

Here is the bit that follows the part of my chapter 4 where I broke off yesterday, on the Gospels as sources for what happened at the resurrection event, starting with the same sentence I ended with yesterday.

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There are other discrepancies, but this is enough. I should stress that some of these differences can scarcely be reconciled unless you want to do a lot of imaginative interpretive gymnastics, of the kind fundamentalists love to do, when reading the texts. For example, what does one do with the fact that the women apparently meet different persons at the tomb? In Mark it is one man, in Luke it is two men, and in Matthew it is one angel. The way this discrepancy is sometimes reconciled, by readers who can't believe there could be a genuine discrepancy in the text, is by saying that the women actually met two angels at the tomb. Matthew mentions only one of them, but never denies there was a second one; moreover, the angels were in human guise, so Luke claims they were two men; Mark also mistakes the angels as men but mentions only one, not two, without denying there were two. And so the problem is easily solved! But it is solved in a very curious way indeed. This solution is saying, in effect, that what really happened is what is not narrated by any of the Gospels: for none of them mentions two angels! This way of interpreting the texts does so by writing a new text that is unlike any of the others, so as to reconcile them to one another. You are certainly free to write your own Gospel if that's what you want to do, but I wonder if that is the best way to interpret the Gospels that you already have.

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