

On the Resurrection: Evidences Volume One. By Gary R. Habermas. Brentwood, TN: B&H Academic, 2024. 1054 pp. \$52.41. ISBN 978-1-08777-860-0.

Gary Habermas is recognized as the world's foremost expert on Jesus's resurrection. His new book is the culmination of fifty years of research. His illustrious career began with completing his PhD in Philosophy and publishing his dissertation, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Rational Inquiry*, at Michigan State University in 1976. During his career, Habermas authored over 100 articles and several books and contributed over sixty chapters to other books.

Habermas describes his new book as his magnum opus. It expands significantly on the data supporting his well-known minimal facts argument. The author systematically builds a case that the biblical account of the resurrection is the most probable reality. He skillfully guides the reader through each fact and supporting data while interacting with a who's who of scholarly experts.

The book is divided into five sections. Part 1, *The Nature of Historical Research*, is presented in five chapters. Habermas provides guidelines for what a proper historical inquiry should entail and how history has been studied and evolved since the early twentieth century. He wrote: "The discipline is chiefly concerned at least with what has happened in the past, along with the accounts of these occurrences" (p. 16). "The consensus was that many past historical facts could be studied, investigated, and known according to probability" (p. 32). He regards primary source material from AD 30 to 50 as exemplary and highly preferred. Material from this early period predates the written gospels. The early pre-Pauline material 1 Cor. 15:3–8 is thought to be a very early Christian creed from the mid-30s. The Book of Acts early sermon summaries AD 30–40. The pre-Markan passion narrative AD 50–60 and early genuine Paul epistles from the 50s.

"The textual criteria of authenticity are the rules that support the likelihood of a particular sayings or events of history, in this case, form the life of Jesus" (pp. 42–43). Habermas provides eight criteria and unpacks their function in establishing the probability of a particular passage for historicity. The author notes that each criterion should be considered an "individual epistemic indicator" (p. 43). The eight scholarly criteria were (1) Early sources; (2) Eyewitness testimony; (3) Multiple attestation; (4) Double dissimilarity; (5) Aramaic words, substrata, environment, or other indications of a Palestinian origin; (6) The principle of embarrassment, negative reports, or surprise; (7) Enemy attestation; and (8) Coherence.

Part I concludes with a set of two lists. First, the twelve minimal facts that Habermas claims are acknowledged "by virtually all researchers in the field" (pp. 146–147). The shorter list of six plus one "contains the material that is essential to the overall research that addresses the historicity of the occurrences in question" (p. 148):

1. Jesus died due to the effects of Roman crucifixion.
2. The disciples afterward reported experiences that they thought were actual appearances of the risen Jesus.
3. These experiences accounted for the disciples' lives becoming thoroughly transformed.

4. The proclamation of Jesus's resurrection and appearances took place very early, soon after the experiences themselves.
5. James, the brother of Jesus and a skeptic before his conversion, most likely believed after he also thought that he saw the risen Jesus.
6. Just a few years later, Saul of Tarsus (Paul) also became a Christian believer due to an experience that he also concluded was an appearance of the risen Jesus to him.
7. +1. The private tomb in which Jesus was probably buried was discovered to be empty shortly after his death (p. 149).

Part 2 begins with Chapter 6: The Existence of Jesus. The author asserts that few ancient figures enjoy the volume of attestation to their existence that is available for Jesus's life and death by crucifixion. Habermas states that "Jesus' death by crucifixion can be asserted as a historical fact from the secular data alone" (p. 219). The author walks his reader through biblical and non-biblical sources reporting on the life of Jesus written between AD 30 and AD 150. He also reports the findings of well-known New Testament agnostic scholars Erdman and Casey, who render the "mythicists" argument untenable.

In Chapter 7: A Definition of a Miracle, the author reviews the historical scholarly evolution of the definition. He examines earlier definitions by Hume, Swinburn, Lewis, Makie, Flew, and others who have contributed over the last two hundred and fifty years. Habermas concludes the discussion with his choice of definition for a miracle:

A miracle is the manifestation or presence of divine actions that temporarily or momentarily overrule or supersede nature's normally observed, lawful pattern of events or that appear to do so. In these cases, nature's law can be suspended or interrupted for a brief time by a stronger power while remaining unbroken. Such an event is brought about by the power of God or another supernatural agent. (p. 242)

Chapter 8 is titled Jesus the Healer. According to Habermas, Jesus's work as a healer and exorcist is probably the most well-attested claim about his ministry. The evidence of multiple and enemy attestations and early eyewitness material containing Aramaic phrases suggests contemporary Christian and skeptical scholars take Jesus's miracle claims seriously.

Part 3 is titled The Minimal Historical Facts. In Chapters 9 through 14, Habermas meticulously walks the reader through the six minimal facts, applying the eight textual criteria of authenticity to each. The data supporting each minimal fact is substantial, and virtually all researchers in the field acknowledge their historicity.

In Chapter 11: The Earliest Proclamation of the Gospel, the author presents nine layers of evidence supporting that the earliest Christology was the highest Christology. Jesus's resurrection and deity "formed the heart of the earliest Christian message" (p. 476). He supplements Chapter 11, Excursus 2: The Early Creedal Traditions. Habermas explains the purpose of early creeds in spreading the gospel message to a largely illiterate community. He explains that contemporary critical scholarship is "near unanimity" (p. 481) in the opinion that these creeds are embedded within several ancient Christian Scriptures. The earliest and most impactful creed supporting all six minimal facts is 1

Cor. 15:3–7. Many contemporary scholars believe the creed predates Paul's conversion in AD 33. The creed with the addition of verse eight in which Paul adds his personal experience:

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

Excursus 2 holds some of the book's newest and most impactful information. He lays out an exhaustive list of creeds, their species, uses, and how they are identified. Most of them appear in Paul's undisputed epistles. The epistles are dated AD 50–60, but it is hypothesized that the creeds could date back to just a brief time after the crucifixion in AD 30 or 33.

Part 4 is titled *The Other Six Known Historical Facts*. In Chapters 15 and 16, Habermas reveals the latest evidence surrounding the burial of Jesus and the empty tomb. Skeptics have long suggested Jesus's body was left on the cross to be consumed by wild animals, buried in common criminals' graves, or pitched into the city dump. The burial and empty tomb study present new ground. One new layer of evidence first uncovered by Evans, an expert on burial traditions impacting Jesus, lists several Roman and Jewish sources that lend credence to the gospel account:

The Roman *Digesta*, a summary of Roman law, expressly permits to turn over the bodies of crucifixion victims to the family members (48.24.1, 3), Josephus (Life 75), and the crucifixion victim Jehohanan, whose bones were found in Israel reburied in an ossuary after decomposition. Likewise, Jewish law required a proper burial even for victims of capital punishment. (Duet. 21:22-23; 11Q19 64:7-13a) (p. 644)

Part 5 is titled *The Gospel Resurrection Data*. The final seven chapters, Chapters 18–24, are an exhaustive unpacking of the evidence in the pre-Pauline material, the Gospels of Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John, Acts Chapters 1–5, 10, and 13, and the non-canonical Christian authors (AD 95–160). Several critical subjects impacting the minimal facts are sifted. What was the prevailing thought by Jews about the general resurrection of the dead in the pre-first century? Early source material for the Gospels. The disciples' doubts. The woman's testimony. And much more.

Habermas's writing style puts the reader at ease. He presents his case reminiscent of a college professor standing before his students. He lays out the evidence, followed by various opposing and supportive scholarly input. Like a good professor, he lets the evidence speak for itself. He maintains a neutral voice throughout, avoiding unnecessary guiding commentary. Many find the evidence pointing to the resurrection conclusive, moving the debate closer to a claim of fact. Habermas distances himself from those conclusions. He respects his audience enough to sift and weigh the evidence themselves.

The book is by far the most comprehensive book by any author researching Jesus's resurrection. Although the book's primary purpose is to lay all the current evidence

available before the reader, impacting upon the resurrection study, it necessarily touches upon all aspects of the gospel story. Habermas builds the evidential case from the bottom up, requiring the author to thoroughly investigate every aspect of Jesus's history. Habermas's book will serve as the paradigm moving forward for all researchers. The book is also a shot across the bow to those critical of the gospel version. Critical scholars have much evidential work to do to catch up. The book reveals a wide evidential gap between his work and those critical of the gospel. Unless or until new evidence enters the stream, Habermas's research will hold the well-deserved spotlight.

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Effective Altruism and Religion: Synergies, Tensions, Dialogue. Edited by Dominic Roser, Stefan Riedener and Markus Huppenbauer. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2022. 254 pp. \$46.00 (paper). ISBN 9783848781195.

Effective altruism (EA) originated as a largely secular movement and remains so today. It aims to improve the world not just through ordinary deeds but through a “radical focus on impact” (p. 9). It asks not only how we do good but how can we do more good and do it impartially, considering how data analysis might improve things like delivery of humanitarian services. Religious ethicists have voiced significant skepticism about EA—and EA about religion for that matter—so this book provides a welcome conversation offered in a careful and sustained way. Contributors to this volume vary dramatically in their assessment of EA, but taken as a whole, the essays suggest that religious traditions should give EA a more careful look before rendering judgment.

Among the more appreciative arguments for EA, authors claim that it provides perspectives and insights that religious traditions lack—or at least don't take seriously enough. Given most religious traditions emerged in worlds less globalized than ours, EA asks moral questions about what we owe people across the world or how we might harness the wealth of capitalist accumulation to substantially improve lives for strangers. EA furthermore presses religious traditions to ask what obligations we bear for those who live after us and for future environments and ecosystems. Dominic Roser is one of the most appreciative contributors. Not only does he argue for EA from a Christian perspective, he shows how deontology—an ethical perspective focused on duty and favored by many religious adherents—“can be less demanding than consequentialism,” which focuses on the outcomes of our actions (p. 56). EA shows how consequentialism can expect more from us than a deontology that merely finds comfort in following certain rules. In this regard, EA calls into question the notion of supererogation, the idea that some acts are above and beyond basic ethical duties and therefore considered commended but not