Can We Understand the Risen Jesus as Enacting Sovereignty over Space in the Fourth Gospel (or does Jesus ‘Merely’ Pass Through Physical Objects at John 20:19-20)?

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Abstract: In interpreting the risen Jesus’ action of appearing ‘out of nowhere’ at John 20:19-20 (and Luke 24:36) and his inferred action of rising from the dead at John 20:5-7 (and Luke 24:12), the consensus of both classical and modern tradition has been to understand these actions as Jesus in some sense passing through physical objects and therefore the space containing them. Hence Jesus’ action of standing in the midst of the disciples at John 20:19-20 and his inferred action at 20:5-7 of rising from the dead such that he is no longer in his grave-clothes are both described in terms of passing through physical objects. Yet it can be argued that the same ‘event’ in both cases was interpreted by John in terms of sovereignty over space as opposed to ‘mere’ sovereignty over physical objects. 20:19-20 and 20:5-7 can be understood in terms of John attributing sovereignty over space to Jesus.

Keywords: sovereignty over space; sovereignty over time; the Gospel of John; passing through physical objects; the classical tradition; the modern biblical tradition

INTRODUCTION
In this essay I wish to put the case for interpreting John 20:19-20 and indeed 20:5-7 in terms of Jesus enacting sovereignty or lordship over space. Part of this case will involve an examination of passages in Luke 24 (v.12 and v.36) that I hold to be proto-Johannine and so are relevant to the argument. I will juxtapose this hypothesis to what I take to be the prevailing consensus interpretation as regards the continued influence of the classical tradition and its implicit endorsement by modern biblical exegetes. This is that Jesus is to be understood in some sense as passing through physical objects and therefore the space containing them. Once I have so to speak provided the data to be interpreted in terms of sovereignty over space I turn to the question of what
would prove it to be the better hypothesis than sovereignty over physical objects. My answer is that it would be the better hypothesis were it to be the case that John also held the risen Jesus to enact sovereignty over time. That is, independent evidence regarding sovereignty over time would add weight to the claim of sovereignty over space. What would make sovereignty over space an inferior hypothesis (though this would not necessarily confirm passing through physical objects) is if it turned out that John did not attribute to Jesus sovereignty over time. Were sovereignty over time not part of John’s intentionality it would be singularly unlikely that John’s intentionality would have been one of sovereignty over space. Hence thought the data would remain consistent with sovereignty over space the latter would not I contend be a plausible interpretation of John. But on grounds provided by the Old Testament scholar Claus Westermann I suggest the reverse does not hold: were sovereignty over space not to be true of John it would not follow that sovereignty of time is false. This is because John like the Priestly writer in Genesis 1 privileged time over space.

I turn to matter at hand as regards the Gospel of John itself. The main objective of the essay is to explore the plausibility that John’s intentionality behind 20:19-20 (especially) and John 20:5-7 can be understood in terms of the risen Jesus’ sovereignty over space rather than as a matter, as the classical tradition has it (and not a few of the modern tradition), of Jesus passing through solid physical objects in truly miraculous fashion.

In this respect, the key methodological issue both these putative explanations have to address is whether it is plausible to attribute Johannine intentionality this kind of truth-claim at all. John meaning Jesus passing through physical objects and the event itself being explained by Jesus passing through physical objects are two different things in modern hermeneutics. Modernity holds that the latter could be ‘true of the world’ but ‘not true of John’s intentionality’ (what John believed about Jesus but what might not have been true about Jesus). John refers the position and shape of the grave-clothes; and this may be explained by Jesus passing through them as Thomas Aquinas held. But it does not follow that the reason John inserted these details was because he himself was making that claim (he may, for example, have inserted then because he simply believed they were the facts). The latter is a matter of intentionality; the former purports to be a ‘scientific’ or ‘efficient cause’ explanation of the phenomenon in question. The medieval world did not distinguish the two in this way. If the author of the text is God, and God means by the text that Jesus passed through physical objects - and this because God knows that Jesus passed through physical objects - then to the classical mind they are not distinct in the way modernity understands them to
be. This is not the place to tackle this thorny issue. My intention is the more modest and unashamedly modern project of asking the simple question of intentionality. Whether or not it is true, did John mean the simultaneous co-presence of ‘objects’ (in some sense) or sovereignty over space? Did John mean anything more by adding the locked doors motif than wanting his readers to know that the disciples were fearful of the Jewish leaders? Central to the framework of my argument is the assumption that the following two propositions are consistent:

i. ‘It is characteristic [of John] that there is no reflection at all on how Jesus could arrive through a shut door.’

ii. How Jesus came and stood in the midst of the disciples is to be explained by his body passing through locked doors.

But central also, as will be seen, is the truth of (i); so I don’t think (ii) was part of John’s intention. But it doesn’t follow from (i) that (ii) is false. If (ii) is false it must be for some other reason. One would be the claim that, at a later stage in his Christological development, John perceived in the risen Jesus’ action his enactment of sovereignty over space:

iii. What it is Jesus had enacted by standing in the midst of the disciples precisely without passing through physical objects - and indeed without passing through ‘intervening’ space - was sovereignty over space.

I hold (iii) to be consistent with (i) but not with (ii). (As will be seen sovereignty over space means that intervening space is no obstacle to Jesus ‘being there’; so it cannot be matter of passing through physical objects.)

A word on historical context. The risen Jesus passing through solid bodies such as doors or walls and tombs has indeed come to be the standard interpretation of these texts. To be able to do these things can appropriately be described as ‘sovereignty over physical objects.’ Putting it counterfactually: had the presence of physical objects - their ‘being there’ (Dasein) – constrained the risen Jesus’ body from ‘being there’ then objects would have been sovereign over Jesus and his body. But since, according to this interpretation, he is able to pass through them, objects are not sovereign over Jesus, he is

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1 One of the great contributions on this topic is in fact the great Johannine scholar Raymond Brown’s PhD dissertation published under the title The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture (Baltimore: St Mary’s University, 1955).

2 These are in fact the words of Rudolf Bultmann from his commentary on John, Bultmann, John (London: SCM, 1941), 681.
sovereign over them. As I say, this is something like the orthodox interpretation. It was the standard interpretation during the Patristic period (Origen, Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory the Great). Thomas Aquinas affirmed it in his *Commentary on John* in the thirteenth century. Luther continued the legacy in the sixteenth. And though, as we will see, Calvin provides at least one example of an ‘early modern’ exception, it has endured in ‘modernity’: modern scholarship has by and large endorsed the tradition of the risen Jesus’ sovereignty over physical objects.’

To be sure, the best of the classical tradition was reluctant to say it was due to a property, a capacity, of Jesus’ body – whether natural or supernatural - that it could be in the same place simultaneously as another body. So Thomas Aquinas rejects Jesus’ glorified risen body in this respect; he is acutely aware that daimones, spirits, phantoms and ghosts – solid and less solid - may pass through walls and doors too; in their cases this is no sign of divinity. It is no sign of: miracle. These events or actions are in the medieval mind ‘natural’, not miracles. And because of this, these creatures are not divinities. In contrast, Jesus doing this is a matter of miracle; passing through locked doors or through his grave-clothes is a sign of his divinity.

Nevertheless, the mere fact that Jesus’ body behaved like the body of a daimon, spirit, phantom, or ghost – no matter that miracle was responsible and not law-like nature or ‘super-nature’ – was sufficient for a theologian like Calvin, for example, to reject simultaneous spatial co-presence as an explanation. The miracle Calvin held was simply what the text said was true of Jesus, no less but no more: Jesus came and stood in the midst of the disciples, Jesus’ body was no longer there in the tomb – these facts are the miracle that we did not eliminate from our story were we to reject Jesus passing through locked doors or through grave-clothes. The decided bonus in doing the latter was that Jesus’ body was now no longer comparable in any way to these ‘spirits’ since its ‘behaviour’ was in reality a dimension of Jesus’ *sui generis* divinity.

But though Calvin rejected the ‘classical’ explanation here he offered nothing in its place. He circumscribed John’s point to the mere facts of the narrative. The text was John’s intention. My argument will be that it is possible to offer a substantive alternative ‘explanation’ that does distinguish

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4 Indeed, at times Calvin’s denunciation of what he takes to be ‘corrupt’ Roman theology (rather than the classical tradition per se) is so vehement that he will take recourse to naturalistic causes if he thinks this the only available choice. See Book IV of *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (sixth edition), edited by John T. McNeill; translated by Ford Lewis Battles, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960, chapter 17, (n.20 below).
Jesus from ‘the spirits’ but without limiting John’s intentionality to the bare facts of the literal sense of the text. To be sure, as Karl Barth put it: ‘It is never explained where [Jesus] came from, or how He came (a point which is underlined by the mention of the closed doors in Jn. 20:19, 26).’ (Barth, Church Dogmatics IV/2, trans. G Bromiley [Edinburgh; T & T Clark, 1955], 144); my italics). Quite so, one can agree with Barth that John was not interested in explaining (causally) how Jesus came to stand in the midst of the disciples. But while such a stricture might preclude any thought about Jesus passing through physical objects, it would not exclude Jesus enacting sovereignty over space. For the latter does not so much explain how Jesus came to be there as re-describe or re-conceptualize what it is Jesus had enacted by standing in the midst of the disciples precisely without passing through physical objects, and indeed without passing through ‘intervening’ space. Much the same point can be made in response to Bultmann. Comparing John with Hellenistic narrative and Homer in particular, Bultmann writes:

It is characteristic [of John] that there is no reflection at all on how Jesus could arrive through a shut door. It is otherwise in Homer, The Odyssey 6 19f: Athene hovers “like air that blows” by Nausikaa in the locked chamber; hymn. Homer, Ibid 3 145f: Hermes comes through the key-hole like a mist. In analogous Hellenistic narratives there are reports of the αὐτόματον of the opening door (Bultmann, John, 691).

To be sure, Jesus’ body dematerializing and rematerializing as a means of passing through solid physical objects and standing (solidly) in a room has no role to play in the Johannine intentionality. So one can agree that ‘there is no reflection at all on how Jesus could arrive through a shut door’ (does Bultmann assume that John thought Jesus did pass through a locked door?). But an action that re-describes or re-conceptualizes what it is Jesus has done in the mere fact of his presence in the Upper Room - no less that the enactment of sovereignty over space – is no longer playing the ‘Aristotelian’ game of (causally) explaining how Jesus came to be there.

‘Sovereignty over space’ in the context of 20:19-20 and 20:6-7 means that Jesus did not pass through intervening or adjacent space – far less through physical objects – to be in the midst of the disciples in the Upper Room. Jesus did not have to pass through intervening space – far less through his grave clothes or indeed the walls of the tomb - to be ‘no longer in the tomb’ (to no longer ‘be there’: Heidegger, Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen

5 D. Felton’s Haunted Greece and Rome: Ghost Stories from Classical Antiquity (Texas: University of Texas, 1999) is especially informative in this respect. It provides significant comparative evidence supporting the view that John would have sought to distance Jesus from these kinds of comparisons were he to see in the risen Jesus’ actions manifestation of divinity comparable to YHWH’s.
Philosophie, 18:89: ‘Das Nicht-mehr-da ein Character des Da’: the no-longer-there is a characteristic of the there). In both cases, Jesus enacted sovereignty over the very dimension of space, not merely over their second-order relata - objects governed by the laws of space. According to this interpretation, it is sovereignty over space rather than sovereignty over physical objects that John had in mind when he cast the narratives the way he did.

The essay is constructed in five parts. Part I deals with the texts themselves. Part II sets out the evidence that sovereignty over physical objects is something like the standard ‘official’ theory of mainstream tradition. Part III sets out dissenting voices to this consensus. Noting their limitations it leads into Part IV’s exposition of the risen Jesus and sovereignty over space. Part V is an attempt of evaluation of the hypothesis of sovereignty over space. I attempt to state the grounds on which sovereignty over space would be a superior hypothesis regarding John’s intentionality to sovereignty over physical objects. In this respect I explore the link between the risen Jesus’ sovereignty over space and the Priestly creation narrative. Claus Westermann provided salutatory arguments to the effect that the Priestly creation narrative and Genesis 1:3-5 and 6-10 in particular make the claim that YHWH created time and space respectively (Westermann, Genesis 1-11 tr. John Scullion, [Minneapolis, Fortress, 1985, 112-122]).

I. THE TEXTS IN QUESTION
The key passages for consideration are, on the one hand, John 20:19 and Luke 24:36b and, on the other, John 20:6-7 and Luke 24:12. Let me take them in turn.

John 20:19 and Luke 24:36b
This pair of passages refer to the risen Jesus’ initial appearance to the disciples in Jerusalem:

*On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” (John 20:19)*

*While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you” (Luke 24:36b)*

The question whether Luke intended the event to be understood as taking place in an internal circumscribed space like a room can be settled by the observation that, without reference to locked doors, one would not know that

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6 One can see why the later Wittgenstein appreciated Heidegger. Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty* can be understood in terms of Heideggerian ‘epistemology.’ To speak of ‘no-longer-being-there’ presupposes having ‘being there’ i.e., *Dasein* is conceptually primordial in this philosophical scheme such that the power of scepticism is nullified.
John intended us to understand the event in this way. Hence it is reasonable to infer that Luke like John means the disciples are in a room. (Fitzmyer interprets Luke as speaking of Jesus appearing to ‘the household’ so he seems to presume it takes place in a room (Fitzmyer, The Gospel According to Luke X-XXI [New Haven: Yale, 1985], 1574). Luke says that the disciples were ‘assembled together’ presumably assembled in a room, the same room to which John refers). We can I think rule out the theory that the reference to the doors was at one time in Luke but for some reason it was deleted. This allows us to infer that John added the locked door motif to the tradition. But is the addition to be explained by John’s addition to the original Lukan tradition? Or is it in fact an addition John made to his own tradition? It depends, of course, on the identity of the original tradition. Prima facie, it may appear that it is Luke. There are those who argue that John takes the extant Lukan tradition and adapts and develops it by, inter alia, adding the doors motif. But

7 As John has it, the doors were locked - not merely shut - and were locked intentionally (κεκλεισμένων: ‘having been locked …. for fear of the Jewish leaders’). It is reasonable to surmise on the basis of the plural “doors” that more than one locked doorway separated the disciples from arrest or capture: ‘the reference may be to a door at the house entrance and one into the room’ (Morris, John, 1995, n.50) ‘Proper residences were equipped with bolts and locks. Bolted doors would prevent anyone from entering (a heavy bolt could be slid through rings attached to the door and its frame’ (Keener, John, 1993: 317).

8 There is one historical scenario that might just make some sense of this claim. It is based on the view that reference to Jesus eating broiled fish (Luke 24:42-43) was not part of the original tradition regarding what took place in the room. Luke could have had a reason for deleting reference to locked doors had he been of the view that his story of the risen Jesus eating broiled fish had in fact originated elsewhere – and outside - beside the Sea of Galilee (it may be what is referred to in John 21:9-13). Perhaps this knowledge might have led him to delete the reference to make the scene less determinate. But it is unlikely. On the source of Luke’s ‘broiled fish’ tradition Brown holds that it is what is in John 21:9-13. See Brown, The Gospel of John XII-XXI, 1031.

it may be that the final form of John is based on his own original tradition such the original tradition lies with John and not Luke: the source of the Lukan tradition is in fact the original Johannine tradition such that without reference to the locked doors motif the original Johannine tradition would have been indeterminate as regards reference to a room. The point of this analysis

the locus of the original tradition remains valid. As said, there are those who hold that the source of 20:19-20 is 24:36 such that the original tradition is Luke’s (see for example, Neirynck, ‘John and the Synoptics’, 73-106, esp. 98-104; see footnote 10 for additional relevant secondary sources on this matter).


This does not preclude the possibility that the tradition common to both John and Luke is in fact John’s at an earlier stage in his development and before the seminal insight that the Thomas narrative represents. In other words, the tradition underlying Luke 24:36-43 is Johannine in origin and each developed it in their own respective ways: John the Thomas narrative and Luke in the tradition represented by Luke 24:44-49. More recently Matson has made a case for Luke’s dependency on an earlier written version of John. See Mark A. Matson, In Dialogue with Another Gospel? The Influence of the Fourth Gospel on the Passion Narrative of the Gospel of Luke (SBLDS 178; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001). Examining how and why Luke’s Passion and Resurrection narrative shows such variance from the other two Synoptic Gospels, Matson concludes that Luke knew and used John, either its final form or some earlier recognizable form – the Gospel of John or an earlier Johannine narrative - in the composition of his Gospel. Paul N Anderson makes a similar case in the
would be to frame an understanding of the locked door motif as a later insertion in John not originally there in his account of the basic historical experience of the disciples, which account was the basis for Luke.¹¹ But, whichever theory of textual transmission is valid, we can I think say that John’s intentionality is behind the addition of the motif. As John has it: the addition of the ‘closed doors’ motif is to inform us that Jesus didn’t come into the room through the doorway; in other words, according to this interpretation, the intention is not that Jesus passed through the doors. So insofar as there is an interpretation here at all it must be another one.

John 20:6-7 and Luke 24:12
This pair of narratives refer to Peter’s observation of the position of the grave-clothes left behind by Jesus:

³So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.⁵He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷as well as

context of a bi-optic hypothesis affirming Mark and John as the two main pillars of historical witness. If this is true it would follow that Luke is derivative: ‘Where Luke diverges from Mark and Matthew, he often converges with John … against Mark and Matthew (Q). This cannot be explained on the basis of Johannine dependence on Luke’, Anderson, The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6 2nd edition (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2010), 274-5; see also Anderson, The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus (NY: Continuum, 2007), 112-117. Richard Bauckham provides a coherent and sustained argument for, on the one hand, a Petrine and therefore ‘apostolic’ eye-witness (representing the ‘Twelve’), and on the other, a ‘non-apostolic’ eye-witness originating with ‘John the Elder’ who is both witness as ‘disciple of Jesus’ (the ‘Beloved Disciple’ in the text) and author of the Fourth Gospel. See Bauckham, Jesus and the Eye-witnesses 2nd edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017).

¹¹That is, though his original reception of this tradition or if witness - his original reaction to the event - was simply to narrate it in its simple literal sense and in that sense be at one with the Lukan tradition, it is surely possible that John later saw in the same action the enactment of sovereignty over space (John 20:19). All of this is consistent with the claim that Luke and John shared a common independent tradition which turns out to be John’s own tradition at an earlier stage in his development. Each then developed the original Johannine tradition in their respective ways.
the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then the disciples went back to where they were staying (John 20:3-10)

12 Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen only lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened (Luke 24:12).

When we compare these passages we find the same pattern of textual addition and omission. Again, since it is certain that both passages refer to the same tradition or event, the matter at stake is: what explains the presence of the references to the details of the position of the grave-clothes in John and the absence of the same details in Luke? The matter is more complicated than the Upper Room texts: it appears that if one is to isolate authentic Johannine tradition here, one must first establish the authentic Lukan tradition. But it can be shown that, even if one assumes that 24:12 is authentic and in particular the text with τα οθόνια κειμένα μονα (textus receptus) rather than τα οθόνια μονα (SBLGNT), it would still remain true that the intentionality behind the details of the text with which we are concerned in 20:5-7 – v.7 in particular - is John’s, and John’s alone.12 To be sure, the ‘expansive’ version of Luke 24:12 goes beyond the Markan (and Matthean) account in that it

12 ‘The witnesses that attest the verse are not themselves invariant …. κειμένα is attested by the bulk of the manuscripts but not by such high quality and early witnesses as P75 κ B W 0124 syr.5 ε cop; μονα is omitted by κ9 A K 063 al.’, Ehrman, The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture, 254. Ehrman provides a sterling argument, for 24:12’s ‘scribal dependence’ on John even gives its presence in P75, (Ibid, 212-221; see esp. 213-14). Against this kind of position, Wright asserts: ‘…one major ms, the fifth-century western text ‘D’, omitted v. 12, as did the Old Latin MS and Marcion. It has sometimes been argued, not unnaturally, that the verse is a compilation of John 20:3, 5, 6, and 10, but if every other ms in the entire tradition contains it, it seems more likely that Luke knew, at this point at least, an abbreviated version of a story like John’s.’ (Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God, [London: SCM, 2005], 613). Brown notes that “‘cloth wrappings’ [/octeti] is mentioned at John 19:40’ (Brown, The Gospel According to John XII-XXI (Anchor Bible, 29a; Harvard: Yale University Press, 1970) 986) Therefore, the ‘mention of the same at Luke 24:12 is an addition because ὀθόνια is not mentioned at the Lukan burial narrative.’ (Ibid, 985.)

13 I have again ruled out the theory that the relevant details were originally Lukan tradition but deleted.
implies not only was Jesus’ body not in the tomb, but it’s not being there was not because of human agency. As Smith puts it:

When Peter looks into the tomb, he sees only the linens, which not only means that he does not see the body, but also suggests that the body was not stolen, for someone moving or hiding the body would have taken the grave clothes with it. Thus Luke 24:12 provides apostolic testimony that Jesus left the tomb on his own.’ (Smith, Revisiting the Empty Tomb: the Early History of Easter, 101).

But even if Luke’s intentionality captures the insight that John left the tomb ‘on his own’ such that ‘the Easter faith has been transferred from Christophanies to the empty tomb’, it is surely not illicit hermeneutics to assume that John’s extended and more detailed version of the same story must have given some thought to ‘what Jesus was doing when he did this.’ The fact that the tradition of Peter’s visit to the tomb may be the only empty-tomb tradition whose source postdates the appearances tradition supports this. Indeed, we can put it this way: John’s extended and more detailed

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14 In the Matthean continuation of the Markan account the theft motif implies opponents of Jesus who likewise believed the tomb was empty but attributed this to theft – human agency – rather than to divine agency (God had raised Jesus from the dead). The risen Jesus then appears (Mt 28:9) and the answer is clear: divine agency. The appearance of the risen Jesus does all the work here though the Matthean empty-tomb tradition sets up the decision nicely: human or divine agency? In contrast, with its reference to grave-clothes 24:12 may already presuppose the truth of divine agency. See Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God, 689. But to be noted is James Dunn’s reticence on making this inference: ‘Is it so clear that “he believed” in 20:8 denotes the “transference of the rise of the Easter faith from Christophanies to the empty tomb ....?”’ (Dunn, Jesus Remembered [London: SCM, 2011, 833). But Dunn’s reference to 20:9 as support for his argument may be misplaced. John’s point at 20:9 may be to emphasize that the disciples came to this conclusion even before they realized that it was ‘prophesied’ by scripture (in contradistinction to Luke; on this see John T Carroll, Luke: a Commentary [Louisville: KJK], 491 ). It is almost certain that source-wise it postdates the resurrection appearances tradition. As a late tradition, it would remain the one exception to Hans von Campenhausen’s classic argument for the historical precedence of the empty tomb tradition; see von Campenhausen, ‘The events of Easter and the empty tomb’, Tradition and life in the Church: essays and lectures in Church history; translated by A.V. Littledale (London: Collins, 1968), 44-92.

15 One may put this point the following way. In the famous debate between Hans von Campenhausen and Hans Grass (Grass, Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte, 4th ed. [Göttingen: Vandenhoock & Ruprecht, 1970), the ‘Petrine’ empty-tomb tradition would be on the latter’s side of the debate.
version represents an intentionality that goes beyond what was meant by even the most expansive version of 24:12. That is, the details such we have in 20:5-7 did not merely serve to reinforce the claim that Jesus had ‘left the tomb;’ they were added – the story augmented - in order to make a distinctly new point, one that had not been part of the original intention, one precisely focussed on ‘what Jesus was doing when he did this.’ This it is submitted is the reason that John added v. 7 to his final version. Peter sees not only the linen strips lying by themselves but also

the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen (20:7).

As Kostenberger says, ‘The cloth (σουδάριον), presumably used to keep Jesus’ jaw in place … was folded up in a place (εἰς ἕνα τόπον) by itself (χωρὶς), separate from the linen.’ He continues: ‘The expression “folded up” (NIV; somewhat paraphrastically andagnostically, NIV: “lying”) may actually mean “rolled up” (ἐντυλίσσω: entylissō So NASB; NRSV; cf. Matt 27:59 and Luke 23:53, of Joseph wrapping Jesus’ body in a linen cloth) which either points to neatness or indicates that the cloth was still in the exact same position as when Jesus’ body had been wrapped in it, or both.’ (Kostenberger, John, [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2094, 563-4]). On the basis of a detailed analysis cited frequently in the literature Raymond Brown concludes of John’s intentionality regarding the position and place of the face cloth: ‘… John may simply mean that the soudarion was rolled up in an oval shape, i.e., the shape it had when it was around the head of the corpse.’ (Brown, John XII-XXI, [New York: Doubleday, 1970], 986).

We encounter here the claim that Jesus’ body wrappings and his grave-mask were lying separately from each other in determinate shape either as consequence of Jesus’ tidiness or as if untouched by human hand. If we assume that this tradition presupposed the appearances tradition – and in particular the tradition at Luke 24:36b and John 20-19-20 - it is not hard to envisage that John conceived this tradition for the same kind of reason that united the Beloved Disciple and Peter in John 21. That would make it authentically Johannine rather than Lukan. But more importantly, it would provide a rationale for the assertion that John meant more with his addition than the claim that Jesus had left the tomb ‘on his own.’

The question of course is what this ‘more’ was. The conceptual commensuration of (divine) intentionality with causal explanation allows us to conceive of simultaneous co-presence (of the kind presupposed by Jesus and his body passing through grave-clothes) as the classical tradition’s

16 I am inclined to think that the original motive of John 20: 5-7 was the same as that behind the unification of John and Peter in John 21. But it may be that the addition precisely of v.7 was entirely an insight on the nature of the risen Jesus’ relation to space.
answer. Notwithstanding the fact of miracle rather than capacity (hence, without conceding any degree of immateriality that might be thought conducive to this end under 'natural' circumstances), Jesus’ body behaves like that of a daimon, spirit, phantom or ghost and passes through solid substance. This it is claimed is the 'intention of the text.' So strong is the sense that there can be no other explanation, it is almost as if the truth of Jesus’ ‘being there’ or ‘not being there’ (or ‘no longer being there’) simply signifies – refers to - simultaneous co-presence. Co-presence is a picture that holds the tradition ‘captive’ to quote Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* (§115).

II. JESUS PASSED THROUGH PHYSICAL OBJECTS:
SOME EXAMPLES FROM THE CLASSICAL AND MODERN TRADITION

Exegesis on 20:19 is missing from Origen’s commentary on John but he ‘seemed to believe that the continuity of Jesus’ body before and after the resurrection was guaranteed not by its materiality but by a kind of somatic form … still capable of passing through locked doors’ (Glenn Most, *Doubting Thomas* [Boston: Harvard University Press, 2008] 137). Augustine writes: "Do you want to know how Christ could enter through closed doors? If you understood how, it would not be a miracle. Where reason fails, faith instructs." (Augustine, *Sermons on the Liturgical Seasons*, tr. Mary Sarah Muldowney [Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1995], 298-299). Cyril of Alexandria writes: ‘… the entry of our Lord through closed doors will be classified, at least by those with a sober mind, with his other signs’ (Cyril of Alexandria, *Cyril Of Alexandria Commentary on John* (Ancient Christian Texts) vol 2, Joel C Elowsky (ed.), David R Maxwell (tr.) [ IVP, 2015, 366). Cyril is clear that Jesus passed through the closed doors. He is also sure that it is ‘a demonstration that Jesus is by nature God (ibid, 364).

If we take Thomas Aquinas as representative of mainstream classical and medieval tradition, we see that underlying this tradition is the idea of a single unifying explanation of the reference to closed doors and to the position of Jesus’ grave-clothes. Jesus has the miraculous ability to pass through solid or resistant objects. Thomas sums up this tradition regarding the presence of the motif of closed doors when he writes: ‘From Christ’s point of view the doors were shut so he could show them his power by entering through closed doors.’

I quote Thomas at length to show just how integral this explanation was to the tradition:

17 Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chapters 13-21* trans. by Fabian Larcher and James A Weisheipl; introduction with notes by Daniel Keating and Matthew Levering [Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010], 269. See also ST III. q. 55. a. 6: “’The Lord offered his
Regarding this point, some say that to enter through closed doors is a property of the glorified body. They say that due to some inherent property in a glorified body, it can be simultaneously present in the same place as another body. Thus, this is accomplished without a miracle. But this position cannot stand, for the fact that a non-glorified human body cannot be simultaneously in the same place as another body is due to its very nature. Consequently, if the glorified body has an inherent ability to be in a place occupied at the same time by another body, it must be because it lacks the property which now prevents this in the case of a non-glorified body. But this latter property cannot be separated or destroyed from a body, since it is not a mathematical bulk, as they say, but the very dimensions of the quantified body through which it has a local position. Thus the Philosopher, when he argues against those who posit ideas and matter, asserts that even on the assumption that the entire region above the earth is a vacuum, no sense-perceptible body could exist there in the same place as another body because of their quantitative dimensions. Now no property of a glorified body can remove the dimensions from a body and have it still remain a body. Thus we should say that Christ did this miraculously, by the power of his divinity, and that whenever something similar happens with the saints, it is miraculous and requires a new miracle. Augustine and Gregory teach this explicitly. [...] So, just as Christ’s leaving the womb of his virgin mother was a miracle of his divine power, so was his entering through closed doors.18

18 Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chapters 13-21, 269. At ST III q. 55. a. 6. Thomas invokes the distinction between the humanity and the divinity of Jesus to solve the issue: ‘just as Christ’s leaving the womb of his virgin mother was a miracle of his divine power, so was his entering through closed doors.’ (Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae v. 55, 59). See Pim Valkenberg for an account of the development of Thomas’ thought on this issue. Valkenberg, ‘Aquinas and Christ’s Resurrection: The Influence of the Lectura super Ioannem 20-21 on the Summa Theologiae’, Dauphinais and Levering (ed), Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas (Washington: CUA Press, 2005), 277-89. Note Thomas’ simple and unrelenting presumption that the miracle is Jesus entering through closed doors. Valkenberg is surely right to dismiss the Supplement to Part III of the Summa as representative of Thomas’ final worlds on the issue. Though it entertains the possibility that simultaneous co-presence may be a capacity of Jesus’ body (q83. art. 3), it was
The essence of Thomas’ argument is this. No matter the special status of Jesus’ glorified body it cannot lack the quantitative dimensions of *what it is* a body is, and be defined as a body, glorified or otherwise. If a glorified body is a body then it must possess the qualitative dimensions of a body. Otherwise, it might be a glorified something but it could not be a glorified *body*. So Thomas insists that it is a miracle rather than a natural capacity when Jesus’s body passes through another physical dimensional body. He appears to think the same of Jesus’ body exiting the tomb: ‘it is not surprising if he passed through the tomb with his glorified body [*non est ergo mirum si cum corpore glorioso exivit de sepulcro*]’ (Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chapters 13-21, 269*).

What is notable about a mainstream trend in modern scholarship is that it concurs with the kind of explanation affirmed by Thomas. It too perceives a relationship between the two traditions. It too posits a single explicandum, a single ‘power.’ What we know of Tom Wright’s view on Jesus’ appearance in the Upper Room is in fact to be found in the same place as his reference to the position of the grave clothes in the empty tomb tradition. The reason for this is that they are to be explained in the same way. Speaking initially of the latter, Wright asserts:

Their positioning, carefully described in verse 7, suggests that they had not been unwrapped, but that the body has somehow passed through them, *much as, later on, it would appear and disappear through locked doors* (verse 19)’ (Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 689; my italics). Elsewhere Wright speaks of Jesus ‘coming and going through locked doors’ (Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 609). Andreas Kostenberger in his commentary on John implies the same. There is one unifying explanation and in his eyes it is Jesus’ ability to pass through three-dimensional objects:

‘The beloved disciple’s eyes then fell on the face cloth that had been around Jesus’ head. In contrast to Lazarus, who came out of the tomb still wearing his grave-clothes (11:44), Jesus’ resurrection body apparently passed through the linen wrappings very much in the same way as he later was able to appear to his disciples in a locked room (20:19, 26 …)’ (Kostenberger, *The Gospel of John*, 563; my italics).

Wright and Kostenberger’s focus is decidedly on the event rather than John’s intentionality, or so it seems. We might say that they are more concerned with first-order ‘de re’ explanation of the events – how did Jesus come to be standing in the upper room?; why were the relative position and shape of the grave-clothes the way they were? – than the ‘de dicto’ matter of Johannine intentionality. But there are modern scholars whose emphasis is at least implicitly this second-order ‘de dicto’ explanation, why John inserted this or

written after Thomas’ death and so is not necessarily Thomas’ final position on the topic.
that textual reference. C K Barrett in the second edition of his commentary writes:

… it is probable that John’s motive, whatever his authority may have been, for mentioning that the doors were shut was to suggest the mysterious power of the risen Jesus, who was at once sufficiently corporeal to show his wounds and sufficiently immaterial to pass through closed doors (Barrett, *John*, 2nd edition, Cambridge: CUP, 1972, 568).

Barrett speaks as a typical modern interpreter when he refers to John’s intention here. Nevertheless, on the matter of the tomb and Jesus’ exit, he concurs with the kind of analysis Wright and Kostenberger produce. He appears to address the event itself: ‘… it seems that the body had in some way disappeared from, or passed through, the clothes and left them lying as they were (cf. v. 19 where the risen Jesus suddenly appears in a closed room).’ (Kostenberger, *John*, 563). Nevertheless, Barrett reverts to Johannine intentionality with his concluding observation. He concludes, not unlike Rudolf Schnackenburg, that ‘John’s point however may be simply to show that the natural assumption of robbery (v.2) was mistaken.’ (Kostenberger, *John*, 563).

The conclusion is therefore warranted that both the classical and modern tradition seem welded to the theology of the risen Jesus’ sovereignty over physical objects, though as one might expect the theology appears in the two characteristic variant forms. In the classical tradition it is always cited as the explanation of Jesus being where he is (in the midst of the disciples, no longer in the tomb); in the modern tradition it is sometimes attributed to John’s intentionality but in the majority of the cases where it occurs it appears to be employed to explain the event itself, as in the classical tradition.

III. ‘THE WORDS DO NOT CONVEY THIS MEANING’:
MERE HERMENEUTICS

The lesson of the assault of ‘hermeneutics’ on simultaneous co-presence of bodies – one body passing through the other – is how inevitable its failure to nullify the power of the ‘picture’ (the ‘picture holding us captive’ as Wittgenstein put it). Leon Morris writes of 20:19 that we ‘can scarcely say more than that John wants us to see that the risen Jesus is not limited by closed doors’ (Morris, *The Gospel According to John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971], 844). He makes a similar claim about John’s reference to the position of the grave-clothes in the tomb:

19 See footnote 21 below.
….. this has often been taken to mean that the grave-clothes were just as they had been when placed round the body. That is to say Jesus’ body rose through the grave-clothes without disturbing them. This is not inconsistent with the language but it should be borne in mind that John does not say this. (Ibid, 833; my italics).

‘We can scarcely say more than’ ….. ‘John does not say this.’ Morris eschews any reference to Johannine intentionality that goes beyond the text. In that sense he does not offer an alternative to sovereignty over physical objects but simply rejects all and every intentionality other than the narrative-sense of the text itself. But this means we are not told what is true of the world such that the picture holding us captive is false and needs to be rejected. The rationale behind Calvin’s argument against co-presence is similarly limiting. Speaking of the locked doors in 20:19 he writes:

This detail was deliberately added, because it contains a manifest proof of Christ’s divine power. For what some think – that the doors were unlocked for him by someone and He entered by the ordinary way – is completely contrary to the Evangelist’s meaning. We must understand that Christ did not enter without a miracle, to give a proof of His divinity to make his disciples more attentive (Calvin, The Gospel According to John 11-21 trans. T H L Parker; ed. Thomas Torrance [Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1961], 202.

Note Calvin’s very contemporary claim that the locked doors motif was ‘deliberately added’ (I presume he means John ‘deliberately added’ it to his own account for his reader to ‘understand that Christ did not enter without a miracle’).’ His core argument is that he cannot find ‘simultaneous co-presence’ in the text. He concurs with Thomas Aquinas in his rejection of any kind of naturalistic explanation, and like Thomas he invokes miraculous action. But unlike Thomas, he does not think the text conveys the idea of Jesus passing through a solid body:

Yet I am far from admitting that … the body of Christ passed through the shut doors. […] .. the words do not convey this meaning. The Evangelist does not say that he entered through the shut doors, but that he suddenly stood in the midst of his disciples, though the doors had been shut, and had not been opened to him by any man’s hands.20

20 I think it almost certainly true that Calvin did not follow this consistently but, as will be seen, it is his argument here. He writes in Book IV, Chapter 17 of his Institutes of Christian Religion: ‘The objection, that Christ came forth from the closed sepulchre, and came in to his disciples while the doors were shut (Mt. 28:6; John 20:19), gives no better support to their error. ….’ The most probable explanation regards the tomb is that ‘the stone was removed at his command, and forthwith, after giving him a passage, returned to its place.’ Note Calvin cannot in this instance resist the temptation to substitute an alternative ‘picture’ even a naturalistic one. As regards the Upper Room: to
What is not readily apparent is the weakness of this kind of approach, mere hermeneutics. As long as it did not show that what the false textual interpretation said about the world, was itself false, it would fail to dismantle the picture. In this circumstance, the allure and indeed seeming necessity of simultaneous co-presence would sustain its powers of captivity. But an explanation that rejected the truth-claim itself while being faithful to Johannine intentionality – that was another matter.21

IV. ANOTHER ‘PICTURE’: SOVEREIGNTY OVER SPACE

i. Without Passing through Physical Bodies

The first thing to be said about this explanation is that it is not a picture. This is one of its strengths. It does not ‘visually’ explain how Jesus ‘got (to) there’ or ‘got (from) there.’ Rather, it re-describes or re-conceptualizes what it is Jesus had enacted by ‘getting (to) there’ or ‘getting (from) there’ (coming and) without passing through physical objects, and indeed without passing through ‘intervening’ space. The second thing to say is this. Even though it is not itself a picture, if it is true then the picture of simultaneous co-presence – one body passing through the other – is false.

Bultmann’s insight that John ‘at no time reflected on how Jesus had got into the Upper Room’ remains valid: John does not refer to locked doors in order that the reader infer simultaneous co-presence. But the fact that he refers to sovereignty over space means that there is no room for simultaneous ‘enter while the doors were shut, was not so much to penetrate through solid matter, as to make a passage for himself by divine power, and stand in the midst of his disciples in a most miraculous manner.’ 21 Rudolf Schnackenburg writes that the description of the grave clothes ‘is certainly not based on any reflection as to how the risen one left the clothes enveloping and restricting him. He has left behind these wrappings used for the body, because he has risen and lives, because he has obtained for ever a new, unearthly-heavenly existence.’ Schnackenburg, The Gospel According to John vol 3 (New York: CrossRoad, 1990), 311. But note Schnackenburg’s claim, on this point at least, is not one about John’s intentionality. What he gives us here is his own understanding of the event itself, what he thinks the details mean about the reality of Jesus - not what the details mean about the intentionality of the author. Any intentionality on John’s part seems to be restricted to the theft motif: ‘… the nature and arrangement of the discovery betrays a particular intention of the narrator … the idea of the body being stolen or any other removal of the body is being guarded against.’ (Schnackenburg, The Gospel According to John, 3, 311).
co-presence of bodies. If the former is true then the latter is false. There is no room for both. This is a surprising result. It is essentially because the level at which the former pitches its reality is superordinate to the classical domain of discourse here: both conceptually and empirically, space is superordinate to the objects that occupy it. To repeat: if sovereignty over space is intrinsic to Johannine intentionality, simultaneous co-presence has no part of it at all.

**ii. An Intimation of Sovereignty over Space?**

Barnabas Lindars comments that the imputed motive in the story for locking the doors is an entirely natural one ("for fear of the Jews"). Nevertheless, ‘it is introduced to emphasize the miraculous character of Jesus’ arrival.’ Lindars then follows with this assertion:

This does not mean that his body is ethereal, able to pass through locked doors. It means that he can make himself present at any time and place (Lindars, *The Gospel of John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 610; my italics].

It could be that, rather than speaking of John’s intention here, Lindars’ point is, like Schnackenburg’s, about the meaning of Jesus’ action. In other words, it is Lindars who attributes this property to Jesus, not John. But the way in which he introduces his conclusion seems to imply a claim about John’s intentionality, what John meant by introducing the locked doors motif. If so, it may be that we have here an intimation of Johannine intentionality regarding sovereignty over space: ‘he can make himself present at any time and place’ seems to imply some kind of sovereignty over time – and space. The test of its authenticity is surely whether it entails the falsehood of simultaneous co-presence. On John’s characterization of the grave clothes Lindars writes:

On this basis it could be argued that John means here that the napkin was till wrapped round, as it had been when it was bound round Jesus’ face. This would lead to the conclusion that John means that the grave-clothes were undisturbed by the Resurrection. Jesus had passed through them, and not even the face-cloth had moved. This interpretation is denied by Bernard, Hopkins and Mastin, probably rightly (Lindars, *John*, 601).

Just as he rejects Jesus passing through the locked doors of the Upper Room, so Lindars rejects Jesus passing through his grave-clothes. But the latter is not dismissed so unequivocally, leading one to suspect that he does not perceive the same intentionality at the locus of John’s reference to the grave-clothes as at the locked doors. (Lindars may have concluded that the two events were not to be assimilated under one Johannine intentionality.)
might have employed this conceptuality as a means of uniting his analysis of Jesus’ appearing in the Upper Room and the exit from the grave.

iii. The Risen Jesus’ Enacts Sovereignty over Space

The risen Jesus is not subject to space but space is subject to him. Jesus is not subject to the constraints of space because space is his creature not he space’s. The laws governing solid objects do not constrain Jesus, but this is because he can be in a particular space without having to move through space, adjoining or otherwise. Solid three-dimensional objects do not pose a barrier to Jesus but this is precisely because the laws of space that govern solid objects themselves do not pose a barrier to him. Sovereignty over space means precisely that Jesus does not have to move through space to be in a space, not that he can pass through objects (it is not John’s claim that Jesus – body and all - moves through space at will). For were this the case Jesus would still be bound by the normal constraints of space: he would still have to pass through space (space would therefore remain sovereign over him). John’s intention has to do with Jesus’ sovereignty over space, one of ‘the forms of creation’, as Origen put it, not sovereignty over physical objects - though it is the latter too since sovereignty over space subsumes sovereignty over objects. Hence, instead of passing through solid objects Jesus had not passed through anything at all. He had enacted sovereignty over space such that the issue of solid objects obstructing his passage simply had not arisen. There had been no ‘passage’ to make. To be sure, the reference to locked doors is introduced into the narrative precisely to avoid the inference that Jesus did in fact enter the room in the ordinary way (Brown, John XII-XXI, 1018; Schnackenburg, The Gospel According to John 3, 334). It is to say that a ‘continuum of physical objects’ faced the risen Jesus. But it is not to say that Jesus passed through the locked doors for the simple reason that John’s intention is that Jesus had not moved through adjoining space at all.

iv. Lazarus

The contrast of Jesus with Lazarus is evident and intentional. Unlike Jesus, Lazarus does not move from one place to another without traversing intervening space (nor can he pass through physical objects). Accordingly neither his grave clothes nor the face-mask (σουδάριον) round his face remain

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22 Therefore, Jesus has not travelled through space to stand where he is standing. As Barth perceptively commented (and may have made a whole theology of the matter): ‘It is never explained where He came from, or how He came (a point which is underlined by the mention of the closed doors in Jn. 2019, 26).’ Barth, Church Dogmatics IV/2, 144).
in the grave (11:44). In particular, the face-mask moves where he moves - it moves through the same space his face moves; it remains where it is on his head. It is not implausible to say that the intention behind characterizing Lazarus’ exit from the grave in this way was precisely to draw a contrast with Jesus’ ‘exit.’ Or, at least, John has Lazarus’ exit from the grave in mind when he narrates what Peter and the Beloved Disciple saw when they inspected the grave-clothes at the empty tomb.

V. EVALUATION OF HYPOTHESIS

In the introduction I said that once I had provided the data duly interpreted in terms of sovereignty over space I would turn to the question of what would prove it to be the better hypothesis than sovereignty over physical objects. The answer I gave was that it would be the better hypothesis were it to be the case that John also held the risen Jesus to enact sovereignty over time. Were there independent evidence regarding sovereignty over time this would add weight to the claim of sovereignty over space. Why is this? The overall answer is that if John attributed the risen Jesus sovereignty over time, ceteris paribus it would be more likely than not that he would have attributed Jesus sovereignty over space. An analogy may go like this. If the Priestly writer meant by Genesis 1:3-5 that YHWH created time it is more probable as a consequence of this that he meant by 1:6-10 that YHWH created space. Similarly, if, say, the Old Testament scholar Claus Westermann were to have interpreted the Priestly writer as meaning by 1:3-5 that YHWH created time it is more probable as a consequence of this that he would interpret the writer at 1:6-10 to mean YHWH created space. The qualification is that to say that both are more probable does not mean that both are true and is in fact completely compatible with both being false. The Westermann example is a slightly more complex case. We know I think that Westermann did both things and in particular we know that he did in fact interpret 1:6-10 to mean YHWH created space. So our question is this: counterfactually subjunctively, were it the case that Westermann interpreted the Priestly writer as meaning by 1:3-5 that YHWH created time, is it more probable that he would (then) interpret the writer at 1:6-10 to mean YHWH created space? I suggest that if we make explicit our assumption of ‘all things being equal’ (‘ceteris paribus’), the answer must be, yes. Conversely, if it turned out that the text at vv. 6-10 did not in the smallest detail evince this meaning we would conclude it is not about the creation of space. But this is of course consistent with the claim that, ‘all things being equal’, it is more probable than not that Westermann would interpret the Priestly writer this way were he to interpret him as meaning the creation of time. In other words, were Westermann to attribute the creation of time to the Priestly writer, he would be liable to think that the Priestly writer
also attributed the creation of space to YHWH (otherwise some other being was responsible and YHWH’s Godness would be seriously threatened).

What would make sovereignty over space an inferior hypothesis (though this would not necessarily confirm passing through physical objects) is if it turned out that John did not attribute to Jesus sovereignty over time. Were sovereignty over time not part of John’s intentionality it would be singularly unlikely that John’s intentionality would have been one of sovereignty over space. Hence thought the data would remain consistent with sovereignty over space it would not I contend be a plausible interpretation of John. To be sure, if John can be understood as attributing the action of sovereignty over space to the risen Jesus this would doubtless constitute a clue for further investigation to the effect that John also attributed to Jesus sovereignty over time; but it clearly it would not count as independent data.

But here is an intriguing thought. Though falsity of sovereignty over time most likely puts paid to sovereignty over space I think there are grounds for saying that were sovereignty of space not to be true it would not follow that we should rule out John attributing sovereignty over time to Jesus. So there is an asymmetry here. I say this on grounds provided by Westermann. It is the distinctive contribution of the Priestly writer that the creation of time ‘takes precedence’ over the creation of space (Westermann, Genesis 1-11, 120): ‘creation does not begin with the division of space, but with the division of night and day as the basis of time’ (Westermann, Genesis 1-11, 114). (As Westermann has it there is no a priori reason why YHWH could not have created space first followed by time.) Following the creation of time, there are in fact two divisions of space in the Priestly narrative. Together, the three acts of division – of separation

are the source of the three basic categories of existence. [...] The alteration of night and day is the basis of time, the creation of the firmament – the separation of the heavens from the earth – ‘the basis of the vertical dimension’ of space, the division – separation – ‘of the water and the land, the basis of the horizontal dimension (Westermann, Genesis 1-11, 119).

We may surmise that just as the Priestly writer privileged time over space then so John could have attributed sovereignty over time without sovereignty over space. Putting it more precisely: that he did not attribute Jesus sovereignty over space does not impinge very much on whether he could have attributed sovereignty over time. It does not because John could have held sovereignty over time to be crucial, and indeed necessary and sufficient to the claim of divinity. This after all is what Karl Barth may have claimed to be the case in Church Dogmatics III/2 and in the section entitled ‘Jesus Christ – Lord of time.’ But since I think there are grounds for attributing sovereignty over space the necessary next step is to provide a case for John attributing the risen Jesus sovereignty over time. The problem I have with Barth’s argument
is that he put his money on the wrong narrative. He wrote that, as regards sovereignty over time, the Emmaus narrative was the lens through which to understand all the other resurrection-appearance narratives: ‘It is surely no accident that Luke, the Evangelist who more than any other has the reputation of being a historian, records this story as an indispensable commentary on all the other Easter narratives’ (Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/2 [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1947], 272). My view is that he read too much into Lukan intentionality and that sovereignty over time if it was anyone’s insight was John’s. But this would be the subject of another essay.\(^{23}\)

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\(^{23}\) There is one issue that I judge I should say something in regard of the claim of sovereignty of time begetting sovereignty of space. Dale Allison notes the numerous reports of apparitions in which the bereaved experience the solid presence of their departed beloved. One common phenomenon is that they say their beloved appeared ‘out of nowhere’, Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus* (New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 281, 288, 292-3. Notwithstanding whether one was only a ‘seemingly solid’ presence (Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus*, 281) and the other an actual solid presence, the key differentiation is sovereignty over time. If it were to turn out that sovereignty of time is true of Jesus in John 20 such that the overall best hypothesis is sovereignty over space, then we could say – in accordance with the same logic that would critique the actuality of Jesus’ sovereignty over space – that in the absence of the latter, the beloved’s departed is not really, as Jesus may be, enacting sovereignty over space.