THE RESURRECTION

God's answer to the skeptic

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THE HISTORICAL CERTAINTY

"Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. Then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive;" (I Cor. 15:12-22).

Not only is the literal, physical resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, the pivotal point of Christianity (the historical event on which the whole structure of Christian revelation rises), but it is also the historical demonstration of the existence of God and of His intentions for the salvation of men. Dr. Clark H. Pinnock comments that the religion of the Bible approaches the question of God's existence, from the angle of history. Its entire thrust arises from the claim that God has manifested His presence and His power in historical events, which cannot be explained other than by acknowledging His existence.

The validity of the Gospel record rests upon actual historical occurrences. The apostles of the resurrected Christ appealed to the record of history, because they believed it would yield evidence to the impartial observer of the absolute truth of the Gospel. They were convinced that Jesus' rising from the dead was a plain fact, and so did not fear the closest kind of examination.

In both the Old and the New Testaments, history is the medium in which revelation has unmistakably occurred.

The late Dr. Wilbur Smith wrote of the three great themes of Paul's Athenian address—the creation of the world by God, a righteous judgment to come, and the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Of these three, only one may be designated as belonging strictly to the realm of history—the alleged resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Although the creation of the world by God was an actual event, man was not yet on earth; thus, what is known as history had not begun. The judgment to come is known as prophecy; however, someday it will be a matter of history. At this time, only the resurrection belongs to the realm of history.

We are living in a day when, as never before, the value of historical certainty is dogmatically insisted upon, with the corollary dogma that nothing in all the past history of man is to be accepted unless it comes certified with indisputable historical evidence.

Nothing is more critical and crucial in the entire field of Christian evidence than the question of the deity of Jesus Christ. And nothing is more essential in the establishing of the deity of Jesus Christ than the fact of His physical, literal resurrection from the dead. If He did not come forth from the tomb on that third day, as He said He would, then He was not deity incarnate.

The word *resurrection* means arising from the dead, with the assumption that death has already been experienced. Our Lord never spoke about His death without, at the same time, speaking about His resurrection; and He always spoke of His resurrection in an unmistakably plain, straightforward manner. Although His disciples

did not seem to understand what He was talking about, it is intriguing that the Jews took His assertions seriously.

Dr. Wilbur Smith has cleverly surmised that our friends would hasten to quietly delete us from society, confining us to an institution until our minds became clear and sound once more, if we were heard to comment that we expected to die (either by violence or even by natural means), and that we would return (in the flesh) after three days. They would be right! For only a foolish man would go around talking about rising from the dead on the third day—unless he knew that this was going to take place. And no one in the world has ever known that about himself except one: Christ, the Son of God.

In the teaching and preaching of the apostles, the supreme fact—the most convincing fact—in identifying Jesus as the Son of God, was His resurrection from the dead. This is the ultimate evidence that He was God, invading the stream of human history in corporeal form. And so, literally everything depends upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

As the Apostle declared, if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and our faith is also vain. More than that, he said, we ourselves—we apostles—"...are found false witnesses of God..." (I Cor. 15:15). And even more important is the fact that any valid hope that we might have for life beyond the grave depends upon whether the resurrection of Jesus Christ was in the realm of fact or fiction.

We know we were born. We exist. We surely die. And it is an extremely short journey from the crib to the grave. From the unknown, alone we enter; and alone, back to the unknown, we depart. It would seem that for everyone of us there is a lonely, fixed, inevitable, unavoidable rendezvous with death. And man asks, is there any hope? The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the only valid answer to that question. If He did physically, literally, bodily rise from the dead, then we have hope. If He did not, then Paul put it absolutely right: we have no hope. We are of all men most miserable.

Rudolph Bultmann, in his book *Jesus Christ in Mythology*, speaks of taking the myths out of the New Testament, among which is the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Bultmann's claim is that Jesus was raised only spiritually—that His body stayed in the grave, since the miracle of a physical resurrection is, by definition, impossible. Thus, it is maintained that Jesus continued to live on in the spirit of His disciples, who were impregnated with His memory, His example, and His teachings; and that the disciples were so obsessed by the idea of His spiritual presence, they invented the stories contained in the Gospels.

Richard Niebuhr defined Bultmann's concept of myth as an expression, typical of a naive mentality that would project an internally apprehended meaning into the realm of the cosmos, without heeding the difference between objective and subjective truths. This simply means that a subjective truth does not need to be based on objective reality. This, of course, would reduce history to nothing but shambles. All of reality becomes spiritualized, and meaning is what each observer makes of it. This kind of existentialism is a greater threat to Christian truth than is empiricism (the practice of relying entirely upon observation and experiment).

In consideration of the fact of the resurrection, we are offered genuine, historical, observable materials; so let's get this straight: a "spiritual" resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is an absurdity because it is a contradiction of reality. It denies the event.

Certainly the soul of our Lord Jesus Christ was in the place of the dead, but it did not cease to exist. The death of the body has no effect upon the continuity of the life of the soul; the soul is eternal. Thus, it was His body that was brought back to life, and without that bodily resurrection, the whole evangelical testimony would be non-existent. Without the bodily resurrection of our Lord we would never have known that He was the conqueror of death, and there would be no historical fact upon which to base our personal, subjective experience. Only by His literal, physical resurrection could it

be shown that death had, indeed, been conquered—substantial reason why the words of the Apostle Paul, "... *if Christ be not risen...*" contain the most momentous "if" in the universe! For if Christ be not risen, then our preaching is vain, and the cross stands gaunt, bleak and solitary against the empty, desolate sky. There is no revelation from God. There is no bridge across the gulf of death, and the story of Christ is one of abysmal failure and defeat—if Christ be not risen. The victory of our Lord Jesus Christ over death is the divine cure for the darkest fears that haunt the human race. Actually, His resurrection was the shattering of history by the creative act of God.

Dr. Klaas Runia of the Free University in Amsterdam, concludes that the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ was a new act of God, being much more than an existential interpretation of the cross and of the faith of the disciples. It was a new fact, having occurred after the death on the cross of the man Jesus of Nazareth. Dr. Runia stressed that it is a historical fact, for it happened in the history of this world; but, at the same time, it transcended the historical dimensions of the world.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was not simply a return to this life, or this world; it was His entering into eternal life, and into the new world of God's kingdom. Dr. Runia relates that such a new act of God was, of course, impossible from the point of view of naturalism. In a naturalistic world, all things remain immanent, meaning that they perform within the order of nature. The view of a closed world does not allow a new act of God. The entire world system could be demolished by such a new act; however, by the very characteristic of the Bible's testimony, the resurrection was a new act of God, transcending both life and death into a new life that is beyond the possibility of death.

Thus, our Lord's resurrection began a new era for the universe. His resurrection was not just a personal survival of the man Jesus, or a phenomenon to be studied by the Psychical Research Society. It was a great, tremendous, cosmic victory; for there is a power at work in

the world that is mightier than all the forces that crucified our Lord.

Other religious systems believe in immortality; however, the late Swiss theologian Karl Barth has accurately expressed that Christians do not believe in the immortality of a tiny soul, fluttering (like a butterfly) above a grave, being preserved somewhere in the unknown to live on immortally. This certainly is not the Christian's hope. Christians believe in the resurrection of the body, which, according to the Bible, is simply man under the sign of sin, with the glorious promise, "...he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

Resurrection, then, does not simply mean the continuation of life, but life's *completion*. The 15th chapter of I Corinthians expresses repeatedly, "...we shall all be changed..." (vs. 51), meaning that "...this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (vs. 53). It does not indicate that a new or different life begins. The book of I Corinthians continues: "So, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (vs. 54). Furthermore, the Apostle writes: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power" (I Cor. 15:42, 43). Thus, the Christian's hope is the promise of a conquest over death, not a flight leading us away from this life into the beyond.

The Apostle Paul reasons by the Holy Spirit that if Christ be not raised from the dead, then we are not raised. But the fact of Jesus Christ's resurrection in the past, points with unerring certainty to the truth of the resurrection for us in the future. The resurrection, then, is the crux of Christianity. Based upon the truth of this event, Christianity rises or falls; and whatever expectation and hope we have, also rises or falls.

Everywhere the apostles went they preached the res-

urrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. If you were to have asked them: "How do you *know* that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" "How do you *know* that He has the power to forgive sin?" "How do you *know* that death is not the end of life?" "How do you *know* that God's gift is eternal life?" they would have simply replied, "Because, on the morning of that third day, He arose from the dead."

The inspired Apostle, writing in Romans 1:4, says, "[He was] declared to be the Son of God with power... by the resurrection from the dead." If Christ did not rise, He *is* not; He cannot save us from our sins. If He is still lying in a tomb, decayed and corrupted, as are the teachers of all other religions, then He would merely be another man—the victim of death, as all men are. The Gospel would not be the power of God; it would be a delusion. The faith of Christians would be vain. There would be no comfort in the hour of sorrow. The future life and all that pertains to it, would be dark and uncertain, and the dead would have perished. We could close our churches, because they are built on "fog banks" instead of the Rock of ages. We could silence our preachers, because preaching would be vain. We could burn our Bibles, particularly the New Testament, and we should never use the name of Jesus Christ again.

Men have gone to the ends of the earth to preach a risen, living Christ. They have endured hunger, martyrdom and shame, that others might share their joy. Millions have been transformed by this faith, and gloried in it. But, if He did not rise, it would all be vain. Literally everything depends on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is to Christianity what the sun is to our planet Earth. It is the cornerstone upon which the superstructure of revelatory truth rises. The cross, without the resurrection, would have spelled eternal defeat. The principal theme in the preaching of those early disciples was the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. To them it was the decisive proof that the Gospel was true.

All the false messiahs have vanished from history. The only explanation for the existence of the Gospel is

the bodily resurrection of our Lord. There is more evidence to substantiate the resurrection of Jesus Christ than there is to substantiate the historical certainty of Julius Caesar, or any other fact of ancient history.

In the best-seller *Who Moved the Stone?* attorney Frank Morrison tells how he had been brought up in a rationalistic environment, and had come to the opinion that the resurrection was nothing but a fairy tale. He planned to write an account of the last tragic days of Jesus, allowing the full horror of the crime and the full heroism of Jesus to shine through. He would, he decided, omit any suspicion of the miraculous, and would utterly discount the resurrection. But as he began his study, the stubbornness of the facts prevented the original book from being written. He started out with a bias against the resurrection, but was compelled by honesty to revise his presupposition. Thus, he wrote his book on the side of the historical certainty of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. The evidence is stable, and the Apostle's writing is correct: "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain..." (I Cor. 15:17) and "...we are of all men most miserable" (I Cor. 15:19).

THE HISTORICAL VERIFICATION

Literally everything depends upon the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. As far as Christians are concerned, this intervention of God in history is a demonstration that the "unknown God" is no longer unknown. When the Apostle Paul preached his unforgettable sermon on Mars' Hill, he said to the Greeks in Acts 17:22,23: "...Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are very religious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." The Apostle then proceeded to identify that "unknown God" as the person of Jesus Christ. He warned that God "...hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; concerning which he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (vs. 31). To the Apostle Paul, this was the vindication of God's existence, of God's presence, and was an undeniable, historical event.

Michael Green, author of *Man Alive*, makes the valid point that Christianity would not even exist, without faith in the resurrection. Thus, Christianity does not hold the resurrection to be only one, among many, tenets of belief. Without faith in the resurrection, the Christian church would never have begun; and it stands or falls with the truth of the resurrection. In attempting to disprove it, you will have disposed of Christianity already. With Michael Green, I agree that Christianity is a historical religion, claiming that God has taken the risk of involving Himself in human history, and that the facts

are there for you to examine with the utmost rigor. Certainly, they will stand any amount of critical investigation.

The criteria for determining what Caesar did at Gaul; or what happened when the Goths sacked Rome; or, for that matter, what happened at Waterloo, are the same identical criteria by which we must determine whether or not the resurrection actually took place. In this one realm, concerning the greatest of all miracles, we are face to face with definite, historical data. This is one of the reasons why the Christian faith is superior to all the other faiths of history.

One of the most amazing things that ever came from the lips of Jesus, as His apostles and His disciples listened to Him, was His frequent assertion that not only was He going up to Jerusalem to die at the hands of the religious leaders of Israel, but that on the third day, after His death, He would rise again. Early in His ministry, immediately after the cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem, our Lord said to the Jews, "...Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). Then, we're told, "...he spoke of the temple of his body" (John 2:21).

During His Galilean ministry, after the healing of the demoniac, he declared in Matthew 12:40: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Immediately following Peter's great confession, we read in Matthew 16:21: "...began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how he must go unto Jerusalem,...and be killed, and be raised again the third day." This prophecy was repeated immediately after the transfiguration in Matthew 17:23, just before the last week of His earthly ministry. Our Lord emphatically predicted that He would be raised on the third day. During that last week, following what we know as the Lord's Supper, He revealed His unwavering faith in His stupendous miracle, speaking of the events that were to take place "after I am raised up."

Gospel writers are quite frank to admit that such

predictions really did not penetrate their minds until the resurrection was a fact. But the evidence is there, and from the mouth of our Lord Himself came the declaration that He would return from the dead after three days. He also declared that He would be put to a violent death because of hatred; and everything He said came to pass.

Robert M'Cheyne Edgar wrote in his portrayal of Christ that, as a teacher of religion, He calmly staked His entire claims upon His ability to rise again from the grave, after having been violently put to death. Edgar accurately assumes that there never was before, nor has there been since, such a proposal made. To claim that this extraordinary test was invented by mystic students of the prophecies and inserted into the Gospel narratives, would lay too great a burden on our credulity. Any man, ready to stake everything on His ability to come back from the tomb, must stand before us as the original of all teachers. Certainly, He is outstanding in His own self-evidencing life!

At this point, it is well to emphasize that the Scriptures never demand a committal without a reasonable basis. And so, as Dr. Merrill C. Tenney suggests, between the extremes of gullibility and chronic skepticism, there is a middle ground of belief, possibly transcending the limitations of scientific logic, but beginning with historic facts—the same facts that convinced the Lord's immediate associates, some of whom were skeptical, as are the most crassly materialistic of our day.

That brings us to the verification of history, recorded in the New Testament documents. The question is: can we trust the documents? To begin with, they have a textual advantage over all other ancient manuscripts. If these documents are unbelievable, we cannot believe any documents of antiquity.

Sir Frederick Kenyon, former director and principal librarian of the British Museum, wrote, concerning the New Testament documents, that the interval between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence was so small that it becomes negligible. What-

ever foundation there was for doubt (that the Scriptures have come down to us, substantially as they were written) has now been removed. The authenticity, as well as the general integrity, of the New Testament books may now be regarded as finally established.

There are on record over 8000 manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate, and at least 1000 additional early versions. When we add over 4000 Greek manuscripts to that, the total manuscript copies of New Testament portions will number well over 13,000! Besides all this, much of the New Testament can be reproduced from the quotations of the early Christian writers.

The fine scholar, John Warwick Montgomery, is accurate in his observation of the resultant texts of the New Testament. He feels that to be skeptical of these is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity; for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested to—bibliographically—as the New Testament.

When Emperor Hadrian rebuilt Jerusalem in A.D. 135, after Titus destroyed it in A.D. 70, he built a pagan temple over the site of the empty tomb, with the explicit purpose of desecrating that place so that people would cease visiting it. (Until the time of Hadrian, evidently everyone in the vicinity of Jerusalem knew the site of the tomb.)

The Apostle Paul made his first visit to Corinth around A.D. 49. He states that he, himself, received what he passed on to others. This refers to his visit to Jerusalem, about which he wrote in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians. At that time, he spent fifteen days with Simon Peter, and also saw James, the Lord's brother. In fact, as early as A.D. 40, or within ten years of the resurrection, the Apostle Paul recorded the account of private interviews the risen Christ had with both Peter and James (I Cor. 15:5,7).

Further, in I Corinthians 15:6, Paul tells us that the majority of the five hundred witnesses to the resurrection were still living. The entire Gospel of Mark is, substantially, a written account of the oral testimony of Simon Peter, the date of which would be somewhere be-

tween A.D. 55 and 65. In his very primitive document, we find another independent reference to the resurrection appearances; and, probably more important, the earliest account of the women's visit to the empty tomb on the morning of our Lord's resurrection.

In his writing, Sir William Ramsey has shown what an accurate historian Luke was, particularly in such disputed matters as the account of the missionary journeys, and the titles that had been assigned to Roman officials. We know that the beloved physician was in Jerusalem in A.D. 57, a time when both Calvary and the sepulcher were well-known locations. In the book of Acts, Luke gives an independent account of the women's resurrection appearances, as they visited the empty tomb on that first Easter morning. He also gives to us the earliest account of the apostolic preaching in Jerusalem after the resurrection.

It is not our purpose to explore the historical documents, except to emphasize that these authors were all Christian men (known to be honest), and that their writings appear to be both objective and impressive eyewitness testimonies. We shall regard them as substantial, accurate records, because there is absolutely no reason not to do so.

Christianity is not a philosophic religion; it is a narrative religion, based on history. And the supreme fact of that history is the resurrection—an event that happened in the historical context of time and space. Our Lord's birth, and His life are history. His death is history. The resurrection is a fact of history, without which history does not make any sense. The fact of the resurrection may prove to be very difficult for the naturalistic biologist, but to those of us who believe in the living God, we know that He has simply acted in the empirical realm —in the flesh and bone—of history, in order to save men from both sin and agnosticism.

Dr. J. N. D. Anderson, Dean of the University of London Faculty of Law, has termed the Christian Church as a phenomenon in the world today, traceable in history to the region of Palestine in the first century. In

asking, "To what does the Christian church owe its origin?" we would have to agree with Dr. Anderson that the New Testament (its "documents of association," as a lawyer would call them) makes the unequivocal statement that the church owes its origin to the resurrection of its founder from the dead.

J. B. Hardy, Vancouver, B. C. engineer, believes that there is no definition of religion acceptable to everybody; but, to keep it simple, he defines religion as "the truth" that will point "the way" to the most cherished of all freedoms—freedom from death, or, conversely, "eternal life." If we hold on to our very simple definition of religion, we are not interested in (or confused by) doctrine, dogma, ritual, tradition or convention. Mr. Hardy points out that there are but two essential requirements: (1) Has anybody cheated death and proved it? (2) Is that victory available to me?

Here are some extremely thought-provoking facts, as brought out by Hardy, who states the complete record something like this: All of the great religious teachers are dead. Confucius is dead. Buddha is dead. Mohammed is dead. They are all losers; and what could be more stupid or senseless than to follow a loser? Who really wants to follow a loser? While the Christian missionaries are frequently harrassed by Mohammedans, boasting to possess the tomb of their great prophet Mohammed, in Medina, and accusing the Christians of having nothing; the fact is, we Christians have everything—the only Winner. It is intelligent and assuring to follow a winner. While other tombs are evidences of death and decay, Christ's tomb alone is the evidence of life. Thus, when you hear the angel's challenge, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" whether you are convinced or not, of the emptiness of our Lord's tomb, He is the only one who can make the claim: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore..." (Rev. 1:18).

He literally staked His entire reputation as a teacher of truth, as well as the future of the Gospel and His Church, upon the fulfillment of His prediction that He would rise from the grave. The integrity of both the

Gospel and the Savior rests upon the validity of that single event. The entire validity of Christianity rests upon the fact of Christ's resurrection on the third day. To hold a meaningful faith, apart from historical reasoning, is nonsense—the fantasy of hallucination. And if, as some theological liberals tell us, the knowledge of the resurrection is supposed to come by some kind of intuition, rather than by historical study, we answer again—nonsense!

The beauty of the Gospels is in their openness to examination, and we immediately ask why the apostles point to a time-space event as the central theme of their conviction and their preaching? The answer to that question lies in the fact that Christ was a public figure, and the resurrection was a public event! To them, it was decisive proof that the Gospel was, indeed, true. The Gospel is not a concoction of mere human imagination, but rather, it is objective truth. The credibility of religious claims rests upon the ability to verify those claims.

The reason we *know* that he that hath seen Christ hath seen the cosmic God in corporeal form; the reason we *know* that He is the way, the truth, and the life, and that no man can ever come to God (in a vital, personal, redemptive relationship) except through Him; the reason we *know* that he who believeth on Him will experience the infusion of the throbbing, thrilling life of God; the reason we *know* that His shed blood is the antitoxin to the deadly poison of sin; the reason we *know* that death has lost its sting, and the grave has lost its victory; the reason we *know* that He has gone to prepare a place for us, and that He will one day come again to receive us unto Himself; the reason we *know* that the Spirit of God will, on that day, quicken these mortal bodies; the reason we *know* that the sufferings of this present time are not to be compared with the glories that shall be revealed in us; the reason that we may be assured of *all* of these truths is because Jesus Christ kept His word, and did (on that third day) rise, victorious over death and the grave! We may rejoice and celebrate the fact of an empty tomb, and of a risen, living Savior!

THE IRREFUTABLE EVIDENCE

In his great apocalyptic vision in the first chapter of Revelation, verses 17 and 18, John says, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen, and have the keys of hades and of death."

One truth about Christianity, that to me is very meaningful, is that Christianity looks death "square in the face." It admits the reality of grief, sorrow, and bereavement; but a Christian may be confident that the person he loved, who died in Christ, is safe in the hands of God, and that one day there will be a reunion in a world that will know no end. A Christian knows that the Lord himself—the Lord of life—descended to taste death and to conquer it by His resurrection from the dead. He, thereby, overcame death at its most devilish destructiveness. And so our Lord says, "...Fear not;...I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore...."

Our belief in immortality, then, does not come from metaphysical inference, or from philosophical speculation or from a well-devised web of arguments. The Christian's answer to death is an event—a verifiable, historical event. And that event is the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. His victory over death—His resurrection—is the divine cure for the darkest fears that haunt the human race. It is the great, grand cosmic victory! There is a power at work in the world, mightier than all the forces that crucified our Lord. The bonds of death could not confine Him. In the words of Peter, in Acts 2:24: "...it was not possible that he should be held by it [death]."

Each of the Gospels devotes at least two paragraphs

to the fact of His death and His burial. They stress the fact more than the manner or the process. The argument of some unbelievers that Jesus was taken off the cross and was found to have merely fainted, and was then revived by the rest and the coolness of the tomb, is without substantiation. That Jesus was dead was attested to by all the witnesses who saw Him die. The old "swoon" theory (that Jesus never actually died on the cross, but survived the crucifixion, escaped from the tomb, and presented Himself alive to His followers) is more difficult to believe than the plain biblical record.

Clark H. Pinnock says of such an incredulous theory that it is past belief how Jesus could survive the crucifixion of six hours, endure the wound from a Roman spear, and convince Pilate and His executioners that He was dead. Then, in a terrible state of physical anguish, He would have to have withstood the coldness of the tomb for three days, removed a large boulder at the door of the grave, eluded the guard posted at the sepulcher, convinced His disciples that He had a glorious resurrected body, and finally disappeared and died anonymously. This sort of hypothesis is an emphatic example of how far a non-Christian will go to escape the inescapable!

H. J. Schonfield, author of *The Passover Plot*, has a new "twist." He says this deception was in Jesus' mind when He planned to fake death and conjure up a resurrection. The plan was that He would receive a pain-killing drug while on the cross, that would enable Him to survive the ordeal. But, according to Schonfield, unfortunately, the whole "passover plot" fell through and the unexpected happened when a Roman soldier thrust his spear in Jesus' side, thereby foiling the conspiracy. It is interesting that even Schonfield admits that Jesus was dead.

According to Roman custom, victims were usually left on the cross until they expired. Often the bodies were allowed to remain afterward as a warning to other offenders. If they were not dead already, the executioners broke their legs to hasten the end.

The terrible mechanism of crucifixion caused the

weight of the body to paralyze the rib cage so that respiration could no longer take place in diaphragmatic action. In prolonged suspension, the diaphragm would fatigue, and at last the muscles would paralyze. And so, the fastening of the legs enabled the victim to relieve respiratory failure by providing leverage to lift and raise the body, thus relieving the tension on the thorax set up by the body weight that was hanging on the arms. Agonizingly, the victim usually surged and plunged for an amazingly long time. The breaking of the legs caused the victim to die of respiratory failure, because breathing could not continue. So the breaking of the legs was an act of mercy.

John states in John 19:31-37 that the soldiers intended to follow this procedure at the crucifixion of our Lord; but, when they came to Him, they found that He was already dead. As a gruesome test, however, they very needlessly plunged a spear into His side, and we read in John 19:34 "...and immediately came there out blood and water." The separation of the dark corpuscles from the thin, whitish serum of the blood indicated that death had previously taken place.

Before Pilate released the body to Joseph of Arimathea, he confirmed that Jesus was dead (Mark 15:43-47). He accepted the word of the centurion as official certification that the execution had been completed. Joseph of Arimathea, aided by Nicodemus, tenderly removed Jesus from the cross, wrapped Him in a shroud, and put Him in his own sepulcher. Together, the men bound His body in tight cloths, as was the custom of the Jews (the manner of Jewish burial custom is described in John 19:39,40). If Christ had been alive, the embalming process (using a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes, as described in John 19:39) would have been enough to cause death by asphyxiation.

There was also the expressed fear of the Pharisees that someone would steal the body. The four evangelists and the apostles give an absolute, unanimous testimony throughout the New Testament to the great event of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Consideration of the evidence leaves no room for doubt that Jesus was dead. To the skilled observer, the physical results of the spear-thrust, the official pronouncement of the government, the obvious intention of the women who came to the tomb, and the committal by His aristocratic friends remove any possibility of illusion. He was dead.

But the important question is: what became of the body?

It is fascinating that we know more about the burial of our Lord Jesus Christ than we know of the burial of any single character in all of ancient history. We know infinitely more about His burial than we do of the burial of any Old Testament character, of any king of Babylon, Pharaoh of Egypt, philosopher of Greece, or triumphant Caesar.

We have four records of the burial of our Lord, all of them in astounding agreement. The record of Matthew, a disciple of Christ, who was there when Jesus was crucified; the record of Mark, written within ten years of our Lord's ascension; the record of the physician Luke, a great historian and companion to the Apostle Paul; the record of John, who was last to leave the cross, and who, with Peter, was the first of the twelve to behold the empty tomb on the day of the resurrection.

The two primary testimonies upon which the New Testament is most emphatically insistent (preceding numerous secondary ones), are that (1) the tomb in which Jesus was buried was found to be empty on Sunday morning of that same week, and (2) our Lord Jesus Christ, in His resurrection body, appeared to His own disciples.

Even the well-known infidel, Schenkel, admitted that the fact was indisputable—that in the early morning of the first day of the week, following the crucifixion, the grave of Jesus was found empty.

It is still empty! The resurrection story could have been easily and conclusively refuted. All that the Roman and Jewish authorities had to do was simply to produce the body of Jesus. As Dr. Anderson said, they could

have exploded Christianity once and for all; but, why didn't they do it? Neither the Jewish nor the Roman authorities had any motive for keeping the body hidden. Undeniably, it was missing from the tomb in which it had been laid. The Jews concocted the story of the disciples' stealing the body, telling the guards to say that His disciples came by night and stole Him away while they were asleep (Matt. 28:11-15).

Of course, this was a fantastic lie! Obviously, if the guards had been asleep, how would they have known what happened? If their charge could be proved, why were the disciples not seized and interrogated? Further, how could a small number of men have broken open the sealed tomb and carried away the corpse of a full-grown man, without having been noticed by at least one person? Finally, if, to cover their own confusion, the disciples were merely creating a rumor to screen the truth that Jesus had risen, then the whole narrative becomes incoherent. That the disciples stole the body was an obvious fabrication, and has never carried much weight.

Within seven short weeks, Jerusalem was seething with the preaching of the resurrection. The apostles were proclaiming it up and down the city, causing the chief priests to be very much upset by it. They said the apostles were trying to bring this man's blood upon them. They were being accused of having crucified the Lord of glory, and they were prepared to go to almost any length to nip this dangerous heresy in the bud.

If Jesus' body had been moved by their orders, why didn't they issue an official denial when the apostles began preaching the resurrection? They could have said, "That's nonsense! The body was moved at our orders." And even if that had not convinced the people, why weren't those who were known to have taken the body away, called as witnesses? Or, if that proof had not sufficed, why did they not point the people to where the body was resting? And, finally, why did they not simply produce the body of Jesus? Nothing further would have been needed!

Dr. William Biederwolf expressed that should all

the infidels on this side of hell convene into a session for the purpose of exposing and over-throwing the resurrection, he would hurl the Lord's empty sepulcher into the midst of their diabolical deliberations, convinced that they would be utterly confounded and confused!

The Gospels are in harmonious agreement that the body had disappeared: "And the angel answered...He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (Matt. 28:5,6). Mark's account is substantially like that of Matthew's. Luke (chapter 24:3) differs only by stating that the women "...entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus." Even before the angelic messengers explained the reason for its absence, John records the impression that Mary Magdalene's knowledge of the absence of the body of Jesus preceded her investigation of the interior of the tomb (John 20:1,2). She saw that the stone had been removed and, consequently, concluded that the body was gone. Peter and John, following her, actually looked inside and corroborated her deduction.

The very surprise and concern of the disciples (in the knowledge that the tomb was empty) is, in itself, evidence of the fact—it was, indeed, empty! Long before (at the betrayal in the garden of Gethsemane), "...all the disciples forsook him, and fled" (Matt. 26:56), because they were disorganized, filled with fear, and terrified of the authorities. In fact, when they met again after His death, they convened behind locked doors, "...for fear of the Jews..." (John 20:19). They would, then, be quite content to leave the body of Jesus in Joseph's care, for they could scarcely have found a better place.

Certainly, the enemies of Jesus would never have disturbed the body, since their interests were best served by leaving it in the fixed and well-known grave, supposedly on its way to decomposition.

The conclusive evidence is overwhelming—the tomb *was* empty! And it *is* empty now!

There is, however, another important material witness—the state of the graveclothes. What was startling to those who visited the tomb that morning on the first

day of the week was that the body of Jesus had vanished; but the graveclothes were still there—obvious, undeniable evidence that the One who once filled those wrappings was gone! We see this same kind of evidence in the empty chrysalis that a butterfly leaves behind.

Is there any event of ancient history that can be attested to with sounder evidence than the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Dr. Pinnock believes that such evidence constitutes excellent motivation for trusting Christ—sufficiently enough to demand an answer from every non-Christian. The documentary evidence is superb. In fact, these documents enjoy such corroboration that there is nothing to compare with them. We know that the resurrection stands within the realm of historical factuality, and that the New Testament knows nothing of trans-supra or metahistory. It was God who acted in history, and it is in history that we see Him.

We may exultantly exclaim with the Apostle Paul, "...now is Christ risen..." (I Cor. 15:20). The casket and the grave are not the end. Life is not a dead-end street; it is a thoroughfare that goes through the twilight and out into the eternal dawn.

The risen, living Christ made this claim: "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore..." (Rev. 1:18). And He promises, in John 14:19: "...Because I live, ye shall live also." He further declared: "...I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

In his book, *Death in the Afternoon,* Hemmingway summarized his philosophy by suggesting that there really is no remedy for anything in life. After he had pointed the silver inlaid shotgun at his head, destroying himself, one of his devotees might well have grimly added, "Nor in death!"

Hemmingway died as he lived—without hope. But the biblical revelation—this glorious fact of our Lord's resurrection—shatters such a notion of nihilism with these words of promise: "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection;" (Rom. 6:5).

THE WITNESSES

When Peter spoke to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius in Acts 10:38-41, he told them "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit, and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree. Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before by God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead."

No fact of history has been as well authenticated and established, as the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. If over 500 credible eyewitnesses appeared before a modern court to testify unanimously on any one subject, the court would unquestionably call the matter settled. There *were* over 500 credible witnesses who saw Jesus alive in a fleshly body after His resurrection from the dead.

Students of history will remember that the two great Romans, Pontius Pilate and Titus, crucified (around the walls of Jerusalem) some thirty thousand male Jews of military age. The military age in Rome was about the same as it is in the United States—between the ages of 18 and 45. That means that thirty thousand young men of approximately the average age of Jesus (when He was crucified on a Roman cross) were also crucified during that very brief period of history.

Up until 1938, no student of history could name even one of those thirty thousand, with the exception of the universally remembered Jesus Christ. In the summer of 1938, however, archaeologist V. Tzaferis excavated some stone ossuaries in east Jerusalem, appearing to be dated from the first century A.D. These were chests in which the bones of the dead were reburied after the flesh had decomposed, following their original burial in a cave.

One of these ossuaries, inscribed with the name Yohanan Ben Ha'galgol, contained the bones of a man who had obviously been crucified—the first such victim ever discovered. Israeli pathologist, Dr. Nicu Haas, further examined Yohanan's bones, announcing the following conclusions: The victim was between 24 and 28 years of age, with a triangular face, curved nose, robust chin, and good teeth; but he had a cleft palate on his right side.

A large, rusty, seven-inch iron spike had been driven through both heel bones, after first penetrating an acacia wood wedge or plaque that held the ankles firmly against the cross. As the nail was driven into the cross, the point of the spike must have encountered a knot, since it had been bent directly backwards. The slivers that were still clinging to it prove that the cross was made of olive wood.

In addition to an iron spike, more evidence of Yohanan's crucifixion included a deep scratch on the right radius bone, indicating that the nail had penetrated between the two bones of his lower forearm just above the wrist, which abraded them as the victim writhed in agony. That his lower arms were pierced with the nails, rather than his hands, suggests the numerous variations of crucifixion.

At the close of Good Friday, the legs of the two criminals were broken to induce death. Even the detail of this act (crurifragium, as it was called) has an exact parallel here. Yohanan's right tibia and left tibia, as well as the fibula, were all broken in the lowest third segment at the same level, indicating a common, crushing blow, probably from a mallet or sledge.

But the point is, we would not know of Yohanan's

unfortunate death by crucifixion unless his bones had been recently discovered. And, for that reason, all the other martyred Jews remain forever nameless, while the whole world remembers the name of one. The simple explanation is that all, save one, remained dead, and the dead (with their bones) are soon forgotten; however, all history remembers the One who rose from the dead—the One whose bones will *never* be found!

This fact alone would go far to establish the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ as a literal, historical occurrence. All the evidence of the centuries continues to pile up more and more positive proof that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

In considering the evidence of the empty tomb, Paul L. Maier, professor of ancient history at Western University, has expressed that one of the earliest and most authoritative historians was Josephus. His celebrated reference to Jesus in *Antiquities VIII*, page 33, states in part: "He was the Christ...for He appeared alive again on the third day." Maier believes that it is extremely unlikely that any Jew could have written this statement; thus, it is properly regarded as an early Christian interpolation today.

However, in 1972, Professor Schlomo Pines of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, announced his finding of an Arabic manuscript, containing a somewhat different and perhaps original version of this passage. This finding indicated that the Lord's disciples had reported to have seen Him alive, three days after His crucifixion. The Arabic manuscript then goes on to admit that He was, perhaps, the Messiah.

Mr. Maier expresses that this is language a Jew might have written with less difficulty; however, what no one had yet pointed out is the remarkable fact that Josephus does not seek to scotch the resurrection claim (by any information at his disposal) that Jesus' body remained in its grave. Granted, this is an argument from silence, but the silence is especially eloquent, in view of Josephus' known habit of harshly criticizing false messiahs elsewhere in his books.

Another important factor in the material witness of the resurrection of our Lord is the state of the graveclothes. What was startling to those who visited the tomb on that morning of the first day of the week was that, although the body of Jesus had vanished, the graveclothes were still there!

There were three Marys who lovingly cared for the body of Christ—the virgin Mary, the contemplative Mary, and the liberated Mary. In Papini's magnificent *Life of Christ*, he describes how they lifted from His head the insulting crown of Pilate's legionnaires, and plucked out the thorns that had penetrated the skin, smoothing and arranging His hair that was clotted with blood. They closed the eyes into which they had looked so many times with pure tenderness, and the mouth which they had never kissed. In the calm paleness of death, the sweetness of His face shone once more, as it was washed with many loving tears that were purer than the water from Joseph's well.

Papini continues in full-color word picture, as he portrays how the body of our Lord was sullied with sweat, dust, and blood—the serum oozing from the wounds of His hands, feet, and chest.

When the three Marys had finished with the washing, the corpse was sprinkled with Nicodemus' spices without sparing, for they were abundant; and Papini pictures that even the black wounds left by the nails were filled with the spices. The body of Jesus had received nothing but bruising insults, after the evening when the sinning woman (with a premonition of this day) poured nard upon the feet and head of the pardoner; but now, as then, the murdered, white body was covered with perfumes and with tears, sweeter than the perfumes.

With great detail, Papini tells of how the hundred pounds of Nicodemus' ointment covered Jesus with a fragrant pall; and exactly how the winding sheet was tied about the body with long, linen bands. The head was wrapped in a napkin, and another white cloth was spread over the face after they had all three devotedly kissed his forehead.

The story continues that, according to the ritual, the two Sanhedrinists recited aloud the mortuary psalm, after which they placed the white-wrapped body in the cave, closed the opening with a great stone, and silently crept away, followed by the others.

In John 20:7, we read that "...the cloth, that was about his head, (was) not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself." No wonder then, the condition of the graveclothes excited Peter's amazement—they were lying just as they were when the body was in them! The head cloth was where the head had been, separated from the others by the distance from the armpits to the neck. The shape of the body was still apparent, but the flesh and bones had disappeared. While Peter was cogitating over this puzzle, John (the "other disciple") entered the tomb; and the account says that "...he saw, and believed" (John 20:8).

What did he see that made him believe? To express the answer as Dr. Merrill C. Tenney did, it "clicked"! Jesus had very evidently risen, having passed through the graveclothes, which He left undisturbed as silent proof that neither death nor material bonds could hold Him.

Every account is explicit. Angels spoke to the women in, or in front of, the sepulcher to calm their terror, and to affirm to them the Lord's resurrection. Those angels showed themselves either one or two at a time; so there is nothing contradictory in the accounts. According to Matthew, one angel rolled away the stone and rendered the guard powerless (Matt. 28:2-4). In the Luke 24:5 account, the angels pronounced those beautiful words, "...Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

Other religions point with pride to the place where the remains of their founders rest. I have visited the venerated tomb of Abraham in Hebron, where devout Jews and Moslems wail and lament his death. Mohammed died June 8, A.D. 632 at the age of 61, at Medina, where his tomb is annually visited by thousands of devout Mohammedans. Every year, the Buddhists carry through the streets the last remains of Buddha—a single tooth. All the millions and millions of Jews, Buddhists and Moham-

medans agree that their founders have never come up from the dust of the earth in resurrection.

The resurrection accounts in the New Testament—magnificent, joyful, triumphant narratives that they are—do present some startling variations on a common theme. These apparent discrepancies are marked and many. They are, obviously, four separate, independent accounts. It would have been impossible for these four accounts to have been made up in collusion with or derived from one another.

One, two, three, or more women approached the sepulcher at Easter dawn, according to John, Mark, Matthew and Luke, respectively. One angel greeted them with the resurrection announcement in Matthew and Mark, while two angels are recorded to have made the greeting in Luke and John. Luke confined the resurrection appearances to the Jerusalem area, while the other three involved Galilee as well.

There is a harmony between the four accounts, but the harmony does not lie upon the surface. It appears only through protracted and thorough study, and is such a harmony as would exist between accounts written or related by several different persons, each looking at the events recorded, from his own standpoint. It is precisely such a harmony as would *not* exist in four accounts that had been manufactured in collusion, or derived from one another. On the contrary, the variations, as found in the resurrection narratives, actually support, rather than undermine, their authenticity. The four accounts supplement one another, with the third account sometimes reconciling apparent discrepancies between the two.

It is absolutely incredible that four persons, having each written accounts (independently of each other) of what had not occurred, should have made their stories agree to the extent that these do! On the other hand, there is no possibility that they could have been made up in collusion with one another—the apparent variations are too numerous, and too noticeable. To repeat, it is proven that they were written independently of one another, and that they could not have been made up in col-

lusion with one another. Thus, we are driven to the conclusion that the resurrection narratives were not made up at all, but are true, historically related facts, recorded by eyewitnesses as they actually occurred!

In a common classroom demonstration of this fact, Maier suggests that a professor might stage some episode —perhaps a crime being perpetrated. On the next day, when his students are asked to record their impressions, the variations in their reports would be stunning.

And so it would be true of the Easter witnesses, in reporting something as incredible and exciting as what they claimed to have seen. Their stories, although told with similarities, also related differing impressions.

The established fact of the resurrection and the empty tomb gives us many answers to the deepest questions of our soul; because our salvation depends upon our faith and confidence in the physical, literal resurrection of Jesus Christ.

If He did *not* rise physically, literally, bodily from the grave, then He is dead, His claims are false, and we have no Savior. As the Apostle Paul expressed it, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (I Cor. 15:19). But, with the Apostle, we can exultantly shout, "But now is Christ risen..." (vs. 20).

Further, the Apostle Paul declares to the Corinthians in his great valedictory address, concerning the resurrection of the body: "For our earthly bodies, the ones we have now that can die, must be transformed into heavenly bodies that cannot perish but will live forever. When this happens, then at last this Scripture will come true—'Death is swallowed up in victory.'

"O death, where then your victory? Where then your sting? For sin—the sting that causes death—will all be gone; and the law, which reveals our sins, will no longer be our judge. How we thank God for all of this! It is He who makes us victorious through Jesus Christ our Lord!

"So, my dear brothers, since future victory is sure, be strong and steady, always abounding in the Lord's

work, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever wasted as it would be if there were no resurrection" (I Cor. 15:53-58, *The Living Bible*).

Absolute, sure, and certain victory is in the unalterable promise of our Lord, "I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25,26).

THE EMPTY TOMB AND THE LIVING CHRIST

"Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them, in shining garments; And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how he spoke unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words, And returned from the sepulcher, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest" (Luke 24:1-9).

All the evidence of the centuries continues to pile up more and more positive proof that Jesus Christ rose from the dead; that the greatest event of all history occurred in a garden (just outside the city wall of old Jerusalem) 1900 years ago; that nothing like it had happened before, and nothing like it will ever happen again!

In my library is a very valuable book. It was published in 1929 and is entitled, *Lord Lyttleton on the Conversion of St. Paul and Gilbert West on the Resurrection of Christ.* It is a well-known fact that Lyttleton and West left Oxford University at the close of an academic year, each determining, during the long vacation, to prove the baselessness of both the Apostle Paul's alleged conversion, and the alleged resurrection of Jesus Christ. They met again in the autumn and compared their research

and experiences. Lord Lyttleton had become convinced of the truth and the authenticity of the Apostle Paul's remarkable conversion; and Gilbert West of the literal, physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. West verified that, studying the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and weighing the facts (according to the laws of evidence), he had become satisfied that Jesus really rose from the dead, as recorded in the Gospels. His book was then written on that side—the side of Christ and His truth.

We will never forget that dramatic moment when, in the cluttered cabin of Air Force I, immediately following the tragic assassination of John Kennedy, President Johnson was sworn into office. His aides saw to it that he had a Bible to place his hand on. An indescribable tragedy had occurred. There was a frightening atmosphere of suspicion. No one knew what motives were behind the assassination of our President. In that situation, the new President put his hand on the revelation of God and swore to uphold the Constitution of the United States.

President Johnson made that solemn affirmation upon the Bible, because the Bible is the book of truth—because we have a very high opinion of the Bible, and use it frequently to substantiate the truthfulness of our statements.

Anyone who believes that Jesus of Nazareth is still in a Palestinian tomb had better never lay his hand upon the Bible to prove that he is telling the truth; for, if the decaying remains of Jesus are still mouldering in a Palestinian grave, then the Bible is absolutely false from beginning to end.

The resurrection message dominates the Bible. It was predicted in the Old Testament and clearly foretold by the prophet in the 16th Psalm. In fact, Peter (in Acts 2:27) quotes Psalm 16:10, where Christ declares that He, God's Holy One, shall not be left in death and shall not see corruption. There is the triumphant cry of victory by the palsied Job, as he says in Job 19:25: "...I know that my redeemer liveth...."

The prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the resurrection of our Lord are so powerful and compelling, that even if the event had not been recorded in the New Testament, we would still have the assurance that our blessed Savior, having been "cut off out of the land of the living," would, nevertheless, "prolong his days," to use the very words with which Isaiah describes this tremendous event (Isa. 53:8,10).

The New Testament is a resurrection book. Without the resurrection there would have been no New Testament. If Jesus had remained buried in a grave, the story of His life and death would have remained buried with Him.

The New Testament is an *effect* of Christ's resurrection. The Bible clearly states that our Lord Jesus Christ arose from the grave—the reason why the Apostle's Creed so states: "The third day He rose again from the dead...."

Our Lord Jesus Christ arose! Later, He appeared to a large and very select number of people. The apostles, who had followed Him for many months, saw Him. They talked with Him, and, as Peter says, they ate with Him. "Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before by God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts 10:40,41).

In evidential support of a *living* Lord, here is an account of the series of appearances, as made by the risen Christ to chosen witnesses: "...he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present time, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then, of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (I Cor. 15:5-9).

These are the post-resurrection appearances of our Lord. We have in the New Testament ten different occasions on which our Lord is said to have appeared to His followers, in addition to His appearance to the Apostle

Paul on the Damascus road—a great, dramatic episode. These manifestations of our Lord Jesus Christ differ widely in time, setting, persons involved, and results. However, they unanimously agree that His physical presence was attested to by competent witnesses, who were willing to stake their lives on the fact that He had risen.

We should remember, too, that these appearances were wholly unexpected. On Easter morning, when Mary Magdalene went to tell the disciples that the tomb was empty, she found them mourning and weeping; and on the night of His resurrection, when He appeared to them in the upper room, they were utterly astonished and terrified! They thought it was a spirit!

These appearances could not have been produced by their feverish imaginations, created by brooding over the hope that they would soon see the risen Lord, because they had no such hope. They were disappointed, disillusioned, downcast—knowing He had died, and believing they would never see Him again on earth. It was not until they had an abundance of proof, that they came, at last, to the unshakable and unanimous certainty of His resurrection.

Dr. Clark Pinnock gives us an interesting little detail: strictly speaking, our Lord Jesus Christ first came to Mary Magdalene, as described in John 20:11-18. However, in I Corinthians 15:5-9, Paul does not wish to include the name of a female on a list that has almost legal force in his mind. The fact that John does record this incident is a detail that no first century male would have invented; but John had the courage to preserve it, and the story has important symbolic overtones.

The appearance to Peter and James, individually and separately, goes far to explain their very unique authority in the primitive church. The appearance to five hundred brethren at once, indicates the public nature of the event. Paul knew that many of these believers were alive at the time of his writing. The series of appearances to many individuals, extended over a period of several weeks, is certainly a phenomenon that calls for an explanation. Our Lord clearly impressed His disciples that He

was neither the ghost of a dead man, nor simply a revived corpse. He was alive in a new mode of existence, and He summoned His disciples to proclaim the possibility of such existence to all who would believe on His name.

There is a fantastic difference between the disciples in the Gospel narratives and those who appear in the book of Acts. The difference is in their transformed behavior. In the book of Acts, they were intellectually convinced that the Gospel was true, because God had raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

The conversion of the Apostle Paul from his bitter hostility toward the Christian movement, to his energetic defense of the Gospel, is further testimony to the incontrovertible fact of the resurrection. This was the only appearance that Christ made to an avowed enemy; and the Apostle Paul was living proof of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

After his conversion, Paul endured poverty, strife, hunger, imprisonment—and, finally, death. The Apostle wrote fourteen Epistles, unexcelled in literature. His tragic end was a Roman dungeon and an executioner's axe. Could imagination, nightmare, or spirit visitant possibly carry a man through such horrendous life-and-death trials?

In a comment by D. A. Hayes, he calls our attention to the degree of intense convincing that was necessary to convert a man like Saul. Only the appearance of a sudden, unexpected, irresistible revelation of the resurrected One Himself, in the majesty of His divine power, could bring about conversion in the life of such a man.

The Apostle accepted the story of the empty tomb at a time when the recollection was recent, when he could examine it closely for himself, and when he could make the fullest possible inquiry. The following was his conclusion: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures (I Cor. 15:3,4).

Paul's entire ministry is massive testimony to the

reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His belief in the resurrection was shared by early Christians as absolute and categorical. Anything less than Jesus' triumph over death would have vitiated the cause to which he had staked His life, and rendered Christians a pitiable lot.

Facts, in evidence of the resurrection, are multiplied. Six different and independent accounts—one in each of the four Gospels, one in the book of Acts, and one from the pen of Paul—recount this triumph over death. In the remainder of the New Testament, scores of passages speak of the Savior's resurrection, with a clarity that tolerates no uncertainty. There are very few events of ancient history with better attestation and sounder evidence, than the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In fact, its security in the annals of history is as firm as any other event. The resurrection is the only hypothesis that will make peace with all the facts. The physician Luke, writing in Acts 1:3 says: "...he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen by them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Notice that Dr. Luke speaks of "many infallible proofs."

We can never forget the challenge of Thomas when he said: "...Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). Paul Maier reminds us that this remark, in the future ages, would bring Thomas to be called a fool, a dullard, a doubter, or more charitably, a skeptic. In the Middle Ages, Germans used the ass as a sign of this Apostle, to ridicule his disbelief. But the modern era applauds Thomas' demand for empirical proof. His was a scientific challenge—a demand for the direct and objective—not just hearsay evidence that would reach the five senses; and the tales of excited women were not enough. The supposed apparition deluding his colleagues was not enough for him; but to touch the scars would indeed be enough evidence.

Thus, a week after the initial appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, the disciples were gathered at the same

place, except that Thomas was with them this time. Again Jesus appeared with the Hebrew greeting, "Shalom; peace be with you." He then walked purposefully over to Thomas and, meeting him on his own terms, said: "Put your finger into My hands. Put your hand into My side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!" (John 20: 27, *The Living Bible*). Feeling overcome, Thomas could speak only an exultant, "My Lord and my God!"

"Have you believed me because you have seen me?" Jesus chided him gently. "...Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed" (John 20:29). This comment was focused largely on the future, since most of those who believed had, at that time, like Thomas, seen the risen Jesus when He made other climactic appearances.

In an upper room, ten of the eleven disciples were huddled behind locked doors, fearful of the priestly aristocracy of Jerusalem, and afraid for their very lives! Suddenly, Jesus appeared in their midst and said, "...Peace be unto you" (Luke 24:36). (Evidently, He had materialized through the walls, and the disciples were terrified! Only spirits behaved in that fashion; however, in reflecting back on another night they would never forget, this was that same "ghost" who had frightened them, as they witnessed Jesus walking on the water of the Sea of Galilee!) The Lord asked them, "...Why are ye troubled?..." Then showing them His pierced extremities, He said: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:38,39). The mood among the disciples shifted instantly from disbelief to radiant joy.

In our Lord's final discourse with His disciples, in which He directly keyed His mission to Old Testament prophecy, He said in Luke 24:46-48: "...Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things."

Later, the Lord revealed Himself privately to Simon Peter, apparently as a reconfirmation of apostleship after

his denial; and then to His brother, James, the future pastor of Jerusalem.

Additional appearances to the disciples followed, including two unforgettable scenes among their familiar haunts up in the north country. In one (a poignant recapitulation of the first meeting with their Teacher), the disciples were again fishing on the sea of Galilee. Following our Lord's directives from the shore, they cast in their nets and brought in 153 fish for their breakfast.

In another, on a mountain in Galilee, Jesus appeared not only to the eleven, but also to at least five hundred in a broader circle of His followers, where, at the final parting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples witnessed Jesus' ascension—His withdrawal into another dimension. "And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (Luke 24:51).

After His ascension, they saw Him no more. But everywhere they went they proclaimed a risen, living Christ. As the Apostle Paul expressed it, He was "...declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4).

THE CROWNING PROOF OF IMMORTALITY

"...I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die [*never really dies*]*..." (John 11: 25,26).*

It is said that Bobby Burns, the Scottish poet, was walking down the street one day; and, stopping to look through a painting gallery window, he found himself impressed by an artist's picture of the crucifixion. Turning a little, he noticed a small, raggedly clothed boy standing beside him. Addressing the little fellow, the poet said, "What is that picture?" The lad replied, "Don't you know?" "That's the Roman soldiers...they're killing Jesus."

The poet started on his way, and had gone but a short distance, when he felt a tug on his coat. Turning, he saw his little friend, who hastened to say, "Excuse me, sir, there's one thing I forgot to tell you...He rose from the dead!"

The resurrection is literally the crux of Christianity, and is one of the most definite assurances of divine revelation.

Recent excavations have uncovered the extended tombs of the kings in Ur of the Chaldees, showing evidence that at the death of the ruler, his entire court was buried alive. In Egypt, the tomb of Tutankhamen, with its lavish wealth and artistic adornment, has impressed even our age. Red leaders in Russia claim that the body of Nacolai Lenin, embalmed by a secret process and ex-

hibited in a glass casket, will never decay. But uncensored reports from the Red capital reveal that Lenin's corpse has already shown suspicious signs of going the way of all flesh. In fact, every tomb, every burial place, every cemetery, every gravestone, every casket, every hearse is unquestionable testimony to the final failure of all that is material and human. Nothing changes that fact, whether the burial place be as massive as the pyramids, as simple as your family plot with its modest memorial stone, or even as unadorned as a shallow grave in a potter's field. But the tomb of Jesus Christ has been empty for two thousand years!

As Christians, we can point to a vacant tomb and a living, risen Christ. It is intriguing that we know more about the burial of Jesus than of any other personality in ancient history—whether king of Babylon, philosopher of Greece, or triumphant Caesar. We know of the tomb in which Jesus' body was placed; we know the name of the man who owned it (Joseph of Arimathaea); we know that a stone was rolled against the tomb, and (by wish of the Jews) a Roman guard was set before it to prevent the body from being stolen. Finally, we know unquestionably that the tomb in Joseph's garden was empty on the morning of the third day, and that it remains empty today!

No infidel, atheist, agnostic, or skeptical unbeliever has ever been able to satisfactorily explain that empty tomb. If a single particle of bone had been found, the Christian structure would have crumbled long ago. The uniqueness in Christianity is based on the claim that its founder was resurrected from the dead. Not one shred of evidence has yet been discovered in literary sources, epigraphy, or archaeology that would disprove the historical narrative concerning the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, the exuberant, triumphant faith of these early Christians has not been universally shared, and an outright denial of the literal resurrection of Jesus Christ has come, not only from non-Christians, but also from so-called liberal, Christian theologians. And, of

course, the basic argument is that a physical resurrection, like the other miracles in the Bible, could never have happened, since natural law simply cannot be suspended. The dead do not rise today, says the argument; therefore, the dead have never risen.

When Paul preached his great valedictorian message on the resurrection to the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in Athens, they called him a "babbler," and "a setter forth of strange gods." But Paul confidently replied, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26:8). Paul was simply saying that if you admit there is a sovereign, omnipotent God in the heavens, and that all the power that is known belongs to Him, then impossibility must throw up its hands!

The same God who created the heavens and the earth out of nothing; the same God who hung the planets on air, and set them whirling and whizzing along their courses, crossing a thousand tracks of other worlds in minute precision; the same God who made the inanimate animate, and called into being every living thing—the Author of life itself—surely could, if He so desired, raise His son Jesus Christ from the dead.

DeWette, one of the great leaders of rationalism, gave the claims of Christ's resurrection the most precise, scientific investigation. He finally concluded that the resurrection of Jesus Christ could not be doubted, any more than the historical certainty of Caesar's assassination. In addition, we could say that even this is an understatement, since we do not have testimony from any eyewitnesses to the assassination of Caesar, or to his funeral, for that matter. We do possess the statement of Matthew, John, Peter, and Paul—truthful witnesses—who actually *saw* the risen Christ and *heard* Him speak; and it is interesting that all—believers and unbelievers alike—admit that something took place on that unforgettable morning, that ignited the spiritual explosion recognized as Christianity.

After our Lord was crucified, He was laid away (under the supervision of Roman guards) by Joseph of Arimathaea, in an impregnable stone tomb. A mammoth

rock was then rolled before the sepulcher and secured with the seal of Rome. That Roman seal was a cord, stretched across the stone, with each end imbedded in a soft, clay-like substance that would soon harden. Anyone trying to roll the stone from the tomb's entrance would have broken the seal, thus incurring the wrath of Roman law. Roman guards, with bayonets bristling, were placed on 24-hour duty to guard the body of a dead man. In asking the question, "Why?" the answer becomes proof of the resurrection:

"Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, that the sepulcher be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead; so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch; go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch" (Matt. 27:62-66).

In referring to the tight security measures taken at Jesus' sepulcher, E. LeCamus expressed that there never had been a criminal who was given so much concern after his execution. Above all, there had never been a condemned, crucified man who received the honor of being guarded by a squad of soldiers.

Professor G. W. Clark concludes that everything had been done (that human policy and prudence could do) to prevent a resurrection, which these very precautions only verified.

From the study of the prophets, and from the awesome evidence of the darkness, earthquakes, and other supernatural phenomena, we are made to wonder whether the religious leaders of that day were not convinced that they had indeed crucified God in the flesh? Could their order for the tomb to be sealed and guarded have been an unconscious confession? Otherwise, what idiocy was this—that the Roman government would send strong,

brave men to keep a dead man from walking away; or for that matter, the possibility that His unarmed, disconsolate, frightened disciples would attempt to steal His body? All the power of Rome was back of that seal; and at the same time, all the power of Satan and hell were present to keep that body within the confines of the grave.

When we read how the keepers of the tomb fell back as dead men, we are convinced that nothing (short of the intervention of Almighty God) could produce such an effect. When the Roman leaders ordered their guards to watch the tomb, all possibility that the resurrection of Jesus Christ could be a farce, was removed. In fact, this order was absolute assurance that the resurrection of our Lord was incontrovertible, historical truth! Since the Roman guard lived to tell the story, it is certain that they did not fall asleep while watching the tomb. If they had fallen asleep, Roman law would have required their execution; thus, since their lives continued, we have evidence that a "crooked bargain" had been made to cover up the resurrection (Matt. 28:11-15), but it could not be covered up. It was already a blazing, incontrovertible truth. Christianity was not founded on a graveyard theft, or on some ghouls robbing a grave. Western civilization was not built on an ancient lie. Sooner or later the truth will win out, and a lie does not usually exist as long as two thousand years!

In an effort to explain away the resurrection, numerous hypotheses have been advanced by the critics down through the years. Let us look into the fallacy of the "wrong tomb" theory. This is the story that, because of the hasty way in which our Lord was buried, the women returned to the wrong tomb (in the predawn darkness) and found it empty. Supposedly, they were startled by the gardener, and did not realize that they had made the error. According to the theory, when the gardener said to them, "See the place where He lay," the women panicked and fled.

Undoubtedly, it is sufficient to say that Mary knew all about the burial of Jesus on Friday evening; but, even

if there had been a mistake about the site of the tomb, certainly Joseph of Arimathaea (or the guards who were assigned to the sepulcher) would have corrected the error without hesitation.

These same facts also refute the ridiculous "lettuce" theory. Allegedly, the gardener became so angry at the curiosity seekers trampling over the lettuce seedlings he had planted around Joseph's tomb, that he took it upon himself to remove the body of Jesus, reinterring it elsewhere. Surely, he would have had to do some explaining to the owner of the garden, as well as to the Roman guards, before proceeding to transplant a body!

Another theory claims that Jesus never actually died—that He was merely in a "swoon." The odor of the spices and the cool air of the tomb were said to have revived Him; He then got up, left the tomb, rejoined His disciples, lived out His life, and later died a natural death. This theory is more difficult to explain than the miracle itself.

Furthermore, Paul L. Maier challenges such logic when he questions how a crawling, wounded near-cadaver could inspire in His followers the founding of a faith (based on His resurrection), if this were actually the way in which He escaped the tomb.

By the time the resurrection occurred, Jesus had been dead for approximately forty hours; but the record states that when the soldiers came to Jesus and the thieves on the cross, Jesus was *dead* already!

Even though David Strauss (the 19th century German scholar) did not accept the resurrection of Christ, yet he repudiated this fanciful idea when he wrote of how impossible it would be for one to come forth from a grave, half dead; creep about, weak and ill, desperately in need of medical treatment, bandaging, strengthening and tender care—having succumbed to suffering; yet, having given to the disciples the impression that He was a conqueror over death and the grave, and that He was the Prince of Life!

Such a resuscitation could only have weakened the impression He had made upon them in life and in death.

It could not have elevated their reverence into worship. In fact, this theory would have made the disciples out to be a set of fools and liars.

All sorts of things were recorded about our Lord after His resurrection that could not be true of Him, if He came out of the tomb with the same physical body He had when He entered. Knowing that Jesus Christ expected Christianity to sweep around the world, arousing the keenest antagonism of the hardheaded Jews, the criticism of the Gentile philosophers, and the challenge of the dictum of science, do you suppose (for even one moment!) that our Lord would risk the founding of Christianity upon a statement as flimsy and easy to be discredited as this?

To cause His disciples to believe that He had died—although He had not—expecting them to depend upon this lie as a ground for their hope and the conversion of the world, would have been a deception that would make Jesus Christ an unprincipled monster! His claims were what revealed Him to be the Son of God; and there was no sin in Him—let alone the despicable sins of chicanery, lying, and deceit!

The swoon theory is not only incredible, it is impossible. Contemporary Roman historians, such as Tacitus, Josephus, and Pliny record Jesus' death as a fact. Writer George Hanson is correct in declaring how difficult it becomes to believe that the swoon theory was the favorite explanation of 18th century rationalism. The evidence speaks to the contrary of such a hypothesis, which is, for the most part, now obsolete.

No other fact of history has more support than the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Historians today accept thousands of facts, for which they can produce only threads of evidence; and yet, in the New Testament, we have hundreds of witnesses who talked with Christ, walked with Him, ate with Him, knelt before Him, and claimed Him as their Lord and Savior after His resurrection from the dead. Today, we send a man to death in the gas chamber, on circumstantial evidence. But the enemies of Christ are not ready to let Jesus live, even

though overwhelming testimony proves His resurrection.

We exultantly claim with the Apostle Paul: "Now is Christ risen!" Let men repeat the falsehood (now two thousand years old) that the body of our Lord was stolen from the grave. Let them try to laugh away His bursting from the tomb. And let them compose a long and conflicting list of fantastic and impossible theories. The fact is that the *tomb is empty*, and *Christ has risen* from the dead. The seal has been broken and the gravestone of overconfident unbelief has been rolled away.

There are tremendous lessons in the fact of the resurrection! For believers, it means that He lives; and because He lives, they will live also. The resurrection means that death has lost its sting, the grave has lost its victory, and glorious immortality is assured. It is more than the pledge of a vague existence, more than a survival of personality, more than a continuance of ego; "we shall be like him...."

However, for the unbeliever, the resurrection reality means stark-naked nothing! For the unbeliever, the interred remains of Jesus of Nazareth might just as well be mouldering in some lonely Palestinian grave. Our Lord has justly warned: "...if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins...where I go, ye cannot come" (John 8:24,21).

THE CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

Thus far, we have uncovered only a few unfounded theories from the pens of skeptics who wrote in an attempt to explain the mysterious resurrection of our Lord. There have been numerous other theories—for example, the "twin brother" theory, claiming that Jesus had an identical twin brother who occasionally substituted for Him, but who generally remained out of sight. Supposedly, when Christ was crucified on Friday, it was His twin brother who came from seclusion on Sunday, causing some people to believe that He had risen from the dead.

Hardly worth mentioning is the absurd theory that the climate was so very conducive to organic decay, that the body had completely decomposed by the time the tomb was visited.

One of the most prevalent theories (compared only with the "stolen body" or the "swoon" theories) is that of the "vision" hypothesis, alleging that the disciples were hallucinated. Ernest Renan, the French infidel, and David Strauss were propagators of this particular theory. They said, "An hallucinated woman gave to the world a resurrected God." They further claimed that this hallucination was built on expectancy.

Fortunately, the entire theory becomes invalid in the light of the Gospel, which clearly points out the fact that the resurrection was the one thing that the hard-headed disciples were not expecting—especially doubting Thomas! When our Lord did make His appearance to them, instead of grasping the fulfillment of their so-called dream and hallucination, the Scripture says: "...they

were terrified and frightened, and supposed that they had seen a spirit" (Luke 24:37). The Lord had to actually labor to convince them that He had already risen; thus, the news of His resurrection had to be forced on them because of their obvious disbelief. In Mark's Gospel, we read that He "...upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not those who had seen him after he had risen" (Mark 16:14).

Furthermore, for the disciples to have been affected in this manner, there would have to have been a collection of these hallucinoses, ranging in group size up to 500 people on one occasion. Each of these people, even in different places, would have to have had the same hallucination at the same time, seeing the same thing—a virtual impossibility in the case of a phenomenon that is usually extremely individualistic. A large number of people will not see the same thing in different places, nor experience a general hallucination, mirage, daydream, or mass hysteria.

Another interesting question would be, why did such visions end? After our Lord's forty days of ministry with the disciples, followed by His ascension, His appearances ceased! It would be expected that such "hallucinations" would continue to occur for decades, or even centuries. The empty tomb is not explained by the "vision" theory; nor does hysteria explain the Lord's day. And so time and again, we have witnessed that history is not hysteria!

In writing on the life of Jesus, Renan brought his book as far as the cross on which Jesus died, after which he wrote the word "Finis"—putting an end to it all. After that lying, dismal word "Finis" (on the flyleaf of the book), Renan's publisher (also an unbeliever) placed a woodcut illustration of the crucified Savior, depicting the Christ with drooping head, matted hair, and pale, blood-streaked face. The scene shows that everyone had deserted Him, stormclouds had gathered in the sky, while black-pinioned birds circled through the gloom. Everything about the picture depicts defeat.

If, indeed, the resurrection were a lie, as Renan expressed it, the entire world would be clothed in eternal night, never to see the light, and left to drift deeper and deeper into the recesses of a black tomb, imprisoned with only sobs of despair to break the stillness of eternal death.

The Apostle Paul was right, as he wrote to the Corinthian Church concerning the resurrection of the body, that if Christ did not rise, our faith is in vain, all hope is lost, preaching is a mockery, and we shall die in our sins.

But the great, tremendous, overwhelming, incontrovertible truth is that He *did* rise from the dead! With a dead Christ, there would have been no Gospel to preach. Every doctrinal truth we proclaim has its validity in our Lord's resurrection. It unifies all other doctrines, from justification to stewardship. Without it, other parts of the circle of revelation are only fragments. Without it, the doctrines of the Christian faith become isolated, disconnected, and unsubstantial. It was the dynamic impact of the resurrection that changed the world.

Certain institutions and conditions existing in our day are effects. We have, for example, the Lord's day. We admit, without a moment's hesitation, that this is not the original Sabbath. Christians do not keep the Sabbath. That was a Jewish ordinance which belonged to the Old Testament. Today, millions of Christians worship on the first day of the week, rather than the seventh day—the Jewish Sabbath. Why? In the book of Acts, as well as in other early writings, Christians assembled on the first day of the week. Nothing is more difficult to accomplish than the changing of a cherished holy day, celebrated for centuries. It is especially significant that the day was changed by no express decree, but by general consent. Something tremendous must have occurred, leading to this change. The apostles asserted that the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead had memorialized that day—the most rational and reasonable explanation for the change.

Consider the Christian Church. It is an effect. What was the cause? If our Lord Jesus Christ had not bodily

risen from the dead, there would be no Church! In Matthew 16:18, our Lord prophesied that He would build His Church, and that the gates of Hades would never prevail against it—meaning it would never die. So, during the centuries, that little nucleus of disciples has grown into an institution with nearly a billion members. The presence of these believers in the world is a testimony to the fact that their founder arose from the dead.

The New Testament is an effect. As we have said frequently, if our Lord Jesus Christ had remained buried in the grave, the story of His life and death would have remained buried with Him. Thus, because the resurrection of Jesus Christ gave reason for the New Testament to be written, it became an effect.

Consider the change in the disciples. At the time of the crucifixion, we find that the whole apostolic company was filled with empty, disconsolate, abysmal despair. From Calvary's awesome scene, they all forsook and fled. But observe the same disciples at Pentecost only a few weeks later. Standing in the midst of those who had consented to the murder of the Son of God, Peter boldly preached to them of a risen Lord: "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

What changed these timid disciples into the fearless witnesses that they became, counting it a privilege to suffer for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to give their lives for the Gospel? It was the very fact that they saw Jesus *alive* after His resurrection. Everywhere the apostles went, they preached one message—the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

It was faith in the resurrection of Christ (and the preaching of this testimony) that gave the early church its power to win thousands (and then millions) of idolatrous citizens of the great Roman Empire for Christ. It is recognized among all careful observers of the difficult problems connected with the establishment of the Christian Church in the Roman world, that vast multitudes knew what torture and social ostracism they would en-

counter when they confessed their faith. Nevertheless, they put their faith in the living Christ!

Most assuredly, a tremendous occurrence was all that could account for such a radical and astounding transformation of attitude in those disciples. Nothing short of the resurrection miracle, followed by the appearance of their living Lord, could explain it.

The indisputable resurrection in the past points an unerring finger to the certainty of a judgment in the future. When the Apostle Paul addressed the Greeks on Mars' Hill, he warned them: "...[God] hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; concerning which he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

Should anyone laugh at, mock, or believe that there will be no judgment; should there be any who fancy that they may continue in the violation of God's moral order (in favor of sin, and in rejection of Christ) without being accountable; or if any man should think that he can continually trample under foot the Son of God, resisting the plea of the Holy Spirit, without certain suffering; I beseech you to discard that hope, because it is totally baseless and utterly hopeless! It is an absolute, certain fact that there *will* be a day when Jesus Christ will judge the world in righteousness.

All of God's past predictions of judgment on individuals and nations have come true to the very letter. And, if we are to judge the future by the past—and there is no other way to judge it—God's predictions about future judgments will come true, with the same terrifying, minute accuracy.

Everything in nature is moving toward a moral juncture. The flowing river, the growing planet, the breathing tribes, the planetary systems—all tend toward universal crisis. Many factors irresistibly indicate a turning point in human history: the unremitting increase in the human family from age to age; the enlarging monster of war, with weapons that can destroy all life on earth; the contamination of the atmosphere with deadly radiation; the

pollution of the earth, air, and water that surround it; the multiplied number of problems, unsolvable by man; the great swelling, sweeping tides of sin; the terrible night of unbelief; the prostitution of man's genius, and his undeniable depravity and utter ruthlessness.

How long can we expect this mushrooming, secular "fallout" to continue—with its pollution and war, racism and poverty, depressing depersonalization and despair? There must be a turning point; and God's special guarantee of that turning point was the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the gloom of the tomb! Someday, Jesus Christ will be the judge—the same judge that men are now rejecting, whose honor men are robbing, whose deity men are denying. What a dark day for the Christ-rejecting unbeliever! How untellable and incomparable an experience—to stand in judgment before the Christ you had refused again and again!

He will also be the standard of judgment. Who can stand comparison with His Word, His righteousness, His holiness? For twenty centuries the world has found no sin in Him, in His thoughts, His doctrines, His conduct, or in His life. John tells us (in the apocalypse) that the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand? The answer is wonderful news—glorious assurance! Because Jesus Christ is my Savior, God promises me (in Romans 8:1) that He will never be my judge; "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus...."

This means that Jesus Christ bore the judgment of my sin on Skull Hill. In the language of the Holy Book, He was made sin for me that I might receive the righteousness of God. Thus, I am garmented with His perfect righteousness, because I have committed my life (in trusting faith) to Him as my Lord and my Savior. Another assurance from the Word of God is found in John 3:18: "He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." How vital it is to remember, there is no judgment to the man who knows Jesus Christ as his Lord and his Savior!

DON'T BURY HIM AGAIN

"...if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:9-13).

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is essential to our salvation, because only God can save us from sin and its consequences—eternal separation from Him, and the abysmal loneliness of a Christless eternity. Our salvation is inherent in our absolute confidence in the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus Christ and His deity. If He is not God, coming to man in a glorious, redemptive purpose, man has no hope. The proof of His deity is His resurrection from the dead.

The above text makes it clear that belief in the literal resurrection of Jesus Christ and confession of that belief, openly and unashamedly, is essential to salvation. Since the resurrection was to be the sign of the deity of Jesus Christ ("...[He was] declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead;") (Rom. 1:4), acceptance of that sign is a confession that He is the incarnate God, the only Savior, and thus, able to

save. To be saved, we must *believe* "that God hath raised him from the dead."

The Apostle Paul picks out in Romans 10:9,10, the very heart of the Gospel, the fundamental basis of the entire structure, the keystone in the arch of the Christian faith, and the primary truth that is the very foundation of the Gospel. Without this personal *belief* in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, there can be no personal salvation. If that fact were to be moved even a hair's breadth, the entire Christian system would come crashing down, hopelessly unfounded. If Jesus Christ were dead (as some say), then He obviously could not be God incarnate. He would be mortal—just as mortal as you or I; and without the possibility of being our Savior. In fact, He would desperately need a Savior, even as we do. Thus, we can see that the salvation of every man is vitally dependent upon the truth, as stated in the great apocalyptic vision of John, when our Lord said: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of hades and of death" (Rev. 1:18).

Theological liberals, denying the literal, physical resurrection of Jesus Christ, are lost—without God, and without hope! And yet, a person can intellectually believe in the *fact* of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, without experiencing the saving grace of our wonderful Lord. That person has not passed from death unto life. The only kind of belief that will save a man (relating him to God in the experience of forgiveness and in the reception of a new and eternal life) is a genuine heart belief.

Heart, as used in the New Testament, does not merely represent the "seat" of the emotions; but actually includes and encompasses the total man—the corporate personality. The word "heart" actually means "the sum total of a man's attitude toward life." It takes into account man's intellect, his convictions and his volitions. There is a vast difference between heart belief and mere head belief.

Head belief accepts the facts as verified and true; while heart belief acts on the facts. It is not enough to merely assent to a creed—to admit, "It is true." A com-

mitment, absolute and irrevocable, is necessary; and it is this commitment that displays utter trust in the object of our faith. This is heart belief—a yielding, surrendering, committing, trusting faith, and complete obedience to the divine authority of the living Christ. For example, in explanation of head belief without a genuine heart belief: You can believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross; you can believe that He rose from the dead; and yet, you can spend your eternity outside of God's kingdom, without Christ, and forever without hope!

Many years ago, I gave a brilliant young man, who was having difficulty accepting the infallibility of the Scriptures, some excellent books on Christian evidence and apologetics. After much faithful and diligent study, he approached me to say that he no longer was an unbeliever in the infallibility of Scripture, nor in the deity of Jesus Christ. He said to me, "I believe that Jesus Christ was exactly who He claimed to be." But, following that statement, when I invited him to put his faith and trust in Jesus Christ, making Him the Lord of his life, I will never forget his reply: "I don't need Him yet!" The example is clear—he believed with his head, but he wasn't ready to make a *heart* commitment.

It can only be an earnest belief from the heart that saves, because it is that kind of belief that requires complete surrender, utter trust, and total commitment of your life to Jesus Christ. There can be nothing withheld! In Matthew 10:39, Jesus has magnificently explained that "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Practically speaking, this is the kind of faith that is exhibited when we believe in a physician's skill, to the point of actually submitting our life to his decision and action.

Perhaps you are asking, "Why does God demand that we *confess* our faith in the risen, living Christ? The answer refers back to the Scripture that was quoted as the text for this chapter, Romans 10:9,10: "...if thou shalt *confess with thy mouth* the Lord Jesus, and shalt *believe in thine heart* that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the *heart* man be-

lieveth unto righteousness; and with the *mouth* confession is made unto salvation." The Lord was also very specific in Luke 9:26, where He said: "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." Also, in Matthew 10:32, He stated, "Whosoever, therefore, shall *confess* me before men, him will I confess also before my Father, who is in heaven."

There are three basic reasons why our Lord wants our confession of faith to be open, public, and unashamed: First, for our own sake—it will strengthen our faith. Since the Lord Jesus Christ hung in agony on a cross, before the gaze of the world for us, there is little doubt that we can well afford to take a stand, publicly and unashamedly, before the world for Him. If you declare that you will not make such a profession, you may be very sure it will be the one thing necessary before you will ever know the experience of Christ's saving grace! Be proud to take your stand for Jesus Christ! God pity the man or woman who is ashamed of Him.

Secondly, He demands this confession for the sake of others. All of us have an influence, and that influence extends to others, like the concentric circles that are formed by a rock thrown into a placid pool. Endlessly, these rivulets of influence affect the lives of others. God holds each of us responsible for the way we use our influence, because someone's life may be saved or damned by that influence. Such an example occurred when the chief justice of the court of appeals in Rochester, New York made a public confession of Christ, under the ministry of Charles G. Finney. This confession is said to have started a spiritual revival that influenced 150,000 souls to make decisions for Jesus Christ!

Thirdly, God demands that we confess Him before men for the sake of our Savior. When the Lord Jesus Christ hung, grotesque and naked, before the gaze of three million eyes, He was willing to make a spectacle of Himself to redeem us. When the intensity of sin had built up until it became a "critical mass" of destruction to us,

with the penalty of hell staring us square in the face, Jesus Christ paid that penalty in full. When the inexorable justice of a sovereign, Holy God demanded that we should die, the sinless Son of God (moved by a love that we cannot comprehend) threw His own body across the fury of sin's "chain reaction" and broke its destructive power for you and me. In the face of such sacrificial love, how could we ever refuse to openly and publicly confess our heartfelt belief in Him, and our love for Him? As II Corinthians 5:21 tells us, He took the full blast of sin, and He became its conqueror: "For he hath made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Dr. Biederwolf tells of a contractor who was inspecting a building under construction, when he fell from a high scaffolding. One of the humble workers, with tremendous courage, caught his body as it fell. The weight of the falling man forced the worker's arms into their sockets, crushing his shoulders, twisting his spine, and resulting in the breaking of both legs. The injuries caused the man to walk the streets ever after, an object of pity. However, when someone asked him about the man whose life he had saved, his face beamed when he said, "Oh, he gave me half of his fortune. He gives me half of his income, and he never lets me want for a thing."

We know how to appreciate such a sacrifice; but some seem to forget that there was one—the Godman Himself—who was crushed and broken for *you!* Isaiah has prophetically said: "...he [Christ] was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities..." (Isa. 53:5). He went through the tomb and out the other side in the blazing glory of an incontrovertible resurrection, to take away our fear of death, and with the promise that because He lives, we shall live also. And yet, there are those who will not publicly own Him as Lord and Savior, who continue to reject Him, who continue to thwart His love.

Are you one of those? You ought to confess Him. You ought to acknowledge Him. You ought to love Him. You ought to thank God for the privilege of standing up

for Him, because: (1) He is the incarnate God, (2) His agonizing death on the cross has redeemed you and me from the penalty of sin, (3) He rose from the dead, in full vindication of His deity. He has promised to save you (in all that the word implies), if you will believe on Him, trust in Him, and commit yourself to Him with all your heart.

Why should *you* believe in the resurrection? Your answer determines whether there's anything beyond this life. Why should *you* believe in the resurrection? Your answer determines the validity of the personal faith of Christians down through the centuries, as well as the validity of the Christian message itself. Your answer determines what kind of life you will live in this world. In fact, your answer determines whether or not you are now lost or saved! In summation, your personal salvation and your personal relationship with God depends upon your faith in the risen, living Christ, because it was He who said: "...no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

A Christian worships the risen, living Savior with hope and anticipation. Those who reject the fact of His resurrection by maintaining that He is still in the tomb, are attempting to bury Him again; and regrettably, they are denying themselves the benefits of His salvation. To bury the Lord Jesus Christ is to forfeit the eternal life that He purchased for all who put their faith and trust in Him. Praise God, Christ is not in the grave; for if He were, there would be only the grave to anticipate for all eternity! Don't bury Him! Own Him! Love Him! Confess Him!

When the Apostle Paul preached on Mars' Hill, there was a reaction by the Greeks to the message of the resurrection. In Acts 17:31-34, we read: "Because he [God] hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; concerning which he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So

Paul departed from among them. Nevertheless, certain men joined him, and believed...."

Do not follow those mocking atheists on Mars' Hill. Ask God for strength to remove every obstacle that could prevent you from coming to Jesus Christ.

The second class of Paul's hearers on Mars' Hill were those who said, "...We will hear thee again of this matter." They were postponing their decision. They were deferring an acceptance of Christ. How sad it is, there are those who continue to do this very same thing, time after time...until there is no time! The Word of God warns: "...behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation..." (II Cor. 6:2).

A third class of hearers in Paul's audience were those who believed him, and found new life in Jesus Christ. There, on Mars' Hill, the Spirit of God touched their hearts—they believed and were saved.

What a God-given opportunity is ours—to take our stand for this living Christ! When we take our stand for Him, the Scriptural promise is that He will stand for us in the day of judgment. He has already borne the judgment for our sins on the cross. In Romans 4:25, the Apostle Paul declared: "Who [Christ] was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification."

Because of His death on the cross to redeem us from sin, and because He rose from the dead to vindicate His deity, we may wholeheartedly believe on Him, unashamedly confess our belief in Him as Savior and Lord, and, thereby, enjoy the benefits of His salvation. The matchless promise of Romans 10:9 is: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." *Saved!* in the totality of personality! *Saved!* morally, spiritually, bodily, eternally! *Saved!* to usefulness, to purposefulness, to completeness, for the fulfillment of God's will and His plan for your life!

In John 14:19, when He said, "...Because I live, ye shall live also," we have yet another promise: *His* resurrection is the pledge of *ours!* What a glorious salvation!

"Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is (I John 3:2).

The captain of a transatlantic ocean liner related that many years ago one of his passengers was the talented young singer, Jennie Lind, who had dedicated her beautiful voice to Jesus Christ. He recalled that one morning she arose early and, standing on the bridge of the ship, she watched the sun rising out of the trackless ocean. The radiance of daybreak evidently awoke within her heart the thought of eternity, and she began to sing, from Handel's *Messiah*, the unforgettable passage, "I know that my Redeemer liveth...."

Then, in an exultant climax, she sang, "...and because He lives, I too, shall live!" The captain said that it was one of the most exalted moments in his entire life.

If you can greet each new day with the song of resurrection triumph—"I know that my Redeemer liveth"—you can end all of life's days with the Christ-centered confidence, "I too, shall live!" No wonder, in his great valedictory on the resurrection, the Apostle Paul concludes: "But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 15:57).