Research Report

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this is my own and personal work, except where the word(s) or publications of others have been acknowledged by means of accepted reference techniques.

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The Research Report
Pieter Craffert and Michael R. Licona’s viewpoints
on Jesus’ bodily resurrection

Introduction

Different scholars seem to have a different take on whether or not Jesus was raised bodily from the dead. As it will be argued the diversity is very dependent on the scholar’s view of the biblical text and of what perspective the respective scholars approach the events of the New Testament. Some scholars argue that the biblical text in the Gospels are very much historically accurate such as Darrel Bock, others claim that the figure of Jesus was never that historical, such as Robert Price. Yet, some scholars argue that the disciples of Jesus suffered from cognitive dissonances or hallucinations. This lead the disciples to believe that their deepest longings and beliefs in what Jesus had foretold had come true, namely his resurrection, and in the aftermath of his death they could not tell fantasy from reality, but was lead to believe that it really happened. This theory became widespread in the 1950s with Leon Festinger as a pioneer, but other has continued working on this theory. Other scholars argue for a cultural sensitive reading of the sources which implies that the texts should be seen as referring to real experience, though without claiming that they happened in time-space and without elevating them to necessarily be objective events, this argument is presented by Pieter Craffert. Yet again, some scholars claim that their historical theory of the event of Jesus’ resurrection is addressed with the utmost reasonable and accepted historical approach in research, as by Michael R. Licona.

Today there is an eagerness in New Testament scholarship to work historically when dealing with the historical Jesus research. However, historical Jesus research scholars has been highly criticized for not being historical when conducting historiographical research of the data, but rather been biased either with theological or with critical/anti-theistic agendas and presuppositions either made by conservative or critical scholars. The question that might occur is what type of historiographical framework is more suitable for the conduction of research in this field? Traditionally re-

2 Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God., 697.
3 such as Goulders (see a brief description of Goulder’s view in Licona, The Resurrection of the Son of God, 479–91.) Also also in newer, Skandinavian scholarship is this view represented. Per Bilde also concludes that the disciples suffered from cognitive dissonance (see Bilde, Den historiske Jesus, 256–57.)
4 Craffert, “Caretakers, Critics, and Comparativists”, 112.
5 Craffert, 112–13.
search in this field has mainly been conducted with a historiographical approach but a proposition for an interdisciplinary mode of historiography which for example combines both social-sciences and historical research is progressing.  

With this in mind I wish to present two different viewpoints, by both Pieter Craffert and Michael R. Licona who conducts historical work on the issue of Jesus’ resurrection in two different ways, in order to establish what differences and similarities they might have, how they address the issue and what methodological framework they work by.

I: Pieter Craffert’s viewpoint

Jesus’ resurrection in the historical Jesus research:

Pieter Craffert draws the attention to the problematic dichotomy in the ongoing debate about Jesus’ resurrection namely that it is trapped between fact and fiction. The main question debated between NT scholars is whether or not Jesus’ resurrection was an actual event in history. Did the followers of Jesus piously fabricate the event or was Jesus physically raised from the dead? Or even more appropriate as Craffert puts it: was it real seeing or merely hallucinations or delusions? However, Craffert argues: “Both sides treat the text as if they talk about resurrection as a historical event in time-space that can be verified (affirmed or rejected) by means of the “evidence” and understand the question of historicity as a validation of such an event.”  

Thereby said, that the choice of interpretation also leads to a certain way of inserting the question or a specific way of understanding what the texts are about.

The neuroanthropological perspective - an alternative way of interpreting the data

Craffert offers a different way of interpreting the data, a social-scientific approach with a postmodernist view of history. He presents it as an experiment in neuroanthropology. Neuroanthropology is a field of research that together with cultural neuroscience studies the interrelationship between culture, mind and brain. Briefly summarized as Craffert points out: “… a neuroanthropological reading does not offer an alternative interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection but suggests that the data point towards a different kind of cultural event.” Therefore, the neuroanthropological perspective

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6 Craffert, 111.
10 Craffert, 3.
11 Craffert, 2.
is not as concerned with the event from a time-space perspective or if it actually happened but it rather begins by posing the question: what did really happen/what event does the data speak of? Furthermore, Craffert’s approach

“… strives to move beyond modernism, that is, tries to avoid the application of modernist criteria of what is real, to all other people and stories. It strives to be post-modernist in that it accepts that there is more than one cultural system or view of reality…. In fact, it radically takes seriously the insight that reality is a systems phenomenon. Within this perspective, the elements of the stories lose their mysterious or supernatural character or their exotic flavour when it is realised that they properly belong in a different cultural system. They become natural human phenomena in specific cultural systems which can be appreciated as such. Cross-cultural research does this to all such stories in different cultural systems.”

This approach is then concerned about experiences that are culturally approved and has their credibility in terms of the insiders constituted consensual reality. Also, it seeks to examine and explain these experiences by comparison of similar and related phenomena.

Multiple cultural realities

As in the abovementioned quote a feature of the neuroanthropological perspective is that it accepts and acknowledges multiple cultural realities. This is based on the understanding that reality not only consists of material objects but also intentional object and beliefs. The latter are either cultural categories or subject- and cultural dependent things, as for example: “… marriage, money and theft, but also ghosts, demons, spirits and gods.”. And they only exist due to the constitutive rule system that has validated their existence. They exist in every culture and can be expressed through natural language, but they cannot necessarily be seen. A second aspect is that the object world is for all people subject dependent. As Craffert argues: “According to this view reality is not ‘out there’ simply to be discovered but is partly subject dependent. Thus, what human beings take as reality is partly the product of their own making.”.

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12 Craffert, “Caretakers, Critics, and Comparativists”, 117.
15 Craffert, 4.
16 Craffert, 5.
17 Craffert P.F, “Jesus’ Resurrection in a Social-Scientific Perspective”, 134.
18 Craffert, “Did Jesus Rise Bodily From the Dead?”, 138.
20 Craffert, “Did Jesus Rise Bodily From the Dead?”, 136.
Polyphasic consciousness

Most people in the world experience and approve polyphasic consciousness (such as dreams or visions)° and regard it as real. 21 Through the cycle of meaning ("people experience the entities they believe in and believe in the entities that they experience") this reality is approved. 22 Therefore, it is difficult to argue against people who experience this since it is as real to them as monophasic reality is as real to Western people. 23

However, the point is not about how accurate the perceptual process is, but rather how real it makes the world appear. Consequently, this is why not many people question the reality of their worldview. Yet, Cultural realities should be discussed with respect for the differences, since presumably not all working model of the world are good and beneficial. 24

Vision, visions and conscious reality

There is amongst scholars a significant agreement and shared interpretive framework on the post-mortem appearances of Jesus or the seeing of Jesus, in the studies of Jesus’ resurrection:

“… it maintains that seeing refers either to objective visual perception or to hallucinations (also referred to as subjective visions). For critical scholars hallucinations are illusions or delusions and therefore a “baseless” ground for securing the resurrection… For conservative scholars visions as hallucinations would certainly not be sufficient to ground the historicity of the resurrection and therefore, the visionary accounts in the gospels must have been akin to normal seeing.” 25

However, there are in neuroanthropological research three interrelated (incorrectly) assumptions that characterize these positions, that is: “… the natural understanding of vision, the notion that visions are merely hallucinations, and, thirdly, a (Western) common sense dichotomy between vision and hallucination. In the neuroanthropological perspective the simple antithesis of seeing (vision) and hallucination (vision) has no validity and it is not necessarily hallucinations when operating with visual perceptions without external stimuli. Consequently, Craffert concludes: “Therefore, because of the nature of human perceptual processes even convincing claims about visual percep-

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22 Craffert, 5.
23 Craffert, 5–6.
24 Craffert, 6.
tions are no conclusive proof of any particular external reality.”. 27 Thereby said, it is not necessarily an ontologically objective reality.

**Going beyond our natural way of thinking about vision (seeing)**

Through the work of neurosciences we now know that the way the brain functions and how it constructs reality is in a very complex way. Information is processed from the senses: “The ability of the brain to fill in gaps, emotional attachment, prior knowledge and beliefs as well as peer-group confirmation are all essential or play a role for the electrochemical impulses to be turned into visual perception and consciousness.”. 28 Thus, we do not see the world as it is naturally. While this is confirmed by the phenomenon of optical illusion, this phenomenon also explains that the brain can create phantom images from optical illusion:

“It also shows that the brain recognizes patterns where they are not, turns ambiguous shapes into recognizable forms, constructs from a few elements it sees a complete image and constantly imposes a perceptual bias onto ambiguous objects... it creates coherent perceptions of the world by putting together information in ways that are consistent with prior experiences and memories.”. 29

Furthermore, our awareness is always influenced by prior beliefs and convictions, and this together with the overload of information the result is the brains selection of the more important information and the weeding out of the rest. 30 Consequently, you are more likely to believe in demons and ghosts, when you live in a community that does so. For when the community supports that cultural view you are more likely to stumble upon elements that support that reality. 31

Consequently, what follows is believing is seeing as much as seeing is believing. However, as Craffert points out, visual consciousness is also independent of external stimuli. 32

**Visual perception without external stimuli**

Human beings can have the same experiences as mentioned above only without external stimuli; but as the result of other sources or settings: “… artificial electrical stimulation, by means of alternate...”.

27 Craffert, 7–8.
28 Craffert, 9.
29 Craffert, 10.
30 Craffert, 10.
31 Craffert, 10–11.
32 Craffert, 11.
states of consciousness (ASCs), stress or trauma as a result from psychotic illness or brain injuries.”.  

All kinds of sensory perceptions can be produced when the brain is stimulated by means of an electrode. For example and out-of-body experience or OBE will result from when the temporal lobe (right parietal cortex) receives stimulation with an electrode. Furthermore, we know through brain scan that the human brain detects visions and normal seeing in the same area of the brain. As a result visions can seem just as real as ordinary visions.  

Hallucinations: illusionary sense perception from injury or illness  
The definition of hallucination is by psychologists and psychiatrists defined as illusionary sense perception and which can be the result of psychotic illness or brain injuries. Hallucinations and delusions can derive as a resulted feature under these injuries and illnesses. OBEs are an example of that. However, mystical and religious experiences resulted from ASCs should simply not be put in a single categorization together with associated hallucinations, schizophrenia for example, since the two bear great differences.  

The noteworthy difference is that while continuous distress and poor quality of life often accompanies the psychiatric patient who experience hallucinations the experiences that occurs in religious context are quite the opposite - extremely meaningful and enriching. The outcome and status of these two is simply not the same.  

As Craffert argues: “There are more good reasons why visions are not necessarily pathological or hallucinations.”.  

The content of the hallucinations are reported to be delusional, according to Goodman – what is reported does simply not correspond to anything real. However, visions are in polyphasic settings culturally approved ASCs and not hallucinations. Craffert contends that it is the intersubjective certification of a community that is the supreme authority of these phenomena. Therefore, the culture affirms or negate whether or not an experience has the basis for contributing knowledge, and not the visual perception itself since there is no guarantee that is exist outside the brain.  

The resurrection of a Sisala drummer  

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33 Craffert, 11.  
34 Craffert, 11.  
35 Craffert, 12.  
36 Craffert, 13.  
37 Craffert, 13.  
38 Craffert, 13.
Bruce Grindal’s was present close to midnight at a funeral ceremony for a diseased drummer who was a powerful man in his community – for that reason members of the community arrived quickly and the funeral and burial ceremony had to take place all at the same time. This was preceded by three days for Grindal’s attendance in the ceremony, in which he as an anthropologist where present, because of his study on the Sisala clan of Ghana. He concluded his study with these words: “on the night of 23 October 1967, I witnessed the raising of the dead.”.  

Grindal describes what he saw:

“The corpse, shaken by spasm, then rose to its feet, spinning and dancing in a frenzy. As I watched, convulsions in the pit of my stomach tied not only to my eyes but also my whole being into this vortex of power. It seemed that the very floor and walls of the compound had come to life, radiating light and power, drawing the dancers in one direction and then another. Then a most wonderful thing happened. The talking drums on the roof of the dead man’s house began to glow with a light so strong that it drew the dancers to the rooftop. The corpse picked up the drumsticks and began to play.”. 

Grindal experienced what the other members of the Sisala clan experience. However, some heard the drummer play and other did not. But there was no question; both the Sisala and Grindal were convinced that the drummer was raised from dead. However, this is no surprise for the Sisala clan since divination is normal and natural for them as it is part of their funeral rituals, and it is known in stories among them. But for Grindal it did not happen without good reason. Grindal had had formal entry into the clan and its practice and culture and was inaugurated and was attended by special local conditions, therefore “Grindal could enter the consensual reality of the Sisala through a long process of on-site learning.”.  

Although, there is no simple answer to what really happened, Grindal supplies with two answers: He joined the consensual reality of the Sisala clan through a very personally experience that changes his self-image. In Grindal’s own words he describes it as: “My heart changed. I was no longer content to be a polite, middle-class American anthropologist. Instead I wished to let my upbringing fall like a veil, so that I could share the secrets of those men who divine over the dead.”. 

Along with this, Grindal experienced an ASC, as was expressed in the beginning of his study. For statement Grindal clarifies: “It does not now seem so strange that I witness the ancestor dance, for I
had prepared for it. What I experienced, I now believe, was a synesthetic integration of my senses.”

The explanation for the consensual reality of the Sisala clan and the experiences that validates their belief and vice versa is given by Grindal’s analysis of the data. Grindal’s involvement in their consensual reality is together with the explanatory power of ASCs given as another way of interpreting the data. The same reality then affirms the experience by three explanations: “the belief of the locals, his engagement with their consensual reality and the explanation of it as an ASC.”

Furthermore, the ASC was both a real and non-objective event. However, according to Grindal to understand death divination one must depart from “the canons of empirical research that limits reality to what is verifiable through the consensual validation of rational observers” and secondly “assume that reality is relative to one’s consciousness of it.”

Craffert points to the non-existing distinction of the ‘events’ that took place in time-space and the ASC Grindal experienced: “Within what he describes as a synesthetic integration of his senses there are no distinction between “events” that took place in time-space and those that were in his interpretation ASCs.” In conclusion Craffert argues: “Perhaps most important, from a neuroanthropological point of view, is to realise that within such an experience there is no distinction between sensory perception and visual consciousness. The reality created by the experience is a mind-culture unity that is affirmed or rejected by society.” Therefore, the event or the ASC is not a ‘fact’ that can be validated or not by scholarly analysis, but it is only understood through the local interpretation of the data.

**Resurrection appearances of Jesus of Nazareth**

Saul of Tarsus (later known as Paul) was on his way to Damascus round about 30 CE to pursue his life’s aim and persecute the followers of Jesus, as Jesus abruptly appeared to him. Three years before this incident the some disciples of Jesus had made the same claim, namely to have seen Jesus after his death. While as Craffert point out, there is no claim from any text that the first followers had witnessed Jesus’ resurrection, instead the evidence proposes that the first disciples were certain about seeing Jesus or that he appeared to them after his death, that is:

“At least twelve individuals or groups of people are credited in the canonical texts with “having seen Jesus”, or, of “having had visions of Jesus”. In addition to his own visionary experience, Paul mentions in 1 Corinthi-
ans 15 appearances to Cephas (:5) and James (:6), the twelve (:5) and the apostles (:7) and to five hundred brothers (:6). When defending Jesus’ resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul is convinced about it because of these (visionary) experiences.”.  

The account of the empty tomb could not have been the adequate evidence for the appearing of Jesus, since the Gospels themselves refute that proposition; the body could have been stolen or removed. The question that remains for Craffert is then: what are the data evidence for?

**Belief based on visionary experience**

The first disciples of Jesus truly believed that Jesus was bodily raised from the dead, because of their visionary experience, although both Paul and disciples were not accompanied by such visionary experiences in their daily lives, and such resurrection appearances were neither normal nor natural (contrary to the Sisala Clan). We can also read about Paul’s visionary experience in Paul’s own and Luke’s accounts (Acts 9.14 and 22) adjacent to the before mentioned evidence. The terms neuroanthropological perspective offers for Paul’s conversion experience on the way to Damascus will be ecstatic trance or ASC. But the meaning is not merely in the single words.”.  

When Paul reports about the visionary experience (1 Cor 15) it seems clear from a neuroanthropological perspective that the visionary experiences established justifiable and valid evidence for Jesus’ resurrection. We will not go through the visionary experiences in detail due to lack of space (for Craffert’s detailed analysis se the footnote), however, what is of importance is that all the Gospels “… contains and agree on the fact that Jesus appeared to his first followers while John (21-1) explicitly states that Jesus revealed himself.”.  

What the neuroanthropological perspective suggests is that as Jesus revealed himself to the first disciples and Paul, the visions were reality creating events and became the supplement for the basis of their belief in Jesus’ resurrection. For people living in the ancient Mediterranean world, it was normal to experience such visions and dreams and they understood them as being real and literal events, since they lived in a polyphasic culture. The vision the disciples had of Jesus after his death belong to such phenomena. The event does not require Jesus’ corpse to transform for the disciples to believe when the interpretation of the postresurrection appearances is given such an expla-
nation, since in the visionary experience of seeing Jesus the disciples believed what they were experiencing was reality.55

Belief in a resurrected Jesus
Not all believed in Jesus’ resurrection through what would have been a visionary experience. Probably none other than the first disciple and Paul, had that privilege. But as Paul says, it is the preaching or proclaiming of the Gospel that is the basis for the belief in Jesus’ resurrection (15.3 and 11). The church history confirms this. The Church’s belief and confession has been transmitted through preaching and teaching. And therefore all Christians from practically the past two centuries believed in the literal bodily resurrection not because it had been proven but because it was believed.56 Craffert makes his point clear: “People do not believe Jesus’ resurrection to be real because it is historical but they believe it is historical because it is real to them. In this sense Jesus’ resurrection is beyond historical proof, not because, as Bock… says, it was a “divine act”, but because it is a belief or a consensual reality.”.57

Visions and cultural context
The context of the visionary experiences of Jesus’ resurrection and the claims about the same happened at particular place to a particular people that based on ASCs had different cultural believes and practices that anticipated and presumed the same ideas about human beings: they believed in supernatural elements such as demons, evil spirits and ancestral spirits. Remarkably many reports in the Gospels demonstrate possessions and resurrection experiences are made possible through the cultural complexity. The cultural complex contains at least three elements: “… the astronomical complex, afterlife beliefs and a dualistic notion of the human being, body and self and all three of these were closely associated with certain ASCs.”. The transfiguration scene and the reports about Jesus walking on water (for detailed discussion see footnote)58 both includes the disciples and are examples of such ASCs experiences, however they were part of a quite larger pattern.59

The astronomical complex is the first component of this larger pattern, and it makes reference to: “… the whole set of ideas that divine beings, celestial bodies and deceased ancestors were

57 Craffert, 21.
58 Craffert, Life of a Galilean Shaman, 214–27.
composed of the same substance and that some human beings can be turned into celestial bodies or angels (for a detailed description see footnote).  

The afterlife notion is the second component of the larger pattern. It makes reference to: “Among notions of astral transformation and sleeping with the ancestors, resurrection from the dead developed in Second Temple Judaism as one pathway for the Israelite deceased.”. That is to say, it became an agreeable understanding for life after death at that time. In addition: “It is no coincidence that the idea of bodily resurrection was first expressed in Israelite religious documents in Daniel 12 as given by a revelation, since ASC experiences are closely associated with such beliefs.”.  

The last component of the larger pattern is that such experiences are very much linked to the cultural notion about the human body. Ideas about the afterlife can only exist if there are particular notion about either the human body or the human being, such as for example a dualistic notion. Craffert continually argues on the subject:

“The idea that the self can exist independently from the body is a prerequisite for any kind of afterlife existence and therefore, in the Israelite tradition (as in many other) afterlife beliefs are closely connected to a variety of ASC experiences. Out-of-body experiences (OBEs) such as travelling experiences, visionary experiences of deceased ancestors (seeing or encountering the deceased) as well as near death experiences (NDEs) are all connected to the notion of the afterlife and historically linked to the development of such ideas.”.  

The cultural belief of the options of the afterlife’s potentialities for the human body improved these visionary experiences. To the point, because of the cycle of meaning these were not independent beliefs. The belief of Jesus’ resurrection took place in a context were all these elements were present.  

The idea of an single resurrection that could happen not earlier than at the edge of time was a new idea, however, is was accredited to a very distinct social individual: “Jesus is presented as a figure who on all accounts started his public life based on a ASC experience and who, according to the reports, together with his followers haven often experienced ASCs.”. Jesus probably identified himself as the son of man, which he presumably also was identified as by others. The term Son of man is closely related with human beings that have experienced heavenly

62 Craffert, 23.
63 Craffert, 23.
64 Craffert, 23.
65 Craffert, 23.
66 Craffert, 23.
journeys. Finally, claim of a bodily resurrection of any human being at no particular place did not happen. It was a particular person, Jesus of Nazareth and it was witnessed by his disciples in a context that had certain cultural beliefs and experiences.

Pieter Craffert’s conclusion

An alternative interpretive framework is given when working from a neuroanthropological point of view. Craffert concludes that there are at least two ways in which the data about the resurrection appearances can be settled in: “By undermining our natural way of looking at vision and by supporting a picture on polyphasic cultures within the world of multiple cultural realities. In that way it provides a framework for appreciating visionary experiences as potential source for creating cultural reality.” 67

Experiences and events as those mentioned above are in the neuroanthropological perspective settled in a comparative setting where both the mind, culture and the brain are dimensions that play a significant role. 68 Visions do lead to the creation of consensual reality within the cycle of meaning of polyphasic cultures. And because human beings create their own reality by means of the interconnectedness of mind/brain, culture and environment, it is then reasonable to presume that the same applies to those of human beings that are convinced of death divination and bodily resurrections. As Craffert argues: “As for Grinadal and for Paul and the first disciples such visionary (synesthetic) experiences could very well have served as basis for a firm belief in death divination or that Jesus was raised bodily from the dead.” 69

As Craffert initiated, then the question in the neuroanthropological perspective no longer as in the current debate: was it fact or fiction, but it upholds an alternative interpretation: “Like Grinadal who as an anthropologist has appreciation for the cultural view and consensual reality of the Sisala people, the cultural reality of Jesus’ resurrection can be endorsed without claiming it happened in time-space. Like death divination among the Sisala we can and should respect their cultural reality for what it was but it is not necessary to elevate it to an objective event.” 70

The ‘evidence’ is then the visionary perceptions and encountering of Jesus’ bodily resurrection by at least the first disciples and Paul. And based on them within the logic and belief of that time Jesus was literally, bodily and physically resurrected and the event was real. As Craffert express it: “… he

67 Craffert, 24.
68 Craffert, 24.
69 Craffert, 24.
70 Craffert, 24.
was bodily and physically resurrected in a truly first-century Israelite culturally conceptualized body based on experiences and beliefs appropriate to them.” ⁷¹

II: Michael R. Licona viewpoint

Michael Licona, in contrast to Pieter Craffert, represents the more evangelical contribution of research in the debate on the subject of Jesus’ resurrection. He deals with the question of the resurrection of Jesus from a historical perspective. He has contributed to the subject by means of different approaches and methods. The first one is called “The minimal facts approach”. ⁷²


In Licona’s makes use of the so-called “minimal facts approach” on presenting the evidence of Jesus’ resurrection, which as he states: “builds the case using facts with a high degree of certainty. This approach only considers data that can meet the two criteria ⁷³: 1) The data are strongly evidenced. 2) The data are granted by virtually all scholars on the subject, even the skeptical ones.

The 4 + (1) facts

As Licona only uses data that is strongly evidenced historically and which nearly all scholars regards as reliable facts, they may not seem as much, but for his purpose in The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus they are adequate, since he want to build a strong case, yet simple case on just a few facts, but probably not without concerns. The four facts ⁷⁴ that Licona and his fellow scholar Habermas presents are as follows ⁷⁵: The first fact: Jesus died by crucifixion, the second fact: Jesus’ disciples believed that he rose and appeared to them, the third fact: The church persecutor Paul was suddenly changed, the fourth fact: The skeptic James, brother of Jesus, was suddenly changed.

The first fact: Jesus died by crucifixion

One of the executonal forms employed by the Roman was crucifixion. It was violently used against slaves, lower class, soldiers and rebels as punishment. Josephus report of the Romans great hatred against Jews, and how they crucified many and Cicero calls crucifixion a horrendous torture. Tac-

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⁷¹ Craffert, 24.
⁷⁴ As Licona states, the four facts best meets the “minimal facts approach” criteria, and therefore I choose to leave the fifth out, as he states that not all scholars accepts the fifth/4+1. (see Habermas og Licona, 89–90.
⁷⁵ Habermas og Licona, 48–76.
tus also refers to it as “the extreme penalty”. All of the four Gospels have records of the execution of Jesus by crucifixion. However, there are also extra biblical sources that reports about it as well. One is for example Josephus, who writes: “When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing amongst us, had condemned him to be crucified…” and Tacitus does as well:

> “Nero fastened the guilt [of the burning of Rome] and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus.”

Also the Greek satirist, Lucian of Samosata writes: “The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day – the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account.”. We have also Mara Bar-Separion, who wrote to his son from prison with the following comment: “Or [what advantage came to] the Jews by the murder of their Wise King, seeing that from the very time their kingdom was driven away from them?”. Mara informs that Jesus was killed, but he does not mention by crucifixion. Also the Talmud reports: “on the eve of Passover Yeshu was hanged.”. Yeshu is the Hebrew term for Joshua, and the parallel in Greek is Jesus. The information about Jesus being hung is a shortened version of ‘being hung on a tree’ which in the antiquity was used to describe crucifixion. Reasonably, by the considerable evidence it is clearly a historical fact that Jesus died by crucifixion. Finally, as a conclusion on Jesus’ crucifixion John Dominic Crossan, a highly critical scholar writes: “That he was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be.”

**The second fact: Jesus’ disciples believed that he rose and appeared to them**

As a supplement to the first fact, there is fundamental consensus among scholars regarding the second fact: that Jesus’ disciples believed that he rose and appeared to them. Two suggestions of the data have led to this conclusion. First: “the disciple themselves claimed that the risen Jesus had ap-

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76 Habermas og Licona, 47–48.
77 Habermas og Licona, 48.
78 Habermas og Licona, 48.
79 Habermas og Licona, 48.
80 Habermas og Licona, 48–49.
81 Habermas og Licona, 49.
82 Habermas og Licona, 49.
83 Habermas og Licona, 49.
peared to them” and second: “subsequent to Jesus death by crucifixion, his disciples were radically transformed from fearful, cowering individuals who denied and abandoned him at his arrest and execution into bold proclaimers of the gospel of the risen Lord. They remained steadfast in the face of imprisonment, torture, and martyrdom. It is very clear that they sincerely believed that Jesus rose from the dead.”. Repeatedly, there is consistent agreement among the scholars to this notion. However, Licona uses the “minimal facts approach” to discern this second fact by presenting and examining a number of ancient sources to establish the disciples’ claims as reliable historical facts.

First, the disciples claimed Jesus’ resurrection and that he had appeared to them. Here there are nine early and independent sources that falls into three categories. The first one is the testimony of Paul and the disciples. The second source is the oral tradition that has been transmitted through the early church. The third source is the written works of the early church.

Paul contributes with reliable evidence for establishing the Resurrection claims by the very first disciples. As he maintained that his authority was equal to the other apostles’ authority, and this was soon recognized after the completion of the New Testament by the a number of the apostolic fathers, which two of those early writer might have been the disciples of the apostles. As the reports from Acts 9; 26-30; 15:1-35 inform Paul and the disciples knew each other and they had fellowship with one another. Paul also reports in 1 Corinthians 15:3 that both he and the disciples knew each other personally and that both him and they claim Jesus’ resurrection. Since Paul is one of the original disciples and the data that is used by him is well evidenced and acknowledged by almost every scholar, even the most skeptical ones, Licona regards confidently, as well as nearly every other scholar, that Paul can be regarded as an independent source.

The Gospels, subsequent to Paul are also regarded as well-accepted sources and as written in the first-century. All the Gospels contain the attestation of Jesus’ resurrection. In addition, the written sequel to the third Gospel of Luke, the book of Acts, also claims Jesus’ resurrection. Since all of these writing were by individuals whom had either been attendant at the events or who had reported it from the eyewitnesses of the events, it is then very plausible to conclude that these above-mentioned writings reflects what Paul and the first disciples believed to be the truth. As oral tradition was a way of teaching and preserving information it was used to transmit the infor-

84 Habermas og Licona, 49–50.
85 Habermas og Licona, 50.
86 Habermas og Licona, 51.
87 Habermas og Licona, 51–52.
88 Habermas og Licona, 53.
mation from one to another through memorization and in forms of creeds, hymns and story summaries, and poetry. In this way they could preserve a message to be untouched and passed along.\textsuperscript{89}

1 Corinthians 15:3 – 5 is one of the most important identified creeds that was used in the earliest tradition of the Church. It predates Pauls’ writing and many scholars believe that it was received by Paul from Peter and James from the time he had fellowship with them in Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{90}

Finally, Licona presents the writings of the successors of the early church’s apostles whom are called the apostolic fathers.\textsuperscript{91} (There will not be a presentation of them all due to lack of space but a reference in the footnote to the rest\textsuperscript{92}). These apostolic fathers probably had fellowship with the earliest apostles and could presumably been appointed by them. However, what is of importance here is that they reflected the apostles’ teachings and belief, and especially how the apostles were dramatically impacted by the resurrection of Jesus.

The bishop of Rome, Clement, probably the one Paul refers to in Philippians 4:3, according to the early church fathers Irenaeus and Tertullian, Clement might have been close to and spent much time with the apostles. The noteworthy information is whether or not Clement wrote about Jesus’ resurrection. He writes in his letter to the Corinthian church: “Therefore, having received the orders and complete certainty caused by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and believing in the Word of God, they went with the Holy Spirit’s certainty, preaching the good news that the kingdom of God is about to come.” (First Clement 42:3)\textsuperscript{93} Clement confirms that the apostles had seen Jesus after the resurrection and they truly believed and kept their belief in Jesus’ resurrection.

This further confirms the claims being made in the New Testament were not claims conjured at a later date by someone else completely disconnected from the original events.

Subsequent to Clement there are Polycarp, Ignatius, Tertullian, Origen, and Eusebius that has writing we could look at. Due to the lack of space, we will not go into detail, but most importantly mention the willingness of the disciples to suffer and die for their faith. Eusebius, the church historian writes about the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul by which he sites Dionysius of Corinth (170), Tertullian (writing about 200), and Origen (writing about 230-250). On the martyrdom of James, the brother of Jesus, he cites Josephus (writing about 95), Hegesippus (writing about 165-175), and

\textsuperscript{89} Habermas og Licona, 52–55.
\textsuperscript{90} Habermas og Licona, 52.
\textsuperscript{91} Habermas og Licona, 53.
\textsuperscript{92} Habermas og Licona, 55–59.
\textsuperscript{93} Habermas og Licona, 54.
Clement of Alexandria (writing about 200). Although these writings are not found in the New Testament, they are acknowledged as legitimate historical sources.

**The third fact: The church persecutor Paul was suddenly changed**

The once known Saul of Tarsus, but better known as the apostle Paul changed suddenly from being a persecutor of the church to after seeing the appearance of the resurrected Jesus become one of the most important and influencing figures in spreading the Gospel. The events of Paul’s pre-Christian actions are described in the book of Acts. Paul’s was known for being a notorious persecutor of Christians also by this later fellow Christians. However, the important question is what caused Paul’s sudden change? Much points to a transformation caused by the appearance of the resurrected Jesus. The fact that Paul was a transformed person after seeing the appearance of Jesus is attested by significant amount of sources: Both by Paul himself, Luke, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Tertullian, Dionysius of Corinth, and Origen. And it is even attested that Paul was transformed to the point where he would gladly suffer and die for his faith.

**Fact Four – The skeptic James, brother of Jesus, was suddenly changed**

Jesus’ brothers, James was probably to begin were a non-believer of Jesus, but rather a pious Jewish believer. The Gospels reports depicts the nonbelief of Jesus’ family and friend (Mark 3:21, 31 Mark 6:3 – 4; 7:5). Although there is not as much information about James’ conversion there is still enough evidence that established the fact that James was a skeptic prior to Jesus resurrection and a transformed person after. While Hegesippus report the prior to the transformation figure of James, we know from 1 Corinthians 15:3 – 7, that Jesus appeared to James after his resurrection, and that he allegedly became one of the church leaders in Jerusalem (Acts 15:12-21; Gal. 1:19). However, James’ strong belief that cost him his life and he died as a martyr is also attested or mentioned by Josephus, Hegesippus and Clement of Alexandria, and also Eusebius.

**Michael R. Licona’s conclusion**

Through the use of the “minimal facts approach” we have presented evidence regarding Jesus’ resurrection. In use of this method, only data that is strongly attested historically are taken into account. Shortly after the resurrection of Jesus, he appeared to his disciples, who believed what they

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94 Habermas og Licona, 59.
95 Habermas og Licona, 69–72.
96 Habermas og Licona, 71–76.
saw and wrote about it. He also appeared to a ‘foe’, who also believed him. The appearance of Jesus also led to both conversion and a sudden transformation, both of Paul and James.

A New Historiographical Approach

In Licona’s more comprehensive work *The Resurrection of Jesus*, wherein he presents a second approach, namely the historiographical approach, the former approach and method is somewhat replaced. Through a thorough and careful historical analysis Licona excludes the fourth fact mentioned above from being qualified to the criteria of being historical and acknowledged by nearly every consensus of scholars. He presents two general methods that are usually applied by professional historians, the arguments for the best explanation and the arguments from statistical inference. The arguments for the best explanation is a list of criteria that historians look at when weighing the hypothesis, and it is: 1) Explanatory Scope – examines the quantity of the facts, 2) Explanatory Power – examines the quality of the facts, 3) Plausibility – that the hypothesis implies a greater degree and a greater variety of accepted truths/ how naturally the facts fit into the hypothesis, 4) Less ad hoc – a hypothesis is more ad hoc if it needs nonevidenced assumptions 5) Illumination – when a hypothesis provides possible solutions to other problems without confusing other areas held with confidence. 97

In this research Licona carefully delivers a major overview and discussion of issues related to the philosophy of history and historical method, a discussion and open statement of a historian’s bias’ or personal “horizon”, and a method to mitigate the lack of neutrality. 98 He then offers a case for the justification of the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection by entering into a discussion with various scholars who have objections on the matter of miracle-claims; including Hume, C. B. McCullaug, John Meier, Bart Erhman, A.J.M. Wedderburn and James D. G. Dunn. 99

Furthermore, Licona evaluates primary sources that can be of assistance to his case, this includes textual evidence and extra-biblical sources. 100 He then carefully examines and analyses the most promising material which he conclude is The New Testament and Paul and the oral traditions, but other sources may assist as well, like 1 Clement, Polycarp’s letter to the Philippians, the speeches in Acts, and a few ancient secular sources. 101

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100 Licona, chap. 3.
101 Licona, 275.
From this he composes a list of fact which contains the historical bedrock: He concludes with the following bedrock pertaining to Jesus’ fate: 1) Jesus died by crucifixion. 2) Very shortly after Jesus’ death, the disciples had experiences that led them to believe and proclaim that Jesus had been resurrected and had appeared to them. 3) Within a few years after Jesus’ death, Paul converted after experiencing what he interpreted as a postresurrection appearance of Jesus to him.

Licona tests various hypotheses related to Jesus’ fate on this historical bedrock. The hypotheses offered by Geza Vermes, Michael Goulder, Gerd Lüdemann, John Dominic Crossan, Pieter Craffert, and Dale Allison in the appendix. Licona presents the views, analyses and weighs the view according to the five criteria for the best explanation\(^\text{103}\). The finishing hypothesis which Licona analyzes and evaluates is the Resurrection Hypothesis (RH), which he concludes to be the best hypothesis.\(^\text{104}\) “Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is the best historical explanation of the relevant historical bedrock. Since it fulfills all five of the criteria for the best explanation and outdistances competing hypotheses by a significant margin in their ability to fulfill the same criteria, the historian is warranted in regarding Jesus’ resurrection as an event that occurred in the past”\(^\text{105}\) (p. 610).

The Resurrection Hypothesis

The Resurrection Hypothesis (RH) offers the hypothesis that Jesus rose from the dead. The scholars who defend this position are Dale Allison, William Lane Craig, Gary Habermas, N. T. Wright. Wright concludes in his research that when the first believers postulated that Jesus rose from the dead, they understood Jesus’ resurrection equal to the fact that his body had been renewed and transformed. However, there is no such consensus amongst scholars on this claim. Licona’s reminds us that if the RH does not account for the crucial historical bedrock, it does not hold the historical evidence that it widely acknowledged. Whilst the historical bedrock does not mention any particular notions to Jesus’ resurrection appearances we can freely choose how to define RH. As Licona lists: “We could make a choice between an objective vision… that is, Jesus ontologically appeared to others in a manner not perceived by the physical senses (i.e., an actual appearance that occurred outside of space-time) –and Jesus’ appearance in his revivified corpse that was seen with ordinary

\(^{102}\) Licona, chap. 4. Cf. Licona, The Resurrection of Jesus, 463
\(^{103}\) Licona, chap. 5.
\(^{104}\) Licona, 610.
\(^{105}\) Licona, 610.
vision…” The first proposal could not have been videotaped (as with Grendal’s experience), whilst the latter could. Yet, since none of these proposed interpretations are parts of the historical bedrock, we are not forced to make a choice. Furthermore, since there is no historical evidence for the assertion that God raised Jesus from the dead, it will only be claimed that the cause of the event must have been a supernatural one.106 Thus, Licona defines RH: “Following a supernatural event of an indeterminate nature and cause, Jesus appeared to a number of people, in individual and group settings and to friends and foes. In no less than an objective vision and perhaps within ordinary vision in his bodily raised corpse.” 107

III: A comparative analysis of Licona and Craffert’s viewpoints

Craffert and Licona’s different approaches

Licona searches for the objective truth that happened in time-space, and that can be verified through the examination of the most reliable historical evidence there is about Jesus’ resurrection. On the other side, Craffert searches for what the data about the appearances of Jesus are evidence for, and how the consensual and cultural reality can point to an alternatively real and true reality by use of the neuroanthropological perspective. Craffert examines the data through the interconnectedness of the culture-mind-brain complex and takes into account the relativities that can occur when dealing with neuroscience and social sciences. The way they approach their field of work is therefore also one of the differences between them, yet also one of the most important aspects between Craffert’s and Licona’s work of.

While Craffert’s approach to the question regarding Jesus’ resurrection is social sciences with a postmodern view of history, Licona makes use strictly of a new historiographical approach. Consequently, this results in working with different types of criteria and methods. However, one of the similarities between them is that they both wish to examine the data, for what they mean and what they are evidence for - they simply do it by different approaches. In addition, they differ as expected in their framework, since they are laid out according to their different ways of approaching the data.

We will take a closer look into this in the passage below.

I will give my analysis and concerns regarding the two scholars firstly and finally conclude on the different approaches in the end.

106 Licona, 582–83.
107 Licona, 583.
Analysis and concern of Craffert’s hypothesis

Postmodernism and naturalistic bias

I think Craffert truly contributes to the historical Jesus research, when he advocates for the understanding and acceptance of multiple types of reality and radical pluralism that were present both at the times of the ancient Mediterranean world but also in our present day. And we should be more attentive of that when conducting historical Jesus research, so we do not limit ourselves unwillingly or fallaciously to our own horizon and worldview, but seek to understand what reality truly consists of and what it means to different types of cultures. However, I am reluctant to the fact that as Craffert offers his approach from a postmodern view of perspective; he possibly himself neglects to acknowledge multiple realities, since his view of radical pluralism presupposes that supernatural events are excluded from happening: “Within this perspective, the elements of the stories lose their mysterious or supernatural character or their exotic flavour when it is realised that they properly belong in a different cultural system. They become natural human phenomena in specific cultural systems which can be appreciated as such.” 108 Consequently, even if a supernatural event were happen in reality, we can never appreciate it as such, since we have excluded it from happening to begin with. Only natural explanations are to be appreciated. Craffert should allow the evidence and data and not his a priori assumptions determine the direction of his historical research.

Altered states of consciousness

What I am afraid Craffert might be excluding to begin with, Craffert himself in regards to ASCs is in the same way afraid Western scholars might exclude to begin with:

This [the application of an ASC model] poses a strong challenge to Western scholars who might yield to ethnocentric tendencies and deny a priori the possibility of finding ASC experiences in ancient texts from the circum-Mediterranean area [Pilch 2011:218].”109 Although I highly respect Craffert’s ASC model, I am truly concerned about how Grendal’s experience is compared with Jesus’ resurrection as a similar or related phenomenon, and how the postresurrection appearances it is then concluded to be visions or ASCs similar to Grendal’s experience.

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First, I can see how one might argue that the two experiences are similar, but to me more differences than similarities seems to dominate the picture, and I do not agree with Craffert that the disciples experiences qualifies to be regarded as ASCs.

Pilch, who Craffert refers to, appeals to a source by Belinda Gore who describes how one is to enter into an ASC with very specific instructions\(^\text{110}\):

> “A few of these include (a) the selection of a quiet location, (b) the selection of a comfortable posture, (c) smudging yourself and your space ‘with smoke of an herb. . . . At the conclusion of your smudging, be sure to thank the plant whose body made the cleansing possible,” (d) “[M]ake an offering to the drum, rattle, or other instrument with which you are inviting the spirits that can be awakened and, if called upon, must be ‘fed.’ Our group usually uses cornmeal,” and (e) “The auditory stimulation of the rattle or drums induces the altered states of consciousness. Use an even, rhythmic sound of 200 to 210 beats per minute for aduration of fifteen minutes.”\(^\text{111}\)

Although not all might have been used at Grendal’s experience, we know that he along the Sisala Clan expected and prepared to enter into an ASC. And we know from his experience that they used instruments as drums for the inducement of the ASC. However, none of the disciples were neither expecting, nor preparing or in knowledge of what was to come, or what they were about to see and experience. They neither did any of the things the Sisala clan did or any of the instructions given by Belinda Gore.\(^\text{112}\)

Second, when a biblical person in the text experience a vision or a dream, this is much often also stated in the text or in any way alluded. However, in the passages that we have examined from the Gospels and in Paul’s account there are no such statements or allusions. It is just as reasonable to assume that what the disciples experience was real seeing and not ASCs.

Third, I do have some concerns when it comes to comparing to ‘related’ events with no further consideration for the gap of time (2000 years), the cultures (African contra the ancient Mediterranean), and the framework of the events (Grendals’s experience was an expected and prepared event at a ceremony, while Jesus’ resurrection was a non-expected event, that shocked the disciples). While we see Craffert giving a detailed presentation of the different types of reality to different cultures (monophasic and polyphasic), I believe a presentation of the culture and beliefs of the respective people that are involved in the examination should be introduced, for examining and assessing whether or not an event should be categorized as an ASC or an ordinary states of consciousness (OSC); since this can convey the cultures own understanding of when ASC’s and OSCs occur; and for example, a presentation of different views on the resurrection in the Gospels, Paul’s


\(^{111}\) Licona, 574.

\(^{112}\) Licona, 574-575.
letters and extra-biblical literature. Whilst ASC may occur in many different cultures, these features mentioned above, may be included for when examining the experiences.

**Analysis and concern of Licona’s hypothesis**

Although, I have great sympathy with Licona’s work since I myself am a Christian, I do also have a skeptical mind, and therefore I believe also to see some troubling concerns in regards to Licona’s contribution.

First, Licona proposed two criteria for identifying a miracle: “(1) the event is highly improbable given natural causes alone and (2) the event occurs in a context charged with religious significance.” The latter criteria is what strikes my concern, since in my opinion the context that is religiously intense can seem to cloud the judgement of an individual’s interpretation of an event. Craffert makes a significant contribution regarding this, as he argues: “If you happen to live in a community that believes in demons and ghosts, then you’ll find ample opportunity in the shadows to support that cultural view.” I believe the same applies to miracles. If you happen to live within a religious setting that claims miracles exists, then you are likely to find ample opportunity for such cause of effect, than if you were to live in a context with little religious influence. Prior beliefs and assumption can work against an trustworthy identification of a miracle.

Second, the plausibility of RH is difficult to determine since it requires a supernatural cause, as Licona admits. This sheds the light upon an important problem if we are to reach the best explanation for supernatural or miracle events if there is no solid criterion for such assertions. This allows too much guesswork. Further to what Licona continually argues, I see difficulties because of what we stated in the first concern: “While we will not presuppose God’s existence, it is hard to ignore that our relevant historical bedrock exists within the broader context of Jesus’ ministry that contains additional bedrock charged with religious significance.” The same applies here as in the first concern, difficulties with the second assertion on miracles.

Fourth, Licona suggests a “position of openness” to the reader, without presupposing nor a priori excluding God or supernaturalism. This definitely lays nonevidenced assumptions on the table that in many ways requires much from the reader. Licona himself stated that one cannot simply put

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113 Licona, 468.
116 Licona, 602.
117 Licona, 604.
down horizons and worldviews aside, although we can make an effort to minimize the negative impact of our horizons as mentioned earlier.

I conclude that while there is a logical consistency in Licona’s work and reliable evidence for the RH, there are still some significant concerns that need more explanations.

I must correct myself, and state that whilst the first approach and method of Licona is very simplistic and there is much room for bias’s there, the second approach by Licona, the new historiographical approach, cannot be seen as an entirely evangelical contribution with many presupposition. Since Licona in his work has contributed with his method and bias’s out in the open, and made them public and consistently forced himself to mitigate the lack of neutrality, as when he himself conduct his work in accordance to the six tools for managing and minimizing the negative impacts of a scholars horizon, as for example making an account for the historical bedrock, method, aim and personal horizon as mentioned above, his work displays sound research that needs recognition. Licona though still admits that we even with the six tools cannot be all free of our horizon in accordance to Baruch Fischhoff.

**Conclusion**

Both Craffert and Licona must be recognized for their work of contribution. They both lay strong hypothesis forward, with solid arguments. However, from my point of view, I claim to have experienced more transparency in the contribution of Licona’s work than in Craffert’s work. Yet, they both signify their approaches, methodology, horizons and worldviews (Craffert, maybe not to the full extent), frameworks and so forth in a clear and logical way. However, both scholars are not without concerns as mentioned above.

The strength Craffert’s work is that it is an interdisciplinary field of research where the contribution of the different fields of research in his work, functions logically and consistently, and the different field of research works as a puzzle that falls into place. Yet, the only serious blemish is that his approach requires a naturalistic worldview, since it a priori excludes supernaturalism. This flaws his contribution in a serious way, but it does not neglect the valuable information that still can be true. It just bids us to be aware of that.

118 Licona, 50–62.
119 Licona, 130–32.
120 Licona, 61.
The strength of Craffert is his transparency as mentioned above, and his far-reaching objectivity he demonstrates throughout his work. Though, he makes a strong case for RH, I still have some important concerns in regards to RH, the most significant is the one concerning the criteria for identifying a miracle.

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Bibliography: