

WHY SHOULD WE *THINK CRITICALLY* ABOUT THE RESURRECTION?

The main purpose of this book is to help people to *think critically* about these questions:

- **Did Jesus rise from the dead?**
- **Did God raise Jesus from the dead?**
- **Did God raise Jesus from the dead and give Jesus an immortal body?**

But why *think critically* about these questions? The basic answer to this question is that *thinking critically* about these questions gives us the greatest chance of arriving at answers to these questions that are true.

There are no guarantees that *thinking critically* will result in true answers, because some questions are too difficult to answer given our limited knowledge and information relevant to some questions. And even when there is enough knowledge and information to arrive at a true answer to a question, the question might be difficult or challenging enough so that sometimes people who *sincerely make a serious effort to think critically* about the question nevertheless go astray and end up with a false or dubious answer to the question.

But there is no way of determining the answer to a difficult or challenging question that will *guarantee the truth* or correctness of the answer. That is simply a basic reality for human beings. Critical thinking is not a guarantee of truth, but it is *the best way that we have* of determining what is true or false.

Why would *thinking critically* be the most reliable way of determining a true answer to a question? In order to answer this question, we need to understand what it means to *think critically about a question*. Here is one

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dictionary definition of the word “critical”:

Relating to or characterized by criticism; reflecting careful analysis and judgment...

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Critical thinking is thus thinking that involves *careful analysis and judgment*.

In what sense does critical thinking involve “careful analysis and judgement”? What is one being “careful” of when doing such thinking?

First and most importantly, a critical thinker is NOT being careful *to please other people or to avoid upsetting or offending other people*, and a critical thinker is NOT being careful *to please himself or herself* or to confirm one’s prejudices or to advance the interests of some particular group (e.g., “my ethnic group”, “my political group”, “my family”, “my friends”, “my religious group”, etc.). Rather, a critical thinker is one who is being “careful” in relation to *universal intellectual standards*, such as: *clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency*, etc. Careful analysis and careful judgment are analysis and judgment that involve *consciously striving to conform one’s thinking to such universal intellectual standards*.

Sloppy or careless thinking rarely leads one to true answers to questions. Thinking where one makes little or no effort to conform to intellectual standards like *clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency*, etc. results in unclear, confused, and illogical thinking, and such thinking usually ends with conclusions that are false or inaccurate or dubious. Our best chance of determining true answers to our questions is to engage in *careful analysis and judgment*, which involves thinking where we *consciously strive to conform our thinking to universal intellectual standards*.

The only alternatives to *careful analysis and judgment* are *careless*

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analysis and judgment or *relying on some supposed authority* to provide the answer to a question. Sometimes it makes sense to rely on the conclusions of an authority. If a person or group of people have *greater knowledge or experience than others* on a particular issue, then it might make sense to defer to the conclusions of that person or group. However, if different “authorities” provide conflicting answers to a particular question, then one must determine which authorities are legitimate and which authorities are not, and that requires doing some thinking.

Thinking about which alleged “authority” is legitimate and which alleged “authority” is not legitimate can either be done in a careless or sloppy way, or it can be done with careful analysis and judgment. So, if one is going to rely upon some alleged “authority” to provide the answer to a particular question, one can either think critically about this or think uncritically about this. To have the best chance of correctly determining whether some alleged “authority” is legitimate, one needs to think critically about the various alternative alleged “authorities”.

So, whether one thinks for oneself to determine the answer to a question or relies upon some authority to provide the answer to that question, *one should engage in critical thinking*, either about the question itself, or about the various alleged authorities that offer answers to that question.

THE USE OF THE BIBLE IN THINKING ABOUT THE RESURRECTION

Protestant Christians usually view the *Bible* as the ultimate authority on matters of religion and theology. Catholic Christians usually view the *Catholic Church* as the ultimate authority on matters of religion and theology. Muslims view the *Koran* as the ultimate authority on matters of

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religion and theology, and Mormons view the *Book of Mormon* as the ultimate authority on such issues. So, there are various alternative alleged “authorities” on matters of religion and theology.

For both Christians and Jews, the authority of their prophets and their scriptures rests upon *divine miracles*. It is the miracles of Moses that supposedly demonstrate that Moses was a true prophet, and it is the miracles of Jesus that supposedly demonstrate that Jesus was a true prophet and the divine savior of mankind. But if it is the alleged miracles of Jesus, such as his *resurrection from the dead*, that show Jesus to be a true prophet and the divine savior, then in order to determine that Jesus was a true prophet and the divine savior, we must FIRST determine whether the alleged miracles associated with Jesus actually occurred, before we can conclude that Jesus (and the New Testament) is a legitimate authority on matters of religion and theology.

Because alleged *miracles* are the basis for evaluating alleged religious authorities, to determine which alleged authorities, if any, are *legitimate authorities* in matters of religion and theology, we cannot rely upon the *Bible* to provide an answer to these questions:

- **Did Jesus rise from the dead?**
- **Did God raise Jesus from the dead?**
- **Did God raise Jesus from the dead and give Jesus an immortal body?**

One cannot use the *Bible* as a legitimate authority on questions of religion and theology until AFTER answering these questions. Therefore, *we must think for ourselves about these questions* without relying on the authority of the *Bible*, or the *Koran*, or the *Book of Mormon*, or the *Catholic Church* to provide the answers to these questions. Since we want to arrive at *true*

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answers to these questions, *we need to think critically* about them.

Since most of the information we have about Jesus comes from the *Bible*, especially from the Gospels, it is not possible to investigate the alleged resurrection of Jesus apart from studying the *Bible*, especially the Gospels. However, one can treat the Gospels (and other New Testament writings) as *ordinary ancient documents* that can be used to help answer historical questions about Jesus. One just cannot treat the Bible as being *the infallible Word of God* while investigating the alleged resurrection of Jesus, because the alleged resurrection of Jesus is one of the key pieces of evidence for *the alleged divine inspiration and authority* of the *Bible*.

We don't just want any old answers to our questions. We want answers to our questions that are true, or answers that have *the best chance of being true and accurate* answers. For many of our most important questions, there is no easy way of determining true answers to them.

Most important questions are also difficult questions to answer. Since we want to have true answers to our most important questions, we have no alternative but to *think critically* about those questions, to engage in careful analysis and careful judgment, by *consciously striving to conform our thinking to universal intellectual standards*, such as: *clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, fairness*, etc. Otherwise, we are likely to end up with answers that are false, inaccurate, or dubious.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CRITICAL THINKING

Two leading experts in the field of critical thinking defined it this way:

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Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. In its exemplary form, it is based on universal intellectual values that transcend subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness...

([A statement by Michael Scriven & Richard Paul](#), presented at the 8th Annual International Conference on Critical Thinking and Education Reform, 1987.)

Thinking involves a number of *different elements*, so doing “careful analysis” involves recognizing the different *elements of thinking*, and the intellectual skill of analyzing instances of thinking into those different elements.

Here is a list of some of the most important *elements of thinking*:

- **Point of View**
- **Purpose**
- **Question at Issue**
- **Information**
- **Interpretation & Inference**
- **Concepts**
- **Assumptions**
- **Implications & Consequences**

<https://community.criticalthinking.org/wheelOfReason.php>

Critical thinking requires one *to consciously strive to conform one’s thinking to universal intellectual standards*. Here is a list of some of the most important of those standards:

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- **Clarity**
- **Accuracy**
- **Precision**
- **Relevance**
- **Depth** (consideration of the complexity of the issue)
- **Breadth** (consideration of various points of view)
- **Logic**
- **Significance**
- **Fairness**
- **Sufficiency** (consideration of whether evidence is incomplete or some relevant evidence is missing)

<https://community.criticalthinking.org/criteriaCorner.php>

These *universal intellectual standards* are to be applied not only to instances of *the thinking of other people*, but also to *one's own* instances of thinking, including when one evaluates instances of thinking from other people.

For example, I can evaluate an instance of thinking of someone else as being UNCLEAR, but when I do so, I need to be CLEAR about why I think that this instance of thinking is UNCLEAR. If my thinking about someone else's thinking is UNCLEAR, then I need to work on *my own thinking* about the other person's thinking so that *my thinking* becomes CLEAR.

I can also evaluate an instance of the thinking of someone else as being INACCURATE, but my thinking about that other person's thinking should be ACCURATE. If I notice that my thinking about the other person's thinking is INACCURATE, then I need to work on *my own thinking* so that it becomes ACCURATE.

Critical thinking requires careful analysis and careful judgement. Careful analysis requires that one *analyze thinking into its elements*, and

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careful judgment requires that one *evaluate thinking* in terms of *universal intellectual standards*. The universal intellectual standards need to be used not only to evaluate *the thinking of others*, but also to guide and evaluate *one's own thinking*, including the thinking one does when evaluating instances of the thinking of other people.

KREEFT AND TACELLI CLAIM TO PROVE JESUS'S RESURRECTION

In Chapter 8 of their book *Handbook of Christian Apologetics (hereafter: HCA)*, the Christian philosophers Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli make a case for the resurrection of Jesus. They do so by attempting to “refute” or “disprove” *four skeptical theories* that are alternatives to the Christian view that *God raised Jesus from the dead*:

There are five possible theories: Christianity, hallucination, myth, conspiracy, and swoon. ...

If we can refute all other theories (2-5), we will have proved the truth of the resurrection (1). (HCA, p. 182)

Here are the four skeptical theories that Kreeft and Tacelli attempt to disprove:

Hallucination: “the apostles were deceived by a hallucination”

Myth: “the apostles created a myth, not meaning it literally”

Conspiracy: “the apostles were deceivers who conspired to foist on the world the most famous and successful lie in history”

Swoon: “Jesus only swooned and was resuscitated, not resurrected” (HCA, p.182)

According to Kreeft and Tacelli, they were successful in their attempt to show that these are the only skeptical alternatives to the Christian view and in their attempt to refute each of the four skeptical theories:

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Swoon, conspiracy, hallucination and myth have been shown to be the only alternatives to a real resurrection, and each has been refuted. (HCA, p.195)

Kreeft and Tacelli clearly believe they have “proved the truth of the resurrection”.

WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT JESUS’S RESURRECTION?

According to Kreeft and Tacelli, the resurrection of Jesus was a *miracle*. This was a supernatural event that *God intentionally caused to happen*. In the opening pages of their chapter on the resurrection, Kreeft and Tacelli note that the apostle Paul (who wrote most of the New Testament) stated this:

“...we testified of God that he raised Christ...” (HCA, p.177)

In clarifying the Christian belief in Jesus’ resurrection, Kreeft and Tacelli also make this statement:

We also do not know exactly how Jesus rose. ...No one knows what spiritual technology God used. (HCA, p.179)

The Christian view about Jesus is not just that *Jesus happened to come back to life* after dying on the cross, but that *God intentionally caused this event to happen*. If Jesus was raised from the dead *by God*, then this unusual event might well *tell us something about God* and about God’s plans and purposes for human beings.

According to Kreeft and Tacelli, if Jesus was actually raised from the dead by God, then that has *two very significant implications*:

...that validates his [Jesus’s] claim to be divine and not merely human, for resurrection from death is beyond human power; and his divinity validates everything else he said, for God cannot lie. (HCA, p. 176)

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If they can prove that God raised Jesus from the dead, then they think they can also prove that *Jesus was divine* and that *all the teachings of Jesus are completely true*. In short, proving the resurrection of Jesus helps prove that two of the most basic aspects of the Christian religion are true, according to Kreeft and Tacelli.

I am skeptical not just about *the case that they make* for the resurrection of Jesus, but also about these two claims concerning the *implications and significance* of the resurrection of Jesus. However, I will address the *implications and significance* of this alleged event after critically examining the case Kreeft and Tacelli make for the resurrection of Jesus.

KREEFT AND TACELLI'S CASE FOR THE RESURRECTION

Here is a summary of the case made by Kreeft and Tacelli for the *Christian Theory* of the alleged resurrection of Jesus:

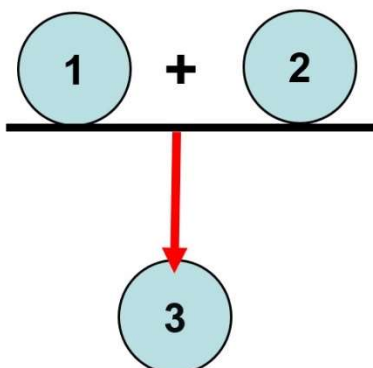
- 1. IF Kreeft and Tacelli refuted the four alternative (skeptical) theories, THEN Kreeft and Tacelli have proved that the *Christian Theory* of the resurrection of Jesus is true.**
- 2. Kreeft and Tacelli refuted (in Chapter 8 of HCA) the four alternative (skeptical) theories.**

THEREFORE:

- 3. Kreeft and Tacelli have proved that the *Christian Theory* of the resurrection of Jesus is true.**

Here is a simple diagram of the logical structure of this core argument:

The Logical Structure of the Core Argument for the Resurrection



Much of my *critical examination* of this case will focus on premise (2). But after I complete my evaluation of premise (2), I will also critically evaluate premise (1). Here is the reason given by Kreeft and Tacelli in support of premise (1):

4. In addition to the *Christian Theory* of the alleged resurrection of Jesus, there are only four alternative (skeptical) theories: (a) the *Swoon Theory*, (b) the *Hallucination Theory*, (c) the *Conspiracy Theory*, and (d) the *Myth Theory*.

THEREFORE:

1. **IF** Kreeft and Tacelli refuted the four alternative (skeptical) theories, **THEN** Kreeft and Tacelli have proved that the *Christian Theory* of the resurrection of Jesus is true.

The idea is that if there are only *five possible theories*, and you eliminate four of those theories, then the only remaining theory must be true.

Premise (2) is based on four claims that are more specific than premise (2):

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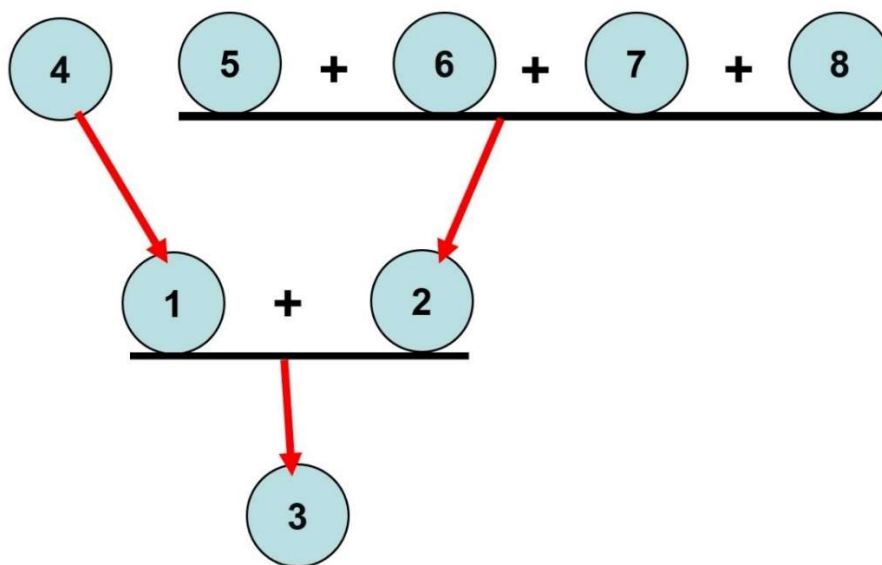
5. Kreeft and Tacelli refuted the *Swoon Theory* (in Chapter 8 of HCA).
6. Kreeft and Tacelli refuted the *Hallucination Theory* (in Chapter 8 of HCA).
7. Kreeft and Tacelli refuted the *Conspiracy Theory* (in Chapter 8 of HCA).
8. Kreeft and Tacelli refuted the *Myth Theory* (in Chapter 8 of HCA).

THEREFORE:

2. Kreeft and Tacelli refuted (in Chapter 8 of HCA) the four alternative (skeptical) theories.

Here is a diagram that shows the logical structure of Kreeft and Tacelli's case for the resurrection of Jesus:

The Logical Structure of the Case for the Resurrection of Jesus



WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN THEORY OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS?

This is a *very important detail* that Kreeft and Tacelli fail to adequately clarify. They are attempting to prove that the Christian Theory about the alleged resurrection of Jesus is true, but they are somewhat UNCLEAR about what the Christian Theory asserts.

There are at least *three different possible interpretations* of what “the Christian Theory” asserts:

Christian Theory A: Jesus rose from the dead.

Christian Theory B: God raised Jesus from the dead.

Christian Theory C: God raised Jesus from the dead and gave Jesus an immortal body.

These interpretations are arranged in *ascending order of strength*.

Christian Theory A makes the weakest claim, implying only that Jesus died and then later came back to life. *Christian Theory B* makes a somewhat stronger claim, because it implies that *Christian Theory A* is true, but also implies something more: *God intentionally caused Jesus to come back from the dead*. Finally, *Christian Theory C* makes the strongest claim, because it implies that both of the previous Christian Theories are true, but it also implies something more: *When God raised Jesus from the dead, God gave Jesus an immortal body*.

The stronger a claim is, the less likely it is true, and the more evidence is required to show it to be true. Because *Christian Theory A* is *the weakest* of the three claims, it is *the most likely* of those claims to be true. Because *Christian Theory C* is *the strongest* of the three claims, it is *the least likely* to be true, and it requires the most evidence to show it to be

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true. So, clearly *it matters which interpretation one settles on* about what “the Christian Theory” asserts.

I have previously pointed out that in the opening pages of Chapter 8 of HCA, Kreeft and Tacelli clearly imply that “the Christian Theory” asserts that *God intentionally caused Jesus to rise from the dead*. So, that eliminates interpretation A and leaves us with two options: *Christian Theory B* or *Christian Theory C*.

Kreeft and Tacelli do make an attempt to clarify what they mean by “the Christian Theory” of the resurrection of Jesus on pages 178 to 181 of HCA. The third point they make in that section is *directly relevant* to determining the correct interpretation of “the Christian Theory”, that is to say, to determining what specific assertions Kreeft and Tacelli believe are made by “the Christian Theory”:

Resurrection is also not reincarnation. Reincarnation, like resuscitation (supposedly) only gives you another mortal body. Christ’s resurrection body was immortal. (HCA, p.179)

To distinguish “the Christian Theory” about Jesus’s alleged resurrection from other ideas (such as reincarnation or resuscitation), Kreeft and Tacelli characterize “the Christian Theory” as asserting that *the body of the resurrected Jesus was immortal*. Therefore, Kreeft and Tacelli are committed to defending *Christian Theory C* in their case for the resurrection of Jesus.

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SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CASE AGAINST THE *SWOON THEORY*

In Chapter 8 of their book *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (hereafter: *HCA*), Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli make a case for the resurrection of Jesus. They do so by attempting to refute *four skeptical theories* that are alternatives to the Christian view that *God raised Jesus from the dead and gave Jesus an immortal body*:

Swoon: “Jesus only swooned and was resuscitated, not resurrected”

Hallucination: “the apostles were deceived by a hallucination”

Conspiracy: “the apostles were deceivers who conspired to foist on the world the most famous and successful lie in history”

Myth: “the apostles created a myth, not meaning it literally”
(See: *HCA*, p.182)

One of the four skeptical theories is the *Swoon Theory*. In Chapter 8 of *HCA*, Kreeft raises nine objections against the *Swoon Theory*. Those same objections were also published [in a blog post](#) by Peter Kreeft as well as [on Kreeft's website](#).

A key premise in Kreeft and Tacelli's case for the resurrection of Jesus is premise (2):

2. Kreeft and Tacelli refuted (in Chapter 8 of *HCA*) the four alternative (skeptical) theories.

This premise is in turn based upon four more specific claims or premises:

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5. Kreeft and Tacelli refuted the *Swoon Theory* (in Chapter 8 of HCA).
6. Kreeft and Tacelli refuted the *Hallucination Theory* (in Chapter 8 of HCA).
7. Kreeft and Tacelli refuted the *Conspiracy Theory* (in Chapter 8 of HCA).
8. Kreeft and Tacelli refuted the *Myth Theory* (in Chapter 8 of HCA).

THEREFORE:

2. Kreeft and Tacelli refuted (in Chapter 8 of HCA) the four alternative (skeptical) theories.

I have critically examined Kreeft and Tacelli's case against the *Swoon Theory*, and I concluded that Kreeft and Tacelli have FAILED to refute the *Swoon Theory*. If, as I will argue, they have indeed FAILED to refute the *Swoon Theory*, then we have *sufficient reason to conclude* that their case for the resurrection of Jesus is also a FAILURE. They claimed that they would prove that Jesus rose from the dead, but their FAILURE to refute the *Swoon Theory* means that premise (5) is FALSE, and it also means that a key premise of their case for the resurrection of Jesus is FALSE, namely premise (2):

2. Kreeft and Tacelli refuted (in Chapter 8 of HCA) the four alternative (skeptical) theories.

If a key premise of their case for the resurrection of Jesus is FALSE, then *we must reject that case*, because it is UNSOUND. If premise (2) is FALSE, then Kreeft and Tacelli's case for the resurrection of Jesus FAILS.

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WHAT IS THE *SWOON THEORY*?

A basic principle of critical thinking is that one needs *to be clear about the meanings of key words and phrases* in an instance of thinking that one is attempting to analyze and evaluate. CLARITY is one of the *universal intellectual standards* to which a critical thinker consciously strives to conform his or her thinking (see the description of this standard in the *Critical Thinking Appendix* under “Universal Standards of Thinking”). So, before we examine any of Kreeft and Tacelli’s objections against the *Swoon Theory*, a first step should be to determine what specifically the *Swoon Theory* asserts.

Here is what Kreeft and Tacelli say to characterize the content of the *Swoon Theory*:

Jesus only swooned and was resuscitated, not resurrected.
(HCA, p.182)

What does it mean to say that Jesus only “swooned” on the cross? Here is the first definition of the word “swoon”:

1. To Faint

([The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language](#), Fifth Edition copyright ©2022 by HarperCollins Publishers.)

What is the significance of Jesus *fainting* on the cross? In a blog post about the *Swoon Theory*, Peter Kreeft provides an important clue:

Today we'll examine what's often called the "swoon theory," which suggests that Jesus never really died on the cross—he simply fainted, or swooned, and was presumed dead.
([“Rejecting the Swoon Theory: 9 Reasons Why Jesus Did Not Just Faint on the Cross”](#))

On this theory, Jesus was “presumed dead” by the Roman soldiers BECAUSE he had fainted on the cross and thus *appeared to be dead*.

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The basic elements of the *Swoon Theory* are obvious:

- **Jesus was crucified by the Romans.**
- **Jesus fainted while he was on the cross.**
- **Because he fainted, Jesus appeared to be dead, but was actually still alive.**
- **Because Jesus appeared to be dead, the Roman soldiers mistakenly judged Jesus to have died and they allowed Jesus' body to be removed from the cross.**
- **Jesus later came back to consciousness (without any divine intervention), and he met with his disciples who sincerely, but mistakenly, inferred that Jesus had died on the cross and then miraculously came back to life sometime after he was removed from the cross.**

The *Swoon Theory* asserts at least these five claims. According to Kreeft and Tacelli, their objections to the *Swoon Theory*, spelled out in Chapter 8 of HCA, refute this theory. If their objections FAIL to refute the *Swoon Theory*, then their case for the resurrection of Jesus also FAILS.

OVERVIEW OF THE OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE *SWOON THEORY*

In Chapter 8 of HCA, Kreeft and Tacelli present nine objections against the *Swoon Theory*:

OBJECTIONS IN HCA AGAINST THE *SWOON THEORY*

OBJECTIONS	LOCATION	BASIS
Objection #1: Deadliness of Roman Crucifixion	HCA, p.183	NOT the Gospels
Objection #2: Break their Legs	HCA, p.183	Gospel of John
Objection #3: Blood and Water	HCA, p.183	Gospel of John
Objection #4: Winding Sheets & Entombment	HCA, p.183	Gospel of John
Objection #5: Sickly Jesus	HCA, p.183	Gospel of John
Objection #6: Who Overpowered the Guards?	HCA, p.183	Gospel of Matthew
Objection #7: Who Moved the Stone?	HCA, p.183-184	All Four Gospels
Objection #8: Where Did Jesus Go?	HCA, p.184	NOT the Gospels
Objection #9: Swoon Theory implies False Theories	HCA, p.184	All Four Gospels

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Notice that the third column in the above table specifies the historical basis of each objection. I am going to use this “basis” to do *an initial evaluation* of the potential strength of these objections, so that I will start by examining what seem to be the *weakest objections* first, and then move on to objections that are potentially stronger ones. I take it that the weakest objections are likely to be those based on passages from the *Gospel of John*. The *Gospel of John* is the LEAST historically reliable of the four Gospels, so objections based primarily on passages from that Gospel are likely to be weak objections.

There is also an objection based primarily on the *Gospel of Matthew*, and two objections that are based upon passages from *all four* of the Gospels. I take it that none of the Gospels provides an historically reliable account of the life, ministry, trials, crucifixion, and burial of Jesus, although the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) are *more reliable* than the *Gospel of John*. So, the second set of objections that I will examine are those based on passages from the *Gospel of Matthew* or from *all four* Gospels.

Finally, there are two objections that are NOT based primarily on any of the Gospel accounts. Those two objections are potentially the strongest ones against the *Swoon Theory*. I will save the examination of those two objections for last. Here is a revised table, with the order of the objections going from those that are likely to be the weakest to those that are likely to be the strongest:

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OBJECTIONS IN HCA AGAINST THE *SWOON THEORY*

OBJECTIONS	LOCATION	BASIS
Objection #2: Break their Legs	HCA, p.183	Gospel of John
Objection #3: Blood and Water	HCA, p.183	Gospel of John
Objection #4: Winding Sheets & Entombment	HCA, p.183	Gospel of John
Objection #5: Sickly Jesus	HCA, p.183	Gospel of John
Objection #6: Who Overpowered the Guards?	HCA, p.183	Gospel of Matthew
Objection #7: Who Moved the Stone?	HCA, p.183-184	All Four Gospels
Objection #9: Swoon Theory implies False Theories	HCA, p.184	All Four Gospels
Objection #1: Deadliness of Roman Crucifixion	HCA, p.183	NOT the Gospels
Objection #8: Where Did Jesus Go?	HCA, p.184	NOT the Gospels

Since this is only an initial evaluation of the potential strengths of these objections, it could turn out that some of the objections based on the *Gospel of John* happen to be based on a specific event or passage from that Gospel that is historically reliable or probable, so one of those objections might turn out to be a strong objection on closer inspection. Similarly, an objection that has the potential to be a strong objection (because NOT based on a Gospel passage) might turn out to be a very weak or defective objection. So, my *initial evaluation* of these objections is only *preliminary* and is subject to change when we take a closer look at each of the objections.

2.2 EVALUATION OF OBJECTIONS TO THE SWOON THEORY

OVERVIEW OF OBJECTIONS BASED ON GOSPEL OF JOHN

In Chapter 8 of their book *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (hereafter: *HCA*), Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli raise four objections against the *Swoon Theory* that are based primarily on passages from the *Gospel of John*:

OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE SWOON THEORY BASED ON JOHN

OBJECTIONS	LOCATION	BASIS
Objection #2: Break their Legs	HCA, p.183	Gospel of John
Objection #3: Blood and Water	HCA, p.183	Gospel of John
Objection #4: Winding Sheets & Entombment	HCA, p.183	Gospel of John
Objection #5: Sickly Jesus	HCA, p.183	Gospel of John

These are likely to end up being *the weakest* of the nine objections to the *Swoon Theory*, because the *Gospel of John* is the LEAST historically reliable of the four Gospels. (See “The Historical Unreliability of the *Gospel of John*” in the *New Testament Appendix*).

For each objection, I will begin with a quotation (or quotations) from Kreeft and Tacelli, and then CLARIFY the claims and the reasoning in each objection, so that we have *a clear argument* with *clear premises*, and *a clear conclusion* to critically evaluate, and I will represent that clarified argument in *an argument diagram* that shows the logical structure of the argument.

This process of extracting a clear argument for each of these objections, is called *argument analysis*. To make the main text of this book more concise and easier to read, I have placed all the argument analysis in the *Argument Analysis Appendix*. So, what we will examine in the main text of this book are the clarified versions of Kreeft and Tacelli’s arguments.

2.2 EVALUATION OF OBJECTIONS TO THE *SWOON THEORY*

OBJECTION #2: BREAK THEIR LEGS

Here is the argument constituting the “Break Their Legs” Objection:

- 1. The Roman soldier did not break Jesus’ legs while Jesus was on the cross (John 19:31-33).**
- 2. The Roman soldier did break the legs of the two other criminals while Jesus was on the cross (John 19:31-33).**
- 4. Breaking the legs of crucifixion victims hastened death so that the corpse could be taken down before the sabbath (John 19:31-33).**

THEREFORE:

- 3. The Roman soldier was sure Jesus was dead while Jesus was on the cross.**
- A. IF the Roman soldier was sure Jesus was dead while Jesus was on the cross, THEN it is virtually certain that Jesus died on the cross.**

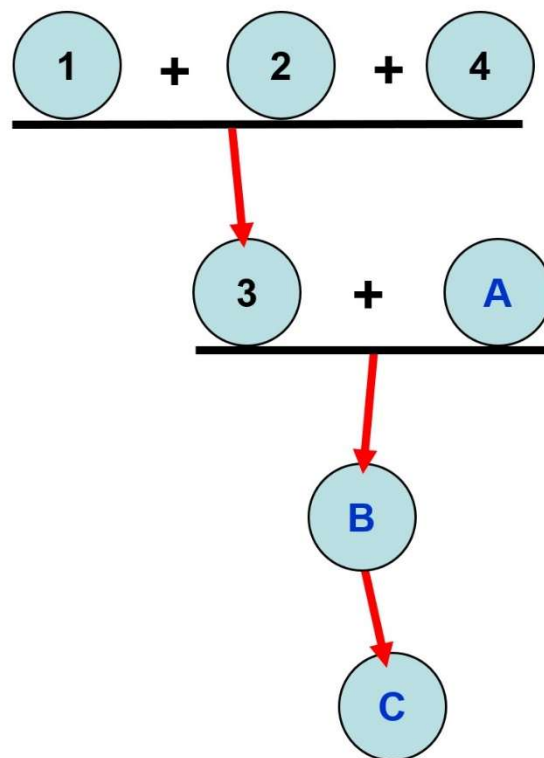
THEREFORE:

- B. It is virtually certain that Jesus died on the cross.**

THEREFORE:

- C. The *Swoon Theory* is false.**

Logical Structure of Objection #2



CRITICAL EVALUATION OF OBJECTION #2

Premises (1) and/or (2) might well be FALSE or INACCURATE because they rest on a *questionable assumption*:

The story in the *Gospel of John* of the Roman soldiers deciding to NOT break Jesus' legs while Jesus was on the cross is a reliable and accurate account of historical events.

Premises (1) and (2) are clearly NOT historical facts. They are *questionable inferences* based on the *incorrect assumption* that the 4th Gospel provides us with reliable historical information about the ministry and crucifixion of Jesus.

There are good reasons to doubt the historical reliability of this passage from the *Gospel of John*:

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- **There are good reasons to view the *Gospel of John* as historically unreliable.**
 - The 4th Gospel provides historically unreliable information about the teachings and words of Jesus.
 - The 4th Gospel suppresses the fact that Jesus was an exorcist.
 - The 4th Gospel was not written by an eyewitness of the events it relates.
 - The 4th Gospel was written about sixty years after Jesus was crucified.
- **There are good reasons to doubt the reliability of this passage based on the specific content of the passage.**
 - This passage in the 4th Gospel conflicts with related accounts in the other Gospels.
 - This passage contains some internal conflicts that cast doubt on its historical reliability.
 - The historical claims in this passage can reasonably be viewed as “prophecy historicized”.
- **The other Gospels fail to corroborate a number of specific aspects of this passage.**
 - None of the other Gospels corroborate the breaking of the legs of the other two crucified men.
 - None of the other Gospels corroborate the closely related claims concerning Jesus being stabbed in his side.
 - None of the other Gospels corroborate the closely related historical claim that “the Jews” requested that the bodies of the crucified men be removed from their crosses before the sabbath day began.
 - None of the other Gospels corroborate the presence of the “beloved disciple” at the cross (who is supposedly the ultimate source of this account in John 19:34-35).
 - None of the other Gospels corroborate other stories in the 4th Gospel about the “beloved disciple”.

For more details on these points see: “A Critical Examination of John 19:31-37” in the *Historical* section of the *Issues Appendix*.

Based on the claim that “the Roman soldier did not break his legs”, premise (1), and the claim that “the Roman soldier did break the legs of the

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two other criminals”, premise (2), Kreeft and Tacelli conclude that “the soldier” was “sure Jesus was dead”, premise (3). If they had actually read the passage that they reference, they would have known that it speaks about “soldiers”, not about “the soldier”. Since premise (1) and premise (2) are both dubious, they have FAILED to show that premise (3) is true.

Furthermore, premise (3) is *probably false*, according to the *Gospel of John*, because the very next sentence in the passage from the *Gospel of John* implies that “the soldier” was NOT “sure Jesus was dead”:

Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out.

(John 19:34, *New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition*)

If the soldiers were “sure Jesus was dead”, then there would be NO POINT to piercing his side with a spear! The motivation for poking or stabbing Jesus with a spear was presumably either (a) to check to see if Jesus reacted with pain, to see if he was still alive, or (b) to CAUSE Jesus to die right then and there, to ensure that Jesus was dead before removing his body from the cross. But on either one of these probable motivations, the soldier who did the stabbing was NOT sure that Jesus was dead, and in all likelihood, neither of his fellow soldiers were sure that Jesus was dead.

If Kreeft and Tacelli had *actually read the passage* that they are using as evidence here, then they would not have drawn the conclusion that “the soldier was sure Jesus was dead” based on the claim that the soldiers didn’t break Jesus legs. The very passage that they point to gives strong evidence *against their conclusion* in the very next verse of that passage! So, even if we took this passage from the *Gospel of John* to be historically reliable, it would then provide evidence *against* premise (3).

Premise (A) is clearly FALSE, because Roman soldiers were NOT

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modern medical doctors; they did NOT have modern medical knowledge, they did not have modern medical technology, and they did not receive modern medical training. So, Roman soldiers were quite capable of making an incorrect diagnosis of death. (See “The Medical Ignorance of Roman Soldiers” in the History section of the *Issues Appendix*).

The sub-argument for premise (3) is probably UNSOUND, because premise (1) and premise (2) might well be false or inaccurate. Furthermore, premise (3) is probably false, because the very next verse after the passage referenced by Kreeft and Tacelli implies that the soldiers had significant doubts about Jesus already being dead. Finally, premise (A) is FALSE based on the ignorance of the soldiers concerning modern medical knowledge. So, even if premise (3) were true, the argument for (B) would still be UNSOUND. Because premise (3) is dubious, and because premise (A) is clearly false, the argument for (B) should be rejected, and thus the “Break Their Arms” objection, **Objection #2** against the *Swoon Theory*, FAILS.

OBJECTION #3: BLOOD AND WATER

Here is the *revised and improved* version of the argument constituting Kreeft and Tacelli’s **Objection #3** against the *Swoon Theory*:

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1A. John (one of the twelve disciples), an eyewitness, certified that he saw liquid that looked like blood and liquid that looked like water come from a wound in Jesus' side while he was on the cross. (John 19:34-35).

THEREFORE:

A1. Liquid that looked like blood and liquid that looked like water came from a wound in Jesus' side while he was on the cross.

2A. IF liquid that looked like blood and liquid that looked like water came from a wound in Jesus' side while he was on the cross, THEN Jesus' lungs had collapsed, and Jesus had already died of asphyxiation while he was on the cross.

THEREFORE:

3. Jesus' lungs had collapsed, and Jesus had already died of asphyxiation while he was on the cross.

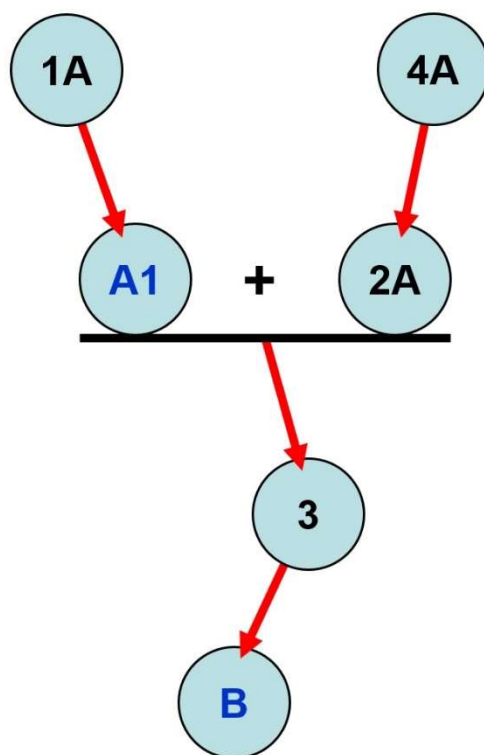
THEREFORE:

B. The *Swoon Theory* is false.

The premise supporting premise (2A) has been revised and as well:

4A. Any medical expert can vouch this: IF liquid that looked like blood and liquid that looked like water came from a wound in Jesus' side while he was on the cross, THEN Jesus' lungs had collapsed, and Jesus had already died of asphyxiation while he was on the cross.

Logical Structure of Revised Objection #3



CRITICAL EVALUATION OF OBJECTION #3

Premise (1A) is probably FALSE or inaccurate. It is based on at least *three dubious assumptions*:

- **John (one of the twelve disciples) wrote the *Gospel of John*.**
- **John (one of the twelve disciples) was an eyewitness of Jesus' crucifixion.**
- **The passage in John 19:34-35 provides accurate and historically reliable information about the crucifixion of Jesus.**

Because premise (1A) is based on these three dubious assumptions, we may reasonably conclude that this premise is itself dubious. So, premise (1A) FAILS to provide adequate support for premise (A1). Thus premise (A1) is dubious. For details on these problems with premise (1A), see "A Critical Examination of John 19:31-37" in the *New Testament Appendix*.

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What about the other key premise, premise (2A)? Here is the argument for premise (2A):

4A. Any medical expert can vouch this: IF liquid that looked like blood and liquid that looked like water came from a wound in Jesus' side while he was on the cross, THEN Jesus' lungs had collapsed, and Jesus had already died of asphyxiation while he was on the cross.

THEREFORE:

2A. IF liquid that looked like blood and liquid that looked like water came from a wound in Jesus' side while he was on the cross, THEN Jesus' lungs had collapsed, and Jesus had already died of asphyxiation while he was on the cross.

Premise (4A) is FALSE, so this sub-argument is UNSOUND and Kreeft and Tacelli have FAILED to give a good reason to believe that premise (2A) is true, so premise (2A) remains dubious.

Why do I say that premise (4A) is FALSE? There are at least two problems with premise (4A). First, many medical doctors have attempted to determine the cause of Jesus' death and they disagree with each other and have arrived at *many different conclusions* on this question. Premise (4A) implies that medical experts AGREE on the cause of Jesus' death, and that is simply FALSE.

A review of relevant medical articles on this topic found that there have been many different conflicting theories as to the cause of Jesus' death:

2.2 EVALUATION OF OBJECTIONS TO THE SWOON THEORY

Table 1 A representative selection of medical hypotheses for the cause of death of Jesus, or crucifixion in general

Cause of death	Background of author	Reference
Cardiac rupture	Physician	Stroud 1847 (Ref 2)
Heart failure	Physician	Davis 1965 (Ref 15)
Hypovolaemic shock	Forensic pathologist	Zugibe 2005 (Ref 12)
Syncope	Surgeon	LeBec 1925 (Ref 16)
Acidosis	Physician	Wijffels 2000 (Ref 17)
Asphyxia	Surgeon	Barbet 1963 (Ref 18)
Arrhythmia plus asphyxia	Pathologist	Edwards 1986 (Ref 19)
Pulmonary embolism	Haematologist	Brenner 2005 (Ref 20)
Voluntary surrender of life	Physician	Wilkinson 1972 (Ref 21)
Didn't actually die	Physician	Lloyd-Davies 1991 (Ref 22)

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(This table is from: “Medical Theories on the Cause of Death in Crucifixion” by Matthew Maslen and Piers Mitchell, in *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, Vol. 99, April 2006, p.186.)

Asphyxiation is only one of those various theories, so it is simply FALSE that medical experts agree on the cause of Jesus' death.

A second reason for rejecting premise (4A) is that medical experts cannot reasonably “vouch” for this conclusion based on the sketchy and dubious information that they possess about the crucifixion of Jesus. For example, the relevant passage from the *Gospel of John* does not indicate that the spear wound was *in or near Jesus' heart*, nor does it indicate whether the spear wound was on Jesus' right side or his left side. But the asphyxiation theory mentioned by Kreeft and Tacelli is based on the assumption that the spear wound was a wound to Jesus' heart.

The “medical experts” DO NOT KNOW whether the wound was in or

2.2 EVALUATION OF OBJECTIONS TO THE *SWOON THEORY*

near Jesus' heart. They also DO NOT KNOW how deep or how wide the spear wound was. So, the information that the "medical experts" have about this wound is VAGUE. They also DO NOT KNOW whether the liquid that LOOKED LIKE blood was in fact blood, nor whether the liquid that LOOKED LIKE water was in fact water or what it actually consisted of.

Any conclusions by any "medical experts" based on such VAGUE and SKETCHY information cannot be taken seriously as anything other than *speculations* or *educated guesses*. So, either the "medical experts" admitted that their conclusions are *speculative* (and thus they are not "vouching" for their conclusions), or else they are "medical experts" who are *unreasonable* and thus are *lacking in credibility*. So, to the extent that some "medical experts" do "vouch" for the *asphyxiation theory*, they are lacking in credibility as "medical experts" and their opinion FAILS to provide a good reason to believe that premise (2A) is true.

Because there are many different conflicting theories about the cause of Jesus' death among medical experts who have examined this question, premise (4A) is clearly FALSE. Because the basic factual information about the alleged spear wound in Jesus' side is VAGUE and SKIMPY, any medical theory about Jesus' death based on that information will necessarily be *speculative*. Thus, no reasonable and credible "medical expert" will "vouch" for the asphyxiation theory of the cause of Jesus' death; they will at most provide a *speculative opinion* on this matter. Therefore, Kreeft and Tacelli have FAILED to provide a good reason to believe that premise (2A) is true.

Kreeft and Tacelli have FAILED to provide a good reason to believe premise (A1) is true, and they have FAILED to provide a good reason to believe premise (2A) is true. Because both premise (A1) and premise (2A)

2.2 EVALUATION OF OBJECTIONS TO THE *SWOON THEORY*

are dubious, the argument for premise (3) should be rejected. Therefore, because the conclusion (B) is based on premise (3), **Objection #3** (“Blood and Water”) against the *Swoon Theory* FAILS.

OBJECTION #4: WINDING SHEETS AND ENTOMBMENT

Here is the argument for Kreeft and Tacelli’s **Objection #4** against the *Swoon Theory*:

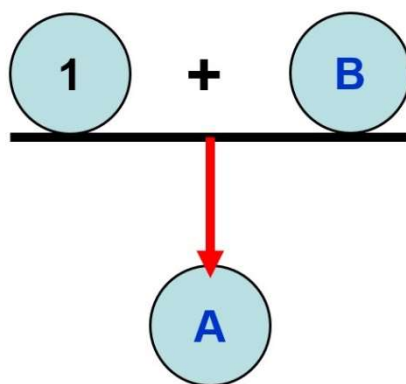
1. When Jesus’ body was removed from the cross, the body was totally encased in winding sheets and placed in a stone tomb (John 19:38-42).

B. IF when Jesus’ body was removed from the cross, the body was totally encased in winding sheets and placed in a stone tomb, THEN the *Swoon Theory* is false.

THEREFORE:

A. The *Swoon Theory* is false.

Logical Structure of Objection #4



2.2 EVALUATION OF OBJECTIONS TO THE *SWOON THEORY*

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF OBJECTION #4

Premise (1) is dubious, and premise (B) is FALSE, so this argument is UNSOUND, and it should be rejected. Thus, Kreeft and Tacelli's **Objection #4** against the *Swoon Theory* FAILS.

The evidence that Kreeft and Tacelli provide in support of premise (1) is a reference to a passage from the *Gospel of John*. But the *Gospel of John* is the least historically reliable of the four Gospels (see "The Historical Unreliability of the *Gospel of John*" in the History section of the *Issues Appendix*), and we have seen that there are a number of good reasons to doubt the historicity of the passage that immediately precedes the passage that Kreeft and Tacelli cite here (see "A Critical Examination of John 19:31-37" in the History section of the *Issues Appendix*). So, the evidence Kreeft and Tacelli provide in support of premise (1) is inadequate to show that this premise is true.

However, the *Gospel of John* is not the only Gospel that has a story about Jesus' body being put into a sheet and placed in a stone tomb. *Mark*, *Matthew*, and *Luke* also have such stories. Kreeft and Tacelli are apparently ignorant of this basic fact about the Gospels, or else their ignorance of NT scholarship led them to mistakenly believe that the *Gospel of John* is an historically reliable source of information about Jesus.

But the burial stories in *Matthew* and *Luke* are based upon the story in the *Gospel of Mark*, so this story is of historical value only if the story of the burial of Jesus in *Mark* is historically accurate and reliable. So, the strength of the evidence for premise (1) all comes down to the question of the historical accuracy and reliability of the *Gospel of Mark* and of the story of the burial of Jesus found in Chapter 15 of the *Gospel of Mark*.

2.2 EVALUATION OF OBJECTIONS TO THE SWOON THEORY

In favor of premise (1) is the fact that most New Testament scholars believe the Gospel stories about women finding the stone tomb of Jesus to be empty on the first Easter Sunday (or at least within days after the crucifixion). Finding the stone tomb of Jesus to be empty, implies that *Jesus was previously buried in that stone tomb* after his crucifixion and sometime before the tomb was discovered to be empty. Thus, the view that Jesus was not buried in a stone tomb after he was crucified is a minority view among NT scholars.

Nevertheless, a number of intelligent and well-informed NT scholars have come to the conclusion that Jesus was probably NOT buried in a stone tomb, and that the story about Joseph of Arimathea burying Jesus in a stone tomb is probably fictional or unhistorical. One such NT scholar is Bart Ehrman.

Many years ago, Ehrman was among the NT scholars who believed that Joseph of Arimathea buried the body of Jesus in a stone tomb more-or-less as described in Chapter 15 of the *Gospel of Mark*:

- 42 When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath,**
43 Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.
44 Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead, and summoning the centurion he asked him whether he had been dead for some time.
45 When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph.
46 Then Joseph bought a linen cloth and, taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.

(Mark 15:42-46, *New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition*)

2.2 EVALUATION OF OBJECTIONS TO THE SWOON THEORY

But over time, Ehrman began to have significant doubts about the historicity of this story, and he changed his mind, and then he argued that the story of the burial of Jesus in a stone tomb by Joseph of Arimathea was probably NOT historical.

Ehrman makes a good case for his view of this matter, and he also makes persuasive replies to criticisms of his case presented by a prominent Evangelical Christian NT scholar named Craig Evans. (If you are interested in this particular controversy, you can find references to Ehrman's book (chapter) and blog posts on this subject and to Craig Evan's critique of Ehrman's views about this issue in "Ehrman vs. Evans on the Burial of Jesus" in the History section of the *Issues Appendix*.)

I am now going to summarize reasons showing that premise (1) is NOT an historical fact, and that it is *probably not true*:

- **There is no historically reliable account of the burial of Jesus in a stone tomb, unless Chapter 15 of the *Gospel of Mark* provides an historically reliable account of the burial of Jesus.**
- **There are good reasons for believing that the account of the burial of Jesus in Chapter 15 of the *Gospel of Mark* is NOT an historically reliable account.**
- **There are plausible explanations for why the *Gospel of Mark* contains an unhistorical or fictional account of the burial of Jesus in a stone tomb.**

Although Ehrman's conclusion that the story about Joseph of Arimathea burying Jesus in a stone tomb is probably unhistorical is a minority view among NT scholars, there are a number of intelligent, well-informed NT scholars who share Ehrman's skepticism about this story. For more details on reasons for doubting premise (1), see "Doubts about the Burial and Empty Tomb stories" in the History section of the *Issues Appendix*.

2.2 EVALUATION OF OBJECTIONS TO THE *SWOON THEORY*

Premise (1) cannot be proven to be FALSE, but there are good reasons for believing that premise (1) is dubious and that it is NOT an historical fact. That is one problem with the argument constituting Kreeft and Tacelli's **Objection #4** against the *Swoon Theory*.

Another problem with this argument is that premise (B) is FALSE. Here, again, is premise (B):

B. IF when Jesus' body was removed from the cross, the body was totally encased in winding sheets and placed in a stone tomb, THEN the *Swoon Theory* is false.

Kreeft and Tacelli provide no reason to believe that premise (A) is true. Since premise (B) is not *obviously true*, their FAILURE to provide any reason whatsoever to believe (B) is true, means that their argument FAILS, as it stands. I will argue that even if the antecedent of (B) were true, the consequent of (B) might well be false, and thus premise (B) is FALSE.

There are three key historical claims in premise (1). First, there is the "Jesus' body was removed from the cross" claim. Second there is the Jesus' body was "totally encased in winding sheets" claim. Third, there is the Jesus' body was "placed in a stone tomb" claim. Because the *Swoon Theory* itself assumes that "Jesus' body was removed from the cross", there is no point in challenging that historical claim. But the *Swoon Theory* does not assume or assert the other two claims, so a defender of the *Swoon Theory* could reasonably challenge the other two historical claims.

THE WINDING SHEETS OBJECTIONS

Although Kreeft and Tacelli provide no reasons whatsoever as to why Jesus' body being "totally encased in winding sheets" has any relevance to the *Swoon Theory*, there are a few Christian apologists who have provided

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some indications and explanations about how the “winding sheets” allegedly work as evidence against the *Swoon Theory*. The most common explanation is this:

WSO1. The winding sheets would have been a constraint on Jesus’ physical movement (like being tied up with ropes), making it difficult or impossible for him to sit up, get out of the tomb, and walk into town.

A somewhat less common explanation is this:

WSO2. The winding sheets and the spices and gummy substance placed in the sheets would have caused a surviving Jesus to die of asphyxiation.

The least common explanation is this one:

WSO3. The application of the winding sheets to the body of Jesus would have given Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus a good opportunity to detect any remaining sign of life in Jesus’ body, and their completing of the burial process implies that they did not detect any sign of life in Jesus’ body.

Are any of these “winding sheets” objections powerful objections against the *Swoon Theory*? First of all, the strength of each of these three versions of “winding sheets” objections depends on the truth and accuracy of the historical claims in premise (1):

1. When Jesus’ body was removed from the cross, the body was totally encased in winding sheets and placed in a stone tomb (John 19:38-42).

The passage referenced by Kreeft and Tacelli says only that Joseph and Nicodemus “took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews.” (John 19:40, NRSV Updated Edition). This passage does NOT state that the body of Jesus

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“was totally encased in winding sheets”. But even if this passage did make that claim, the *Gospel of John* is historically unreliable, so this passage could not be used to establish the historical claim in premise (1).

The passage about the alleged burial of Jesus in Chapter 15 of the *Gospel of Mark* is not as dubious as the passage that Kreeft and Tacelli cite from John, so we should consider what that passage says:

46 Then Joseph bought a linen cloth and, taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of rock. (Mark 15:46, NRSV Updated Edition)

This passage from the *Gospel of Mark* also does NOT state that Jesus’ body “was totally encased in winding sheets”. Nor does this passage IMPLY that Jesus’ body “was totally encased in winding sheets”. If Joseph had simply placed Jesus’ body on top of “the linen cloth” and folded a little more than half of the cloth over the top of Jesus’ body and tucked the edge of the part of the cloth that went over Jesus’ body underneath one side of the body, then that would count as having “wrapped it in the linen cloth”, and that would NOT result in Jesus’ body being “totally encased in winding sheets.” Thus, Kreeft and Tacelli have asserted an historical claim that is NOT clearly stated or implied in *the earliest and best source* we have that describes the alleged burial of Jesus.

And, as previously mentioned, there are some good reasons to doubt the historicity of the burial story found in Chapter 15 of the *Gospel of Mark*. If the whole story could be fictional, then it is also possible that it is partly fictional and partly historical, and that Jesus’ body was placed into a stone tomb, but no linen cloth and no “winding sheets” were placed on Jesus’ body when he was put into the tomb.

2.2 EVALUATION OF OBJECTIONS TO THE *SWOON THEORY*

Based on the above considerations, Kreeft and Tacelli have FAILED to show that Jesus' body "was totally encased in winding sheets" when Jesus was buried. But if Jesus' body was NOT "totally encased in winding sheets", then the above three "winding sheets" objections would have no force or significance.

A major problem with the "winding sheets" objections is that there are *very few details* in the burial story found in Chapter 15 of the *Gospel of Mark*, our earliest and best source of the story of the alleged burial of Jesus. As a result, there are significant details that we are lacking concerning the alleged burial of Jesus:

- **We DON'T KNOW the dimensions and quantity of the cloth used to wrap Jesus' body.**
- **We DON'T KNOW the thickness, strength, and structure of the cloth used to wrap Jesus' body.**
- **We DON'T KNOW how carefully and how tightly Jesus' body was wrapped with this material.**
- **We DON'T KNOW the specific pattern and number of layers of wrapping that was used on Jesus' body.**

It is also important to note that, according to the burial story in the *Gospel of Mark*, Joseph of Arimathea had *very little time* to (a) get permission from Pilate to bury Jesus, (b) purchase a linen cloth, (c) get the body of Jesus removed from the cross, (d) transport the body to the stone tomb, (e) prepare the body for burial, (f) place the body in the tomb, and then (g) close up the tomb. He had to complete all of these tasks *before sunset*, when the Jewish sabbath day began on Friday evening. According to Mark, these efforts by Joseph began when "evening had come". Thus, we CANNOT simply assume that Joseph performed the wrapping of the body in *a slow and careful manner*, as he might have done if there were several hours available for these tasks.

2.2 EVALUATION OF OBJECTIONS TO THE SWOON THEORY

The strength of each of the three “winding sheets” objections depends on a number of factors that we simply have no information about, because there are so few details in the burial story found in the *Gospel of Mark*. This lack of information makes it clear that these “winding sheets” objections are all WEAK objections, at best.

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF WSO1

It is uncertain whether Jesus was buried at all, or that he was buried in a stone tomb. If Jesus was buried in a stone tomb, it is uncertain that he was wrapped in any cloth at all. But even if we grant, for the sake of argument, the assumption that Jesus was buried in a stone tomb and that his body was “wrapped” in “a linen cloth” (according to the burial story in *Mark*) before being placed into the tomb, we don’t know whether his body was “totally encased in winding sheets”, and we also have no knowledge of the details of the material used and of how the body was wrapped.

Because of these uncertainties and the lack of detailed information, we already know that **Winding Sheets Objection 1** is WEAK, at best:

WSO1. The winding sheets would have been a constraint on Jesus’ physical movement (like being tied up with ropes), making it difficult or impossible for him to sit up, get out of the tomb, and walk into town.

There are also some further problems that are specific to this particular “winding sheets” objection. For example, in the story of the resurrection of Lazarus, Lazarus appears to have no problem walking out of his stone tomb when he came back to life, even though he had been wrapped in “winding sheets” or linen cloth when he was buried:

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38 Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.

39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days."

43 ... he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

(John 11:38-39 & 43-44, NRSV Updated Edition)

Like Jesus, Lazarus was buried in a stone tomb. When Lazarus allegedly came back to life he "came out" of the tomb, even though "his hands and feet" were "bound with strips of cloth" and his face was "wrapped in a cloth".

There is no mention of Lazarus being *carried* or *dragged* out of the tomb. The passage does not say Lazarus crawled out of the tomb, though I suppose that the phrase "came out" could include *crawling out*. In any case, Lazarus apparently was able to walk or crawl out of the tomb, even though he had been "bound with strips of cloth" when he was buried.

Since the *Gospel of John* is historically unreliable, I don't believe this story represents an actual historical event. But Kreeft and Tacelli, and most Christian apologists, believe that the *Gospel of John* provides accurate and historically reliable information about the life and ministry of Jesus, so Kreeft and Tacelli, and most Christian apologists, accept this story about the resurrection of Lazarus as being an accurate historical account. But in that case, this story *contradicts and undermines WSO1*. To be logically consistent, they should either reject the historicity of the story of the resurrection of Lazarus in the *Gospel of John*, or else reject **WSO1**. (If they reject the story of the resurrection of Lazarus in the *Gospel*

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of John as unhistorical, then they have a *very good reason* to doubt the stories about Jesus' burial and resurrection in the *Gospel of John*.)

In the story of the resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus tells people to “Unbind him, and let him go.” (John 11:44). This indicates another problem with **WSO1**. Even if Jesus had been “totally encased in winding sheets” and even if those winding sheets had been tightly wrapped around Jesus' arms and legs so that it was impossible for Jesus to stand up, or sit up, or crawl, or leave the tomb, and walk into town, Jesus could have yelled for help, and somebody else could have helped him to remove the winding sheets so that he would be able to sit up, and stand up, leave the tomb, and walk into town.

Based on the general considerations that relate to all three “winding sheets” objections and based on the further problems that are specific to **WSO1**, this is a WEAK and DUBIOUS objection to the *Swoon Theory*, so if this is what Kreeft and Tacelli had in mind, then this element of **Objection #4** FAILS, and that casts serious doubt on **Objection #4**.

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF WSO2

Because of uncertainties about the alleged burial of Jesus and the lack of detailed information about the alleged burial, we already know that **Winding Sheets Objection 2** is WEAK, at best:

WSO2. The winding sheets and the spices and gummy substance placed in the sheets would have caused a surviving Jesus to die of asphyxiation.

The idea is that being “totally encased in winding sheets” would have been harmful to Jesus' health, killing off a weak and wounded Jesus, if Jesus had survived crucifixion.

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Here is a comment by the Christian apologist Josh McDowell along these lines:

...100-plus pounds of spices and a gummy substance were encased around His body—He must have breathed through it all... (*The Resurrection Factor*, p.98)

McDowell is suggesting, without explicitly stating this, that being “encased” in all those spices and “a gummy substance” would probably have caused Jesus to asphyxiate and die, if he was still alive at that time.

Note that McDowell mentions “100-plus pounds of spices and a gummy substance” being used along with the “winding sheets” or linen cloth. But the burial story in the *Gospel of Mark* says NOTHING about any spices or a gummy substance being used in the burial of Jesus. This information about 100-plus pounds of spices comes from the burial story in the *Gospel of John*.

But the *Gospel of John* is historically unreliable in general, and most NT scholars regard the reference to the large amount of spices in this burial story to be dubious and probably a fictional detail added by the author of the *Gospel of John*. Because we cannot rely on this information from the burial story in the *Gospel of John*, we should only give serious consideration to the earliest and best source about the alleged burial of Jesus: the *Gospel of Mark*. The *Gospel of Mark* says NOTHING about any spices or gummy substance being used in the alleged burial of Jesus, so there is no solid historical basis for the historical assumptions that **WSO2** depends upon.

Tight wrapping of winding sheets around Jesus’ body might have constrained his breathing, but *the main threat to his life* would have been the winding sheets wrapped around his head. If those were loose or just a

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couple of layers and contained little or no spices, and little or no gummy substance, then it is UNLIKELY that the wrapping would have caused Jesus to asphyxiate. The problem here is that Christian apologists have engaged in *imagining a worst-case scenario* for Jesus, but we don't have enough FACTS and DETAILS to determine whether there was a real threat of asphyxiation to Jesus or not.

Even if we assume, for the sake of argument, that Jesus' body was tightly wrapped in a number of layers of winding sheets or linen cloth, and even if we assume, for the sake of argument, that a large amount of spices and a gummy substance was used in this process, it still does not follow that Jesus would have asphyxiated, because what really matters, is how his HEAD was wrapped, how tightly his head was wrapped, how many layers of cloth were wrapped around his head, and whether lots of spices and gummy substance was used in the wrapping *of his head*, and these factors are purely *a matter of conjecture*. We have no facts or details about how, or even if, Jesus' head was wrapped in winding sheets or linen cloth.

Based on the general considerations that relate to all three "winding sheets" objections and based on the further problems that are specific to **WSO2**, this is clearly a WEAK and DUBIOUS objection to the *Swoon Theory*, so if this is what Kreeft and Tacelli had in mind, then this element of **Objection #4** FAILS, and that casts serious doubt on **Objection #4**.

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF WSO3

Because of uncertainties about the alleged burial of Jesus and the lack of detailed information about the alleged burial, we already know that **Winding Sheets Objection 3** is WEAK, at best:

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WSO3. The application of the winding sheets to the body of Jesus would have given Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus a good opportunity to detect any remaining sign of life in Jesus' body, and their completing of the burial process implies that they did not detect any sign of life in Jesus' body.

There are also some further problems that are specific to this particular “winding sheets” objection. For example, the longer and more involved the wrapping of Jesus' body, the more opportunity there would have been to detect signs of life in Jesus. But if we focus on the burial story in the Gospel of Mark, our earliest and best source of the story of the alleged burial of Jesus, there is no reason to think the “wrapping” took very long, and every reason to believe it was done very quickly.

There is also a *very serious flaw* with **WSO3**, even if, for the sake of argument, we grant the assumption that Joseph obtained Jesus' body, and that Joseph wrapped Jesus body in winding sheets in preparation for burial. Consider the following comment by a Christian apologist about the alleged wrapping of Jesus' body by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus:

And had there been any Signs of Life in it [Jesus' body], they [Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus] would have undoubtedly taken the proper Care to recover it, and not immediately have placed it, wrapt in Spices, in a cold and damp Sepulchre, which was the most effectual way, wholly to extinguish all Remains of Life. But Joseph's thus burying him, shews there was no Imposture intended, and renders every Pretence and Insinuation of his not being really dead, quite impertinent and groundless.
(*The Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ Re-Examined* by Samuel Chandler, 1744, p.63)

This comment by Samuel Chandler indicates that this “objection” against the *Swoon Theory* actually provides support for the *Swoon Theory*!

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Suppose that Joseph and Nicodemus did wrap the body of Jesus in winding sheets and suppose they did detect some signs of life in Jesus' body. If they were indeed followers or admirers of Jesus, as indicated in the burial story in the *Gospel of John*, then as Chandler suggests, they might well have made a serious effort to help Jesus recover from his wounds and injuries. They might have, as Chandler suggests, immediately taken Jesus away from the tomb to someone's home where Jesus could rest and heal and be cared for while he recovered. Perhaps the women who were watching Joseph and Nicodemus take the body of Jesus to the stone tomb left a few minutes before Joseph or Nicodemus discovered signs of life in Jesus. Thus, the women simply inferred that the wrapping of Jesus' body and the entombment of the body were completed shortly after they left the scene, but this inference was mistaken, because Joseph and Nicodemus left the scene carrying the body of Jesus to someone's home.

Alternatively, Joseph and Nicodemus might have noticed signs of life in Jesus' body, but did NOT take immediate action, for fear of word getting out that Jesus had survived crucifixion, and this leading to a search for Jesus by Roman soldiers with orders to find Jesus and finish the job of killing him (perhaps by cutting off his head).

To avoid such a threat to Jesus and to their own lives, Joseph and Nicodemus might well have kept silent about the signs of life that they detected in Jesus, and proceeded with wrapping and entombing the body, to prevent a massive "search and destroy" mission by Roman soldiers. They could have then returned to the tomb a short while after closing up the tomb and after the women who were watching them prepare the body had left the scene. In this case, the women would have witnessed the completion of the wrapping of Jesus' body, and of the entombment before

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they left. They would have no idea that Joseph and Nicodemus would return less than an hour later, open the tomb, and take Jesus to a nearby home to recover from his wounds and injuries.

Given these two plausible scenarios, **WSO3** not only FAILS as an objection to the *Swoon Theory*, but it also actually provides SUPPORT for the *Swoon Theory*.

Based on the general considerations that relate to all three “winding sheets” objections and based on the further problems that are specific to **WSO3**, this is clearly a WEAK and DUBIOUS objection to the *Swoon Theory*, so if this is what Kreeft and Tacelli had in mind, then this element of **Objection #4** FAILS, and that casts serious doubt on **Objection #4**.

THE ENTOMBMENT OBJECTIONS

Another key claim contained in premise (1) of **Objection #4** is the claim that Jesus’ body was “placed in a stone tomb”. Kreeft and Tacelli fail to provide any reason why this is relevant to an evaluation of the *Swoon Theory*. They FAIL to provide any reason whatsoever to believe that premise (A) is true:

A. IF when Jesus’ body was removed from the cross, the body was totally encased in winding sheets and placed in a stone tomb, THEN the *Swoon Theory* is false.

As a result, premise (A) remains dubious, and **Objection #4** FAILS as it stands.

However, some other Christian apologists have presented different reasons why placing Jesus’ body into a stone tomb provides evidence against the *Swoon Theory* (for details see: “Clarification of **Objection #4** against the *Swoon Theory*” in the *Clarification of Objections Appendix*).

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Here are three different explanations offered by other Christian apologists:

EO1. Being buried in a stone tomb would have killed Jesus, if he had survived the crucifixion, because that would involve a badly injured Jesus being in cold and damp air for 36 hours.

EO2. Being buried in a stone tomb would have killed Jesus, if he had survived the crucifixion, because that would involve a badly injured Jesus bleeding from several serious wounds, without receiving any medical treatment for 36 hours.

EO3. Being buried in a stone tomb would have killed Jesus, if he had survived the crucifixion, because that would involve a badly injured Jesus having no food or water for 36 hours.

GENERAL PROBLEMS WITH THE ENTOMBMENT OBJECTIONS

Although the burial story in the Gospel of Mark clearly states that Jesus' body was placed into a stone tomb by Joseph of Arimathea, there are good reasons to doubt the historicity of this story:

We don't KNOW whether Jesus' body was placed in a stone tomb.

If this story is a legend or a fictional story, then Jesus' body was probably NOT placed into a stone tomb, and these three *Entombment Objections* would be *based on a false assumption* and would have no force or significance (see "Doubts about the Burial and Empty Tomb stories" in the History section of the *Issues Appendix*).

There is a *second serious problem* that casts doubt on all three of the *Entombment Objections*:

We DON'T KNOW how long Jesus remained in the tomb.

Specifically, we DON'T KNOW that Jesus' body remained in the tomb for 36 hours. Even assuming, for the sake of argument, that Jesus' body was

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placed into a stone tomb, we don't know HOW LONG his body remained in that tomb. One possibility that I pointed out above, is that Joseph of Arimathea noticed signs of life in Jesus, and came back an hour later to help Jesus, and to take Jesus to a nearby home to receive care for his wounds, and to receive food and water.

Another possibility is that Jesus came back to consciousness and was able to get out of the tomb without any help. A third possibility is that Jesus came back to consciousness and began to yell for help, and someone heard him and came to help him get out of the stone tomb, and then helped him get care for his wounds, and to get some food and water.

Suppose that the tomb was, as stated in the *Gospel of Mark*, found to be empty on Sunday morning. What that implies is that Jesus was in the tomb for a MAXIMUM of 36 hours. But this does not tell us what the MINIMUM amount of time Jesus could have been in the stone tomb.

If the women left the burial scene before the body of Jesus was placed inside the tomb, then Jesus might NEVER have been inside the tomb (Joseph of Arimathea could have immediately taken Jesus to a nearby home to receive care for his wounds, and food and water). Or Jesus might have been in the tomb for *only one hour*, when Joseph of Arimathea returned to take Jesus to a nearby home for care. Or Jesus might have been in the tomb from 6pm Friday night until 5:45am Saturday morning, yelled for help, and received help from someone who happened to be passing by the tomb so that Jesus left the tomb at 6:00am on Saturday morning, after being in the tomb for *only twelve hours*.

There is *a third serious problem* that casts doubt on all three of the *Entombment Objections*:

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We don't know how badly Jesus was injured when he was crucified.

Specifically, we don't know if Jesus was flogged or scourged before being crucified; we don't know if he was *severely* flogged or scourged before being crucified; we don't know if a crown of long sharp thorns was pressed down onto his scalp; we don't know if his hands were nailed to the cross; we don't know if his feet were nailed to the cross; we don't know if a spear was poked or thrust into his side; we don't know the specific location, depth, or width of the spear wound. (See "The Alleged Wounds of Jesus" in the History section of the *Issues Appendix*). The more wounds Jesus received, and the more severe the wounds were, the stronger the *Entombment Objections* would be. But the fewer and the less severe the wounds were, the weaker the *Entombment Objections* would be. Thus, the strength or weakness of these objections hinges upon *questionable* and *vague* information in the Gospels about the wounds of Jesus.

In short, all three *Entombment Objections* are WEAK objections, at best, because it is uncertain *whether Jesus was actually buried in a stone tomb*, and because, even assuming he was buried in a stone tomb, we don't know *how long he remained in the tomb*, and because we don't know *how badly Jesus was injured* during his crucifixion.

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF EO1

Here again is the **Entombment Objection 1**:

EO1. Being buried in a stone tomb would have killed Jesus, if he had survived the crucifixion, because that would involve a badly injured Jesus being in cold and damp air for 36 hours.

In addition to the general problems with the *Entombment Objections*

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mentioned above, there are other problems with this specific objection.

One problem to note right away with this objection is the VAGUENESS of the claim. HOW COLD was it in the tomb? 60 degrees? 55 degrees? 50 degrees? 45 degrees? 40 degrees? 35 degrees? WE DON'T KNOW what the actual temperature was in the tomb at the time Jesus was placed there. It makes a BIG DIFFERENCE whether the temperature was 60 degrees as opposed to 40 degrees.

Nobody had a thermometer and took a temperature reading when Jesus was placed in the tomb. The first reliable thermometer was invented by Daniel Gabriel Fahrenheit in 1714 (reference). There were no such things as thermometers in the first century.

We could now, in the 21st century, take temperatures inside of various stone tombs in Jerusalem in April for a number of years in order to have some actual FACTS upon which to base an estimate of the temperature of Jesus' tomb, but the temperature readings would be different in different tombs, and on different days, and at different times of day, and in different years. So, what we would end up with is a RANGE of actual temperatures inside of various tombs in Jerusalem in April. We might even end up with a range of temperatures from 30 degrees to 70 degrees.

If we were very lucky the range would be smaller, say 40 degrees to 60 degrees. But then this would NOT give us a high level of confidence that, for example, the temperature in Jesus' tomb was less than 50 degrees. So, actual empirical FACTS about the temperatures inside of stone tombs in Jerusalem in April (which no Christian apologist has bothered to determine) would probably NOT do much to reduce the VAGUENESS and WEAKNESS of this point about the air in Jesus' tomb being "cold".

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A second problem is that it is not clear WHY cool air would cause Jesus to die. None of the apologists who make this point provides a medical explanation for WHY cool air would be deadly to Jesus. The apologists don't have the medical expertise and authority to simply assert this to be so, yet they provide ZERO medical evidence to support the claim that cool air (or damp air) would have been deadly for Jesus. This is one more example of EVIDENCE-FREE Christian apologetics.

A third problem is the VAGUENESS about the degree of dampness or humidity of the air in the stone tomb. Just how humid was the air in that specific tomb at that specific date?

A fourth problem is that the air is DRY (not humid) in Jerusalem in April. The climate in Jerusalem might have been different 2,000 years ago, but Christian apologists have made no attempt to show that the humidity was much greater in April in Jerusalem back in Jesus' time as compared with the modern climate in Jerusalem. (See: "Temperature and Humidity in Jerusalem in April" in the *Scientific* section of the *Issues Appendix*.)

A fifth problem is that if Jesus had appeared to die on the cross because of cardiac arrest, and then his heart began to beat again, there is plenty of scientific evidence that placing him into a cold or cool tomb would NOT have reduced his chances of survival or his chances of avoiding serious cognitive deficiency as a result of brain damage.

There is solid scientific evidence showing that IF Jesus had suffered cardiac arrest while on the cross (thus appearing to die), and if his heart began beating again but he remained unconscious, THEN being put into a cold or cool tomb that reduced his body temperature to anywhere between 31°C and 36°C (below the normal body temperature of 37°C), this would NOT have impacted *the likelihood of his survival* or *the likelihood of his*

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avoiding serious cognitive deficiency, in relation to his previous cardiac arrest. (See “The Entombment of Jesus and Therapeutic Hypothermia” in the *Science* section of the *Issues Appendix*).

A sixth problem is that the first element of **Objection #4** (the winding sheets element) works against the significance of **EO1**. If the first element reflects what actually occurred, if Jesus was actually encased in winding sheets to prepare his body for placement in a stone tomb, then that would seriously reduce the significance of being in cool or cold air while in the tomb. The winding sheets would have acted like clothing or blankets and would have helped Jesus to stay relatively warm.

The claim that the tomb was cold is VAGUE, and there were no reliable thermometers in existence before the 18th century. If we check the temperatures of caves in April around Jerusalem in the 21st century, that would give us a potential *range of temperatures*, and would thus only reduced the vagueness a bit. We don't know how humid the air was in that stone tomb, but we do know that the air is dry in April in Jerusalem (at least in modern times). No medical reason is given by Christian apologists as to why cold or cool air would be likely to kill off Jesus. If Jesus had suffered cardiac arrest on the cross, cooling off his body would NOT reduce his chances of survival. If Jesus' body had been wrapped in winding sheets, as asserted in **Objection #4**, that would have acted like clothing or a blanket and would have helped to keep Jesus relatively warm.

This objection was already WEAK, at best, because of the uncertainty about whether Jesus was buried in a stone tomb, and because we do not know HOW LONG Jesus remained in the tomb, and because we don't know HOW BADLY Jesus was injured during the crucifixion. With these additional problems that are specific to **EO1**, this objection becomes VERY

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WEAK, too weak to be of significance. If this is what Kreeft and Tacelli had in mind, then this element of **Objection #4** FAILS, casting serious doubt on **Objection #4**.

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF EO2

Here again is the **Entombment Objection 2**:

EO2. Being buried in a stone tomb would have killed Jesus, if he had survived the crucifixion, because that would involve a badly injured Jesus bleeding from several serious wounds, without receiving any medical treatment for 36 hours.

One of the general problems with the *Entombment Objections* is especially devastating to this particular objection:

We don't know how badly Jesus was injured during the crucifixion.

We don't know if Jesus was scourged. If he was scourged, we don't know if it was a light beating, a moderate beating, or a severe one. We don't know if Jesus' hands were nailed to the cross or tied to the cross. We don't know if Jesus' feet were nailed to the cross or tied to the cross. We don't know if a crown of thorns was placed on Jesus' head. If a crown of thorns was placed on his head, we don't know how long and sharp the thorns were or whether several thorns pointed inward towards his scalp. We don't know if a Roman soldier wounded Jesus' side with a spear. If his side was wounded with a spear, we don't know whether this was a little poke or a strong thrust, and we don't know how deep or how wide the wound was in Jesus' side. (See "The Alleged Wounds of Jesus" in the *Historical* section of the *Issues Appendix*).

If Jesus had not been scourged, and not been nailed to the cross, and no crown of thorns placed on his head, and no spear wound was

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inflicted in his side, then this objection would have NO SIGNIFICANCE. If Jesus' had only been lightly beaten, and only his hands, but not his feet were nailed to the cross, and there was a crown of thorns, but the thorns mostly pointed outwards, and there was no spear wound to Jesus' side, then this objection would have *some significance*, but it would still be a WEAK objection.

The objection would be strong only if ALL or NEARLY ALL of these wounds were actually inflicted on Jesus, and ALL of the wounds were *severe* in nature. But given the uncertainty of each wound, and of the severity of each wound, it is UNLIKELY that the worst-case-scenario imagined by Christian apologists, like Kreeft and Tacelli, represents historical reality.

In addition to the general problems with the *Entombment Objections* mentioned above, there are other problems with this specific objection. First of all, IF Jesus had been profusely bleeding from a number of major wounds, that would have been *fairly obvious evidence* that he was still alive, thus INCREASING the PROBABILITY that one of the persons involved in preparing his body for burial would have noticed this as a sign of life, and then taken steps to get Jesus to a nearby home where he could recover and be cared for.

Second, although Jesus would not have received “medical treatment” of his wounds while his body remained locked up inside a stone tomb, according to the other element of the “Winding Sheets” Objection:

[Jesus'] body was totally encased in winding sheets...

What sort of “medical treatment” would Jesus have received for his various alleged “serious wounds” that would have helped to stop or reduce blood

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loss from those wounds? A common and ancient medical treatment for serious wounds is BANDAGING.

Many Christian apologists quote the exact same passage from David Strauss, presenting a supposed objection against the *Swoon Theory*. Here is a part of that often-quoted passage:

It is impossible that one who had just come forth from the grave half dead, who crept about weak and ill, who stood in need of medical treatment, of bandaging, strengthening, and tender care... (quoted by LaHaye in *Jesus: Who is He?*, p.272)

Immediately after mentioning “medical treatment”, Strauss specifies the primary sort of treatment that Jesus presumably would have needed: “bandaging”. But if Jesus’ body “was totally encased in winding sheets”, then basically all his wounds were bandaged by that action! Thus, the first element of **Objection #4** (the winding sheets element) undermines the significance of **EO2**.

If the first element reflects what actually occurred, if Jesus was actually wrapped up in winding sheets to prepare his body for placement in a stone tomb, then that **UNDERMINES** the significance of Jesus failing to receive proper “medical treatment” while in the tomb. The winding sheets would probably have performed the same function as bandages. The most critical “medical treatment” was, in effect, given to Jesus **BEFORE** the tomb was closed up with Jesus inside, based on what **Objection #4** asserts.

The three general problems with Entombment objections apply to EO2:

- **We DON'T KNOW whether Jesus' body was placed in a stone tomb.**
- **We DON'T KNOW how long Jesus remained in the tomb.**
- **We DON'T KNOW how badly Jesus was injured during the crucifixion.**

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The third problem is especially devastating to **EO2**, because the strength of this objection rests squarely on the number, nature, and severity of the wounds Jesus received during his crucifixion. Furthermore, if Jesus had several severe wounds and was bleeding from them, this would likely have been noticed by whoever prepared his body for burial and might well have indicated to that person that Jesus was still alive, leading to a rescue of Jesus from the tomb (or possibly before he was placed into the tomb).

Finally, if Jesus had been “encased in winding sheets” as asserted in the winding sheets objections, then that would have acted much like bandages and helped to slow or stop the bleeding from whatever wounds Jesus did actually have. If **EO2** is what Kreeft and Tacelli had in mind, then this element of **Objection #4** is very WEAK, and casts **Objection #4** into doubt.

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF EO3

EO3. Being buried in a stone tomb would have killed Jesus, if he had survived the crucifixion, because that would involve a badly injured Jesus having no food or water for 36 hours.

As with the other *Empty Tomb Objections* this one starts out with three significant problems: (1) We don't know whether Jesus was actually buried in a stone tomb. (2) If he was buried in a stone tomb, we don't know how long he remained in the tomb, and (3) we also don't know how badly Jesus was injured during his crucifixion. So, **EO3** is a WEAK objection, at best.

The second general problem is especially devastating for this objection:

We don't know how long Jesus remained in the tomb.

The strength of this particular *Entombment Objection* depends heavily on

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how long Jesus remained in the stone tomb. As we will soon see, one can survive for 36 hours without food and water, so the objection is a bit weak even on that assumption. But we don't know whether Jesus remained in the tomb for just one hour, or just a few hours, or for eight hours, or twelve hours, or twenty-four hours, or thirty-six hours, so this is a very serious problem for **EO3**.

The first and most obvious problem related specifically to **EO3** is that people can live for WEEKS without eating any food, so going for one-and-a-half days (i.e. 36 hours) without food is NOT a significant point. That would NOT be likely to cause Jesus to die. Water, however, is more critical to staying alive in the short term, so that part of this objection could be significant. (See "Surviving without Food and Water" in the *Scientific* section of the *Issues Appendix*).

The second problem is that people can sometimes survive for up to a week without water, and people commonly survive for three or four days without water, so being without water for one-and-a-half days (i.e. 36 hours) is something that most people can do in most circumstances. (See "Surviving without Food and Water" in the *Scientific* section of the *Issues Appendix*). Since most people can go 100 hours without water, the possibility of Jesus surviving for 36 hours without water would NOT be at all extraordinary.

A third problem with this specific *Entombment Objection* is that **EO1** works against **EO3**. If the tomb was in fact cold or cool, then a living Jesus would not have lost much water in the tomb by sweating, so he could go *significantly longer without water* without becoming dehydrated. Thus, a cool tomb asserted in **EO1** undermines the problem of being without water for 36 hours asserted in **EO3**. In cooler temperatures, a person can survive

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for longer than 100 hours without drinking any water. So, if someone wants to use **EO1**, then they will have to give up using **EO3**, and if someone wants to use **EO3**, then they will have to give up **EO1**.

Based on just the general problems with *Entombment Objections*, this objection is VERY WEAK at best, since the strength of **EO3** depends heavily on how long Jesus remained in the tomb. There is also the problem that people can often survive WEEKS without food, and three to four days without water. Finally, if the tomb had been cold or cool as asserted by **EO1**, then Jesus might well have survived for more than four days without any water. So, if this is what Kreeft and Tacelli had in mind, then this element of **Objection #4** FAILS and that casts significant doubt on **Objection #4**.

EVALUATION OF OBJECTION #4

Kreeft's **Objection #4** has two basic elements: *the winding sheets* and *the entombment*. The winding sheets element has many different general problems:

- **We DON'T KNOW** that Jesus' body was placed into a stone tomb.
- **We DON'T KNOW** that Jesus' body was wrapped in a cloth before he was placed into a stone tomb.
- **We DON'T KNOW** whether Jesus' body was "totally encased in winding sheets" before being placed into a stone tomb.
- **We DON'T KNOW** the dimensions and quantity of the cloth used to wrap Jesus' body.
- **We DON'T KNOW** the thickness, strength, and structure of the cloth used to wrap Jesus' body.
- **We DON'T KNOW** how carefully and how tightly Jesus' body was wrapped with this material.
- **We DON'T KNOW** the specific pattern and number of layers of wrapping that was used on Jesus' body.

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- **We DON'T KNOW** whether Jesus' head was wrapped in winding sheets.
- **We DON'T KNOW** whether or how much spices and gummy substance was used in cloth wrapped around Jesus' body.
- **We DON'T KNOW** whether or how much spices and gummy substance was used in cloth wrapped around Jesus' head.

Furthermore, each specific version of the winding-sheets objection has *additional problems* relating to that specific winding-sheets objection. So, all three versions of the winding-sheets objection are VERY WEAK.

I have examined the second element of **Objection #4** (i.e., the *Entombment Objections*), and have shown these to be WEAK objections, at best, because:

- **We DON'T KNOW** whether Jesus' body was placed in a stone tomb.
- **We DON'T KNOW** how long Jesus remained in the tomb.
- **We DON'T KNOW** how badly Jesus was injured during the crucifixion.

Furthermore, each specific version of the entombment objection has *additional problems* relating to that specific entombment objection. So, all three versions of the entombment objection are VERY WEAK.

Because both elements of **Objection #4** constitute VERY WEAK objections no matter what version of them we consider, **Objection #4** FAILS to show that the *Swoon Theory* is False.

OBJECTION #5: THE SICKLY JESUS OBJECTION

Here is the core argument of the clarified and enhanced version of Kreeft and Tacelli's **Objection #5**, *Sickly-Jesus Objection*:

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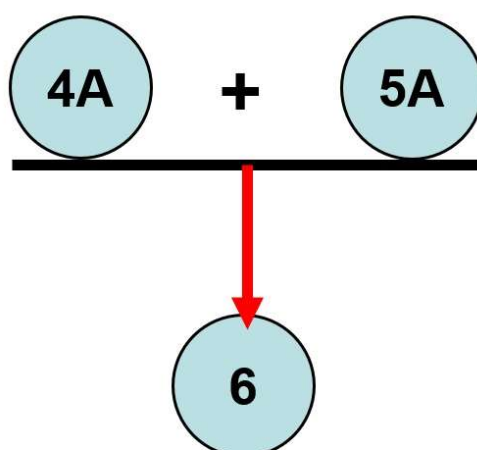
4A. IF the *Swoon Theory* were true, THEN it is psychologically impossible for Jesus' eleven remaining disciples to have been transformed soon after the first Easter Sunday from doubting cowards to fearless preachers of Jesus' resurrection and to become firmly convinced that God had raised Jesus from the dead and then worship Jesus fearlessly as divine lord and conqueror of death.

5A. BUT Jesus' eleven remaining disciples were transformed soon after the first Easter Sunday from doubting cowards to fearless preachers of Jesus' resurrection, and they became firmly convinced that God had raised Jesus from the dead and then worshiped Jesus fearlessly as divine lord and conqueror of death.

THEREFORE:

6. It is NOT the case that the *Swoon Theory* is true.

Logical Structure of the Core Argument for Objection #5



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Premise (4A) is supported by the following sub-argument:

- 1A. IF the *Swoon Theory* were true, THEN Jesus had merely struggled out of a swoon on Friday or Saturday and was a half-dead, staggering sick man who was badly in need of a doctor on the first Easter Sunday.**

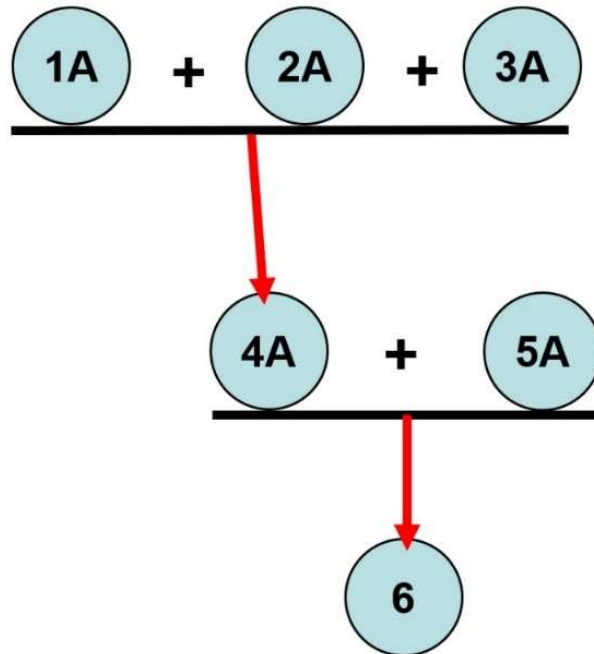
- 2A. IF Jesus had merely struggled out of a swoon on Friday or Saturday and was a half-dead, staggering sick man who was badly in need of a doctor on the first Easter Sunday, THEN ten (or eleven) of Jesus' remaining disciples saw that Jesus was a half-dead, staggering sick man who was badly in need of a doctor on the first Easter Sunday.**

- 3A. IF ten (or eleven) of Jesus' remaining disciples saw that Jesus was a half-dead, staggering sick man who was badly in need of a doctor on the first Easter Sunday, THEN it is psychologically impossible for Jesus' eleven remaining disciples to have been transformed soon after the first Easter Sunday from doubting cowards to fearless preachers of Jesus' resurrection and to become firmly convinced that God had raised Jesus from the dead and then worship Jesus fearlessly as divine lord and conqueror of death.**

THEREFORE:

- 4A. IF the *Swoon Theory* were true, THEN it is psychologically impossible for Jesus' eleven remaining disciples to have been transformed soon after the first Easter Sunday from doubting cowards to fearless preachers of Jesus' resurrection and to become firmly convinced that God had raised Jesus from the dead and then worship Jesus fearlessly as divine lord and conqueror of death.**

Logical Structure of the Revised Objection #5



Kreeft and Tacelli provide an argument in support of premise (4A), but don't provide an argument in support of premise (5A). But premise (5A) implies many HISTORICAL CLAIMS that need to be supported with *historical facts and evidence*, so their failure to provide historical facts and evidence in support of (5A) is an obvious and serious problem with this argument, as we will see later.

EVALUATION OF PREMISE (1A)

Here is the first premise of Kreeft and Tacelli's **Objection #5**:

1A. IF the *Swoon Theory* were true, THEN Jesus had merely struggled out of a swoon on Friday or Saturday and was a half-dead, staggering sick man who was badly in need of a doctor on the first Easter Sunday.

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Premise (1A) is FALSE, because the *Swoon Theory* does NOT assert or imply that Jesus received any of the wounds that Christians traditionally believe Jesus received during his crucifixion. The *Swoon Theory* does NOT assert or imply that Jesus was scourged just before being crucified. It does NOT assert or imply that Jesus' hands were nailed to the cross, nor that his feet were nailed to the cross. The *Swoon Theory* does NOT assert or imply that Jesus received a spear wound to his side while on the cross.

Because the *Swoon Theory* does NOT assert or imply that Jesus received these wounds, nor that each of the wounds was severe, the *Swoon Theory* does NOT imply that Jesus would have been “a half-dead, staggering sick man who was badly in need of a doctor on the first Easter Sunday.” The *Swoon Theory* could be true while the consequent of premise (1A) was false. Therefore, premise (1A) is FALSE.

This problem with (1A) could be repaired by adding *additional historical assumptions* to the antecedent of premise (1A), such as various historical assumptions about *the alleged wounds of Jesus* and their severity. However, this repair would not be successful in terms of rescuing this argument, because:

- **We DON'T KNOW how badly Jesus was injured during the crucifixion.**

If historical assumptions about the alleged wounds of Jesus were added to the antecedent of premise (1A), then that would make it so that we would NOT be able to determine whether the antecedent of this premise was true. If we are unable to establish that the antecedent was true, then we would also be unable to use this premise to establish that the consequent is true, and this argument would FAIL.

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Premise (1A) is FALSE, because the *Swoon Theory* does NOT assert or imply that Jesus received any of the wounds that Christians traditionally believe Jesus received during his crucifixion. Furthermore, this argument cannot be successfully repaired by adding historical claims about the wounds of Jesus to this premise, because the historical evidence for each of the alleged wounds, and for the wounds being severe, is weak, leaving room for reasonable doubt about each of the alleged wounds. Therefore, the sub-argument in support of premise (4A) FAILS.

EVALUATION OF PREMISE (2A)

Here is the second premise of Kreeft and Tacelli's **Objection #5**:

2A. IF Jesus had merely struggled out of a swoon on Friday or Saturday and was a half-dead, staggering sick man who was badly in need of a doctor on the first Easter Sunday, THEN ten (or eleven) of Jesus' remaining disciples saw that Jesus was a half-dead, staggering sick man who was badly in need of a doctor on the first Easter Sunday.

This premise is PROBABLY FALSE, because it is based on the assumption that ten (or eleven) of Jesus' remaining disciples experienced an appearance of what seemed to them to be the risen Jesus when they were gathered together in Jerusalem on the first Easter Sunday. This assumption is PROBABLY FALSE, making premise (2A) PROBABLY FALSE.

Kreeft and Tacelli offer a passage from the *Gospel of John* in support of this assumption (John 20:19-29). But the *Gospel of John* is historically unreliable, so this evidence is weak. Furthermore, the *Gospel of Mark* and the *Gospel of Matthew* contradict this historical assumption and imply that the first appearance of the risen Jesus to his remaining eleven disciples

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took place in Galilee, not Jerusalem, a week or more after Jesus was crucified. The evidence from these earlier and more reliable Gospels makes it probable that there was no appearance of the risen Jesus to his remaining disciples on the first Easter Sunday (for more details on this, see my essay “The First Appearances of the Risen Jesus” in the History section of the *Issues Appendix*). Thus, the assumption that (2A) is based on is PROBABLY FALSE. Therefore, premise (2A) is also PROBABLY FALSE.

Because premise (2A) is PROBABLY FALSE, we now have two good reasons to reject Kreeft and Tacelli’s argument in support of premise (4A).

EVALUATION OF PREMISE (3A)

Here is the third premise of Kreeft and Tacelli’s **Objection #5**:

3A. IF ten (or eleven) of Jesus' remaining disciples saw that Jesus was a half-dead, staggering sick man who was badly in need of a doctor on the first Easter Sunday, THEN it is psychologically impossible for Jesus' eleven remaining disciples to have been transformed soon after the first Easter Sunday from doubting cowards to fearless preachers of Jesus' resurrection and to become firmly convinced that God had raised Jesus from the dead and then worship Jesus fearlessly as divine lord and conqueror of death.

Premise (3A) is FALSE, because the claim that this sequence of events is “psychologically impossible” is clearly *too strong*. Religious beliefs can be surprisingly resistant to strong counterevidence. People can be blinded by faith, and people can rationalize away just about any evidence that runs contrary to their deeply held religious beliefs, even in the face of the evidence of their own eyes and ears that clearly contradicts their religious beliefs. So, premise (3A) is FALSE.

However, one could repair premise (3A) by making it weaker:

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3B. IF ten (or eleven) of Jesus' remaining disciples saw that Jesus was a half-dead, staggering sick man who was badly in need of a doctor on the first Easter Sunday, THEN it is psychologically IMPROBABLE for Jesus' eleven remaining disciples to have been transformed soon after the first Easter Sunday from doubting cowards to fearless preachers of Jesus' resurrection and to become firmly convinced that God had raised Jesus from the dead and then worship Jesus fearlessly as divine lord and conqueror of death.

Premise (3B) seems at least plausible. It seems like a reasonable claim.

The *degree of improbability* would need to be clarified, so that the significance of (3B) could be evaluated (Extremely Improbable? Very Improbable? Moderately Improbable? Somewhat Improbable?). So, it is unclear whether this repair of premise (3A) would produce a claim that is strong enough to do the work that Kreeft and Tacelli expect it to do, without being so strong that the claim becomes dubious or false.

In any case, the original premise (3A) is FALSE, because it makes a claim that is clearly *too strong*. And although a revision of this premise that makes a weaker claim MIGHT help repair the argument, it also MIGHT NOT help repair the argument.

EVALUATION OF THE SUB-ARGUMENT FOR (4A)

Premise (1A) and premise (3A) are both FALSE, and premise (2A) is PROBABLY FALSE. Premise (1A) could be repaired by adding historical assumptions to it about the alleged wounds of Jesus, but that would not fix the broken argument for (4A). Premise (3A) might be repairable, by weakening the claim it makes to one of "improbability". If we did repair (3A) by weakening the claim it makes, that would also *weaken the force of the argument* a bit.

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Given that premise (1A) and premise (3A) are FALSE, and that premise (2A) is PROBABLY FALSE, we should reject this argument as UNSOUND. Therefore, the sub-argument that Kreeft and Tacelli provide in support of premise (4A) FAILS to show that premise (4A) is true.

EVALUATION OF PREMISE (4A)

Here is premise (4A) of Kreeft and Tacelli's **Objection #5**:

4A. IF the *Swoon Theory* were true, THEN it is psychologically impossible for Jesus' eleven remaining disciples to have been transformed soon after the first Easter Sunday from doubting cowards to fearless preachers of Jesus' resurrection and to become firmly convinced that God had raised Jesus from the dead and then worship Jesus fearlessly as divine lord and conqueror of death.

As a stand-alone claim, premise (4A) doesn't make much sense. By itself it is DUBIOUS. It only has plausibility if the reasoning it summarizes is plausible.

But the reasoning behind premise (4A) involves at least three FALSE assumptions:

- The *Swoon Theory* asserts or implies that Jesus experienced all the wounds that Christians traditionally believed Jesus experienced as a part of his crucifixion.
- The *Swoon Theory* asserts or implies that the first appearance of the risen Jesus to his remaining disciples took place in Jerusalem on the first Easter Sunday.
- It would be *psychologically impossible* for a disciple of Jesus to experience on the first Easter Sunday a half-dead, staggering sick Jesus who was badly in need of a doctor and then the disciple quickly transformed soon after the first Easter Sunday from a doubting coward to a fearless preacher of Jesus' resurrection and began to worship Jesus fearlessly as divine lord and conqueror of death.

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Furthermore, if we set aside the FALSE assumptions about what the *Swoon Theory* asserts or implies, then Kreeft and Tacelli would need to make their historical assumptions explicitly as claims and then prove them with historical evidence. But the evidence for the wounds of Jesus is weak and dubious, and the evidence from the Gospels shows that the claim that the first appearances of the risen Jesus to his remaining disciples took place in Jerusalem on the first Easter Sunday is PROBABLY FALSE.

Premise (4A) appears to be FALSE, because the *Swoon Theory* does NOT assert or imply the assumptions listed above, and thus the antecedent in (4A) does not logically imply the consequent. Premise (4A) is also FALSE, because the strong “psychologically impossible” claim does not follow even if we add various dubious historical assumptions to the *Swoon Theory*.

One could modify premise (4A) by making the historical claims about Jesus’ wounds part of the antecedent of this premise, and by also adding to the antecedent the historical claim that the first appearance of Jesus to his remaining disciples took place in Jerusalem on the first Easter Sunday, and one could weaken the “psychologically impossible” claim, reducing it to some *degree of improbability*. Such modifications would make premise (4A) more plausible. However, this would also make it difficult or impossible to use premise (4A), because those historical claims are dubious and there is not sufficient historical evidence to establish those claims. One could weaken premise (4A) in these ways, to make it more plausible, but then the premise would become USELESS for proving that the *Swoon Theory* is false.

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EVALUATION OF PREMISE (5A)

Here is premise (5A) of Kreeft and Tacelli's **Objection #5**:

5A. BUT Jesus' eleven remaining disciples were transformed soon after the first Easter Sunday from doubting cowards to fearless preachers of Jesus' resurrection and became firmly convinced that God had raised Jesus from the dead and then worshiped Jesus fearlessly as divine lord and conqueror of death.

Premise (5A) implies many different specific historical claims, and yet Kreeft and Tacelli offer no historical evidence in support of most of those claims. Here are the historical claims that premise (5A) implies about Philip, one of the remaining eleven disciples:

- **Before the first Easter Sunday, Philip was a doubting coward.**
- **Before the first Easter Sunday, Philip doubted that God would raise Jesus from the dead.**
- **Before the first Easter Sunday, Philip did not worship Jesus fearlessly as divine lord and conqueror of death.**
- **Soon after the first Easter Sunday, Philip was a fearless preacher of Jesus' resurrection.**
- **Soon after the first Easter Sunday, Philip was firmly convinced that God had raised Jesus from the dead.**
- **Soon after the first Easter Sunday, Philip worshiped Jesus fearlessly as divine lord and conqueror of death.**

These six specific historical claims are implied by premise (5A), plus a similar set of six specific historical claims about each of the eleven remaining disciples of Jesus. Thus, premise (5A) implies at least **sixty-six** specific historical claims about the remaining disciples of Jesus. But Kreeft and Tacelli make almost no effort to provide historical evidence in support of these specific historical claims. So, premise (5A) makes dozens of specific historical claims, but there is almost no evidence provided in support of these claims. So, premise (5A) is DUBIOUS for those reasons.

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Furthermore, the Gospels and the book of Acts provide very little information about the lives, activities, and words of the twelve disciples during the ministry of Jesus, and they provide even less information about the lives, activities, and words of most of the eleven remaining disciples after the crucifixion of Jesus. (See my essay: “Our Ignorance about the Twelve Disciples” in the HISTORY section of the ISSUES APPENDIX). Thus, not only do Kreeft and Tacelli FAIL to provide evidence in support of most of their sixty-six specific historical claims that are implied by (5A), but the New Testament does not have sufficient information about Jesus’ Twelve disciples to provide solid historical evidence to establish most of the sixty-six historical claims.

Although it is theoretically possible that premise (5A) is true, we should reject this premise, because (a) it makes dozens of historical claims for which there is little or no historical evidence, and (b) it is probably the case that the first appearances of the risen Jesus to his remaining eleven disciples took place in Galilee a week after Jesus was crucified or a few weeks after he was crucified. So, it is probable that most of the sixty-six historical claims are FALSE.

EVALUATION OF THE ARGUMENT FOR (6A)

The argument for premise (4A) is clearly UNSOUND and therefore FAILS to show that (4A) is true. Also, premise (4A) appears to be FALSE because the inference from the antecedent to the consequent in (4A) is based upon at least three FALSE assumptions.

Premise (5A) is DUBIOUS, because it makes at least sixty-six specific historical claims, but Kreeft and Tacelli offer no historical evidence in support of most of those claims. Furthermore, because the NT has very

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little to say about the lives, activities, and words of most of the eleven remaining disciples, there is no realistic hope that those sixty-six historical claims could be established based on the available historical evidence.

Finally, most of the sixty-six historical claims are PROBABLY FALSE, because the first appearance of the risen Jesus to his eleven remaining disciples probably took place in Galilee a week or a few weeks after Jesus' crucifixion.

Because both premise (4A) and premise (5A) are DUBIOUS, the argument for premise (6) is probably UNSOUND, and we should reject that argument. Therefore, **Objection #5**, the *Sickly Jesus Objection*, FAILS. Kreeft and Tacelli have once again FAILED to show that the *Swoon Theory* is false.

EVALUATION OF THE OBJECTIONS BASED ON JOHN

Four of Kreeft and Tacelli's objections against the *Swoon Theory* are based primarily on passages from the *Gospel of John*. Because the *Gospel of John* is historically unreliable, I suspected that these four objections would be among the weakest of their objections against the *Swoon Theory*. As it turns out, all four of these objections FAILED:

OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE *SWOON THEORY* BASED ON JOHN

OBJECTIONS	LOCATION	BASIS	EVALUATION
Objection #2: Break their Legs	HCA, p.183	Gospel of John	FAILED
Objection #3: Blood and Water	HCA, p.183	Gospel of John	FAILED
Objection #4: Winding Sheets & Entombment	HCA, p.183	Gospel of John	FAILED
Objection #5: Sickly Jesus	HCA, p.183	Gospel of John	FAILED

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Objection #2, the *Break their Legs* objection, FAILS because the key premise (3) of that argument is DUBIOUS, and because another key premise (A) is clearly false. The argument for **Objection #2** is UNSOUND and it should be rejected.

Objection #3, the *Blood and Water* objection, FAILS because Kreeft and Tacelli have FAILED to provide a good reason to believe that the key premise (A1) is true, and they have FAILED to provide a good reason to believe that the key premise (2A) is true. Both premise (A1) and premise (2A) are DUBIOUS, so the argument for **Objection #3** should be rejected.

Objection #4, the *Winding Sheets and Entombment* objection, FAILS because the premise (1) of this argument is DUBIOUS, and another key premise (A) is FALSE. This argument for **Objection #4** is UNSOUND, so it should be rejected.

Objection #5, the *Sickly Jesus* objection, FAILS because the sub-argument Kreeft and Tacelli provide in support of the key premise (4A) is UNSOUND, and because key premise (4A) is DUBIOUS, and because the other key premise (5A) is also DUBIOUS. Both key premises of the argument for **Objection #5** against the *Swoon Theory* are DUBIOUS, so this argument should be rejected.

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OVERVIEW OF OBJECTIONS BASED ON OTHER GOSPELS

In Chapter 8 of their book *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (hereafter: *HCA*), Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli raise *three objections* against the *Swoon Theory* that are based on the Gospels, but not primarily on the historically unreliable *Gospel of John*:

OBJECTIONS AGAINST SWOON THEORY BASED ON OTHER GOSPELS

OBJECTIONS	LOCATION	BASIS
Objection #6: Who Overpowered the Guards?	HCA, p.183	Gospel of Matthew
Objection #7: Who Moved the Stone?	HCA, p.183-184	All Four Gospels
Objection #9: Swoon Theory implies False Theories	HCA, p.184	All Four Gospels

These objections to the *Swoon Theory* have the potential to be stronger than the previous objections that were based primarily on the *Gospel of John*, because the *Gospel of John* is the LEAST historically reliable of the four Gospels. (See “The Historical Unreliability of the *Gospel of John*” in the *New Testament Appendix*).

OBJECTION #6: WHO OVERPOWERED THE GUARDS?

The first objection based on the other Gospels is based on the *Gospel of Matthew*. Here is the core of the argument constituting **Objection #6** (*Who Overpowered the Guards?*):

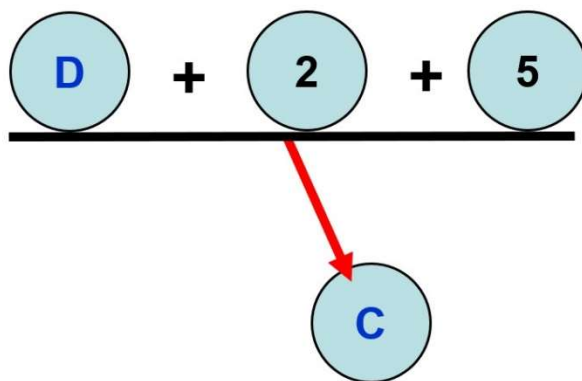
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- D. IF the Swoon Theory were true, THEN either Jesus overpowered the Roman soldiers (who were guarding the tomb on the weekend after Jesus was crucified) all by himself, or else some (or all) of Jesus' eleven remaining disciples overpowered the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb.**
- 2. It is NOT the case that Jesus overpowered the Roman soldiers (who were guarding the tomb on the weekend after Jesus was crucified) all by himself.**
- 5. It is NOT the case that some (or all) of Jesus' eleven remaining disciples overpowered the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb.**

THEREFORE:

- C. It is NOT the case that the *Swoon Theory* is true.**

Logical Structure of the Core Argument for Objection #6



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Kreeft and Tacelli give a sub-argument for premise (2):

- 1. Jesus would have been too weak and frail on the weekend after Jesus was crucified to be able to overpower the Roman soldiers (who were guarding the tomb on the weekend after Jesus was crucified) all by himself.**

THEREFORE:

- 2. It is NOT the case that Jesus overpowered the Roman soldiers (who were guarding the tomb on the weekend after Jesus was crucified) all by himself.**

Kreeft and Tacelli give three different sub-arguments in support of premise (5). The first sub-argument is based on the assumption that *the disciples were unarmed*:

- A. IF Jesus' eleven remaining disciples were unarmed, THEN Jesus' eleven remaining disciples would not have been able to overpower the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb.**

- 3. Jesus' eleven remaining disciples were unarmed.**

THEREFORE:

- 4. Jesus' eleven remaining disciples would not have been able to overpower the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb.**

THEREFORE:

- 5. It is NOT the case that some (or all) of Jesus' eleven remaining disciples overpowered the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb.**

The second sub-argument for (5) is based on the assumption that *the disciples would not knowingly lie*:

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6. **IF** some of Jesus' eleven remaining disciples overpowered the Roman soldiers (who were guarding the tomb), **THEN** the disciples who wrote the Gospels knowingly lied about the burial and resurrection of Jesus in their Gospels.
7. It is **NOT** the case that the disciples who wrote the Gospels knowingly lied about the burial and resurrection of Jesus in their Gospels.

THEREFORE:

5. It is **NOT** the case that some (or all) of Jesus' eleven remaining disciples overpowered the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb.

The third sub-argument for (5) is based on the assumption that the view that some (or all) of *Jesus' disciples overpowered the Roman soldiers* implies the *Conspiracy Theory*:

9. Kreeft and Tacelli refute the *Conspiracy Theory* in HCA.

THEREFORE:

B. It is NOT the case that the *Conspiracy Theory* is true.

8. **IF** some (or all) of Jesus' eleven remaining disciples overpowered the Roman soldiers (who were guarding the tomb), **THEN** the *Conspiracy Theory* would be true.

THEREFORE:

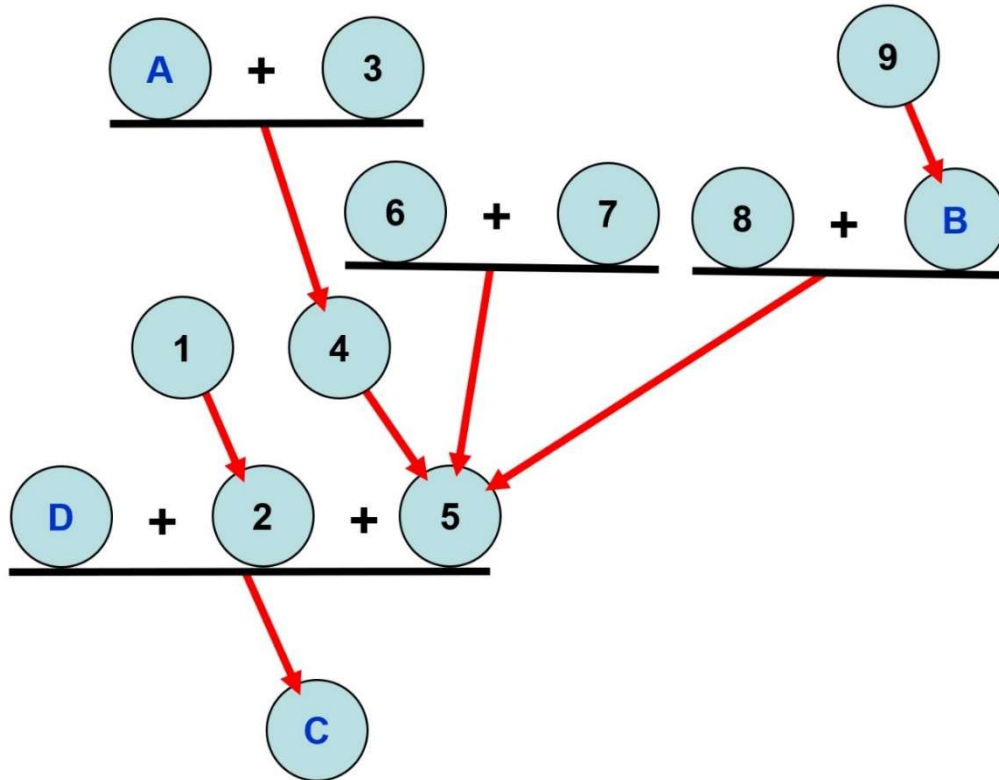
5. It is **NOT** the case that some (or all) of Jesus' eleven remaining disciples overpowered the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb.

If we add the one sub-argument for premise (2) and the three sub-arguments for premise (5) to the diagram of the core argument, we get a

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diagram of the entire argument constituting objection #6:

Logical Structure of Objection #6



EVALUATION OF PREMISE (D)

Kreeft and Tacelli provide arguments in support of the key premises (2) and (5), but they provide no reason or argument in support of the key premise (D). Premise (D) is clearly FALSE, so this argument can be determined to be UNSOUND without even considering the arguments for premises (2) and (5). Because the core of the argument is UNSOUND, **Objection #6 FAILS.**

Here is premise (D), a key premise in the core argument:

D. IF the Swoon Theory were true, THEN either Jesus overpowered the Roman soldiers (who were guarding the

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tomb on the weekend after Jesus was crucified) all by himself, or else some (or all) of Jesus' eleven remaining disciples overpowered the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb.

First, the *Swoon Theory* does not assert or imply that Jesus was *buried in a stone tomb*, so it clearly does not assert or imply anything about *how Jesus was able to leave a stone tomb*. If Jesus was not buried in a stone tomb, then the antecedent of (D) could be true while the consequent of (D) was false. Thus, premise (D) is FALSE.

Second, the *Swoon Theory* does not assert or imply that there were any *Roman soldiers guarding the tomb* of Jesus, so it clearly does not assert or imply anything about *how such soldiers were overpowered*. If there were no Roman soldiers guarding the tomb, then the antecedent of (D) could be true while the consequent of (D) was false. Thus, premise (D) is FALSE.

Third, most NT scholars view the story of the Roman soldiers guarding Jesus' tomb as *an apologetic legend* (see the essay "The Roman Guard Story" in the Historical section of the *Issues Appendix*). The Gospel of Matthew is the ONLY Gospel that mentions the presence of Roman soldiers at the tomb of Jesus. There were probably no Roman soldiers guarding the tomb, so the antecedent of (D) could be true while the consequent of (D) was false. Thus, premise (D) is FALSE.

Fourth, there are *a number of other possibilities* besides Jesus getting help from some of his eleven remaining disciples. According to the *Gospel of John*, Jesus was buried by Josephus and Nicodemus. So, they could have helped Jesus. Josephus was supposedly a wealthy and

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powerful person, so he could have hired a group of strong and armed men to help Jesus.

A group of women allegedly watched Jesus being buried in the tomb on Friday evening, so they could have helped Jesus to leave the tomb on Saturday or Sunday. Jesus had hundreds or possibly thousands of followers, not just the twelve disciples that he selected to be part of an inner circle of followers. So, other followers besides the eleven remaining disciples (out of the twelve), could have helped Jesus to leave the tomb.

Furthermore, there were anti-Roman Jewish rebels in Jerusalem who might well have been happy to help Jesus by beating up or killing some Roman soldiers guarding his tomb (e.g. the Zealots and the Sicarii). Finally, people who were not followers of Jesus, and who were passing by the area where Jesus' tomb was located might have heard Jesus crying out for help from the tomb and gone to give him some assistance.

Finally, Kreeft and Tacelli make the assumption that the **ONLY** way for Jesus to have been *able to leave the tomb* was for someone or some group to *overpower the Roman soldiers*. This assumption is clearly false. The soldiers could have been *distracted*. The soldiers could have been *deceived*. The soldiers could have been *threatened* (e.g. "Leave or we will kill your wife and children.") The soldiers could have been *bribed*. The soldiers could have been *drugged*. There are *many ways* that Jesus could have been able to leave the tomb even if nobody had "overpowered" the Roman soldiers.

Kreeft and Tacelli commit the FALLACY of FALSE DILEMMA here (see "False Dilemma" in the *Critical Thinking Appendix*). There are a number of alternative ways that Jesus could have received help in leaving the tomb. Eliminating the possibility that some of his *eleven remaining*

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disciples overpowered some Roman soldiers to help Jesus to leave the tomb FAILS to eliminate these other possibilities. Thus, premise (D) is FALSE, and the core argument is UNSOUND, and therefore **Objection #6** against the *Swoon Theory* FAILS.

EVALUATION OF PREMISE (2)

The key premise (2) is supported by an argument about Jesus being *too weak and frail* to overpower the Roman soldiers:

- 1. Jesus would have been too weak and frail on the weekend after Jesus was crucified to be able to overpower the Roman soldiers (who were guarding the tomb on the weekend after Jesus was crucified) all by himself.**

THEREFORE:

- 2. It is NOT the case that Jesus overpowered the Roman soldiers (who were guarding the tomb on the weekend after Jesus was crucified) all by himself.**

Kreeft and Tacelli believe that Jesus would have been very weak and frail that weekend because they believe that many serious wounds and injuries had been caused to Jesus during his trials and crucifixion. But in our examination of the Sickly Jesus objection (**Objection #5**), we saw that these beliefs are NOT facts, but are all just *dubious assumptions*. We don't know how many wounds were inflicted on Jesus during his trials and crucifixion or how serious those wounds were. Thus, premise (1) rests on *several dubious assumptions*, making premise (1) dubious. Since (1) is the only reason given by Kreeft and Tacelli in support of premise (2), we may reasonably conclude that premise (2) is also dubious.

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If, as is probably the case, there were no Roman soldiers sent to guard Jesus' tomb, then (2) would be TRUE (more or less), because if there were *no Roman soldiers guarding the tomb*, then Jesus obviously did not overpower any Roman soldiers in order to leave the tomb. But in this case, premise (D) would clearly be false, and the core argument would be UNSOUND, and **Objection #6** would FAIL.

EVALUATION OF THE FIRST ARGUMENT FOR PREMISE (5)

The third key premise in the core argument for **Objection #6** against the *Swoon Theory* is premise (5). Kreeft and Tacelli give three different sub-arguments for (5). The first sub-argument is that *the disciples were unarmed*:

A. IF Jesus' eleven remaining disciples were unarmed, THEN Jesus' eleven remaining disciples would not have been able to overpower the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb.

3. Jesus' eleven remaining disciples were unarmed.

THEREFORE:

4. Jesus' eleven remaining disciples would not have been able to overpower the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb.

THEREFORE:

5. It is NOT the case that some (or all) of Jesus' eleven remaining disciples overpowered the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb.

Premise (A) seems reasonable. But premise (A) is subject to a degree of doubt because *we do not know how many Roman soldiers were*

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guarding the tomb (in fact it is probable that there were ZERO Roman soldiers guarding the tomb!). If there were only *two or three* Roman soldiers guarding the tomb, or if there were only *two or three* Roman soldiers who were actively guarding the tomb *on a shift* (while other soldiers slept some distance away from the tomb), and if all eleven remaining disciples quietly snuck up on the two or three soldiers, it is NOT certain that unarmed disciples would fail to overpower the Roman soldiers, because there would be three (or four or five) disciples attacking each soldier. Premise (A) is reasonable, but it is *less than certain*. Premise (A) is at best PROBABLY TRUE.

Premise (3) is FALSE, according to the Gospels. According to the *Gospel of Luke*, the disciples had AT LEAST two swords:

36 He said to them, “But now, the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one.

37 For I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me, ‘And he was counted among the lawless,’ and indeed what is written about me is being fulfilled.”

38 They said, “Lord, look, here are two swords.” He replied, “It is enough.”

(Luke 22:36-38, New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition)

The fact that Jesus’ disciples were able to produce two swords on this particular occasion does not show that they had ONLY two swords. They might well each have had a sword, but most of them were not *carrying a sword at that time*. In any case, some of Jesus’ disciples had swords, and it might well have been the case that most of them had swords.

According to the *Gospel of Luke* more than one of Jesus’ disciples was carrying a sword when Jesus was arrested, and one disciple used his

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sword to try to prevent Jesus from being arrested:

48 but Jesus said to him, “Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?”

49 When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, “Lord, should we strike with the sword?”

50 Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear.

51 But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him.

(Luke 22:48-51, New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition)

The other three Gospels have similar stories about the arrest of Jesus and the use of a sword by one of his disciples (Mark 14:46-48, Matthew 26:50-52, John 18:7-11).

So, if Kreeft and Tacelli are right that the disciples had no weapons, then *all four Gospels contain fictional stories* about a disciple using a sword to try to prevent Jesus from being arrested. If all four Gospels tell fictional stories about Jesus’ arrest, then it would be reasonable to suspect they also tell some fictional stories about his trials, crucifixion, and burial.

Because premise (3) contradicts stories in all four Gospels, it would be better for Kreeft and Tacelli’s case if they admitted that premise (3) was false, and that means admitting that this first argument for (5) is UNSOUND and should be rejected.

EVALUATION OF THE SECOND ARGUMENT FOR PREMISE (5)

The second sub-argument for (5) is based on the assumption that *the disciples would not knowingly lie*:

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- 6. IF some of Jesus' eleven remaining disciples overpowered the Roman soldiers (who were guarding the tomb), THEN the disciples who wrote the Gospels knowingly lied about the burial and resurrection of Jesus in their Gospels.**
- 7. It is NOT the case that the disciples who wrote the Gospels knowingly lied about the burial and resurrection of Jesus in their Gospels.**

THEREFORE:

- 5. It is NOT the case that some (or all) of Jesus' eleven remaining disciples overpowered the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb.**

Premise (6) is PROBABLY FALSE, because the evidence strongly indicates that none of the Gospels were written by one of Jesus' twelve disciples. Because premise (6) is probably false, this argument is probably UNSOUND, and thus it should be rejected.

Mark and Luke were not among the twelve disciples of Jesus, so no NT scholar believes that *The Gospel of Mark* or *The Gospel of Luke* was written by one of the twelve disciples.

“Matthew” and “John” are the names of two of the twelve disciples of Jesus, so when one of the four Gospels was named “The Gospel According to Matthew” that Gospel was being ascribed to the disciple named “Matthew”. Similarly, when one of the four Gospels was named “The Gospel According to John” that Gospel was being ascribed to the disciple named “John”.

However, there are good reasons for concluding that the “Gospel of Matthew” was not written by the disciple of Jesus named “Matthew”, and that the “Gospel of John” was not written by the disciple of Jesus named “John”. (See, “*The Gospel of John* was not Written by John” and “The

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Gospel of Matthew was not written by Matthew” in the Historical section of the *Issues Appendix*).

Premise (6) is also CLEARLY FALSE, in that it is possible that one or more of the eleven remaining disciples of Jesus *was not present* when the other disciples physically overpowered the Roman soldiers (who were guarding the tomb), and thus *was unaware* of this event.

If, the disciple Matthew was not present when some of the other disciples of Jesus physically overpowered the Roman soldiers, then he would have been unaware of this event, unless he was told about it by the disciples involved in physically overpowering the Roman soldiers. Because beating up or killing a Roman soldier (who was on guard duty at the time) would have probably been punished by death, any disciples involved in overpowering the Roman soldiers *might well have agreed to never mention this event to anyone*, including the other disciples.

Thus, if Matthew wrote the stories in the *Gospel of Matthew* about the tomb of Jesus opening up and about the Roman soldiers failing to try to arrest or kill Jesus as Jesus left the tomb, that would not require that Matthew *knowingly lie* about what happened to the Roman soldiers. Matthew might simply have been *unaware* that some of the other disciples had physically overpowered the Roman soldiers.

The *Gospel of John* doesn't even mention the presence of Roman soldiers guarding Jesus' tomb. It only talks about Jesus' tomb being found empty on Sunday morning. Because there is no mention of Roman soldiers, there was no need for the author to *knowingly lie* about why the Roman soldiers failed to arrest or kill Jesus, when Jesus left the tomb. Nothing in the *Gospel of John* precludes or contradicts the claim that some

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of the disciples of Jesus physically overpowered Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb of Jesus.

Also, John might not have been present when some of the other disciples overpowered the Roman soldiers, and so John might have been *unaware of this event*.

Even if some of the eleven remaining disciples of Jesus in fact physically overpowered the Roman soldiers guarding the tomb of Jesus, this does NOT IMPLY that any of the eleven remaining disciples of Jesus *knowingly lied* in writing one of the Gospels. Therefore, premise (6) is FALSE, and this second sub-argument in support of the key premise (5) is UNSOUND and should be rejected, just like the first sub-argument.

EVALUATION OF THE THIRD ARGUMENT FOR PREMISE (5)

The third sub-argument for premise (5) claims that the view that the disciples overpowered the Roman soldiers implies the *Conspiracy Theory*:

9. Kreeft and Tacelli refute the *Conspiracy Theory* in HCA.

THEREFORE:

B. It is NOT the case that the *Conspiracy Theory* is true.

8. IF some (or all) of Jesus' eleven remaining disciples overpowered the Roman soldiers (who were guarding the tomb), THEN the *Conspiracy Theory* would be true.

THEREFORE:

5. It is NOT the case that some (or all) of Jesus' eleven remaining disciples overpowered the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb.

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Premise (8) is FALSE, so this argument is UNSOUND and thus it should be rejected. The *Conspiracy Theory* implies that Jesus' eleven remaining disciples KNEW that Jesus had not risen from the dead but nevertheless claimed and preached that Jesus had risen from the dead, and thus *knowingly lied about the resurrection of Jesus*.

However, physically overpowering Roman soldiers who were guarding Jesus' tomb does NOT imply that the disciples KNEW that Jesus had not risen from the dead. They might well have believed that Jesus died on the cross, and that Jesus being alive on Easter Sunday morning *was a miracle brought about by God*, even if they helped Jesus to avoid being arrested or killed by Roman soldiers that morning.

Helping Jesus to leave the tomb and walk away from the Roman soldiers does NOT require that any of the disciples doubt that Jesus had died and come back to life, nor does it require any of them to doubt that this was a divine miracle. Thus, premise (8) is FALSE, and this argument for (5) is UNSOUND and should be rejected.

Another problem with this argument is that it requires another assumption to be logically VALID:

B. It is NOT the case that the *Conspiracy Theory* is true.

This is unstated premise of the argument is DUBIOUS, because it is based on a FALSE PREMISE, premise (9). We will see in the chapter on Kreeft and Tacelli's attempt to refute the *Conspiracy Theory* that all of their objections against the *Conspiracy Theory* FAIL, and thus they do NOT refute the *Conspiracy Theory*.

Because premise (9) is false, premise (B) is DUBIOUS, and because premise (B) is a key premise in this third sub-argument, we should reject

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this argument for premise (5). Because premise (8) is false and premise (B) is dubious, it is *very clear* that the third sub-argument for premise (5) should be rejected.

EVALUATION OF THE KEY PREMISE (5)

Here again is premise (5), a key premise of **Objection #6**:

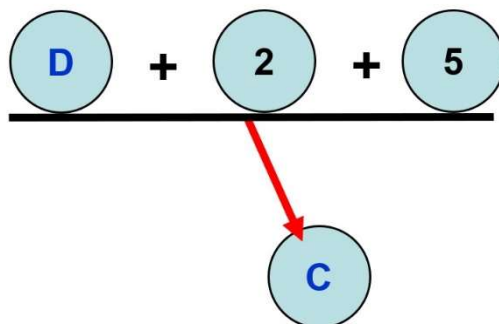
5. It is NOT the case that some (or all) of Jesus' eleven remaining disciples overpowered the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb.

It is not obvious that (5) is true. However, Kreeft and Tacelli have given three different sub-arguments in support of the key premise (5). But all three arguments have serious problems and should be rejected. They have failed to provide *a single good reason* to believe that (5) is true. Thus, it is reasonable to reject premise (5) as being a DUBIOUS claim.

EVALUATION OF OBJECTION #6: WHO OVERPOWERED THE GUARDS?

The core argument for **Objection #6** (Who Overpowered the Guards?) consists of three key premises: (D), (2), and (5):

Logical Structure of the Core Argument for Objection #6



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Premise (D) is FALSE, and the one sub-argument for premise (2) is based on a dubious premise, and all three sub-arguments for (5) are bad arguments, leaving (5) a DUBIOUS claim. Thus, it is *very clear* that we should reject this core argument, and therefore **Objection #6** against the *Swoon Theory* FAILS.

OBJECTION #7: WHO MOVED THE STONE?

The second objection based on the other Gospels (not primarily on the historically unreliable *Gospel of John*) is **Objection #7** (Who Moved the Stone?). Here is the core argument for **Objection #7**:

F. There is no natural explanation for why the stone moved from the door of Jesus' tomb.

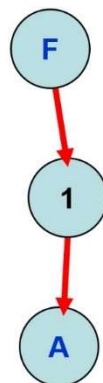
THEREFORE:

1. An angel moved the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb.

THEREFORE:

A. The *Swoon Theory* is false.

Logical Structure of the Core Argument for Objection #7



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Here is the argument in support of the key premise (F):

- G. IF there is a natural explanation for why the stone moved from the door of Jesus' tomb, THEN either Jesus moved the stone, or the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem moved the stone, or the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb moved the stone, or Jesus' eleven remaining disciples moved the stone.**

- B. Jesus did NOT move the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb.**

- C. The Jewish authorities in Jerusalem did NOT move the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb.**

- D. The Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb did NOT move the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb.**

- E. Jesus' eleven remaining disciples did NOT move the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb.**

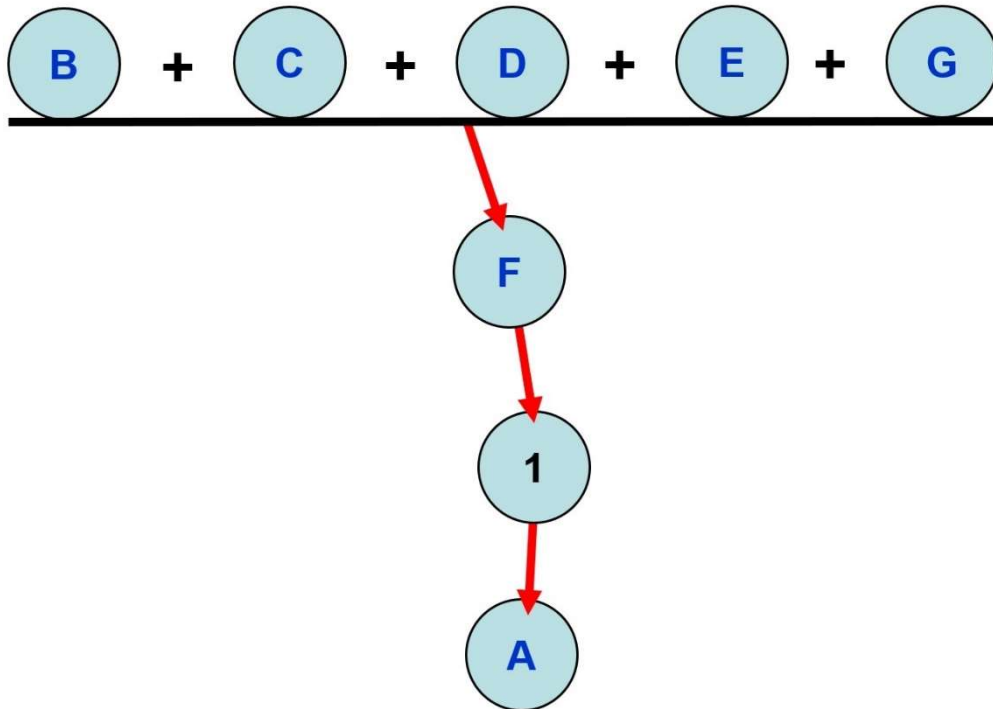
THEREFORE:

- F. There is no natural explanation for why the stone moved from the door of Jesus' tomb.**

If we add this argument to the core argument, we can construct an argument diagram that contains a large portion of the argument constituting

Objection #7:

Logical Structure of Part of the Argument for Objection #7



THE GENERAL LOGIC OF OBJECTION #7

Kreeft and Tacelli provide sub-arguments in support of key premises (B), (C), (D), and (E). Because the diagram showing all of those sub-arguments is rather complex, I'm going to hold off on showing that diagram for now, to avoid making some readers feel overwhelmed. Instead, I will introduce the relevant sub-arguments one at a time as we evaluate the sub-arguments for key premises of **Objection #7**, and I will eventually show the more complex argument diagram after completing the evaluation of those sub-arguments.

Before we begin to evaluate these arguments, it should be noted that

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the logic of this argument is *virtually the same* as the logic of Kreeft and Tacelli's case for the resurrection of Jesus. Kreeft and Tacelli lay out a number of different skeptical views, then attempt to refute each of those skeptical views, and then conclude that the Christian view is true.

As with their case for the resurrection, there are *four skeptical views considered and rejected* by Kreeft and Tacelli, and as with their case for the resurrection, they assume that those four skeptical views are *the only possible skeptical views* on the issue, and that the elimination of those four skeptical views proves that the Christian view is true. As with Kreeft and Tacelli's case for the resurrection, if they FAIL to refute one (or more) of the four skeptical views, then their argument is UNSOUND and **Objection #7 FAILS**.

OBJECTION #7 COMMITS THE RED HERRING FALLACY

Once one understands the core argument of the argument constituting **Objection #7** (Who Moved the Stone?) against the *Swoon Theory*, it becomes obvious that the argument is INVALID and therefore that this objection FAILS. The entire argument, however, is fairly complex, consisting of a number of sub-arguments. Because of the complexity of this argument, this argument appears to commit the FALLACY OF RED HERRING. There is a lot of *emphasis and effort* to prove a claim that is ultimately IRRELEVANT to the main QUESTION AT ISSUE: *Is the Swoon Theory true or false?*

EVALUATION OF THE SUB-ARGUMENT FOR PREMISE (1)

Here is the sub-argument for premise (1):

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F. There is no natural explanation for why the stone moved from the door of Jesus' tomb.

THEREFORE:

1. An angel moved the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb.

There are two serious problems with this sub-argument. First, premise (F) is DUBIOUS, because it makes a *very strong claim*, and because, as we will see later, Kreeft and Tacelli FAIL to provide a single good reason to believe that (F) is true. Second, the inference from (F) to (1) is INVALID, so even if (F) were true, the conclusion (1) DOES NOT FOLLOW from (F).

If we assume that there was no natural cause of the movement of the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb, *the most that we can reasonably infer* is that the stone was moved by *some sort of supernatural force or being*. We cannot conclude that the cause of this event must be *an angel*. It could have been moved by a psychic who had powers of mind over matter. It could have been moved by a magic spell cast by a witch or a wizard. It could have been moved by Zeus or Thor, or by Jehovah or Allah or Shiva or Krishna, or by a fairy or a unicorn, by a magic dragon or by a leprechaun, or by pyramid power, or by a ghost, or by...you get the idea.

Kreeft and Tacelli have committed another FALSE DILEMMA FALLACY. They assume there are *only two possibilities* here: either the stone was moved by some *natural cause* OR it was moved by *an angel*. There are many other possibilities. Thus, premise (1) DOES NOT FOLLOW from premise (F), so this sub-argument is INVALID, and it should be rejected.

Since claims about angels causing observable physical events are

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dubious apart from *powerful evidence* being provided to support such a claim, we are reasonable in concluding that premise (1) is DUBIOUS.

EVALUATION OF THE SUB-ARGUMENT FOR THE CONCLUSION (A)

The inference from premise (1) to the conclusion (A) is INVALID, so the core argument should be rejected, and thus **Objection #7** FAILS:

1. An angel moved the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb.

THEREFORE:

A. *The Swoon Theory is false.*

People who accept or defend the *Swoon Theory* are generally naturalists; *they don't believe in supernatural powers or beings*. Naturalists don't believe, for example, that there are such things as angels. So, if Kreeft and Tacelli can prove that *an angel moved the stone* from the door of Jesus' tomb, then that would clearly challenge the naturalism of many people who accept or defend the *Swoon Theory*.

However, the *Swoon Theory* does NOT assume or imply that *naturalism is true*. The *Swoon Theory* simply implies that Jesus' apparent "coming back to life" was *the result of natural causes*. That leaves open the possibility that there could be *other events* that are supernatural or that are caused by supernatural beings. Thus, the *Swoon Theory* does NOT imply that there are no such things as angels, nor does it contradict the claim that an angel moved the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb. Therefore, (A) does NOT FOLLOW from premise (1).

Because the *final inference* in the argument constituting **Objection #7** is an INVALID inference, the whole argument should be rejected, and **Objection #7** therefore FAILS. Furthermore, as previously noted, premise

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(1) is DUBIOUS, so this sub-argument is both INVALID and based on a DUBIOUS premise. Therefore, it is *very clear* that we should reject this sub-argument for (A), and thus *very clear* that **Objection #7 FAILS**.

EVALUATION OF KEY PREMISE (G)

Here again is the key premise (G):

G. IF there is a natural explanation for why the stone moved from the door of Jesus' tomb, THEN either Jesus moved the stone, or the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem moved the stone, or the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb moved the stone, or Jesus' eleven remaining disciples moved the stone.

Kreeft and Tacelli must assume that the four skeptical explanations for the movement of the stone that they examine and reject are the ONLY possible four skeptical explanations. Otherwise, refuting those four skeptical explanations has *no real significance*, and certainly does NOT prove that there is no natural explanation for the movement of the stone.

The assumption of premise (G) involves the FALLACY OF FALSE DILEMMA (or in this case: FALSE QUADLEMMA, because there are *four alternatives* that are supposed to include all possibilities). It is obvious to anyone who is familiar with the Gospels that these four alternatives are NOT the only possibilities.

There are other possibilities for explaining why the stone at the door of Jesus' tomb moved. According to the *Gospel of John*, Jesus was buried by Josephus and Nicodemus. So, they could have moved the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb on Saturday or Sunday. Josephus was supposedly

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a wealthy and powerful person, so he could have used his servants or hired a group of men to move the stone.

A group of women allegedly watched Jesus being buried in the tomb on Friday evening, so they could have moved the stone from the door to Jesus' tomb on Saturday or Sunday. Jesus had hundreds or possibly thousands of followers, not just the twelve disciples that he selected to be part of an inner circle of followers. So, other followers besides the eleven remaining disciples (out of the twelve), could have helped Jesus to leave the tomb.

Furthermore, there were anti-Roman rebels in Jerusalem who might well have been happy to help Jesus by moving the stone to help Jesus leave the tomb (e.g., the Zealots and the Sicarii). Finally, people who were not followers of Jesus, and who were passing by the area where Jesus' tomb was located might have heard Jesus crying out for help from the tomb and gone to give him some assistance.

Kreeft and Tacelli commit the FALLACY of FALSE DILEMMA here (see "False Dilemma" in the *Critical Thinking Appendix*). There are a number of alternative ways that Jesus could have received help in leaving the tomb. Eliminating the *four possibilities* that Jesus, or some of his eleven remaining disciples, or the Roman soldiers (who were guarding the tomb), or the Jewish authorities moved the stone FAILS to eliminate other alternative explanations. Thus, premise (G) is FALSE, and therefore the argument for premise (F) is UNSOUND and should be rejected. So, (F) remains DUBIOUS and **Objection #7** against the *Swoon Theory* FAILS.

EVALUATION OF THE SUB-ARGUMENT FOR KEY PREMISE (B)

Here is the sub-argument for premise (B):

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2. **Jesus would have been too weak and frail from the many serious wounds and injuries he experienced during his trials and his crucifixion on Friday to be able to move the very large stone from the door of his stone tomb all by himself on that Saturday or Sunday.**

THEREFORE:

- B. Jesus did NOT move the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb.**

Premise (2) is very DUBIOUS, so this sub-argument for (B) should be rejected, and thus (B) itself is DUBIOUS, so the argument for (F) should be rejected, and therefore **Objection #7** against the *Swoon Theory* FAILS.

Premise (2) makes three different *questionable assumptions*:

- **Jesus was buried in a stone tomb.**
- **Jesus had many serious wounds and injuries from his trials and crucifixion on Friday.**
- **The stone at the door of Jesus' tomb was very large.**

NONE of these assumptions are historical facts. All three assumptions are subject to reasonable doubt. On the alleged burial in a stone tomb, see my evaluation of **Objection #4**. On Jesus' alleged many serious wounds and injuries, see my evaluation of **Objection #5**.

One dubious assumption of premise (2) is this:

- **The stone at the door of Jesus' tomb was very large.**

This claim is VAGUE. Precisely how large and how heavy was this stone? Was the stone 500 pounds? 1,000 pounds? 2,000 pounds? Was the stone *circular* or *spherical*, so that it could be easily rolled like a wheel or a ball? Or was the stone more like a *cube* or *cuboid* making it more difficult to move? Was the stone three feet tall? Four feet tall? Five feet tall?

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Kreeft and Tacelli *don't specify any details* about the stone, and that is because the Gospels *don't provide any such details*. The shape, dimensions, and weight of the stone are UNKNOWN, and are a matter of speculation and educated guessing. Kreeft and Tacelli are VAGUE here because the Gospels are VAGUE here, and we simply do not have any precise facts about the shape, size, and weight of the stone.

Because Kreeft and Tacelli don't specify any details about the stone, and because the Gospels don't provide any such details, the VAGUENESS of the claim that the stone at the door of Jesus' tomb was "very large" casts significant doubt on premise (2).

Furthermore, the Gospel accounts about the tomb of Jesus also *cast significant doubt on this claim* because they repeatedly assert that people had to stoop or bend down in order to look into the tomb (Luke 24:12, John 20:3-6, John 20:11), indicating that the top of the entrance to the tomb was significantly lower than an average person's height. Since the average height of a Jewish male in first century Palestine was between five feet one inch (<https://www.esquire.com/lifestyle/a40399/jesus-real-face/>) and five feet five inches (<https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/what-did-jesus-look-like-9780567671509/>), this indicates that the opening of the tomb was probably less than four feet tall.

The archeological study of ancient stone tombs in and near Jerusalem has shown that the entrances to stone tombs were usually between 2.5 and 3.0 feet tall:

Tomb entrances, even those with rolling stones, were rather small, about 2.5–3 feet high and 2–2.5 feet wide.

(<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/what-did-jesus-tomb-look-like-interview/>)

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If the entrance to Jesus' tomb was 2.5 feet tall and 2.0 feet wide, then a circular stone for that tomb could have been just 3.2 feet in diameter and 10 inches thick, and such a circular stone would have weighed as little as about 1,000 pounds.

My car (2015 Ford Escape SE 4-door with FWD) weighs 3,500 pounds, and I can EASILY push my car by myself a few feet on level pavement in just a few seconds. For more details on this question, see my essay "The Size and Shape of the Stone" in the History section of the *Issues Appendix*, and "Could One Person Move the Stone?" in the Science section of the *Issues Appendix*.

Because premise (2) involves at least *three dubious assumptions*, premise (2) is itself dubious and should be rejected. Thus, Kreeft and Tacelli give us no good reason to believe that (B) is true, and therefore, premise (B) is also DUBIOUS and should be rejected.

EVALUATION OF THE SUB-ARGUMENT FOR KEY PREMISE (C)

- 3. The Jewish authorities in Jerusalem had requested that the stone be put in place at the door of Jesus' tomb and that the tomb be guarded by Roman soldiers to prevent Jesus' disciples from stealing the body of Jesus from the tomb.**

THEREFORE:

- 4. It was against the interests of the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem to move the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb.**

THEREFORE:

- C. The Jewish authorities in Jerusalem did NOT move the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb.**

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One problem here is that premise (C) DOES NOT FOLLOW from premise (4). People do things *contrary to their own interests* all the time. It is contrary to a person's interest to drink and drive, but people drink and drive all the time. It is contrary to a person's interest to smoke cigarettes because this increases their risk of lung cancer, throat cancer, and heart disease, but many people smoke cigarettes anyway. It is contrary to a person's interest to try to save the life of a child in a burning building, or to try to save the life of a child drowning in a flooded river, but people often put their lives in jeopardy to save the life of a child, or even the life of an adult. Although people usually do act in accordance with their own interest, there are many exceptions to this general rule. Therefore, the inference from (4) to (C) is INVALID, and thus this argument should be rejected. If we reject this argument for (C), then premise (C) remains DUBIOUS.

What about premise (4)? Was it against the interests of the Jewish authorities to move the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb? Kreeft and Tacelli give us a reason to believe that (4) is the case. But there are two problems with the argument given in support of (4). First, premise (3) is PROBABLY FALSE, because as we have seen previously, it is PROBABLY FALSE that the Jewish authorities requested that Roman soldiers guard the tomb of Jesus. But if this request is fiction, then so is the request that a stone be put in place to block the door of Jesus' tomb. Since (3) is PROBABLY FALSE, we should reject this argument for premise (4), and so (4) remains DUBIOUS.

A second problem with the argument for (4) is that premise (4) DOES NOT FOLLOW from premise (3). The Jewish authorities were (allegedly) worried that Jesus' disciples might *steal his body from the tomb* and then *falsely claim that Jesus had risen from the dead*. The Jewish authorities

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clearly did NOT believe that Jesus was the Messiah or the divine Son of God, and they wanted to prevent the disciples of Jesus *from deceiving many Jewish people* into wrongly believing that Jesus was the Messiah.

But if *Jesus was found to be alive inside the tomb on Saturday or Sunday* (e.g., Jesus might have been yelling for help from inside the tomb), this might well have persuaded many of the Jewish authorities that *Jesus had miraculously risen from the dead*, and that *Jesus was the Messiah* after all. In that case, opening the tomb and letting Jesus walk back into Jerusalem would NOT have been contrary to the interests of the Jewish authorities, because they would no longer be worried about the disciples engaging in some *scheme to deceive other Jewish people*.

Thus, in the circumstances envisioned by the *Swoon Theory*, where Jesus was clearly alive on Saturday or Sunday, it would no longer be the case that the interests of the Jewish authorities would be best served by keeping the tomb closed. Thus, even if (3) were true, it could still be the case that (4) was false. So, premise (4) does NOT FOLLOW LOGICALLY from premise (3). Therefore, the inference from (3) to (4) is INVALID and this argument should be rejected. Thus, premise (4) remains DUBIOUS.

The argument for (C) is based on premise (4), but the inference from (4) to (C) is INVALID, and premise (4) is DUBIOUS. For these reasons we should reject the argument for premise (C), and premise (C) therefore remains DUBIOUS.

SUFFICIENT REASON TO REJECT THE ARGUMENT FOR (F)

We now have *three good reasons* to reject the argument for (F). Premise (G) is FALSE, premise (B) is DUBIOUS, and premise (C) is also DUBIOUS. Clearly, the argument for (F) should be rejected, and thus

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Objection #7 against the *Swoon Theory* FAILS.

EVALUATION OF THE SUB-ARGUMENT FOR KEY PREMISE (D)

Kreeft and Tacelli provide an argument for key premise (D):

- 5. The Roman soldiers who were sent to guard Jesus' tomb would be killed if they allowed someone to remove Jesus' body from the tomb or if they allowed Jesus to leave his tomb alive.**

THEREFORE:

- 6. It was against the interests of the Roman soldiers who were guarding Jesus' tomb to move the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb.**

THEREFORE:

- D. The Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb did NOT move the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb.**

The conclusion (D) DOES NOT FOLLOW from premise (6). This inference is INVALID and so this argument should be rejected. Therefore, premise (D) remains DUBIOUS.

The inference from (6) to (D) is INVALID because *people often do things against their own interests*. This is the same problem that we saw with Kreeft and Tacelli's argument for premise (C). For example, if the Roman soldiers believed that Jesus was a prophet or divine savior, they might have been willing to *risk their own lives* to help Jesus to get out of the tomb and to leave the area to go find his disciples. They might have viewed such action as noble and worthy of the risk of being executed.

Furthermore, if the Roman soldiers believed Jesus to be God or to have been sent by God, they might have believed that Jesus or God would *protect and reward them for helping Jesus*. In that case, they would

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probably have BELIEVED that *helping Jesus WAS in their best interest*. They might well have believed that helping Jesus was in their best interest, even if it was NOT actually in their best interest, even if *in reality* neither Jesus nor God would protect them from being killed for failing to prevent Jesus from leaving the tomb. In this case, (6) would be true, but (D) would be false. Thus, the inference from (6) to (D) is INVALID.

Is premise (6) true? We don't know how many Roman soldiers were guarding the tomb. If there were just two or three Roman soldiers guarding the tomb, then six or seven armed men could have overpowered them and taken their weapons away. The soldiers could then have been threatened with death unless they moved the stone away from the entrance of the tomb. In this case, it would be *in the interest of the Roman soldiers* to comply with the demand and move the stone. In this case, premise (6) would be FALSE.

Since (6) assumes that Roman soldiers were sent to guard Jesus' tomb, and since it is PROBABLY FALSE that any Roman soldiers were sent to guard Jesus' tomb, premise (6) is PROBABLY FALSE. If so, then we would have *two good reasons to reject the argument* for (D). First, the inference from (6) to (D) is INVALID, and second, premise (6) is PROBABLY FALSE. So, this argument for (D) should be rejected.

However, since it is probably the case that there were *no Roman soldiers guarding Jesus tomb*, it is also probably the case that no Roman soldiers were present at the tomb to move the stone from the entrance of the tomb. Although we don't KNOW whether (D) is true or false, since there probably were no Roman soldiers guarding the tomb, it would be *unlikely* that the stone was moved by Roman soldiers.

But Kreeft and Tacelli give an argument for (6), so we should

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consider that argument before we dismiss premise (6) as probably false:

- 5. The Roman soldiers who were sent to guard Jesus' tomb would be killed if they allowed someone to remove Jesus' body from the tomb or if they allowed Jesus to leave his tomb alive.**

THEREFORE:

- 6. It was against the interests of the Roman soldiers who were guarding Jesus' tomb to move the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb.**

First, premise (5) also assumes that Roman soldiers were sent to guard Jesus' tomb. But this assumption is PROBABLY FALSE, so premise (5) is PROBABLY FALSE. Thus, this argument for (6) should be rejected.

Furthermore, since the alleged purpose of the Roman soldiers guarding Jesus' tomb was *to prevent Jesus' disciples from stealing his dead body* (and then falsely claiming that Jesus had risen from the dead), it is DUBIOUS that the Roman soldiers would have been executed if they discovered that *Jesus was still alive* and helped Jesus to get out of the tomb. This would NOT be failing to prevent the disciples of Jesus from *stealing the dead body of Jesus*, so this would NOT be failing to perform the duty they had been given. Therefore, premise (5) is DUBIOUS even if Roman soldiers had been sent to guard the tomb of Jesus.

The Roman soldiers would, in this case, be allowing a man who was *crucified under the order of Pilate*, the Roman governor of Judea, to go free, if they let Jesus walk out of his tomb and into Jerusalem to meet up with his disciples. However, the Roman soldiers *might not have been told who was in the tomb* they were guarding (i.e., a Jew who was crucified under the order of Pilate). They might have merely been told to make sure that *nobody came to steal the dead body* from the tomb. In that case, they

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would not have known they were guarding the tomb of *a capital criminal* (in the eyes of the Roman government).

Premise (6) is PROBABLY FALSE, because it implies that some Roman soldiers were sent to guard the tomb of Jesus. Furthermore, the argument given by Kreeft and Tacelli in support of premise (6) should be rejected because it is based on premise (5) which is a DUBIOUS claim whether or not Roman soldiers had been sent to guard Jesus' tomb. If there were no Roman soldiers guarding the tomb, then (6) is FALSE, but even if there were Roman soldiers guarding the tomb, (6) is still DUBIOUS. Furthermore, the inference from (6) to (D) is INVALID, so it is clear that this argument for (D) should be rejected, and thus **Objection #7** against the *Swoon Theory* FAILS.

EVALUATION OF THE FIRST SUB-ARGUMENT FOR KEY PREMISE (E)

Here is the first sub-argument for premise (E):

H. The Roman soldiers who were guarding Jesus' tomb would

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have been highly motivated to prevent Jesus' disciples from removing Jesus' body from the tomb or allowing Jesus to leave his tomb alive.

7. The Roman soldiers who were guarding Jesus' tomb would not have fallen asleep.
8. Even if the Roman soldiers who were guarding Jesus' tomb did fall asleep, if Jesus' eleven remaining disciples had attempted to move the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb, then the noise they made would have wakened the Roman soldiers.

THEREFORE:

- I. **IF Jesus' eleven remaining disciples had attempted to move the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb, THEN the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb would have prevented them from successfully moving the stone and opening the tomb.**

THEREFORE:

- E. **Jesus' eleven remaining disciples did NOT move the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb.**

Kreeft and Tacelli also provide a reason in support of premise (H) and premise (7):

5. **The Roman soldiers who were sent to guard Jesus' tomb would be killed if they allowed someone to remove Jesus' body from the tomb or if they allowed Jesus to leave his tomb alive.**

Premise (I) is a key premise in the first argument for (E):

- I. **IF Jesus' eleven remaining disciples had attempted to move**

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the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb, THEN the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb would have prevented them from successfully moving the stone and opening the tomb.

This premise implies that Roman soldiers had been sent to guard the tomb of Jesus. But this historical claim is PROBABLY FALSE, so premise (I) is PROBABLY FALSE. In fact, because this means that that antecedent of (I) might well be true even while the consequent of (I) is false, this shows premise (I) to be FALSE. Thus, the first argument for (E) is UNSOUND and should be rejected.

Although the fact that premise (I) is FALSE (because there probably were no Roman soldiers guarding the tomb of Jesus) is sufficient to sink this argument, there are other serious problems with this argument that I will proceed to point out by critically examining the sub-argument that Kreeft and Tacelli provide in support of premise (I). The backbone of the argument for (I) is this:

5. The Roman soldiers who were sent to guard Jesus' tomb would be killed if they allowed someone to remove Jesus' body from the tomb or if they allowed Jesus to leave his tomb alive.

THEREFORE:

7. The Roman soldiers who were guarding Jesus' tomb would not have fallen asleep.

THEREFORE:

I. IF Jesus' eleven remaining disciples had attempted to move the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb, THEN the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb would have prevented them from successfully moving the stone and opening the tomb.

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Premise (5) is PROBABLY FALSE, because the claim that Roman soldiers were sent to guard Jesus' tomb is PROBABLY FALSE. However, there is another problem with premise (5), even if we grant the dubious assumption that Roman soldiers were guarding the tomb. It is DUBIOUS that the soldiers would have faced execution for *allowing a living Jesus to walk out of the tomb* (see my evaluation of the sub-argument for key premise (D) of **Objection #7** above).

Furthermore, if we take the inference from (5) to (7) to be a DEDUCTIVE inference, then the inference is INVALID because someone having a *strong motivation* for doing X, does not mean that someone *will do* X. For example, people have a strong motivation to not fall asleep at the wheel while they are driving at 60 to 70 miles an hour on a freeway at night, but many people DO fall asleep at the wheel while they are driving at 60 to 70 miles an hour on a freeway at night.

When a person is very tired and sleepy, even the strong motivation to avoid a violent death is often no match for the strong tendency of a human body to fall asleep when a person is very tired and sleepy. We have no idea how tired or sleepy the Roman soldiers who were guarding the tomb of Jesus (if there were such soldiers), so for all we know they were very tired and sleepy when they were guarding the tomb on Saturday night and Sunday morning.

Because the inference here is NOT a VALID deductive inference, we should modify premise (7) to make it clear that the inference here is an INDUCTIVE one:

7A. It is very unlikely that the Roman soldiers who were guarding Jesus' tomb would have fallen asleep.

It would be true that it is "very unlikely" that the Roman soldiers would have

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fallen asleep if there was a 90% chance that the soldiers remained awake and a 10% chance that they fell asleep. But in that case, the inference from premise (7A) to premise (I) would be INVALID, because there would be at least a 10% chance that the disciples could open the tomb and get Jesus out of the tomb and into Jerusalem, based on premises (5) and (7A). Thus, premise (7A) at best makes premise (I) very likely; it does not prove that premise (I) is true.

It is this possibility of the Roman soldiers falling asleep that led Kreeft and Tacelli to bolster this argument by *adding another premise*:

8. Even if the Roman soldiers who were guarding Jesus' tomb did fall asleep, if Jesus' eleven remaining disciples had attempted to move the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb, then the noise they made would have wakened the Roman soldiers.

Premise (8), like the other premises in the sub-argument for (I), is PROBABLY FALSE, because it implies that there were Roman soldiers guarding Jesus' tomb, a claim that is PROBABLY FALSE. However, even if we grant the questionable assumption that there were Roman soldiers guarding the tomb, premise (8) is still problematic, because it VERY UNCERTAIN that the disciples moving the stone would have wakened or alerted sleeping Roman soldiers.

If there is a significant chance that the disciples could have moved the stone without waking sleeping Roman soldiers, then premise (8) would be FALSE. Kreeft and Tacelli assume that most of the eleven remaining disciples would have to have been involved in moving the stone, because the stone was "very large" and heavy. They claim that the moving of the stone would make a lot of noise because it was very large and heavy and because so many people would have to be involved in the effort to move

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the stone.

But this is a DUBIOUS ASSUMPTION about the stone, and thus it is also a DUBIOUS ASSUMPTION that most of the remaining eleven disciples of Jesus would need to be involved in the effort to move the stone (See my above evaluation of the sub-argument for key premise (B) of **Objection #7**). It is not clear that the moving of a *modest-sized stone* by, for example, just *two of Jesus' disciples*, would have made loud noises that would alert the Roman soldiers. Thus, premise (8) is FALSE, and the argument for premise (I) is UNSOUND and should be rejected.

Furthermore, we don't know how many Roman soldiers were guarding the tomb, so there might have been only two or three Roman soldiers guarding the tomb, and we don't know how many disciples went to the tomb on Saturday night or Sunday morning, so there might have been ten or eleven disciples at the tomb. We don't know how many of the disciples were armed, so they might all have been armed.

But there are two potential outcomes here in which the disciples would still be successful. First, the disciples might have overpowered, or distracted, or deceived, or threatened, or bribed the soldiers so that Jesus could leave the tomb and walk into Jerusalem unhindered (See my previous discussion of premise (5) of **Objection #6**).

For all we know, the disciples could have overpowered two or three Roman soldiers (or distracted them, or deceived them, or threatened them, or bribed them). So, even if there were Roman soldiers guarding the tomb, and even if the disciples made a lot of noise attempting to move the stone and thus awakened or alerted the soldiers, the disciples still could have been successful at opening the tomb and making it possible for Jesus to walk away from the tomb unhindered by the Roman soldiers.

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Second, if Jesus was alive and walked out of the tomb on Saturday or Sunday, that might well have *changed the minds and intentions of the soldiers* (See my above evaluation of the sub-argument for premise (D) of **Objection #7**). The Roman soldiers were there *to prevent the disciples from stealing the dead body of Jesus*. If Jesus was, contrary to their previous belief, alive and walking around, then they might have had no objection to allowing Jesus and his disciples to go their way. Their job was *to prevent the theft of a dead body*, not to try to kill a god or superhuman who had just risen from the dead, nor to prevent an ordinary man who was mistakenly thought to be dead but who was clearly now alive from walking away from the tomb.

Premise (5) is thus FALSE, because it asserts that the Romans soldiers would have been executed for *allowing a living Jesus to walk out of his tomb*. This also shows that premise (I) is not only based upon FALSE premises, but that (I) is itself FALSE.

Thus, even if there were Roman soldiers guarding the tomb of Jesus, and even if some of Jesus' eleven remaining disciples moved the stone from the door of that tomb, and even if this activity made loud noises that alerted the Roman soldiers, it might well be the case that the Roman soldiers would NOT have arrested or killed a living Jesus there at the tomb, but that they would have allowed Jesus and his disciples to leave the area without arresting or killing any of them.

Therefore, premise (I) is FALSE. It is FALSE, because the consequent of (I) might well be FALSE even if the antecedent of (I) was TRUE, and even if the DUBIOUS ASSUMPTION that there were Roman soldiers guarding Jesus' tomb was correct.

Premise (I) is PROBABLY FALSE, because it assumes that Roman

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soldiers had been sent to guard the tomb of Jesus, but that historical claim is PROBABLY FALSE. Even if Roman soldiers had been sent to guard Jesus' tomb, it is VERY UNCERTAIN that an attempt by some of Jesus' disciples to move the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb would have made enough noise to alert nearby Roman soldiers. Furthermore, even if the disciples did make enough noise to alert the Roman soldiers, the Roman soldiers might well have allowed *a living, walking Jesus* and his disciples to leave the area *without killing or arresting any of them*, or the disciples could have physically overwhelmed the Roman soldiers (or distracted them, deceived them, threatened them, or bribed them). Thus, premise (I) is clearly FALSE, and the first sub-argument that Kreeft and Tacelli give for (E) is UNSOUND and should be rejected.

EVALUATION OF SECOND SUB-ARGUMENT FOR KEY PREMISE (E)

Here is the second sub-argument for premise (E):

10. Kreeft and Tacelli have refuted the *Conspiracy Theory* in HCA.

THEREFORE:

J. *The Conspiracy Theory* is NOT true.

9. IF some of Jesus' eleven remaining disciples had moved the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb, THEN the *Conspiracy Theory* would be true.

THEREFORE:

E. Jesus' eleven remaining disciples did NOT move the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb.

Let's consider premise (10) first. Kreeft and Tacelli believe that the *Conspiracy Theory* is NOT true, because they believe that they have

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refuted the *Conspiracy Theory* in Chapter 8 of HCA. They raise seven objections against the *Conspiracy Theory*. I have carefully analyzed and evaluated each of those seven objections and concluded that they ALL FAIL. So, I have concluded that their claim in premise (10) to have refuted the *Conspiracy Theory* is FALSE. Thus, the argument for (J) is UNSOUND and should be rejected, and that means that premise (J) is DUBIOUS.

Because Kreeft and Tacelli have raised seven objections against the *Conspiracy Theory*, I have devoted *an entire chapter* of this book to evaluating those seven objections. So, I will not attempt to show that (10) is FALSE here in this chapter about the *Swoon Theory*. But that is the conclusion that I will be establishing later, when I evaluate their objections to the *Conspiracy Theory*.

However, we need not wait until I complete my evaluation of their seven objections against the *Conspiracy Theory* in order to evaluate this second argument for (E). That is because premise (9), which is the other key premise of this second argument is FALSE. Thus, this second sub-argument for (E) is UNSOUND and should be rejected.

Here is premise (9) of **Objection #7**:

9. IF some of Jesus' eleven remaining disciples had moved the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb, THEN the *Conspiracy Theory* would be true.

According to the *Conspiracy Theory*, the eleven remaining disciples of Jesus *made up the story that Jesus rose from the dead and made up stories about Jesus appearing to them alive and in a resurrected body* on various occasions after his crucifixion and burial. According to the *Conspiracy Theory*, these eleven remaining disciples KNEW that these claims were FALSE, and thus *they deliberately lied* whenever they

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preached or taught or claimed that they had seen and spoken with the risen Jesus.

However, even if we assume that some (or all) of Jesus' eleven remaining disciples "had moved the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb", it DOES NOT FOLLOW that they just made up the story that Jesus had risen from the dead, nor that they just made-up stories about seeing and talking with the risen Jesus. Moving the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb has NOTHING to do with whether Jesus was inside the tomb at that time, and NOTHING to do with whether Jesus was alive or dead at that time. According to the *Swoon Theory*, Jesus was still alive on the weekend immediately following his crucifixion. On that assumption, if some (or all) of Jesus' remaining eleven disciples moved the stone at the door of Jesus' tomb, and if Jesus was inside the tomb at that time, then they would have discovered a living, breathing Jesus inside the tomb.

If the some (or all) of the remaining eleven disciples discovered a living breathing Jesus inside the tomb, then *they might well have concluded that Jesus had risen from the dead*. And if Jesus remained alive for a few more days, a few more weeks, or a few more months, then there would be opportunities for Jesus' disciples to encounter this living, breathing Jesus on multiple occasions.

Thus, if we suppose that some (or all) of Jesus' eleven remaining disciples moved the stone from the door of Jesus' tomb, this does not in any way rule out the possibility that they met and talked with a living, breathing Jesus that day and on other future days, and that they sincerely, but mistakenly, believed that Jesus had died and that God had raised Jesus from the dead. Therefore, premise (9) is FALSE, and the second argument for (E) is UNSOUND and should be rejected.

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EVALUATION OF OBJECTION #7: WHO MOVED THE STONE?

The sub-argument for the key premise (F) is VALID, but the premises are all either FALSE or DUBIOUS. Kreeft and Tacelli fail to provide any good reason to believe (B), (C), (D), or (E), so those premises are all DUBIOUS. Premise (G) is clearly FALSE. Thus, it is clear that the argument for premise (F) is UNSOUND and should be rejected. Therefore, premise (F) remains DUBIOUS.

The inference from (1) to (A) is INVALID, and premise (1) is DUBIOUS, because the inference from (F) to (1) is INVALID. Furthermore, we have seen that the key premise (F) is DUBIOUS. Thus, the core argument of **Objection #7** is very clearly a bad argument and should be rejected. Therefore, **Objection #7** against the *Swoon Theory* FAILS.

OBJECTION #9: THE *SWOON THEORY* IMPLIES FALSE THEORIES

Objection #9 is the objection that the *Swoon Theory* implies a false theory:

1. **Jesus' eleven remaining disciples testified that Jesus really died on the cross and really rose from the dead.**

THEREFORE:

2. **IF the *Swoon Theory* is true, THEN either the *Conspiracy Theory* or the *Hallucination Theory* is true.**

B. It is NOT the case that the *Conspiracy Theory* is true.

C. It is NOT the case that the *Hallucination Theory* is true.

THEREFORE:

- A. It is NOT the case that the *Swoon Theory* is true.**

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Kreeft and Tacelli believe (B) because they think they have refuted the *Conspiracy Theory*:

3. Kreeft and Tacelli have refuted the *Conspiracy Theory* in HCA.

THEREFORE:

B. It is NOT the case that the *Conspiracy Theory* is true.

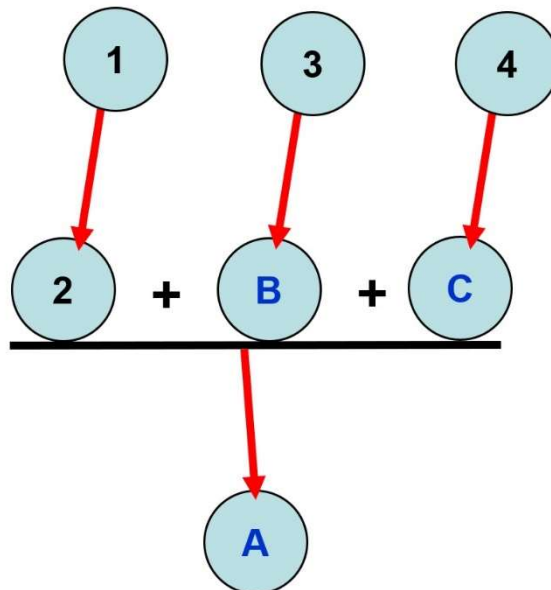
They also believe (C) because they think they have refuted the *Hallucination Theory*:

4. Kreeft and Tacelli have refuted the *Hallucination Theory* in HCA.

THEREFORE:

C. It is NOT the case that the *Hallucination Theory* is true.

Logical Structure of Objection #9



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The inference from (2), (B), and (C) to the conclusion (A) is logically VALID, so the SOUNDNESS of this argument depends on whether the premises (2), (B), and (C) are true or false.

EVALUATION OF PREMISES (B) AND (C)

Premises (B) and (C) are DUBIOUS, so this argument should be rejected, and therefore **Objection #9** against the *Swoon Theory* FAILS.

Kreeft and Tacelli believe (B) and (C) because they believe that they have refuted the *Conspiracy Theory*, and that they have refuted the *Hallucination Theory*. But in later chapters I will show that all of their objections against the *Conspiracy Theory* FAIL, and that all of their objections against the *Hallucination Theory* FAIL. Thus, premises (3) and (4) are FALSE. So, they have not provided any good reason to believe that (B) is the case, nor that (C) is the case. Therefore, (B) and (C) are DUBIOUS premises. Therefore, this argument for (A) should be rejected.

EVALUATION OF PREMISE (2)

Premise (2) of this argument is FALSE, so this argument is UNSOUND and it should be rejected. Therefore, on this basis alone, **Objection #9** against the *Swoon Theory* FAILS.

I have previously shown that the *Swoon Theory* does NOT imply the *Conspiracy Theory* (see my evaluation of the second sub-argument for (E) in my examination of **Objection #7** above). The counterexample that I previously gave against that claim *says nothing about any disciple experiencing a hallucination of Jesus*, and thus the same counterexample shows that the *Swoon Theory* also does NOT imply the *Hallucination Theory*. Premise (2) is clearly FALSE.

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Kreeft and Tacelli give an argument in support of (2), so we should at least briefly consider that argument, even though it seems obvious that (2) is FALSE:

- 1. Jesus' eleven remaining disciples testified that Jesus really died on the cross and really rose from the dead.**

THEREFORE:

- 2. IF the *Swoon Theory* is true, THEN either the *Conspiracy Theory* or the *Hallucination Theory* is true.**

The counterexample to the claim that “the *Swoon Theory* implies the *Conspiracy Theory*” is also a counterexample to this inference. It shows that (1) can be true even though (2) is FALSE.

However, I can also *explain why* the inference from (1) to (2) is INVALID. Kreeft and Tacelli are confusing “asserting a false claim” with “lying”. The key difference between these two different actions is that one can assert a false claim without KNOWING that one is doing so. People sometimes sincerely believe claims that are FALSE, and then assert those false claims. That is NOT the same as “lying”. In order to tell a lie, one must KNOW (or at least believe) that what one is asserting is FALSE.

Premise (1) in combination with the *Swoon Theory* does imply that Jesus' eleven remaining disciples asserted claims that are FALSE (i.e. that Jesus died on the cross, and that Jesus rose from the dead). But the combination of premise (1) and the *Swoon Theory* does NOT imply that the disciples were lying when they made those assertions that are false. According to the *Swoon Theory*, they sincerely believed that Jesus died on the cross and that Jesus rose from the dead; they were just mistaken in this belief. The *Conspiracy Theory* requires that the disciples *knowingly lied* about Jesus rising from the dead. The *Swoon Theory* does NOT imply that

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any such lying took place, so the *Swoon Theory* does NOT imply the *Conspiracy Theory*. Because scenarios compatible with the *Swoon Theory* also need not involve any hallucinations of the “risen” Jesus, the *Swoon Theory* also does NOT imply the *Conspiracy Theory*. The invalid inference from (1) to (2) appears to be based on confusion of “asserting a false claim” with “lying”.

In addition to premise (2) clearly being FALSE, and in addition to the inference from (1) to (2) clearly being INVALID, there is also a problem with the truth of premise (1). It might be the case that (1) is true, but Kreeft and Tacelli have provided NO EVIDENCE showing that (1) is true, and the available evidence does NOT show the claim in (1) to be a historical FACT.

We don't KNOW that all eleven remaining disciples of Jesus “testified that Jesus really died on the cross and really rose from the dead.” In fact, there is good reason to doubt that any of the eleven disciples were present at Jesus' crucifixion (see “Did Jesus' Disciples See Jesus Die on the Cross?” in the History section of the *Issues Appendix*). If they were not present at the crucifixion, then it is unclear that they “testified that Jesus really died”. How could they testify that Jesus really died, when they did not see him die? Wouldn't that be very dishonest?

Furthermore, even if we accept that Peter and John both proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus, we don't have much information in the New Testament about the lives and preaching and teaching of the nine other disciples after the death of Jesus. So, the available historical evidence in the New Testament appears to be very sketchy on the question of whether those nine other disciples all “testified that Jesus...really rose from the dead.” Perhaps some of them left the movement and returned to a quiet life where they did not preach or teach about Jesus. Perhaps some of

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them accepted the belief that Jesus died and rose from the dead, but did NOT “testify” to it, because they did not see Jesus die, or did not see Jesus alive after the crucifixion and burial of Jesus.

Premise (1) might be true, but it is NOT a historical FACT. There does not appear to be sufficient evidence in the NT to prove that (1) is true. Because (1) is NOT a FACT and is somewhat DUBIOUS, premise (2) could not be proven on the basis of (1), even if the inference from (1) to (2) was valid, which it clearly is not.

Kreeft and Tacelli have FAILED to provide a good reason to believe (2), because the inference from (1) to (2) is INVALID, and because (1) is somewhat DUBIOUS. Furthermore, (2) is clearly FALSE, as I have argued above. The *Swoon Theory* does NOT imply the *Conspiracy Theory*, nor does it imply the *Hallucination Theory*, nor does it imply that one or the other of those two other skeptical theories are true.

EVALUATION OF OBJECTION #9

Here is the core argument of the argument that constitutes **Objection #9** (*Swoon Theory* implies False Theories):

2. IF the *Swoon Theory* is true, THEN either the *Conspiracy Theory* or the *Hallucination Theory* is true.

B. It is NOT the case that the *Conspiracy Theory* is true.

C. It is NOT the case that the *Hallucination Theory* is true.

THEREFORE:

A. It is NOT the case that the *Swoon Theory* is true.

Premises (B) and (C) are DUBIOUS, because they are based on false premises (3) and (4), as I will show in later chapters in this book. Premise (2) is clearly FALSE, making this argument UNSOUND. We have three

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good reasons to reject this argument: the dubiousness of (B), the dubiousness of (C), and the falsehood of (2). Thus, this argument should clearly be rejected, and therefore **Objection #9** against the *Swoon Theory* FAILS, just like all of the previous objections FAIL.

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OVERVIEW OF OBJECTIONS NOT BASED ON THE GOSPELS

In Chapter 8 of their book *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (hereafter: HCA), Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli raise two objections against the *Swoon Theory* that are NOT based on the Gospels:

OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE *SWOON THEORY* NOT BASED ON THE GOSPELS

OBJECTIONS	LOCATION	BASIS
Objection #1: Deadliness of Roman Crucifixion	HCA, p.183	NOT the Gospels
Objection #8: Where Did Jesus Go?	HCA, p.184	NOT the Gospels

These objections have *the potential to be the strongest* of the nine objections to the *Swoon Theory*, because they are not based on any of the Gospels and thus don't have the problems of *historical unreliability* that come along with using the Gospels as the basis for historical claims.

OBJECTION #1: THE DEADLINESS OF ROMAN CRUCIFIXION

Here is the argument constituting the "Deadliness of Roman Crucifixion" Objection:

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1. Roman procedures were very careful to eliminate the possibility of a person surviving crucifixion.
2. Roman law even laid the death penalty on any Roman soldier who let a capital prisoner escape in any way, including bungling a crucifixion.

THEREFORE:

3. No Roman soldier ever let a capital prisoner escape or ever bungled a crucifixion.

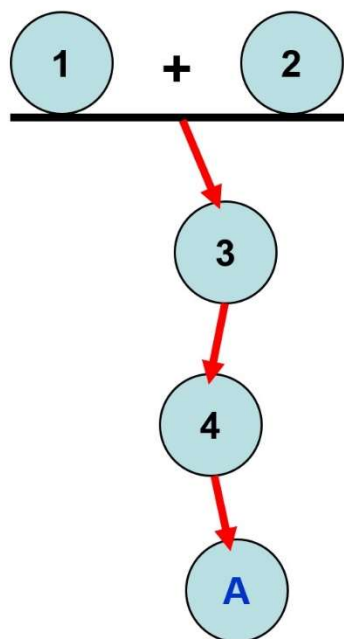
THEREFORE:

4. Jesus could not have survived Roman crucifixion.

THEREFORE:

- A. *The Swoon Theory is false.*

Logical Structure of Objection #1



2.2 EVALUATION OF OBJECTIONS TO THE *SWOON THEORY*

INITIAL EVALUATION OF PREMISE (3)

Premise (3) is clearly FALSE, so this argument is UNSOUND and should be rejected. Therefore, **Objection #1** against the *Swoon Theory* FAILS.

It is clear that some Roman soldiers let a capital prisoner escape, and that some Roman soldiers bungled a crucifixion. This is clear because of *the huge number of crucifixions* carried out by Roman soldiers over the course of *five centuries* during the Roman Empire (crucifixion was introduced to the Romans in the 3rd Century BCE and was abolished in the 4th Century CE). It is *patently absurd* to believe that in five hundred years, after performing tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of crucifixions, no Roman soldier ever bungled a crucifixion.

Not only is premise (3) *absurd on its face*, but it would be nearly impossible to prove such a *very strong and vast historical claim*. Do we have Roman records documenting every single crucifixion carried out by Roman soldiers for 500 years? Of course not. Do we have Roman documents about thousands of Roman crucifixions detailing the results of all crucifixions occurring over *one century* or over a *few decades*? This seems *very doubtful*, because if such records existed, Christian apologists would commonly cite such impressive historical evidence. No Christian apologist has ever cited any such historical documents. In any case, Kreeft and Tacelli are clearly ignorant of any such evidence.

EVALUATION OF THE ARGUMENT FOR PREMISE (3)

Although premise (3) is absurd on its face, Kreeft and Tacelli attempt to show that (3) is true by giving an argument for it:

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1. Roman procedures were very careful to eliminate the possibility of a person surviving crucifixion.
2. Roman law even laid the death penalty on any Roman soldier who let a capital prisoner escape in any way, including bungling a crucifixion.

THEREFORE:

3. No Roman soldier ever let a capital prisoner escape or ever bungled a crucifixion.

Premise (1) speaks to the deadliness of crucifixion when crucifixion was carried out in accordance with “Roman procedures”. This premise is concerned with the *ability* of Roman soldiers to conduct deadly crucifixions. Premise (2) speaks to the motivation of Roman soldiers to carry out crucifixions that were deadly. This premise is concerned with the *willingness* of Roman soldiers to conduct deadly crucifixions.

Premise (1) and premise (2) are both clearly RELEVANT to the conclusion (3), but they are INSUFFICIENT to establish (3). The inference in this argument is clearly INVALID if taken as a *deductive inference*. Even if we take this as an *inductive inference*, the evidence is too WEAK to make the conclusion even PROBABLE. Because the inference here is either INVALID or WEAK, Kreeft and Tacelli’s argument for (3) should be rejected, leaving (3) not only DUBIOUS, but clearly FALSE (as I previously argued). Thus, **Objection #1** against the *Swoon Theory* FAILS.

THE WEAKNESS AND INSUFFICIENCY OF PREMISE (1)

Here again is premise (1):

1. Roman procedures were very careful to eliminate the possibility of a person surviving crucifixion.

What premise (1) asserts is that the Romans had a procedure for carrying

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out crucifixions, and that *if Roman soldiers fully followed that procedure*, this would *virtually guarantee* that the person being crucified would be dead when the crucifixion procedure was complete. However, there are *at least four ways* that the existence of such a procedure falls short of ensuring that no Roman soldier ever bungled a crucifixion.

First, the existence of a flawless Roman crucifixion procedure could be thwarted by *the failure to carefully and thoroughly teach that procedure* to every Roman soldier who would participate in a crucifixion. If only half of the Roman soldiers who participated in crucifixions were carefully and thoroughly taught the Roman crucifixion procedure, then half of the Roman soldiers who participated in crucifixions would have a poor or only partial knowledge of the Roman crucifixion procedure, and thus be at high risk of failing to fully follow that procedure.

Second, the learning of a procedure depends not only on the quality and efforts of the teachers of the procedure, but also on the efforts and intelligence of the students who are being taught the procedure. Some Roman soldiers were not *devoted and intelligent students of Roman military procedures*. Some Roman soldiers, no doubt, made little effort to carefully and thoroughly learn some of the military procedures they were taught, and some Roman soldiers were of lower intelligence than other soldiers so that even with serious efforts, they would still not be successful in fully learning the military procedures they were taught.

If one quarter of Roman soldiers who were taught Roman crucifixion procedures either *failed to make a serious effort to learn* that procedure or *did not have the intelligence or the memory required to fully learn* the procedure (even with a serious effort to do so), then one quarter of Roman soldiers who were taught Roman crucifixion procedures would be at high

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risk of failing to fully follow those procedures when actually carrying out a crucifixion.

Third, even for those Roman soldiers who fully learned the Roman crucifixion procedure there are risks that could lead them to FAIL to carry out an actual crucifixion that was fully in accordance with that procedure. If their training on the Roman crucifixion procedure took place *a year or more before they began to carry out actual crucifixions*, then their memory of the procedure might well have become *incomplete or inaccurate*. Memories fade over time. For example, students who do well on a math test at the end of a math course generally do not do as well on the same math problems if they are tested a year or two later (reference).

Fourth, even if a Roman soldier was *carefully and thoroughly taught* the Roman crucifixion procedure and *carefully and thoroughly learned* the Roman crucifixion procedure and that soldier also began to carry out actual crucifixions only a few weeks or months after learning the procedure, that Roman soldier could still be at high risk of failing to fully follow the Roman crucifixion procedure.

If that Roman soldier was sleep deprived, or sick, or drunk, or hungover, then *that soldier would be at high risk for*: (a) forgetting a step in the procedure or (b) forgetting an important detail about one of the steps of the procedure or (c) getting confused about the order of some of the steps of the procedure. Therefore, such a soldier would be at risk for FAILING to fully follow the Roman crucifixion procedure in carrying out that particular crucifixion.

Given that there are *at least four different plausible ways* that a flawless Roman crucifixion procedure could FAIL to be fully followed by Roman soldiers in carrying out a particular actual crucifixion, it is clearly the

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case that *many actual Roman crucifixions* were carried out in a way that was NOT fully in accordance with a flawless Roman crucifixion procedure. Therefore, premise (1) is too weak and insufficient to make the strong conclusion (3) PROBABLE.

THE WEAKNESS AND INSUFFICIENCY OF PREMISE (2)

Here, again, is premise (2):

2. Roman law even laid the death penalty on any Roman soldier who let a capital prisoner escape in any way, including bungling a crucifixion.

Even if the Roman soldiers who carried out a particular crucifixion all had a solid knowledge of a flawless Roman crucifixion procedure, that does NOT by itself guarantee that they would have fully followed that procedure. What if fully following the procedure was very time consuming and physically strenuous? What if there were alternatives or short-cuts that would save them a significant amount of time and/or that would be much less physically exhausting? The soldiers might well be tempted to use such alternatives or short-cuts, and thus FAIL to fully follow the flawless Roman procedure that they all had learned and knew.

Premise (2) provides an answer to that possibility. According to premise (2), the Roman soldiers would be *highly motivated* to avoid letting “a capital prisoner escape” and to avoid “bungling a crucifixion”. However, there are *a few necessary conditions* that would need to be met in order for a Roman soldier to actually be highly motivated by this threat:

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- **Knowledge of the Law:** The soldier would have to KNOW that the death penalty was a prescribed punishment for these failures of duty.
- **Belief about Superior Officer:** The soldier would have to BELIEVE that his superior officer would be likely to impose this severe punishment for these failures of duty.
- **Belief about the Risk of Failure:** The soldier would have to BELIEVE that following an alternative step or shortcut would create a significant risk that the condemned prisoner would escape or that the crucifixion would be bungled.
- **Fear of the Death Penalty:** The soldier would have to have a significant degree of FEAR about facing the death penalty.

The first point (Knowledge of the Law) is a relatively minor concern; presumably almost all Roman soldiers would have been aware of the death penalty being a potential punishment for these failures of duty (assuming that this was indeed a Roman law for the entire five-hundred year history of Roman crucifixions). However, the other three points are more significant.

Some commanding officers are more strict and harsher in dealing out punishments than other officers. If a specific commanding officer was believed by some of his soldiers to be lenient, then they might think it was *very unlikely* that their commanding officer would impose the death penalty on them for letting a capital criminal escape or for bungling a crucifixion.

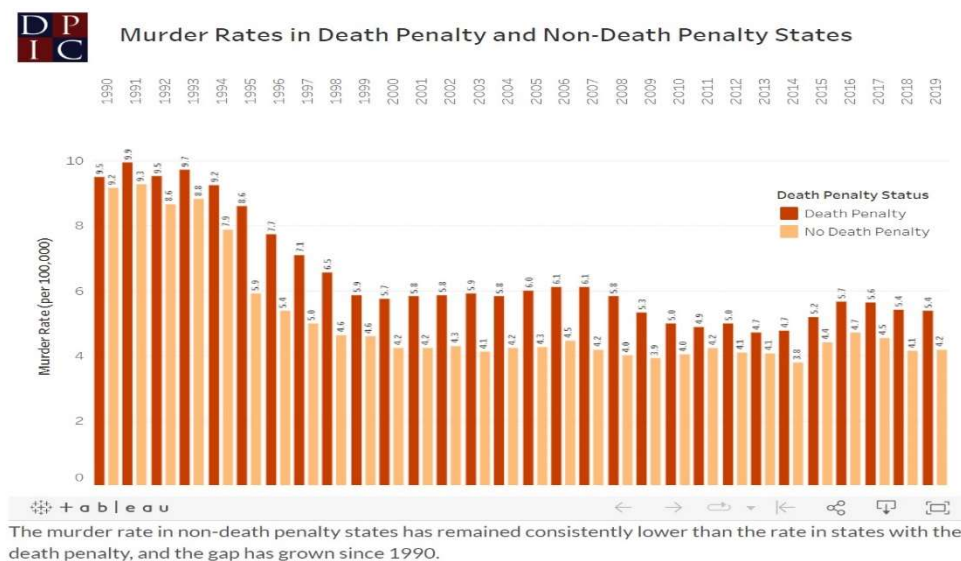
Even supposing the Roman soldiers who are carrying out a particular crucifixion all KNOW a flawless Roman crucifixion procedure, that does NOT imply that they *believe the procedure to be flawless*. They might think that the procedure was flawed and that fully following the procedure *put them at risk* of letting a condemned criminal escape or of bungling the crucifixion. Furthermore, even if they believed the Roman crucifixion procedure to be flawless, they might believe that the alternative or shortcut

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was also flawless, or that using the alternative or shortcut only involved a *very slight risk* of a failure of their duties.

Finally, we generally think of Roman soldiers as being *tough and fearless warriors*, like our view of the US Marines. But if a soldier is tough and fearless, that soldier is willing and able *to face death in battle* whenever called upon to fight. Such a tough and fearless person would probably NOT fear the threat of the death penalty nearly as much as us ordinary citizens (who are not tough and fearless soldiers). So, what seems like *a huge threat* to you and me, might not have been viewed that way by a significant number of Roman soldiers. It seems likely that a significant number of Roman soldiers were in fact tough and fearless.

It is important to note here that, contrary to the belief of many conservatives in the US, the death penalty does not appear to have much influence on the behavior of people. For example, the death penalty does not appear to have much of a deterrent effect on the crime of murder. In states that have the death penalty, murder rates have been consistently HIGHER than in states that do not impose the death penalty:



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If the death penalty had a significant impact on human behavior, we would expect the murder rate to be LOWER in states that impose the death penalty compared to states that do not.

Given that there are *at least three significant necessary conditions* (belief that his superior officer would be likely to impose death penalty, belief that shortcuts to standard procedure posed significant risk of bungling a crucifixion, and a strong fear of facing the death penalty) that plausibly were NOT satisfied in a significant number of instances of Roman soldiers who carried out crucifixions, premise (2) is too weak and insufficient to be used to show conclusion (3) to be PROBABLE.

EVALUATION OF THE INFERENCE IN THE ARGUMENT FOR (3)

Because of the WEAKNESS and INSUFFICIENCY of premise (1) and premise (2) in providing support for the conclusion (3), they not only are an INVALID deductive argument for (3), but if we take them as providing an inductive argument for (3), they FAIL to show (3) to even be PROBABLE. Thus, the problems with the inference from (1) and (2) to (3) provide us with good reason to reject this argument for (3). Therefore, **Objection #1** against the *Swoon Theory* FAILS.

EVALUATION OF PREMISE (1)

Here, again, is premise (1):

- 1. Roman procedures were very careful to eliminate the possibility of a person surviving crucifixion.**

Is this premise true? How could we know that (1) is true apart from knowing *the specific content* of the Roman procedure for crucifixion? How many steps are there in the procedure? Can just one soldier carry out this procedure, or are two or three or four soldiers required in order to fully

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follow the procedure? Is there an actual ancient Roman document that describes the steps and details of this procedure?

Kreeft and Tacelli provide *no information or details whatsoever* about this alleged Roman military procedure. I suspect that this is because *they have no information or details to provide*. In any case, they do not provide any historical facts or evidence whatsoever in support of premise (1).

Kreeft and Tacelli apparently think that readers should simply accept (1) as a fact, simply because they assert it to be so. But given that they rarely, if ever, provide any *actual historical facts or evidence* to support any of their numerous *historical claims*, it appears that they are ignorant about Roman history, in terms of knowing any relevant historical facts or evidence.

Given the utter and complete lack of information, details, and evidence provided by Kreeft and Tacelli, premise (1) is DUBIOUS. They have provided *no good reason* to believe that (1) is true, so we should reject premise (1) as being DUBIOUS, and thus reject the argument for premise (3).

EVALUATION OF PREMISE (2)

Here, again, is premise (2):

2. Roman law even laid the death penalty on any Roman soldier who let a capital prisoner escape in any way, including bungling a crucifixion.

Is premise (2) true? It seems plausible that such a law existed. But what evidence is there for the existence of this Roman law? Is there an ancient Roman document that contains various Roman laws, including this one? If so, what precisely did the law say? Why don't Kreeft and Tacelli simply *quote the law*, if they know of an ancient Roman document that contains

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this law?

Again, Kreeft and Tacelli provide *no historical evidence whatsoever* in support of premise (2). Apparently, they think that readers should simply accept that such a law exists simply because they say so. But Kreeft and Tacelli are philosophers. They are NOT experts on the history of the Roman Empire or on the history of the Roman military. So, nobody should accept this claim simply because they assert it to be so.

Given that we have no idea what this alleged law *actually said*, and given that Kreeft and Tacelli, as usual, provide *no historical evidence whatsoever* to show that such a law existed, this claim made in premise (2) is DUBIOUS, so we should reject this claim. Thus, their argument for (3) should also be rejected since it is based on a DUBIOUS historical claim.

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE ARGUMENT FOR (3)

We have seen that there are a number of serious problems with the argument for (3). First, the inference from premises (1) and (2) to the conclusion (3) is clearly INVALID, if we take this to be a deductive argument. Second, the inference from premises (1) and (2) to the conclusion (3) is WEAK and is INSUFFICIENT to show that (3) is PROBABLE, even if premises (1) and (2) are assumed to be true. Third, premise (1) is DUBIOUS, given that Kreeft and Tacelli provide no relevant details and no historical evidence for (1). Fourth, premise (2) is DUBIOUS, given that Kreeft and Tacelli provide no relevant details and no historical evidence for (2).

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EVALUATION OF OBJECTION #1

Premise (3) is absurd on its face, given that Roman soldiers crucified tens of thousands of people over a period of five centuries. The argument for (3) is clearly NOT cogent and should be rejected. This leaves premise (3) not only DUBIOUS, but FALSE based on common sense and the huge number of crucifixions carried out by Roman soldiers, and therefore the argument for (4) is UNSOUND and should be rejected.

Here is the core argument for (A):

3. No Roman soldier ever let a capital prisoner escape or ever bungled a crucifixion.

THEREFORE:

4. Jesus could not have survived Roman crucifixion.

THEREFORE:

A. The *Swoon Theory* is false.

Since Kreeft and Tacelli have failed to provide a good reason to believe (4), that premise is DUBIOUS. Thus, the argument for (A) should be rejected. Therefore, **Objection #1** (“The Deadliness of Roman Crucifixion”) against the *Swoon Theory* FAILS.

OBJECTION #8: WHERE DID JESUS GO?

Here is the argument constituting **Objection #8**:

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2. A man like Jesus, with a past like Jesus' past, would have left traces.

THEREFORE:

A. IF Jesus survived his crucifixion (i.e., Jesus was still alive when removed from the cross and lived for at least a few days or weeks after being removed from the cross), THEN there would be some historical data about Jesus' life after his crucifixion.

1. It is NOT the case that there is some historical data about Jesus' life after his crucifixion.

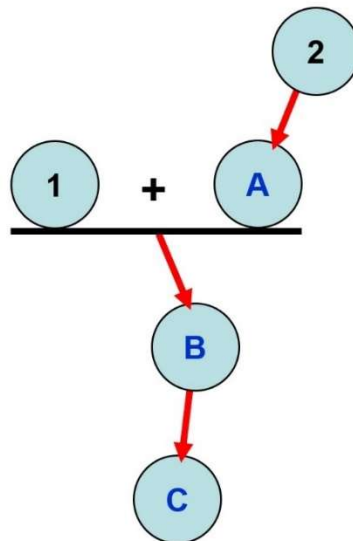
THEREFORE:

B. It is NOT the case that Jesus survived his crucifixion (i.e., it is NOT the case that Jesus was still alive when removed from the cross and lived for at least a few days or weeks after being removed from the cross).

THEREFORE:

C. *The Swoon Theory* is false.

Logical Structure of Objection #8



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Although the LOGIC of the core argument is fine (i.e., premise (B) follows logically from premises (1) and (A)), both premise (1) and premise (A) are FALSE. Thus, this core argument is clearly UNSOUND, and we should reject this argument. Thus, Kreeft and Tacelli have failed to provide a good reason to believe the key premise (B), so (B) is DUBIOUS. Therefore, **Objection #8** against the *Swoon Theory* FAILS, just like all the other objections raised against the *Swoon Theory* by Kreeft and Tacelli.

EVALUATION OF KEY PREMISE (A)

Here, again, is premise (A) of **Objection #8**:

A. IF Jesus survived his crucifixion (i.e., Jesus was still alive when removed from the cross and lived for at least a few days or weeks after being removed from the cross), THEN there would be some historical data about Jesus' life after his crucifixion.

If Jesus had survived his crucifixion, then he would have been *an escaped condemned criminal* who was subject to arrest and execution by Roman soldiers. Jesus would have had *very good reason* to go into hiding, and even to leave Palestine and go into exile, to avoid being crucified a second time. If Jesus had gone into hiding, or left Palestine to go into exile, then *it would be likely* that there would be no historical data about Jesus' life after his crucifixion. Thus, this premise is FALSE.

Also, suppose that someone did write a book or a letter that included descriptions of some events in Jesus' life that took place a year or more after his crucifixion. There are *at least two reasons why* this book or letter might well fail to provide historical data to us about the life of Jesus after his crucifixion. First, *Jesus might have changed his name* to avoid being hunted down and killed by Roman soldiers or by his enemies who were

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Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. If Jesus changed his name, the author of the book or letter containing events in Jesus' life after the crucifixion would probably NOT write that those events were events in "the life of Jesus", so we could not tell two-thousand years later that the events described were events *in the life of Jesus*.

Second, if the author of the book or letter described the events as being events "in the life of Jesus", *this book or letter might well have been destroyed by early Christian believers*, who would view this writing as heretical and destructive of the Christian faith, because it implies that Jesus did NOT return to heaven after his resurrection, as Christians believe.

In either case, there would have been an ancient document describing *events in the life of Jesus that took place after his crucifixion*, but *we would be unaware of this historical information* or of the historical document that contained this information.

Furthermore, when Christian apologists try to explain the lack of first century pagan references to the historical Jesus, they argue that it was unlikely that there would have been any pagan historical references to the life of Jesus, because very few people who lived in that time, even people of great importance and influence, are mentioned in first century writings. But this conflicts with Kreeft and Tacelli's view that, "A man like that, with a past like that, would have left traces." (HCA, p. 184).

If Jesus was *the sort of person who would necessarily leave historical traces* (i.e. people would be highly likely to notice him, talk about him, and write books and letters about him), then the skeptical argument that *Jesus probably did not actually exist* because there are no pagan references to Jesus from the first century, would be *a significant and weighty argument* against the existence of an historical Jesus.

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Christian apologists, like Kreeft and Tacelli, face a serious dilemma here. They can either agree that *it is unlikely that a person like Jesus could exist without leaving historical traces*, in which case they should acknowledge that the skeptical argument just mentioned against the existence of Jesus is *a significant and weighty argument*, or else they can allow that *it is likely that even a person like Jesus could exist without leaving historical traces*, in which case they should reject the claim made in premise (A) of the argument for **Objection #8**.

In any case, it is very plausible that a Jesus who survived crucifixion would go into hiding, or go into exile, and might even change his name. If Jesus did one or more of these things, then it seems UNLIKELY that there would have been books or letters written about events in Jesus' life that took place after his crucifixion and that those events would be described as events "in the life of Jesus". Thus, premise (A) is FALSE, and the argument for **Objection #8** is UNSOUND, and it should therefore be rejected.

EVALUATION OF KEY PREMISE (1)

Here, again, is premise (1) of the argument for **Objection #8**:

1. It is NOT the case that there is some historical data about Jesus' life after his crucifixion.

Premise (1) is FALSE, so the argument for **Objection #8** is UNSOUND and should be rejected. Therefore, **Objection #8** against the *Swoon Theory* FAILS.

All four Gospels and the book of Acts indicate that Jesus met with at least some of his disciples after he was crucified and buried. These accounts are dubious and are historically unreliable in my view, but that

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does not change the fact that the Gospels are *historical documents* that provide *historical data* about alleged events “in Jesus’ life after his crucifixion.” The Gospel accounts of appearances of the “risen” Jesus to his disciples are CLEAR COUNTEREXAMPLES to premise (1), even if skeptics do not take these accounts to be historically reliable or true. Dubious or questionable historical data is still historical data.

Furthermore, Kreeft and Tacelli should be the last people on Earth to claim that the Gospel accounts of appearances of the “risen” Jesus to his disciples are *completely fictional accounts*. They cannot make a plausible case for the resurrection of Jesus while rejecting those accounts as completely fictional stories. If those stories provide us with NO useful historical data about *the life of Jesus after his crucifixion*, then any attempt to argue for the resurrection of Jesus is DOOMED TO FAILURE.

If Kreeft and Tacelli really believe that premise (1) is true, then they should conclude that *there is no cogent argument for the resurrection of Jesus*, and that *there never can be a cogent argument for the resurrection of Jesus*. If they were intellectually honest, they would abandon the Christian faith, based on their acceptance of premise (1).

Because premise (1) is FALSE, the argument for **Objection #8** is UNSOUND and should be rejected.

EVALUATION OF OBJECTION #8 (“WHERE DID JESUS GO?”)

Premise (1) is a key premise in the argument constituting **Objection #8**, and we have seen that premise (1) is FALSE. Premise (2) is also a key premise in the argument constituting **Objection #8**, and we have seen that premise (2) is FALSE. Thus, it is *very clear* that this argument is UNSOUND and should be rejected. Therefore, **Objection #8** (“Where Did

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Jesus Go?) against the *Swoon Theory* FAILS, just like all the other objections that Kreeft and Tacelli have made against the *Swoon Theory*.

EVALUATION OF THE CASE AGAINST THE SWOON THEORY IN HCA

I have shown that each of the *nine objections* that Kreeft and Tacelli have made against the *Swoon Theory* FAILS. Because they have FAILED to make a single solid objection against the *Swoon Theory*, their attempt to refute the *Swoon Theory* is *a complete and unmitigated FAILURE*. Therefore, their claim to have refuted the *Swoon Theory* is FALSE.