relation to the disbelief motif in Ep. Ap. GH too seems to have proof of the resurrection as its major concern. And in GP the visible resurrection before the non-Christian witnesses has the aim of establishing the resurrection beyond all doubt.

This apocryphal material thus exhibits two striking and contradictory features: it is credally correct, and theologically dead. It certainly proclaims the passion and resurrection of Jesus, and thus correctly continues the apostolic preaching. But it is so concerned for the correctness of its kerygma, that it has lost the concern for its meaning. In defending the truth of the fact that Jesus really did rise from the dead, this literature has lost sight of what it was about Jesus that made his earliest followers believe in his resurrection in the first place – which has been preserved in the unity and diversity of the canonical gospels.