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DOUBTING THE RESURRECTION: A REPLY TO JAMES A. KELLER

Stephen T. Davis

In this paper, I reply to James A. Keller's criticisms of my "Is It Possible To Know That Jesus Was Raised From the Dead?" I first discuss three of Keller's arguments about the New Testament evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. I then respond to two philosophical criticisms Keller makes of my original article. Finally, I argue that Keller has paid insufficient attention to several powerful arguments that support the thesis that Jesus was genuinely raised from the dead.

I

This paper is a reply to James A. Keller's article, "Contemporary Christian Doubts About the Resurrection."¹ His article is a response to my paper, "Is It Possible To Know That Jesus Was Raised From the Dead?"² Keller's is the second response to my paper that has appeared in this journal.³ I am happy to admit that I have benefitted from both. The first was written from a theological perspective that might be described as to the right of mine; Keller's position might be described as to the left of mine. I find myself wishing that Aristotle's doctrine of the mean had some relevance to theological disputes.

The thesis of my original paper was that Christians who are supernaturalists and who believe in a theologically traditional understanding of the resurrection of Jesus are or can be rational in doing so. Keller is right that I do not there define clearly what I mean by the term "resurrection," but his own estimate of my meaning ("an event which happened to Jesus (and not just to his followers) in which Jesus, though he had truly died, was restored to life and consciousness and after which his living body left the tomb"—p. 40) is quite acceptable to me.⁴

Keller thinks that I have not established my thesis. He argues that "we cannot today reconstruct what the resurrection involved because there is no clear, historically reliable account of what the resurrection was thought to be by those who directly experienced the Easter event" (p. 41). He further argues that my thesis only holds if we observe an established pattern of miraculous divine acts in the world; the problem, he says, is that "we do not have sufficient evidence to make it rational to believe that the resurrection is part of a pattern of nonnatural events in which God has acted for similar ends" (p. 41).



There is much in Keller's paper with which I agree. (1) Any discussion of the rationality of belief in the resurrection of Jesus must take into account issues discussed professionally by New Testament scholars, and I did not do that in any detail in the paper Keller criticizes. (I hope to have done so elsewhere.) (2) Keller is at great pains to argue that his criticisms of me do not presuppose naturalism (he repeats this point so frequently that it almost becomes a sort of philosophical *leitmotif*); and I am prepared to agree that they do not.⁵ (3) Keller correctly argues, contrary to a brief and (as I now think) poorly considered paragraph in my original paper, that my overall argument requires the notion that the resurrection of Jesus cannot be explained naturalistically. I still think Christians could accommodate the understanding of miracles suggested in that paragraph, but Keller is right in pointing out that it would necessitate radical changes in my own way of conceptualizing the resurrection. (4) I agree with Keller (and the biblical scholars he cites) about the view of miracles held by people in biblical times (pp. 52, 59-60, fn. 28). Such events were understood not as violations of laws of nature but roughly as revelatory and awe-inspiring acts of God. I did claim in my original paper that first century folk tended to explain events naturalistically, just as we do today, and I stand by that claim. I did not assume that their concept of miracle was roughly the same as that of twentieth century philosophers. My aim was to deny a point often made by critics of the biblical miracles,⁶ *viz.*, that people in those days were much more gullible than we are toward miracle claims, that they were prepared to believe in miracles almost at the drop of a hat. If that is true, I still wonder why the apostle Thomas, and many other first century doubters and critics of the resurrection, were so reluctant to believe. More importantly, if resurrections and other miracles were held to be so common (but see John 9:32), why was *this* one taken to be so significant?

However, I do not believe that Keller has successfully refuted the thesis of my article, and I so argue in the present paper. It consists of three main sections. In the first, I discuss three of Keller's arguments about the New Testament evidence for the resurrection. In the second, I respond to two philosophical criticisms that Keller makes of my paper—the first concerns hard and soft miracles and the second concerns a pattern of divine activity. Finally, in the third section, I briefly mention some historical-critical arguments that seem to me decisively to support the thesis that belief in the resurrection of Jesus (in the sense defined above) is rational.

II

There is no doubt that the most profound differences between Keller and me on the resurrection of Jesus consist in our different attitudes toward and conclu-

sions about the New Testament evidence. The crucial question between us is: How reliable are the biblical texts that testify to the resurrection of Jesus? Keller's position is cautious and even doubting. As a theological conservative, I simply do not share his basic skepticism about the New Testament, about what we can and cannot know or rationally believe about the events following the crucifixion of Jesus.

Keller asks two main questions: First, are the New Testament accounts of the resurrection of Jesus primitive, i.e., do they reflect the views of the eyewitnesses to the resurrection events at the time they first came to believe? Second, are those accounts true? Keller thinks we simply have no basis for any firm answer to these questions. This, combined with his endorsement of my own view that we ought to have a bias *against* supernatural events that can only be overcome by very strong evidence indeed, leads Keller to doubt that the resurrection (as I understand it) occurred.

Let me illustrate what I call Keller's basic skepticism. On the views of the eyewitnesses, he says: "we do not have a historically reliable account of what the very earliest believers in the resurrection understood it to involve" (p. 50). This is because the accounts in the Gospels are all second-hand, sketchy, and late (p. 46). "It is at least not clear," he says, "that the Gospel writers give historically reliable accounts of what happened" (p. 48). What Keller thinks we can learn from the empty tomb stories is startlingly meager; virtually all he will allow is that the stories "probably show something about the understanding of the resurrection held by those who told the stories" (p. 48). On the historical trustworthiness of the early chapters of Acts, he cites with approval those New Testament scholars who doubt their reliability (pp. 49-50). And on the New Testament evidence for the resurrection as a whole, he says: "Thus, all that the historian of today can reliably conclude is that certain first-century Christians said that Jesus appeared to certain people" (p. 49).

Now merely citing Keller's views and calling them skeptical do not refute them. I only wish to make it clear that I do not share those views, nor do I think the evidence justifies them.⁷ It is obvious that the differences between Keller and me on the resurrection accounts in the Bible are too huge to be adjudicated here. Let me then be content with replying to three of his specific arguments.

(1) Keller argues that what we need to find is the understanding of the resurrection events held by those who witnessed them *at the time they witnessed them*—not the opinions of later converts or even of those same people much later. And to a certain extent, one can appreciate this point. Further, Keller is surely right that in general we do not have eyewitness accounts of the resurrection appearances of Jesus (I Corinthians 15:8 is an exception), and that the Gospels were written years after the events they describe. But it does not follow from this that the resurrection accounts are unreliable. Sometime we only realize the

full meaning of an event long after we see it. As a teenager I once saw a world record set at a track meet; it made little impression on me at the time—only much later did I realize its significance. Thus it is perfectly possible that the eyewitnesses did not understand the full significance of Jesus' resurrection at the time, and that their mature and reliable grasp of what happened and what it meant is found in the New Testament.

Furthermore, Keller has neglected to mention this fact: virtually all New Testament scholars feel sure that there is primitive material in the Gospels (most would argue that there is primitive material in the resurrection accounts at the end of the Gospels); so the mere fact that the Gospels were written years later does not by itself render them unreliable.⁸ Though it is clear that the gospel traditions grew and changed as time passed, it can be plausibly argued that at least most of the gospels reached their final, canonical form during a time when eyewitnesses to the events they record were still alive. Ancient traditions, some of which may well be true, even allege that some of the Gospels were written under the influence of such people. Finally, as Keller knows, in I Corinthians 15 (written in the early 50's), we have testimony to the resurrection of Jesus that is no more than twenty to twenty-five years from the events themselves; and in this chapter (see 15:3) Paul stresses that he is relying on traditions that are much older than that. For various reasons, many scholars feel that Paul may well be relying here on traditions that date from a year or two of the events.⁹

(2) Like German New Testament scholar Willi Marxsen (on whom he relies heavily), Keller stresses the point that there were no eyewitnesses to the resurrection event itself, and that the faith of the earliest believers in the resurrection of Jesus was an inference. Keller says: "To say that Jesus was resurrected is to express the conclusion of an inference, either based solely on the claims that certain people saw the Risen Lord or based on these claims and also on the story of the empty tomb" (p. 46).

Now the claim that belief in the resurrection is based on an inference, even for those who saw the risen lord, is obviously true. I am not sure how helpful to Keller the point is, however, for surely there are inferences involved in most of our beliefs, and that fact does not make them suspect. It is true (so far as I know) that no one was in the tomb with Jesus and saw the event itself. But circumstantial evidence can be strong. If some time later today I were to see and converse with my own father (who died after an automobile accident many years ago, and whose body I saw in the casket), I would be (or at least could be, depending on other circumstances) well within my intellectual rights in inferring that a resurrection had occurred. Similarly, the earliest Christians believed they saw and spoke with Jesus. Thus it is misleading when Keller says, "The early Christians spoke of Jesus' resurrection not because they had seen it occur, but because of other experiences which certain Christians had had (being

appeared to by Jesus and possibly seeing his empty tomb)" (p. 46). I agree that nobody saw the event itself occur, but some such "early Christians"—e.g., Mary Magdalene, Peter, Thomas—saw the risen lord. *That* is why they said, "He is risen." They did not have to rely on the experiences of certain other Christians.¹⁰

(3) Keller argues that we today cannot recover what was meant by the term "resurrection" as used by the earliest Christians. Did they think the tomb was empty? Did they think that Jesus' resurrection body was a physical object? We do not know, Keller says (see pp. 47, 50, 57-58, fn. 14). But this conclusion is too skeptical. There are two questions here. First, is a concept of bodily resurrection (where what was raised was a body that had spatial location, reflected light, and could be seen and touched) taught in the New Testament accounts? And here the answer is obviously yes. Despite some puzzling descriptions,¹¹ the accounts stress heavily the physical nature of Jesus' resurrection body. We are told several times, in unmistakable terms, that Jesus walked and ate, and that his body could be seen and felt.¹²

Second, is the concept of bodily resurrection primitive, i.e., was it held by the earliest believers? Again I think the answer is yes, though it is true that some biblical scholars would demur. They hold that the earliest views of resurrection were spiritual in nature (a view they claim is confirmed by Paul in I Corinthians 15:50) and that the later accounts grew more physical, primarily in response to apologetic pressures. But I find these views unconvincing; let me mention two important considerations.

(a) Paul claims in I Corinthians 15:6 that the resurrected Jesus "appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep." Since the very idea of a group hallucination or vision is at best deeply problematical,¹³ Paul seems to be presupposing here some sort of physical presence of Jesus. He is also in effect appealing to eyewitnesses. "If you don't believe me you can check with them"—so he appears to be saying. Keller claims we know too little about this appearance to draw any inferences from it, and it is true that we know little about it (unless Paul speaks here of the same appearance that is described more fully in Matthew 28:16-20). Keller explains the appearance Paul cites by suggesting that since "by then" the story of the appearance to Peter was well known, eventually many other people gradually joined in the claim to have seen Jesus, "not wanting to seem to lack faith or insight" (pp. 57-58, fn. 14). But it is clear that this is a mere conjecture on Keller's part, and an implausible one at that. There is no evidence to support it.

(b) Bodily resurrection was the understanding of resurrection commonly held by Jews of Jesus' day. Of course other survival-of-death theories were then current (e.g., Greek immortality doctrines), but apart from further elaboration or explanation, any first century Jew would understand the term "resurrection" to mean bodily resurrection (which would imply the empty tomb). Keller disputes

this claim (p. 50); we simply cannot know, he says, what the earliest believers in the resurrection held. But I think it important that nowhere in the New Testament (not even in I Corinthians 15) or in any of its literary ancestors hypothesized by scholars do we find firm evidence of the frequently-made modern claim that Jesus was raised in only a non-bodily or purely spiritual sense.

III

Let me now reply to two philosophical criticisms that Keller makes. (1) In my original article I made a distinction between what I called soft miracles and hard miracles. A soft miracle, I said, was one that a naturalist could consistently agree had actually occurred (e.g., some desperately ill person Jones suddenly and inexplicably getting well); the naturalist will simply claim that it was not due to any activity of God. A hard miracle, I said, is one which is so difficult to explain naturalistically (e.g., a person dead for three days living again), that consistent naturalists will want to deny that it has actually occurred. Keller criticizes the distinction. He says: "But if one does not have a good reason to think that a naturalistic explanation could not be given (as one typically does not, in regard to soft miracles), why should one resort to a nonnaturalistic explanation? . . . The very fact that an unbeliever could accept the fact that Jones had recovered while not accepting the resurrection would suggest that Jones' recovery is no strong indication that a miraculous event has occurred" (pp. 42-43).

Of course I agree that naturalistic explanations of phenomena ought to be preferred by rational people. Nevertheless, Keller's approach to my distinction is wrong. I meant it, so to speak, as a psychological (or perhaps epistemological) distinction rather than an ontological one. Both soft miracles and hard miracles are miracles, i.e., acts of God that involve interventions in the natural order. A soft miracle is a highly improbable event which I cannot explain, nor can the experts (the doctors, in my above example); but I can at least *imagine* a possible naturalistic explanation, or can rationally imagine that there is one. If a soft miracle is actually a miracle, however, the true explanation of the event is that it was caused by God (as with a hard miracle). A hard miracle, on the other hand, is an event that is so highly improbable that I cannot even imagine a plausible naturalistic explanation.

When Keller alleges that with soft miracles one *typically* has a good reason to think that a naturalistic explanation can be given, he is right. But this is not always true. The question whether the event ought rationally to be called a miracle depends on whether the available naturalistic explanations are plausible. The reason to suspect that a soft miracle is a miracle is precisely the fact that everyone (including the experts) is puzzled as to what has occurred and the

available naturalistic explanations look unconvincing or even foolish. So, contrary to what Keller says, a soft miracle (e.g., someone's suddenly recovering from what looked like a hopeless case of cancer) might constitute rational grounds for belief in a miracle. The naturalists might be wrong. Thus, I believe the distinction between hard and soft miracles is still an acceptable distinction.

(2) As noted earlier, Keller argues that the thesis of my original paper holds only if we observe an established pattern of miraculous divine activity in the world; we in fact observe no such thing, so my thesis fails. Even if the biblical evidence were much stronger than it is, he says, we need "evidence that *God* has in the past *acted in nonnatural events for similar ends*" (p. 51, italics Keller's). Now there is a point in the neighborhood here that is surely correct. Attributing an apparently nonnatural event to the activity of God is probably only rational for people who rationally believe (1) that God exists; (2) that God occasionally acts miraculously in the world; and (3) that God acts miraculously in the world on occasions like the one in question. Such a belief does seem necessary not perhaps to rational belief that a nonnatural event has occurred but to rational belief that it was caused by God. That much is clear.

But the problem is that Keller pushes this acceptable point to the absurd extreme of claiming that belief in a given divinely-caused miracle is rational only if we already possess *proof* that God has acted similarly in the past.¹⁴ He insists that these prior nonnatural events that form the believed-in pattern of divine activity must be proven miracles or "clear" miracles. In order to assess the rationality of belief in one purported miracle, he says, we have to assess the rationality of belief in the purported miracles that are said to form its pattern. Keller says: "If no clearly nonnatural events can be cited in biblical events or in our own lives, how can it be rational to believe that they *actually* occur?" (p. 54, italics Keller's; see also pp. 53, 54, 60, fn. 31).

This requirement is absurd because it rules out rational belief in miracles *a priori* (something Keller says he does not want to do). I can only rationally believe in miracle M1 if M1 fits a pattern of clear or proven miracles M2 and M3; but I can only rationally believe in miracles M2 and M3 if they fit a pattern of clear or proven miracles M4-M7; and etc. We are in a kind of vicious infinite regress in which rational belief in a miracle can never (for logical reasons) get started. I believe this is enough to show that Keller's requirements are far too stringent. For me rationally to believe that a given purported nonnatural event was caused by God, what is needed, I claim, is that I rationally believe that God has acted nonnaturally and similarly in the past; the rationality of this belief certainly could be established (in part) via proof of past miracles, but need not be established in this way, and need not be established (at least not to the satisfaction of those who do not share the belief) at all. Then, if I have the relevant rational belief, and if the purported nonnatural event does occur, it can

be rational for me to attribute it to God.

Keller makes much of the fact that there are no clear hard miracles occurring today (pp. 53, 60). And if "clear" means "obvious to everyone (even naturalists)," I agree. John Hick has taught us that all events are religiously ambiguous in the sense that they can be interpreted either religiously or irreligious.¹⁵ The most natural and common event (e.g., the sun rising in the morning) can be treated by the religious person as evidence of God's presence, and the most startling of religious events (e.g., the Exodus) can be dismissed or interpreted innocuously by skeptics. So perhaps there can be no such miracle (a clear hard miracle) as Keller asks for. In my own view, there are events both in biblical and in recent times whose best explanation is that they are miraculous acts of God.¹⁶

IV

Keller nowhere explains his own view of the resurrection of Jesus. This is understandable; his paper is a critique of my theory rather than a defense of his own. Nevertheless, the reader finishes Keller's paper wondering what Keller thinks actually happened in the days and weeks after the crucifixion. Perhaps Keller would simply say, "I don't know." That surely is his right; as I said in my original paper, since the idea that a man dead for three days would live again is so improbable, agnosticism about the resurrection of Jesus can constitute a rational position.

But Keller wants to deny my claim that belief in the resurrection of Jesus (in the sense Keller defines for me) can also be a rational position. And here I think Keller has simply not paid sufficient attention to the powerful arguments defenders of the resurrection can marshal. These arguments ought not be expected to convince naturalists, but for supernaturalists (especially those with broadly Christian assumptions) they are, I believe, more than sufficient to render belief in the resurrection rational.

First, virtually all scholars who write about the resurrection of Jesus, whether they believe it happened (in some sense or other) or not, agree that: (1) while early first century Jews expected a messiah, the idea of a dying and rising messiah was new; (2) Jesus of Nazareth died and was buried; (3) the disciples of Jesus were consequently discouraged and dejected; (4) soon after the burial of Jesus, his tomb was claimed to be empty and some of the disciples had experiences that they took to be encounters with the risen Jesus; (5) these experiences caused them to believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead; and (6) they started a movement that grew and thrived and that was based on the idea that Jesus had been raised from the dead. My point here is that there exists an acute embarrassment to those who deny that Jesus was raised from the dead or offer reductive theories of the resurrection, *viz.*, that they are unable to account for these widely

accepted facts. That is, though many have tried, no nonbeliever in the resurrection has been able to tell a convincing story of what occurred in the days following the crucifixion. The nineteenth century rationalistic explanations of people like Reimarus, Paulus, and Strauss collapse of their own weight once spelled out, and skeptical twentieth century accounts are all subject to compelling criticism—either accounts of critics like Hugh Schonfield¹⁷ or of believers who propose reductive theories of Jesus' resurrection like Willi Marxsen. The only theories that seem able to account for the accepted facts are those that affirm that Jesus was genuinely raised.

Second, despite the frequently noted discrepancies in the New Testament accounts of the resurrection of Jesus, at important points the biblical texts speak with one voice. All of them affirm that Jesus was dead; that he was buried in a tomb near Jerusalem supplied by a man named Joseph of Arimathea; that early on the day after the Sabbath certain women in the company of Jesus (among them Mary Magdalene) went to the tomb; that they found the tomb mysteriously empty; they they met an angel or angels; that the women were either told or else discovered that Jesus had been raised from the dead; and that Jesus subsequently appeared a number of times to certain of the women and certain of the disciples. There seem to be no resurrection texts that question any of these items. Furthermore, even the discrepancies themselves testify in a left-handed way to the accuracy of the essential story. If the resurrection of Jesus were a story invented by the later Christian church, or by certain members of it, no discrepancies would have been allowed. The biblical accounts do not bear the earmarks of a lie.

Third, the deliberate lie thesis does not square with the radical change that came over the disciples in the days and weeks after the crucifixion. Confused, fearful, discouraged, and disorganized immediately afterward, they soon became bold and courageous revolutionaries who started a religious movement that changed the world order. Their unanimous testimony was that this change was due to their belief in the resurrection of Jesus. Their behavior was not consistent with the behavior of people who have intentionally perpetrated a fraud. Furthermore, the thesis that a few of the earliest believers perpetrated a fraud on the rest of them is implausible because there is not one bit of evidence to support it. No such secret ever "leaked out," nor is there any evidence of an inner circle controversy among the early Christians on the truth of the resurrection. In fact, the New Testament accounts of the resurrection of Jesus were written during a time when eyewitnesses to the events described were still alive and could easily refute erroneous claims. The evidence decisively supports the conclusion that all the earliest Christians believed wholeheartedly in the resurrection of Jesus,¹⁸ even at the cost (for many of them) of their lives.

Fourth, the story of the empty tomb has about it the ring of truth. I cannot explore all the arguments here;¹⁹ let me briefly mention five of them. (1) The

empty tomb is widely taught in the New Testament—in all three synoptic Gospels (note especially that it appears in Matthew’s special source, i.e., in material Matthew did not get from Mark or Q), in the Fourth Gospel, and is possibly alluded to in both Paul (I Corinthians 15:4)²⁰ and in Acts (see Acts 2:27-29).²¹ (2) No story invented by later Christians to bolster their claims about Jesus’ resurrection would have revolved so crucially around the testimony of women, whose value as legal witness in the culture of the day was virtually negligible.²² (3) Most conclusively, it is impossible to imagine the earliest believers having any success whatsoever in their attempt to convince people that Jesus had been raised from the dead without ungainsayable evidence of an empty tomb. Otherwise, their enemies could have refuted their testimony by simply producing the body. Keller replies to this argument by casting doubt on the early chapters of the book of Acts (see pp. 49-50); but it should be noted that many able New Testament scholars find the chronology of those chapters reliable.²³ (4) Contrary to what Keller says, the earliest believers in the resurrection must have believed in an empty tomb, for as noted above that is how any Jew in early first century Palestine would have interpreted the idea of resurrection. Jewish notions of resurrection were highly physical notions, quite unlike Greek immortality concepts or the later idea of “spiritual resurrection.”²⁴ (5) The story of the guard at the tomb in Matthew’s gospel is often attacked by critics as an apologetic legend told by the later church. It is easy to see, however, that even if this is true (and I do not accept that it is), the telling of the story is senseless unless everyone—Christian and nonchristian alike—agreed that the tomb was empty.

Fifth, for several obvious reasons the resurrection appearances of Jesus do not seem to be hallucinations. The disciples were not expecting a resurrection. On at least three occasions the resurrected Jesus was not immediately recognized. Many different people saw the risen Jesus, in different places and in different circumstances. There were none of the usual causes of hallucination present—drugs, hysteria, or deprivation of food, water, or sleep.²⁵ It looks as if the appearances of Jesus caused the Easter faith of the disciples rather than (as is sometimes charged) the other way around.

If I were a supernaturalist who discovered these items of evidence about the claim that Jesus was raised from the dead, I would be rational in believing that claim. Thus, unless these arguments are defective, Keller has not refuted the point that I tried to make in my original paper, *viz.*, that belief in the resurrection of Jesus is rational. I agree with Keller (see pp. 50, 54) that in some sense the burden of proof ought to be on those who argue that a miracle has occurred. But the evidence in favor of the claim that Jesus was genuinely dead and later genuinely alive is sufficient to render the resurrection belief of Christians rational. This is especially true since those who deny that there was a genuine resurrection seem quite unable to explain what did in fact happen in the days after the

crucifixion. Further, they seem equally unable to explain why an obscure itinerant rabbi who died a criminal's death became so quickly (in the eyes of many) the Christ, the savior of the world, the Son of God.

Keller closes his article with a kind of appeal on behalf of people who are Christians but who doubt that the resurrection of Jesus (in the sense I have been working with) happened. I accept that appeal. *Of course* there are Christians of such a persuasion. *Of course* they are making "an honest effort to come to terms with the Christian scriptures in light of all we can learn" (p. 55). I believe I know some such folk; some of them are friends and colleagues of mine. I have no desire to deny they are Christians, convict them of heresy, accuse them of "bad faith," deny them tenure, or *anything* of the sort. I do want to reserve the right to disagree with them. This is because I believe a notion of resurrection like the one I have been defending is the most faithful and defensible one for Christians of today.

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NOTES

1. James A. Keller, "Contemporary Christian Doubts About the Resurrection," *Faith and Philosophy*, V, 1 (January, 1988), 40-60. Page numbers in parentheses in the text refer to this article.

2. Stephen T. Davis, "Is It Possible To Know That Jesus Was Raised From the Dead?," *Faith and Philosophy*, I, 2 (April, 1984), 147-59.

3. See Gary R. Habermas, "Knowing That Jesus' Resurrection Occurred: A Response To Davis," *Faith and Philosophy*, II, 3 (July, 1985), and my response in the same issue.

4. I am aware that there are other ways of understanding Jesus' resurrection currently on the theological market, so to speak. See my "Was Jesus Raised Bodily?," *Christian Scholar's Review*, XIV, 2 (1985), 140-152. In this and other articles, some not yet published, I consider several relevant issues that Keller correctly points out are not discussed in "Is It Possible To Know That Jesus Was Raised From the Dead?"

5. Whether Keller is himself a naturalist or something like a naturalist is a separate question whose answer I do not know. He identifies himself with process thought (p. 54), and surely process theologians (e.g., Hartshorne, Cobb, Griffin) are not naturalists as defined in my original article; they believe that God exists and is at work in the world. But their views (as I see them) are near to naturalism because they posit important causal limitations on God's efficacy due to the power necessarily had by other actualities. That is, God's power cannot involve unilateral interruptions of the powers of and causal relations that exist among those other actualities. God cannot, for example, unilaterally stop a speeding automobile or reverse cellular damage due to exposure to radiation. See David Griffin's contribution to *Encountering Evil*, ed. by Stephen T. Davis (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 101-119.

6. See, for example, Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," *Kerygma and Myth*,

ed. by Hans Warner Bartsch (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), 5, 39, and Willi Marxsen, *The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 156.

7. I try to show this on historical-critical grounds in "Was Jesus Raised Bodily?" and in an article I am presently preparing called "Was The Tomb Empty?" Furthermore, I hold to a "high" doctrine of biblical inspiration and authority, and am accordingly prepared to believe what the Bible says on matters that are relevant to Christian faith and practice unless there is overwhelming reason not to do so. See my *The Debate About the Bible* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977).

8. Even Rudolf Bultmann would agree with this. See *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. I (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1955), 45. See also Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 306; George E. Ladd, *I Believe in The Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1975), 75-77; and Raymond Brown, *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1973), 18. See also Gary Habermas and Antony Flew, *Did Jesus Rise From the Dead?*, edited by Terry L. Miethe (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 180 (footnotes 4-7).

9. See especially Reginald Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 9-49. The evidence is effectively marshalled by Gary Habermas in *Did Jesus Rise From the Dead?*, 23, 30-31 (fns. 38-42), 66, 91-92.

10. Keller argues that Paul is the only person in the New Testament to whom the resurrected Jesus appeared "who is said to have been an unbeliever at the time of the appearance" (p. 58, fn. 14), but this is surely a blunder. What about James (1 Cor. 15:7), Thomas (John 20:24-28), and Paul (Acts 9:1-9)?

11. E.g., the claim in Luke 24:31 that Jesus "vanished out of their sight"; in John 20:19, 26 that Jesus twice appeared in a room despite "the doors being shut"; and in Acts 1:9 that Jesus was "lifted up" into the clouds.

12. Beside the four empty tomb stories, which imply bodily resurrection, see Matthew 28:9-10; Luke 24:13-35, 36-43; and John 20:11-18, 19-29; 21:1-15.

13. Brown calls the idea "synchronized ecstasy." *Op. cit.*, 91. In addition, he argues strongly that the New Testament idea of resurrection is bodily resurrection. See 70, 73, 85-86.

14. Sometimes he merely makes the quite acceptable point made above—the event, he correctly says, must fit into "what we take to be" a pattern of divine activity (p. 51). Further: "Belief that there is such a pattern is needed, if belief in the resurrection in Davis' sense is to be rational" (p. 41). "Belief in these other events is necessary to provide the context within which [it is rational to believe in a given miracle]" (p. 52). "If we are rationally to believe that some nonnatural events occur, we must have in mind some events which we believe are nonnatural events" (p. 54).

15. John Hick, *Faith and Knowledge* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1957), 183-191.

16. In 1974 my own mother-in-law, after much prayer by many people, and after attending a healing service, was healed of or experienced remission from what had been diagnosed by several doctors and after several tests as brain tumor. She is alive and well today as I write these words. The story is told in H. Richard Casdorph, M.D., Ph.D., *The Miracles: A Medical Doctor Says Yes to Miracles* (Plainfield, New Jersey: Logos International, 1976), 121-132.

17. Hugh Schonfield, *The Passover Plot* (New York: Bantam Books, 1966).

18. Again, see Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," 42. Virtually every New Testament scholar accepts this point.

19. As I try to do in the as yet unpublished article referred to in footnote 7. See also John Frederick

Jansen, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ in New Testament Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1980), who says, "Today there is a growing consensus in New Testament scholarship that the tradition of the empty grave is early tradition, not a late addition," 41-42.

20. Gerald O'Collins, S.J., *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson Press, 1973), 43-4, convincingly argues that Paul's theory of the resurrection expressed in I Corinthians 15 requires an empty tomb.

21. And thus the empty tomb tradition seems strongly supported by Keller's third canon of rationality in historical investigation, viz., "that independent testimonies which agree are generally more credible than either one alone or than the two testimonies would be if one were independent on the other" (p. 41).

22. See William L. Craig, "The Historicity of the Empty Tomb of Jesus," *New Testament Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (January, 1985), 58. See also O'Collins, *op. cit.*, 43.

23. See Patrick Henry, *New Directions in New Testament Studies* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), 156, 168; and A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in The New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 189. For the basic argument here, see Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Did Jesus Really Rise From The Dead?," *Dialog* 4 (1965), 18-35, and Brown, *op. cit.*, 126.

24. This is discussed in my "Was Jesus Raised Bodily?," 149-152. We particularly see the Jewish emphasis on bodily resurrection in the inter-testamental literature, e.g. The Apocalypse of Baruch 50:2; 2 Maccabees 14:46; I Enoch 51:1-2, 62:13-16.

25. See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), 88-106. See also Habermas, 84-88.