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TOUCHING THE RISEN JESUS: MARY MAGDALENE AND THOMAS THE TWIN IN JOHN 20

I. INTRODUCTION

In the last analysis, anything theology says about the resurrection of the body of those who have died in Christ stands or falls in terms of what we say about the bodily resurrection of Jesus himself. And our only access to the resurrection of Jesus, whether bodily, physical, spiritual, or none of these is the New Testament. Although there is a great deal of material in the New Testament about the resurrection only three passages focus directly on the bodiliness of the risen one. The first is 1 Corinthians 15 in which Paul argues with members of the Corinthian community who, for philosophical reasons, regarded the material in general and the body in particular as worthless. Paul argues for the possibility, actuality, and significance of bodily resurrection as such, whether of Jesus or of believers.[1] The second is Luke 24:36-43, the narrative of Jesus' appearance to the startled and terrified disciples who think they are seeing a ghost. The risen one invites them to tactiley verify the solidity of his body, that he has "flesh and bones," in order to convince them that he is indeed the Jesus who was crucified and not a ghostly apparition.[2] Both the Pauline and Lukan texts were addressed to predominantly Hellenistic audiences whose dualistic anthropology made bodily resurrection a priori impossible or meaningless or both.

Interesting as these polemics are, and not unrelated to contemporary issues about the possibility of an afterlife, neither text addresses the primary concerns of this paper, namely, the question of what role the bodiliness of the risen Jesus plays,

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[1]For references on the probable ideological *Sitz-im-Leben* of the Corinthian correspondence, see Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "The First Letter to the Corinthians," *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990) ¶48:65, p. 812. (Henceforth, *NJBC*.) For a very good, brief treatment of Paul's position in contrast to the Corinthian position, see Peter Lampe, "Paul's Concept of a Spiritual Body," *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, ed. Ted Peters, Robert John Russell, and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2002) 103-14.

[2]Hans-Joachim Eckstein, "Bodily Resurrection in Luke," *Resurrection: Theologoical and Scientific Assessments*, 115-23, discusses both the polemic in Luke against the anthropological dualism of his predominantly Gentile community and Luke's subtle alternative to that position.

and how it does so, in the relationship between Jesus and his disciples after the resurrection. Does the body of Jesus, which mediated his pre-Easter relationship with his disciples, continue to play that role for his post-Easter disciples, including us?[3] If bodily is synonymous with physical, then we are caught between two equally unacceptable positions. Either, on the one hand, Jesus is simply resuscitated (i.e., physically revived), which leaves him and us still subject to the conditions of space, time, and causality, and vulnerable to death, or, on the other hand, his resurrection is purely spiritual, and we are outside the Christian community's faith in the "resurrection of the body." By way of prolepsis, I am going to propose that Jesus' resurrection is *not* physical but *is* bodily and therefore that his body continues to mediate his relationship with his disciples but in a way which is both continuous and discontinuous with the way it did in his pre-Easter career.

I will argue this on the basis of the third New Testament text that focuses on the body of the risen Jesus, namely, the Johannine resurrection narrative, John 20, and specifically verses 11-18 (the Mary Magdalene episode) and 24-29 (the Thomas the Twin episode). In the first passage the risen Jesus prohibits Mary Magdalene from touching him and in the second he invites, even commands, Thomas the Twin to touch him. Our question is, what does John 20 say about the body of the risen Jesus and its role in his relationship with his disciples?

II. PRESUPPOSITIONS ABOUT THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN

Before turning to the texts in question we have to lay a certain amount of biblical groundwork, first about the theology of the Fourth Gospel (FG) relative to resurrection and second about the structure and dynamics of the Johannine resurrection narrative as a whole. In the first section we need to look briefly at the eschatology and anthropology of the Fourth Gospel which together govern John's approach to the resurrection of Jesus. In the second section we will look at the theological progression within the Johannine resurrection narrative and at the development within it of the dialectic between seeing, hearing, touching (i.e., sense experience), and believing.

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[3]Following Marcus Borg in *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: The Historical Jesus and the Heart of Contemporary Faith* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994) 15-17, I prefer to use the terms "pre-Easter" and "post-Easter" to designate Jesus' life before the resurrection and his life after the resurrection respectively. The traditional term "earthly Jesus" can set up a theologically problematic dichotomy between the "Jesus of history" and the "Christ of faith" and implicitly deny the ongoing presence of the risen Jesus in the historical experience of his contemporary earthly disciples.

A. John's Eschatology[4]

As is commonly recognized, the eschatology of the Fourth Gospel differs strikingly from that of the synoptic gospels. This difference is often expressed as the contrast between realized (i.e., present) and delayed (i.e., future) judgment. However, these two eschatologies involve much more than a temporal difference. Each is a theological approach to life, death, judgment, and afterlife.

In the Fourth Gospel Jesus' death is not presented, as it is in the synoptics, as a *kenosis*, the nadir of his earthly life, a human condemnation from which God vindicated him through resurrection. In John, Jesus' death itself is the apotheosis, the victorious culmination of his life. In and by his death Jesus is glorified by God and exalted to God's presence.[5] He is proclaimed as king and reigns gloriously from the cross (John 19:19). Consequently, Bultmann observed in the mid-twentieth century:

> If Jesus' death on the cross is already his exaltation and glorification, *his resurrection* cannot be an event of special significance. No resurrection is needed to destroy the triumph which death might be supposed to have gained in the crucifixion.[6]

Bultmann and others have suggested that John's Gospel really ends with the crucifixion in chapter 19 and the Johannine resurrection narrative is merely a concession to the tradition which was normative by the time this gospel was written at the end of the first century. While this is hardly a satisfactory conclusion, it raises pointedly the question of what role the resurrection narrative does play in John's gospel. It clearly does not play the vindicatory role it does in the synoptics but, I would argue, it is crucial to John's theological purposes.

The two strands or types of eschatology we find in the New Testament are the descendents of two types of eschatological reflection which developed in the latest Old Testament and the intertestamental writings.[7] The first type, which we might

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[4]Following convention among Johannine scholars I will use the term "John" to refer to the Fourth Evangelist (FE) or to the gospel itself. This implies no position on the much-debated issues of Johannine authorship and the identity of the evangelist. My position on these questions is available in *Written That You May Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, rev. and exp. ed. (New York: Crossroad, 2003) 233-54.

[5]ὑψόω, "exalt" or "lift up," is used several times in John to speak of Jesus' lifting up on the cross as his exaltation (e.g., 3:14; 8:28; 12:32) and δοξάζω, "glorify," is used to speak of the effect on Jesus of his "lifting up" in crucifixion (e.g., 7:39; 12:16; 12:23; 13:31-32), namely, that he is glorified by God and glorifies God by his death.

[6]Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 2, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955) 56.

[7]Although both the category "intertestamental" itself and the dates for the period and its literature are debated, for my purposes it designates the overlapping of Old Testament and New Testament experience and the writings reflective of that experience, extending roughly from 200 BCE to about 100 CE.My thanks to my Old Testament colleague, John Endres, for help with this issue.

call "resurrection eschatology," was futuristic and apocalyptic. It developed in the context of the Syrian persecutions and the Hasidean-Hasmonean controversies in Palestine in the second to first centuries BCE. Faithful Jews, like the mother and seven brothers in 2 Maccabees 7, were being persecuted and even martyred for their fidelity to Torah, but they were strengthened by the hope that they would be vindicated by God after death. The clearest Old Testament expression of this eschatology is found in Daniel 12:1-3 predicting the awakening of "many . . . who sleep in the dust" and 2 Maccabees 7, both of which are influenced by the Suffering Servant image of Deutero-Isaiah.[8] The martyrs are assured that they will be restored even in their bodies, that Israel will be reconstituted, and that the unjust will be finally punished.

This type of eschatology, characteristic of the synoptic gospels, was that of the Pharisees of Jesus' time. Matthew 25:31-46 portrays such a final vindicatory event, a last judgment, conceived as a sudden cosmic cataclysm (see Matt. 24:15-44; Mark 13; Luke 17:22-37), when all will be raised to appear before the glorified Christ who will assign them to eternal reward or punishment on the basis of their comportment in this life. The role of bodily, even physical, resurrection in this eschatology is essentially functional. It renders the just and the unjust present for final judgment in which divine justice will be fully manifest. And it assures the participation of the whole person in the final sentence.

John's gospel, unlike the synoptics, operates within the other strand of late pre-Christian Jewish eschatology, which I will label "immortality eschatology." This eschatology is realized and sapiential rather than future and apocalyptic. It developed in the Hellenistic context of Diaspora Judaism, probably in the late second to first century BCE. Jews who had remained faithful to Torah even though living in a Hellenistic context were being persecuted and even killed, not only by pagans but by their religiously and culturally assimilated fellow-Jews.[9] Once again, there is appeal to a postdeath solution to the problem of the intrahistorical victory of the unjust. The clearest (deutero)canonical expression of this eschatology occurs in Wisdom of Solomon 1-6.

The Wisdom Hero in this story, who epitomizes the faithful Jews, is persecuted unto death by the disciples of Folly who mock his fidelity to the Law, repudiate his claim to be God's son, and are infuriated by his accusation that they are unfaithful to their training and tradition (cf. Wis 2:10-20).[10] The LXX version of the fourth Suf-

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[8]For a detailed comparison of texts showing the influence of Isa 26:20, 26:19, and 66:24 on Dan. 12:1-3, see Sandra M. Schneiders, *The Johannine Resurrection Narrative: An Exegetical and Theological Study of John 20 as a Synthesis of Johannine Spirituality*, vol. 1 (Ann Arbor MI: University Microfilms, 1983) 35-86.

[9]An excellent and provocatively suggestive treatment of the Wisdom of Solomon, its eschatology in relation to its *Sitz-im-Leben*, and its possible relation to the New Testament is Barbara Green's "The Wisdom of Solomon and the Solomon of Wisdom: Tradition's Transpositions and Human Transformation," *Horizons* 30 (Spring 2003): 41-66.

[10]For the development of the extrabiblical literary genre of "wisdom tale" within which

fering Servant Song (Isa 52:13–53:12) and of the Daniel 7 figure of the Son of Man surely influenced the portrait of the martyred hero in Wisdom of Solomon,[11] which was also influenced by Hellenistic notions of immortality. Unlike the future apocalyptic resurrection eschatology of 2 Maccabees, this sapiential eschatology presents the death of the righteous as an exaltation-for-judgement on his enemies and an immediate entrance into an intimate relationship with God in a nonterrestrial, post-death realm. The text tells us that, even though the hero is physically killed, "the souls of the just are in the hand of God. . . . They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead . . . but they are in peace . . . God took them to himself" (Wis 3:1-6).

Bodily, much less physical, resurrection such as we see in resurrection eschatology does not figure explicitly in this sapiential understanding of the destiny of the just and unjust because the judgment of the ungodly takes place in their very choice of evil by which they "summon death" (cf. Wis 1:16) and the just are exalted by and assumed to God in their very destruction by the unjust. However, the exaltation of the just is not simply immortality of the soul in the Greek philosophical sense, that is, the natural indestructibility of a spiritual substance. Their immortality is *life* in the Jewish sense (i.e., a gift from God), who alone possesses it by nature[12] and who freely bestows it on those who are loyal to the covenant. Furthermore, life, even after death, in which the body did not participate in some way would have been inconceivable to the Jewish imagination. So, while it says nothing explicit about bodily resurrection, sapiential eschatology is fundamentally susceptible to it[13] and even in a way requires it.

This sapiential eschatology is easily discerned in the Fourth Gospel and is operative in John's presentation of the death of Jesus as the Wisdom Hero. His death is

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we meet "wisdom heroes" in noncanonical dress who resemble Joseph, Daniel, and Susanna, see G. W. Nicholsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, Harvard Theological Studies 26 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1972) 49-55. The distinctiveness of the biblical wisdom heroes is that their wisdom consists in fidelity to Torah rather than in secular *savoir faire* or philosophically based ethics.

[11]See Schneiders, *The Johannine Resurrection Narrative*, 98-101, for the textual evidence for this position.

[12]This was explained well by Joseph Moignt, "Immortalité de l'âme et/ou résurrection," *Lumière et Vie* 21 (1972): 65-78, who takes essentially the same position as Oscar Cullmann in his classic text, "Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead: The Witness of the New Testament," The Ingersoll Lecture, 1955, *Harvard Divinity School Bulletin* 21 (1955–1956): 5-36.

[13]It is important, however, but beyond the scope of this essay, to note that Jewish anthropology was influenced by Hellenistic philosophy in the immediate pre-Christian period. This is evident in the use of terms such as "incorruption" (ἀφθαρσία) in Wis 2:23 and "immortality" (ἀθανασία) in Wis 3:4. On the other hand, the characteristically biblical approach appears in Wisdom of Solomon in the notion that death is not intended by God but entered the world through the envy of the devil (cf. Wis 2:23-24) in contrast to the notion of death as a natural passage into nonexistence that the enemies of the Wisdom Hero enunciate in Wis 2:1-22.

his exaltation in and by which his persecutors are judged and he is glorified (cf. John 16:8-11). This leads to two conclusions about the role of the resurrection narrative in John's Gospel.

(1) Because bodily resurrection is compatible with, perhaps even implicit in, even though not explicitly affirmed by sapiential eschatology, bodily resurrection *could easily become explicit* in this eschatology if the right pressures were brought to bear upon it (e.g., by the Easter experience of the first followers of Jesus).

(2) If bodily resurrection *did* become explicit (as I believe it did) within sapiential immortality eschatology it would not have the same meaning it has in apocalyptic, resurrection eschatology. It would not be seen as vindication of the persecuted since this vindication takes place in the very death/exaltation of the Just One. Nor would resurrection appear as a victory over death because death never has any real power over the one who is a child of God. Resurrection would be essentially a manifestation of the meaning for the whole bodyperson of life in God now lived in all its fullness. And, in the case of Jesus, as we will see, it would be a condition of possibility for his post-Easter personal presence to his disciples and his continuing action in the world.

I would suggest that the bodily resurrection of Jesus in John is presented precisely in terms of sapiential eschatology. The Johannine resurrection narrative in John 20 is, therefore, not a concession to the constraints of early Christian tradition. It is a narrative-theological exploration of the Easter experience of the first disciples and the implications of that experience for the spirituality of the Johannine community and later disciples. In other words, the two dimensions of Jesus' Paschal mystery, his *glorification* on the cross (i.e., his passage out of this world to his Father) and his *resurrection* (i.e., his promised return to his own), though related, are not strictly identical in John. The glorification is the condition of possibility of the resurrection. Consequently, the appearances in John are not primarily about Jesus' postdeath experience but about his disciples' experience of his return to them.

B. John's Anthropology

Closely related to the eschatology of the Fourth Gospel is its anthropology. Much discussion about bodily resurrection is subverted from the start by the fact that modern westerners tend to read the gospel texts through the lens of a basically dualistic and substantialist philosophical anthropology. John's anthropology, although expressed with Greek vocabulary which has clearly influenced his understanding of the person, is thoroughly rooted in the Hebrew language and sensibility.[14] The pertinent Greek terms, ψυχή (usually translated "soul"), ζωή

[14]A good introduction to Semitic anthropology is Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Mifflintown PA: Sigler, 1996; orig.: SCM, 1974). As we have seen in respect to his eschatology, the Gospel of John is not devoid of Hellenistic influences coming probably through Old Testament sapiential materials, esp. Wisdom of Solomon. However,

("life"), θάνατος ("death"), σάρξ ("flesh"), αἷμα ("blood"), πνεῦμα ("spirit"), and σῶμα ("body"), constitute a complex semantic field in which all the terms are interrelated and mutually qualifying. Although in English these terms each denote a *component or state* of the human being, in biblical usage they each denote the *whole person* from some perspective or under some aspect. Ignoring this difference can result in serious misunderstanding, such as the tendency of many moderns to hear cannibalistic overtones in Jesus' invitation to eat his flesh and drink his blood in John 6:52-58. It is crucial to understand what these anthropological terms meant in the context of John's first century Judaism in order to understand how they function in the Fourth Gospel as a whole, but especially in the account of Jesus' glorification and resurrection.

Time constraints prevent examining each of these terms, but two of them are critical to our purposes here: σάρξ in relation to αἷμα, that is, flesh and blood, and σῶμα or "body." For moderns σάρξ and αἷμα denote two separable components of the human being, one solid and one liquid. However, flesh, in John's anthropology, is not a part of the human distinct from bones and blood but the whole person as natural and mortal.[15] When flesh is combined with blood it denotes the person, mortal by nature, but actually alive. To say that in Jesus the Word of God (λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ) became flesh (σάρξ) is to say that the Word became fully human (i.e., mortal).[16] In the Psalms especially we see "flesh" used to speak of humanity in its weakness and mortality: "God remembered that they were flesh, a passing breath that returns not" (Ps 145:21, see also 56:5; 65:3; 145:21 and elsewhere). In John 6:51 Jesus says that he *is* the living bread come down from heaven, and that the bread which he will *give* for the life of the world "is [his] flesh." Jesus is not talking about a physical part of himself. He is saying that in giving himself totally in death, which is only possible because he is flesh (i.e., mortal), he gives life to the world as bread gives life to one who eats it.

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this influence is controlled by Hebrew understandings of God, the human, and the end of human life. A thorough study of Johannine anthropology, which is completely beyond the scope of this paper, would proceed by tracing the path from the concrete and stereometric (to use Wolff's term) Hebrew usage through the changes rung on the terms in the Greek of the LXX into the FG. I suspect that the most original development is precisely John's exploitation of the distinction—not possible in Hebrew but possible in Greek—between σάρξ and σῶμα.

[15]"Flesh" is a good translation of σάρξ which is a more differentiated term than the Hebrew *bâsâr* which denotes the human in his/her infirmity or weakness (Wolff, *Anthropology*, 26-31). But the Hebrew term covers the territory of "body" virtually completely whereas Greek distinguishes σάρξ from σῶμα, a crucial distinction for John's theology of resurrection.

[16]For a very rich treatment of the meaning of flesh in John, see Dorothy Lee, *Flesh and Glory: Symbol, Gender, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (New York: Crossroad, 2002) 29-64.

The most important term in this anthropological semantic field in relation to the resurrection of Jesus, and the one which John uses in a subtle way that marries Semitic and Hellenistic understandings of the human, is σῶμα, "body."[17] Because moderns tend to think of the body as a distinct substance in the human composite, the physical component as distinguished from the spiritual, they tend to equate it with flesh, itself misunderstood as the soft, solid component in distinction from blood and bones. In other words, body tends to be understood as a physical substance which is integral to but only a part of the person.[18]

For John, body is the person in symbolic self-presentation. The person may be living or dead[19] but it is the whole self, the bodyself, who is living or dead. In Semitic thought, once the body of the dead person begins to decay, to fall apart, the person is no longer a person. Whatever trace of the individual may survive in Sheol, it is not a human being because it does not enjoy subjectivity, community, or union with God.[20] The body is quintessentially the person as self-symbolizing (i.e., as numerically distinct, self-consistent and continuous), a subject who can interact with other subjects, and who is present and active in the world.[21] A corpse, in John's

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[17]Here I disagree with Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 45-46, who suggests that there is no significant difference between σάρξ and σῶμα. I will argue that there is a critically important difference. Jesus does not rise as "flesh" (σάρξ) but as "body" (σῶμα).

[18]It is interesting that psychosomatic medicine is discovering in various ways how completely the whole human is "body," not in the reductive sense of being nothing but physical matter, but in the sense of being, as a whole, a "bodyperson." This understanding is closer to the biblical understanding than the reductionistic anthropology spawned by the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment. Nevertheless, contemporary understandings of the human are still quite dichotomous as is evidenced by the often mechanistic approaches to medical procedures.

[19]The Hellenistic influence on John's thought as well as the exploitation of the possibilities of the Greek language are clear here. *Bâsâr* is not used to speak of a corpse (although *nepesh* occasionally is) but only of living creatures whereas John does not use σάρξ (which the LXX uses for *bâsâr*) but σῶμα to speak of the corpses on the cross (19:31) and specifically of the dead body of Jesus (19:38, 40; 20:12) and of his risen body (2:21-22).

[20]I have never seen a better definition of Sheol than that of John L. McKenzie who says in "Sheol," *Dictionary of the Bible* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1965) 800, that Sheol "is less a positive conception of survival than a picturesque denial of all that is meant by life and activity."

[21]I have dealt at length with the concept of symbol, especially as it functions in John's Gospel, in *Written That You May Believe*, 63-77. See also Lee, *Flesh and Glory*, 9-28. A still very important work on symbol in theology and especially on the body as the primary symbol by which a person is present to himself/herself as well as to others is Karl Rahner, "The Theology of the Symbol," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, More Recent Writings, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966): 221-52, esp. 245-52 on the body. Joseph A. Bracken, in "The Body of Christ—An Intersubjective Interpretation," *Horizons* 31 (Spring 2004): 7-21, dialogues with Rahner's position from the standpoint of neo-Whiteheadian metaphysics.

It is especially interesting that the term "body" does not seem to play a distinct enough

vocabulary, is also called a body (John 19:31, 38, 40; 20:12) precisely because it symbolizes the whole person, the bodyself, in its transition from being to nonbeing or from presence to absence. The corpse is the symbolic (i.e., perceptively real) person in the process of becoming absent and when the person is finally and fully absent, when the corpse has decomposed (which, importantly, does not happen in the case of Jesus), it is no longer considered a body. In short, if the pre-Easter Jesus as *flesh*, that is, as mortal human being, was the symbolic presence of God's glory in this world (cf. John 1:14), Jesus as *body* is his own symbolic presence to his contemporaries. Prior to his death the two, flesh and body (i.e., the mortal human person called Jesus), are coterminous as they are in all humans in this life. The issue of "body" as distinct from "flesh" only arises when Jesus dies and the two are no longer coterminous.[22]

The issue of Jesus' real presence in and after his passage through death dominates the last supper in John (chaps. 13–17) as well as the resurrection narrative (chap. 20). Where is the Lord? Has he gone where his disciples cannot follow? Are they orphans, deprived of the glory of God that had been present in the flesh of Jesus? Are future believers condemned to a faith based on hearsay about events in which they did not and do not participate? Unless Jesus is bodily risen, unless he is alive in the full integrity of his humanity (i.e., symbolized bodily), he is not present, either as the presence of humanity in God or as God's divinely human presence to us.

The crucial anthropological-theological issue for the topic of resurrection is, then, the relation of flesh to body (i.e., of the pre-Easter person of Jesus) as mortal human being to the post-Easter person of Jesus as glorified Son of Man. By way of anticipatory summary, I will propose that the relation of flesh to body is precisely what is altered by Jesus' glorification. In his pre-Easter existence as flesh, the body of Jesus (i.e., his personal symbolic presence) was conditioned by his mortality. He was subject to death and to the limitations of space, time, and causality that natural human life entails. In his glorification Jesus goes to the Father as a human bodyself and in his resurrection he returns to his own in the full integrity of his humanity. His body is real, both continuous and discontinuous with his pre-Paschal body. To say

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role in Semitic thought to merit a term of its own in distinction from "flesh." The only bodies known to human experience were fleshly ones, either the potential human, the "earth creature" (*hââdâm*) of Gen. 2:7, or the living person, *nepesh* or *hâsâr*.

[22]I find very suggestive the point made by Mary Coloe in "Like Father, Like Son: The Role of Abraham in Tabernacles—John 8:31-59." *Pacifica* 12 (February 1999): 1-11: "In speaking of Jesus as both Temple and Tabernacle there is no dichotomy as the two are intrinsically related as the flesh (1:14) is related to the body (2:21). The Tabernacle and the Temple serve the same symbolic function even though they recall different historical eras" (4n.6). I think that, in fact, flesh and body denote different and subsequent modes (analogous to historical eras) of the presence of Jesus to his disciples. Flesh indicates his career as a mortal and body his glorified life. But the two terms denote the same person and the same presence of the glory of God among humans in that person.

that the glorified and risen Jesus is a bodyperson is to affirm that he is numerically distinct, a personal subject who can be intersubjectively present and active,[23] but he is no longer flesh. And he will be present as this same bodyself throughout post-Easter time in the range of symbols through which his personal presence will be manifest.

III. THE STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS OF THE JOHANNINE RESURRECTION NARRATIVE

Increasingly Johannine scholars recognize that the resurrection narrative of the Fourth Gospel is not a random collection of interchangeable episodes but an organic literary/theological unity and that the clue to its meaning lies in its structure.[24] There, however, the consensus ends. Scholars have proposed a surprising number of very plausible structures for John 20, including chronological and geographical, numerological and verbal, narrative and dramatic, theological and spiritual ones, many of which are complementary rather than contradictory even though they lead to different interpretations.[25] Obviously, we cannot review them here but I will

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[23]A fascinating article on the body of Jesus in its displacements, transformations, and resignifications which brings a confirming postmodern light to bear on this topic is Graham Ward, "Bodies: The Displaced Body of Jesus Christ," *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, ed. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward (London/New York: Routledge, 1999) 163-81, esp. 168 on the point here. See also Ward's article, "Transcorporeality: The Ontological Scandal," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 80 (August 1998): 235-52.

[24]Dorothy A. Lee, "Partnership in Easter Faith: The Role of Mary Magdalene and Thomas in John 20," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 58 (1995): 37-49. Although she regards the structure as an important indication of meaning, Lee does not consider the first scene, the Beloved Disciple and Simon Peter at the tomb, to be truly integral to the meaning of the Johannine resurrection narrative (38-40). She considers the pericope a minor prolepsis preparing for chap. 21. I disagree with this position although I find her treatment of Mary Magdalene and Thomas as "narrative partners" in Easter faith encircling the central episode of the appearance to the disciples enlightening.

[25]Recently, Robert Crotty, in "The Two Magdalene Reports on the Risen Jesus in John 20," *Pacifica* 12 (June 1999): 156-68, summarized and criticized a number of the major attempts to decipher the structure of John 20: Francis Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina 4 (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1998) 516; Dorothy A. Lee, "Partnership in Easter Faith"; Brendan J. Byrne, "The Faith of the Beloved Disciple and the Community in John 20," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 23 (1985): 83-97; Ignace de la Potterie, "Genèse de la foi pascale d'après Jn 20," *New Testament Studies* 30 (1984): 26-49; Donatian Mollat, "La foi pascale selon le chapître 20 de l'évangile de saint Jean (Essai de théologie biblique)," *Resurrexit: Actes du symposium internationale sur la résurrection de Jésus*, ed. E. Dhanis (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1974): 316-34; L. Dupont, C. Lash, G. Levesque, "Recherche sur la structure de Jean 20," *Biblica* 54 (1973): 482-98; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII-XXI*, Anchor Bible 29A (New York: Doubleday, 1970) 965. This list is by no means exhaustive. Crotty, of course, offers his own

propose two complementary structures, one theological and one spiritual, without implying agreement or disagreement with other theories. My proposal is in service of the purpose of this particular paper, namely, responding to the question of how the body of the glorified Jesus functions in the relationship between Jesus and his post-Easter disciples.

A. The Theological Structure of John 20

In verses 1-2 the narrative is introduced. Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb in darkness (always negatively symbolic in John), finds the *stone* taken out of the tomb, and reports to Simon Peter and the Beloved Disciple that "they have taken the *Lord* out of the tomb and we do *not know where* they have laid him" (20:2). The "we," even though Mary was alone at the tomb, marks the problem as not merely personal but communal.[26] The programmatic question which drives the first half of the Johannine resurrection narrative, verses 3-18, is announced: "Where is the Lord?" after his death. It also suggests one possible answer: Jesus is a corpse. He is truly gone.

In the next episode, verses 3-10, Simon Peter and the Beloved Disciple run to the tomb. The evangelist carefully structures this story so that Peter enters the tomb first and sees its contents: the grave clothes and the face veil, the *soudarion,* of Jesus lying not with the clothes but carefully wrapped up and definitively put aside (20:7).[27] The Beloved Disciple enters second and sees what he did not see from the outside when he first peered in. From outside he had seen only the grave clothes (20:5). Inside, he sees also the face veil and we are told that he "saw and believed," an expression which John uses for the appropriate faith response to a sign (e.g., 2:23; 6:30; 11:40).

This sign, the face cloth now laid aside, is both continuous and discontinuous with the signs done by Jesus in his public ministry. One characteristic of signs in both dispensations is that they are symbolic and therefore intrinsically ambiguous. Everyone present saw the healed Man Born Blind in chap. 9 and the raised Lazarus in chap. 11. Some saw and believed. Others saw and did not believe. In this episode both Simon Peter and the Beloved Disciple see the face cloth. The Beloved Disciple believes; Peter does not.

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structuration of the chapter.

[26]Crotty, in "The Two Magdalene Reports," 159, follows many commentators in seeing the "we" as an "aporia," a trace of a source text which originally included other women (as we find in all three synoptic resurrection narratives) who accompanied Mary Magdalene to the tomb. However, unlike many he suggests that John uses the "we" to make Mary Magdalene a representative of the community vs. the "they" who have taken the Lord (164). I prefer this position to the attribution of redactional clumsiness to a writer of John's skill. I also think it carries ecclesiological freight.

[27]'Εντετυλιγμένον is in the perfect tense, denoting a punctual action whose effects are permanent or enduring in effect.

But this sign is also different from those worked by the pre-Easter Jesus. Jesus himself is not visibly present doing a work. In this episode the disciples are offered as sign an object that must be interpreted as revelatory, probably in terms of the face veil of Moses which he wore to shield the Israelites from the glory of his face but removed when he dealt "face to face" with God (cf. Ex 34:29-35).[28]

The finale of the scene (v. 9), however, has often defied exegetes: "for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead." So, if not the resurrection, what *did* the Beloved Disciple believe? I would suggest that he believed what Jesus had repeatedly said of his death (e.g., 13:1; 16:28; 17:1; 17:24), namely, that by it he would be glorified. The Beloved Disciple believed that on the cross, though he truly died, Jesus was exalted into the presence of God. The face cloth of his flesh (i.e., his mortality in which his glory had been veiled during his pre-Easter career) is now definitively laid aside. Jesus, the New Moses, has gone up the mountain to seal the New Covenant between God and the New Israel.

The reader now has the beginning of the answer to the question, "Where is the Lord?" He is with God. He is glorified. But there is more, something the disciples do not yet understand, namely, that Jesus is not only *glorified* but *risen* from the dead.

In the next episode, verses 11-18, Mary Magdalene is again at the tomb. This scene is redolent with allusions to the garden of the first creation and especially the place of trysting of the Song of Solomon, the wedding song of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel. In the tomb Mary sees not grave clothes and face veil but two angels sitting, one at the head and one at the feet of the place where the body (σῶμα) of Jesus had lain. This verbal picture, and even the words, recall the golden throne, the "mercy seat," of the Ark of the Covenant (cf. Ex 37:6-9 and the LXX version Ex 38:5-8) which was guarded by two cherubim, one at either end of "the meeting place of God and humans."[29] Mary Magdalene is weeping in desolation at the absence of Jesus whom she clearly equates with a corpse that has been taken away. When Jesus, the Good Shepherd, calls her by name, she turns, she is converted from her despair to recognition of him as indeed the "teacher" she had known in his pre-Paschal life. There is infinitely more in this rich scene, but for our present purpose, it provides the second dimension of the answer to the question, "Where is the Lord?" He has returned to his own. When Mary comes proclaiming (ἀγγέλλουσα) the Easter Gospel to those who are now the "brothers and sisters" of Jesus, she says explicitly, "I have seen the *Lord*" (20:18). The Beloved Disciple saw and believed through a sign, that Jesus was glorified, alive with God. Mary Magdalene has experienced him risen, returned to his own.

With the proclamation of the Easter Gospel, that Jesus is both glorified and risen, the narrative enters its second phase, verses 19-29, which takes place not at

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[28]For the linguistic argument for this Old Testament background for John's use of *soudarion*, see Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe*, 207-208.

[29]Richard J. Clifford, "Exodus," *NJBC* ¶3:49, p. 56.

the dawn of the new era in the garden of the tomb to the first apostle but in the evening of the first day of that new era, in Jerusalem "where the disciples were gathered" as a community. The question "Where is the Lord?" now gives way to the question which dominates the second half of the Johannine resurrection narrative, "How can the risen Lord be experienced?" This first scene of this second part, verses 19-23, Jesus' coming to the community, is the centerpiece of the Johannine resurrection narrative. Despite locked doors, Jesus rises up in the midst of the community. Behind the Greek ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον (literally, Jesus "stood into the midst" of the community) stands the Aramaic verb for "rise up" which can refer either to standing up physically or rising from the dead. As he had promised in his first public act in the temple of Jerusalem, Jesus, on the third day, raises up the new temple of his body in the midst of the community. In the temple Jesus' opponents had challenged him:

> "What sign can you show us . . . ?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." . . . But he was speaking about the temple of his body [σῶμα]. Therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe the scripture and the word Jesus had spoken. (John 2:18-22 NAB)

The scene then unfolds in two actions, both inaugurated by Jesus' "Peace to you," fulfilling his promise to give them, upon his return, a peace the world cannot give (cf. 14:27; 16:33). The character of the first action is signaled by the verb δείκνυμι (show or manifest), a Johannine term denoting revelation. Jesus shows them his hands and his side (i.e., he reveals to them the meaning for them of his glorification), and they rejoice at this revelation that the Lord himself is indeed in their midst, glorified but still marked with the signs of his pascal mystery. His bodyself is both continuous and discontinuous with the One they had known who had promised that his going away would constitute a new coming to them (14:28).[30]

The second action, following the repeated gift of peace, is a commissioning of this New People as God had commissioned Jesus. He breathes on them and says "Receive the Holy Spirit." The verb "breathe" (ἐμφύσαω) is a hapax legomenon, occurring only here in the whole New Testament. It occurs only twice[31] in the Old

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[30]Both verbs in this text are in the present. One would expect "after I have gone away I will come back to you" but instead we have, literally, "I go away and I come to you." It might be paraphrased, "My going away is my coming to you," i.e., my departure from you in the *flesh* is my coming to you in the *Spirit*. In fact, this is why it is expedient or necessary for the disciples that Jesus depart (cf. John 16:7). As flesh he would be unable to establish the kind of mutual interiority with his disciples that he can in the Spirit who will be with them and in them (cf. John 14:16-17).

[31]Actually, the verb appears four times in the LXX, the two instances adduced here, plus Wis 15:11 which recalls the enlivening of Adam and thus is not an independent third instance, and 1 Kings 17:21, recounting the prophet Elijah's reanimation of the son of the widow of Zarephath. The LXX inaccurately (but perhaps deliberately) translates the Hebrew for "stretched" or "measured" as "breathed," perhaps alluding to the creation narrative.

Testament: in Gen 2:7 when God, at the first creation, breathes life into the earth-creature and it becomes the first living human being and in Ezek 37:9-10 when the prophet in God's name breathes life into the dry bones to recreate, to raise from the dead, the people Israel. In this Easter scene it occurs for the third time when Jesus breathes the promised Spirit of the New Covenant into the community of disciples, creating them as the New Israel.

The structure of this scene is that of the Sinai-covenant experience, in which the great theophany on the mount was followed by the giving of the Law which made Israel the People of God. Through the prophet Ezekiel God had promised a New Covenant:

> I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary among them forevermore. My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations shall know that I the Lord sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is among them forevermore. (Ezek 37:26-28 NRSV; cf. 34:25 and Isa 54:10)

God now appears not in thunder and lightening but in the person of Jesus glorified and risen. And as promised in Ezek 36:27-28: "I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes," the Holy Spirit, the New Law, is poured forth in their hearts. Jesus, as God had promised, here establishes the New Covenant with the New Israel raising up in its midst the New Temple of his body. Thus is the church founded, commissioned to continue Jesus' mission of taking away the sin of the world and holding fast all those whom God had given him. It is important to note that the Evangelist does not tell us that Jesus, having completed his work, leaves or departs. Jesus has definitively returned to his own. He will come and come again but he never leaves. That he is present and knows what transpires in his community is clear from what follows.

The final scene in the Johannine resurrection narrative, verses 24-29, concluding with 30-31, the Thomas episode and its conclusion, at first seems out of place.[32] Nothing in the preceding scene suggested that anyone was missing when Jesus appeared on Easter night. Thomas is identified as "the twin."[33] His double

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[32]Although I cannot deal with it here, there is a hypothesis that seems to have some merit to the effect that this episode might have had anti-Gnostic purposes. Mary Magdalene and Thomas are important figures in the Gnostic literature and they play very significant roles in John's gospel that they do not play in the synoptic resurrection accounts. See April D. DeConick, " 'Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen' (Jn 20:29): Johannine Dramatization of an Early Christian Discourse," *Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years* (Leiden: Brill, 1997) 381-98, who proposes that the Thomas episode was composed to refute the Thomasine Christians in Syria whose characteristic soteriology appears in the *Gospel of Thomas*. She proposes that the *Gospel of Thomas* may date from 70-80 CE and thus might have been available to the Fourth Evangelist.

[33]M. de Jonge, "Signs and Works in the Fourth Gospel," in *Miscellanea Neotestamentica* 2, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 48 (Leiden: Brill, 1978) 119, calls Thomas "a

identity is immediately specified: he is both "one of the Twelve" and thus was a companion of the pre-Easter Jesus and participant in the pre-Easter signs, and he was "not with" the gathered disciples on Easter night when Jesus appeared and thus he is one of those who will know the resurrection not through an Easter experience but through the testimony of the church, "We have seen the Lord."

Thomas refuses this new structure of faith, refuses to enter this new dispensation. He insists that he will believe only if he can touch the very wounds of Jesus, only if he can return to the dispensation of pre-Easter faith, only if he can continue to relate to Jesus in the flesh. Note that Thomas is not spontaneously mistaking the glorified Jesus for the pre-Paschal Jesus as had Mary Magdalene. He is demanding that Jesus be for him as he had been prior to the glorification. And note further that Thomas does not "doubt" as is so often averred. He refuses: "I will not believe." In John's gospel believing and refusing to believe are always a matter of free choice, not the natural response to irrefutable evidence or the lack thereof.

Jesus comes again, a week later, on Sunday night, the time of the early Church's Eucharistic celebrations. Again he "rises up in the midst of them," greets them with peace, but this time, though the doors are shut marking the boundaries of the Church community, there is no mention of fear of the authorities. Jesus' initial gift of peace has cast out fear. We are in post-Paschal time. But Jesus directly addresses Thomas whose inner thoughts and outer words he knows perfectly. "I know mine and mine know me" (John 10:14).

He invites Thomas not to do what Thomas had demanded, to physically probe the wounds in his hands and side in order to verify his physical resuscitation, but to a different but just as real experience of his true identity. He says, "Bring here your finger and *see my hands.*" One does not "see" with one's finger. The imperative, ἴδε, "Behold!" or "See!" as M. de Goedt pointed out many years ago, functions in the Fourth Gospel as part of a revelation formula.[34] The invitation is not to see physically but to grasp what cannot be seen with the eyes of flesh (e.g., that Nathaniel is a true Israelite without guile or that the Beloved Disciple on calvary is now the true son of the mother of Jesus). The wounds of Jesus are not a proof of physical reality but the source of a true understanding of the meaning of Jesus' revelatory death.

Then the invitation reaches deeper. Jesus commands Thomas to put his hand into his open side from which had issued the lifegiving blood and water, symbol of the gift of the Spirit in baptism and the Eucharist which Jesus had handed over in his death and had focused in the gift to the community a week earlier when Thomas

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borderline case" because he is the last of those who see signs and the first of those who must believe on the word of witness. I agree that he stands on the border between the Easter experience and later experience of the Risen Jesus but I do not think that signs are replaced by the word of witness. Rather, one kind of sign gives way to a new kind of sign.

[34]Michel de Goedt, "Un schème de révélation dans le quatrième évangile," *New Testament Studies* 8 (January 1962): 142-50.

was absent. This is followed immediately by the imperative μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος ἀλλα πιστός. Note that Jesus does not say, "Do not doubt." Ἄπιστος means to refuse to believe, to be unfaithful, to be treacherous. Thomas's immediate response, not an attempt to touch Jesus physically but an acknowledgement of what he can grasp only by faith, makes clear his conversion from unfaithful to faithful, his transition from his stubborn absorption with the flesh of Jesus, "Unless I touch physically I will not believe," to his self-gift to the risen one, "My Lord and my God." In other words, Jesus says to Thomas not what the Lukan Jesus says to his disciples who disbelieve their eyes through startled joy: "Feel me and see that I have flesh and bones, that I am not a ghost," but rather "Thomas, grasp in faith what my saving death means and appropriate in faith the fruits of that death, the Spirit poured forth from my open side." He is saying in effect what he said to Simon Peter at the last supper, "Unless you enter by faith into the new dispensation inaugurated by my glorification you can have no part with me."

Jesus welcomes Thomas's conversion unreservedly and confirms his Easter faith by one of the only two macarisms in the Fourth Gospel. Jesus equates the two kinds of believing. Faith based on seeing pre-Paschal signs which was appropriate to the first dispensation is supplanted by post-Paschal faith that will be based on a new kind of sign, like the folded up face veil, the apostolic testimony of Mary Magdalene and the rest of the disciples, the words of scripture, which will now be mediated by the Church. "Blessed are those (now including Thomas) not seeing and believing." It is not later disciples who are assimilated to Thomas, but Thomas who is assimilated to the later believers. The pre-Paschal era is over, even for those who participated in it.

The evangelist then concludes the Gospel by directly addressing the disciples of the post-Easter dispensation. The pre-Easter Jesus, says the evangelist, did many visible signs, only some of which are written in the gospel. But the written gospel has exactly the same function in the faith of later disciples that the signs Jesus performed in Palestine had for the apostolic generation.[35] Through believing, these later disciples will have life in Jesus' name just as did his pre-Easter companions. Contrary to what some exegetes, who insert an adversative conjunction between the two parts of verse 29, would suggest, namely, that Jesus derrogates Thomas's faith based on seeing and exalts the faith of those who have not seen signs and yet have believed, Jesus does not assign superiority to either the first generation's experience or that of later disciples. As Dorothy Lee has well said, the faith of future believers is dependent on the witness of the apostolic community but in no way limited by that dependence. "Thomas's confession is a narrative bridge between Easter Sunday

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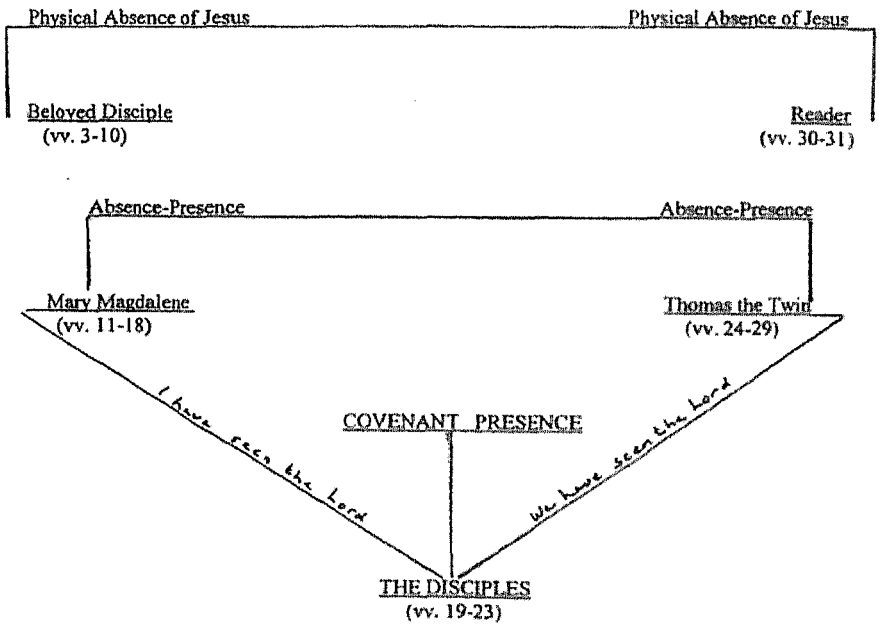
[35]Peter Judge, "A Note on Jn 20,29" in *Festschrift Frans Neirynck*, ed. F. Van Segbroeck, C. M. Tuckett, G. Van Belle, J. Verheyden, vol. 3 (Leuven: University Press, 1992): 2183-92, cites U. Schnelle and D. A. Carson as scholars who, like himself, take the position that the Thomas incident itself is a sign and the gospel will function in the same way for later believers.

and the life of the believing community."[36] The point is neither that faith in response to signs is defective nor that sense experience, seeing and hearing and touching, will have no further role in faith. The mode, not the fact, of seeing must change because the mode, not the fact, of Jesus' bodily presence to his disciples has changed.

B. The Dialectic of Sense Experience and Believing

We turn now, very briefly, to make explicit the dialectic between sense experience and believing which emerges as the spiritual structure of the Johannine resurrection narrative before drawing conclusions about the body of the risen Jesus from the Mary Magdalene and Thomas incidents specifically.

A SPIRITUAL STRUCTURE OF JOHN 20



After the introductory verses in which the question, "Where is the Lord?" is introduced we have a scene in which Jesus does not appear visibly. The Beloved Disciple comes to faith in the glorification of Jesus upon encountering a sign, the

[36]Lee, "Partnership in Easter Faith," 48.

folded *soudarion*. At the other end of the Johannine resurrection narrative is the evangelist's conclusion assuring later disciples that in scripture, in which Jesus also does not appear visibly, Jesus is really and salvifically encountered. In other words, at the beginning and the end of the resurrection narrative is an encounter with Jesus through signs, through sensible material realities, in which Jesus does not appear in visible form. Both of these scenes recount experiences that are historically realistic, the kinds of experiences believers have in "ordinary time," if you will, as they taste bread and wine, hear words, feel water.

Moving inward we have three scenes which take place in "extraordinary time," that are clearly a theological narratizing of spiritual experience, real but not physical, rather than the recounting of ordinary human events taking place in ordinary time. In the very middle is the scene of the establishment of the covenant community which will be in the world the ordinary mode of the glorified Jesus' presence and action (i.e., will be his body). Assured of his identity and presence and enlivened by his Spirit the community will forgive sins and hold fast in communion all those whom God will entrust to it as Jesus took away the sin of the world (cf. 1:29) and held fast all those the Father had given him (cf. 6:37; 6:39; 10:27-29; 17:12; 18:9).

Flanking this historicized narration of the founding of the church as the fully realized bodily but nonphysical and definitive presence of Jesus in the world are two episodes which occur in an "in-between" time/place, what we might call Easter-time, when Jesus is both present and absent. Their purpose is to narratively unfold the intrinsic relationship between Jesus himself, as a distinct bodyperson, and the ecclesial community which is his body in the world. In other words, they are about the relationship of Jesus to Christ mediated by the category "body," the body of the risen Jesus which is the principle of the ecclesial body of Christ. The two are identical, though not reductively so; distinct but inseparable. It is time, then, to examine these two scenes in terms of Jesus' seemingly contradictory commands to Mary Magdalene not to touch him and Thomas the Twin to touch him.

IV. CONCLUSIONS ON TOUCHING THE RISEN JESUS

Both Mary Magdalene and Thomas the Twin undergo conversions that consist in turning away from a mode of experience that is no longer possible and turning toward a new, unfamiliar, but equally real mode of experiencing Jesus. Both, in response to a negative imperative of Jesus (what they must not do: do not touch, do not be faithless) followed by a positive imperative (what they are now called to: find him in the community, recognize me in believing) must pass over from the pre- to the post-Easter dispensation. But the emphasis in each episode is different. The two actors are in different positions in the story, Mary Magdalene bridging the pre-Easter with the Easter time; Thomas the Twin bridging the Easter with the post-Easter time. And their experiences respond to the two presiding questions: (1) *Where* is the Lord encountered? and (2) *How* is the Lord encountered?

Mary Magdalene is the first pre-Easter disciple to encounter the risen Lord. She erroneously thinks that the past dispensation has been reinstated. Things will be as they had always been. Literal misunderstanding in John's gospel is a literary technique to describe growth in faith. Mary reaches out to touch Jesus, to relate to him as she had in the past, using a form of address suitable to that time, "Rabbouni," but Jesus forestalls her attempt: "Do not touch me."

There is no textual basis for the often expressed opinion that Mary was clinging hysterically to Jesus or trying to hold him back from ascending.[37] The verb is ἅπτω, "touch," not κρατέω, "grasp," or "hold on to." (The verb κρατέω is in John's vocabulary and he uses it in its normal sense in the very next scene, in 20:23.) Jesus' response is μή μου ἅπτου. The imperative verb is in the imperfect tense reflecting an ongoing or continuous activity and the negative particle is in the emphatic position. The point is that physical "touching"—which is an apt metonymy for the physically mediated historical experience of two people relating "in the flesh," that is, as mortal human beings—has come to an end. Jesus says: "Go to my *brothers and sisters*." The place where Mary will now encounter Jesus as he really is, glorified and risen, is the community. Mary must pass over from the pre-Easter to the Easter dispensation. Her proclamation to the other disciples makes clear that she has indeed made that transition. She no longer speaks of "Rabbouni." As first apostle of the resurrection she proclaims "I have seen the *Lord*."[38]

In the Thomas episode things are quite different. The Easter experience has taken place. The ecclesial community, constituted by the New Covenant mediated

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[37]See Lee, "Partnership in Easter Faith," 42, against this interpretation which, however, Frank J. Matera, in "John 20:1-18," *Interpretation* 43 (1989): 405, and Teresa Okure, "The Significance Today of Jesus' Commission to Mary Magdalene, *International Review of Mission* 81 (April 1992): 180, both defend.

[38]Although discussing this point is beyond the scope of this essay I want to note the growing consensus among biblical scholars and theologians that Mary Magdalene is, by every criterion available in the New Testament, an apostle. Pheme Perkins, in " 'I Have Seen the Lord' (John 20:18): Women Witnesses to the Resurrection," *Interpretation* 46 (1992): 31-41, says that the Johannine Mary Magdalene episode at least establishes a woman as an independent witness to the resurrection. Teresa Okure in "The Significance Today of Jesus' Commission to Mary Magdalene," 184-85, correctly makes the point that Mary Magdalene is not simply "the apostle to the apostles," as if her mission ended once theirs began. She is the apostle commissioned to announce the resurrection to the church. However, her role is not limited to announcing the resurrection (like the Emmaus disciples) but she is commissioned, (like Paul), to proclaim the Good News, that is, the new status of believers as children of God. Lee in "Partnership in Easter Faith," 46-47, says that she is the first apostle, the first disciple of the Risen Lord, and the representative of the community of faith. A major exegetical/theological study of all the New Testament material on Mary Magdalene, and which comes to virtually the same conclusion, is Gerald O'Collins and Daniel Kendall, "Mary Magdalene as Major Witness to Jesus' Resurrection," *Theological Studies* 48/4 (December 1987): 631-46. The growing consensus about Mary Magdalene's apostolic identity appeals primarily to the Johannine text.

by Jesus on Easter night, proclaims to Thomas, "We have seen the Lord." Mary was the first of the Easter community of apostolic witnesses. Thomas is the first of the post-Easter generation who must respond in faith to their witness.

Thomas does not, like Mary, simply misunderstand his experience; he categorically refuses to believe the testimony of the community. He says, in effect, "You may have seen the Lord, but I haven't, and until I do see physically I will not believe." Thomas does not deny their experience. He simply says he will not substitute their experience for his. What he misunderstands is that it is not *their experience* which he must accept in place of his own, but their *witness* upon which *his own experience* must be grounded. It is the problem of all believers down through the centuries who must somehow grasp that faith is not accepting something as true on the basis of external authority. It is allowing the testimony of the church to initiate one into personal experience through the Spirit of the living God present in Jesus.

It is important to note that Thomas' attitude would have been just as problematic during the time of the pre-Easter Jesus as it was after Easter. Sense experience plays an important role in faith but not as physical proof of the "facts." One could eat the bread at the Sea of Tiberius and, precisely as Jesus says to the crowds who sought him afterward, *not* see the sign of Jesus as the bread of life (cf. 6:26) but be seeking a reliable guarantee of material food. The Pharisees in chapter 9 saw the blind man healed and the Jews in chapter 11 saw Lazarus called forth from the tomb after four days. So one could probe the wounds of the risen Jesus and not see the sign of his real presence. Similarly, in post-Paschal time, Jesus is available, whether in Eucharist or Scripture or mystical experience, only to faith.

Jesus, who is already "there" because he knows what Thomas has said, appears in the community from which Thomas had been separated not only physically but spiritually. And Jesus' being there, his real presence, is precisely what the community mediates to Thomas by its testimony. The community is not reporting a past event which Thomas accidentally missed and now has to accept on someone else's word. It is witnessing, pointing to, a present reality available to him in faith as it is to them in faith. Jesus' command to Thomas is: "Be not unbelieving, but believing." The invitation to touch, as we have seen, is not an invitation to physical verification which cannot cause or ground faith but to sacramental experience, to *seeing* what the crucifixion really means, to *appropriating* what the open side really offers.

Sacramental experience is not disembodied. It is an experience of the spiritual precisely in the material. Jesus invites all his post-Easter disciples to an experience that is in continuity with but different from the faith based on the signs performed in the pre-Easter dispensation. The continuity consists in the material mediation, the actual sensible experience of seeing, hearing, tasting, touching. However, the mediating material is no longer perishable bread at the Sea of Tiberias, but the Eucharistic meal flowing from the open side of the glorified Jesus, no longer physical eyesight restored in the waters of Siloam, but the baptismal opening of the eyes of faith in the water pouring from that same source. Thomas signifies his conversion in his exclamation, "My Lord and my God," which is a response not to flesh probed but to what Thomas could not see physically but only in faith. He, and

all later disciples come to faith through an experience of signs, material mediations of spiritual reality. But the signs in the new dispensation are not the visible flesh of the pre-Easter Jesus but the sacramental body of the Lord which is, and is mediated by, the church.

The whole second half of the Johannine resurrection narrative is an unfolding of the new dispensation of signs which will supplant the signs of the pre-Easter dispensation. The fundamental sign, the ur-sacrament, of the really present Jesus is the ecclesial community itself which is now the body of Christ, the New Temple raised up in the world. The community witnesses in the word of proclamation rooted in Scripture, through the celebration of the sacraments, through its ministry of reconciliation, through its community of mutual love that washes feet and lays down life, and through the mutual indwelling of its members in Jesus in contemplative prayer. The response to that witness, from the first disciples and down through the ages, is the recognition of Jesus as Lord and God to which Jesus replies, "Blessed are you . . . because you believe."

The purpose of these two episodes of "touching" is to help the reader make the same transitions that Mary Magdalene and Thomas the Twin had to make, from a romantic fantasy of contemporaneity with the pre-Easter Jesus through the Paschal experience of death and new life to faith in the glorified and risen Lord. But in making this transition two extremes must be avoided. One is to see the Church not as a mediation of the risen Jesus himself but as an exhaustive substitute for a Jesus who no longer exists. The other is a gnostic attempt to relate to Jesus in a purely spiritual Jesus-and-I spirituality that rejects the sacramental structure of the ecclesial body of the Lord as a merely human organization that plays no necessary or essential role in our encounter with Jesus. Mary Magdalene had to realize that the Church is the *body* of Christ (Jesus is not a corpse) and Thomas had to realize that the Church is the body of *Jesus* (not an unsatisfactory substitute for him).

The ecclesial community, doing in the world the works that Jesus did (cf. 14:12), is truly the body of Christ, the corporate person who is the organ of Jesus' salvific action in the world. But this can only be the case if Jesus himself, the principle of that ecclesial body, is actually alive in the full integrity of his personal humanity. This is the significance of maintaining that Jesus is *bodily* risen from the dead (i.e., that what body signifies, namely, numerical identity, personal subjectivity grounding interpersonal presence and effective action in the world) is verified in him after his death on the cross. Jesus is no longer in the flesh (i.e., he is no longer mortal). He is no longer subject to the conditions of time, space, causality. The description of the tomb as empty of his corpse, his being not recognizable to Mary Magdalene, his being able to appear in the midst of his disciples despite locked doors, his knowing what Thomas thought and said in his absence, are narrative devices for insisting on both the real bodiliness and the nonfleshliness of the risen Jesus.

If Jesus is not a real, distinct, personal subject, a real bodyperson, there is no ontological foundation for the Jesus mysticism that has been a constant feature of the church's spirituality, at least from the stoning of Stephan who saw *Jesus*

standing at the right hand of God and Paul who learned that it was *Jesus* whom he was persecuting, down to our own day. But if Jesus is merely physically resuscitated, if he is still in the flesh, then he cannot be mediated by a community from which he would be not only distinct but separate.

In summary, John's resurrection narrative is not about Jesus' vindication after his shameful death. It is about where and how his disciples, the first generation symbolized by Mary Magdalene, and all those who were not with them when Jesus came symbolized by Thomas the Twin, will encounter Jesus as *their* Lord and God.

In the gospel itself believing is presented as a response to seeing the works of Jesus and hearing his revelatory discourse. Johannine scholars continue to argue over whether John's Gospel was written to *delegitimate* faith based on seeing signs in favor of faith based solely on hearing or to present seeing and hearing as *indispensable* mediators of revelation.[39] I believe that the very nature of the Incarnation as the symbolization of the Wisdom/Word of God in sensible form indicates the latter position. The Word of God became flesh; we have seen his glory; our hands have handled the Word of Life. And he is still with us.

However, precisely because Jesus appeared in the flesh (i.e., as a mortal human being), his human career as flesh had to come to an end. But if, as I believe to be the case, the dynamic of sensible experience mediating faith is a permanent feature of the revelatory economy of salvation, it must somehow continue after the departure of the pre-Easter Jesus through death. Chapter 20 of John's Gospel, enlightened by the Last Discourses in which Jesus explains his "going away" through death as a new mode of "coming to" his disciples in the Spirit, is an attempt to elucidate how the sense-experience-mediating-faith dynamic is realized in a new mode after the resurrection. The Mary Magdalene and Thomas the Twin episodes explore the personal appropriation by disciples of the new location and the new mode of experience of Jesus, risen bodily and now acting through his ecclesial body. The category of body, no longer equated with flesh, body that is material in the sense of being a principle of individuation but not in the sense of being a principle of physicality, is used by the evangelist to assure the reader that it is Jesus himself who is not only glorified in God's presence but who has returned to us and that we will see him and hear him and touch him, experience his real presence in our lives and in our world, through our participation in the life of the ecclesial community. But we are also assured that we are, and are challenged to be, individually and communally, his real presence, his body in the world. Jesus says that "in that day," namely, our own post-Easter day, "you will know that I am in the

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[39]For a good overview of this dispute ranging from those who regard John's gospel as a critique and/or rejection of faith based on signs through those who see signs as playing a critical role in faith only during the career of the pre-Easter Jesus to those seeing signs as permanently important in faith even though the kind of sign is different after the resurrection, see Judge, "A Note on Jn 20,29." My position belongs in the last category.

Father and you in me and I in you" (John 14:20) and that "the works that I do you also will do, and greater than these will you do" (John 14:12).

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