



The Case of the Resurrection

By Fr. Augustinos R. Hanna





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*Translated by
Raouf R. Hanna*

*Edited by
Sherry Wasef and Mark M. Hanna*

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Preface

Some of the content of this booklet was published in *El Kiraza*, the official magazine of the Coptic Orthodox Church, during the 1970's. I thought it would be useful to bring these articles together in one place.

The Resurrection of Christ is considered the “mother of all cases” because of its pivotal importance in our faith, salvation, and in our own resurrection.

The Resurrection is most important to our faith because it proves the Divinity of Christ, which is another doctrine crucial to Christianity. Furthermore, the Resurrection also confirms the truthfulness of the prophesies of the Bible. The Resurrection is necessary for our salvation, as it is the evidence that Christ's atoning death and redemption have been accepted. “Jesus our Lord... was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification” (Rom. 4:24 - 25).

Christ's Resurrection is the seal of *our* resurrection and the key to hope and eternal life (1 Cor. 15).

Because of its importance to the Christian faith, the Resurrection has faced a raging Satanic onslaught from the moment it took place. These attacks continue to occur in the form of modern attempts to cast doubts upon the reality of the Resurrection. The doctrine of the Resurrection has always emerged victorious over these assaults. This comes as no surprise, as Christ's resurrection defeated the three most dreaded enemies of humanity, namely death, Satan, and Hell.



Several of the issues in the Christian faith should be defended in this day and age. These issues do not *need* to be defended; a lion does not need a defender. Rather, defense is necessary to protect those who are not strong in the faith and those who do not study the Bible in depth, because those with weak faith and those lacking knowledge of the Bible are often vulnerable to the fallacies and heresies of opponents of the truth. This is why St. Paul explained, "... knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel" (Phil. 1:17) and "...because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel..." (Phil 1:7).

In the hands of my risen Savior I place this modest booklet, praying that He uses it for His glory and for the benefit of the readers. I hope that this booklet strengthens the faith of the readers and that it leaves them better equipped to explain the hope that resides in them, aided by the prayers of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church and his partner in the apostolic service, His Grace Bishop Serapion. Amen.

Fr. Augustinos Hanna • Easter, 2002
Priest of St. John Coptic Orthodox Church
in Covina, California

* All Bible quotations are from the NKJV.

Introduction

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus from death is one of the most important Christian doctrines. It is also the cornerstone of many other Christian doctrines that draw their strength from it. The resurrection is an awe-inspiring miracle, an event similar to the miraculous birth of Christ, in that it has never been seen before, since the beginning of creation. Nothing like it will happen in the future, either. No person besides Christ will arise after death by his own will, much less after having predicted his own death and resurrection three days later.

Now if we were to prove beyond a shadow of doubt that Christ has indeed risen, then it would necessarily follow that we must believe the consequences that flow from this, the most important of which are:

The Divinity of Christ: Whoever believes in the miracle of self-Resurrection must believe that Christ is God: Anyone who says of his body, “[d]estroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19), and is able to carry out that amazing feat by rising after His crucifixion and death, must be God. No mere human can bring himself back to life after death. Furthermore, death has been a consequence of (and a punishment for) sin since the fall of man. But because Christ is holy, pure, perfect, and infallible, death has no dominion over Him.

Thus, as He chose to die of His own free will to save the human race, He also rose by His own will and power. The Apostle St. Paul explained that Jesus Christ “declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom 1:4).

Christ’s death as evidenced by the resurrection: Jesus Christ’s resurrection makes it clear that His death was not due to weakness or defeat, but rather that it was the greatest triumph imaginable; through His death, Christ defeated the worst enemies of humanity,

namely sin, death, Satan, and hell. Christ confirmed everything He had said about His death and resurrection after He arose, and He cited the prophets. He also revealed Himself to the disciples and apostles while giving them a great deal of proof during the forty-day period following His resurrection. He showed them where the nails of the cross had pierced His hands and feet, and where the spear had pierced His side. He told them, “all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning me ... thus it was necessary for the 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 to all nations ... and you are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:44-48).

3) Christ’s resurrection confirms the truthfulness of every word He had said about Himself: Anybody can make fantastic claims about himself, but when that person dies leaving his claims unfulfilled, his powerlessness and deception are revealed. Christ, however, proclaimed that He is God. He claimed that He came down from heaven and took human form so that He could die and redeem the whole world, and He claimed that He would rise and ascend to heaven to intercede for the believers so that their final salvation could be attained. All these things came to pass! Thus, the resurrection is the seal and proof of the accuracy of His words, and we must believe Christ’s words, no matter how fantastic they may seem to our limited comprehension.

4) The resurrection proves that our salvation is complete: St. Paul wrote that Jesus Christ “was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification” (Rom 4:25). This means that Christ’s resurrection is proof that His atoning sacrifice on the cross, which He made on our behalf, has been accepted. Furthermore, the resurrection made salvation and reconciliation of sinners to God available to those who believe.

5) Christ's resurrection confirms that we, too, can be raised from the dead:

The fact that He rose, fulfilling all His promises and prophecies in that regard, demonstrates that it is possible for us to rise in Him, first from sin and spiritual death, and eventually from physical death on the last day.

If Christ had not risen, it would have been the worst catastrophe for humanity:

St. Paul dedicated the entire 15th chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians to respond to doubts about the resurrection. He outlined the terrible consequences that would follow from the negative hypothesis 'Christ did not rise.' These consequences can be summarized as follows:

The dead would not come back to life;

Our faith would be incorrect;

Our preaching would be invalid;

The apostles would be false witnesses;

There would be neither salvation, nor

justification; all would remain under sin;

All who died in Christ would perish;

We would all become wretched people, as there would be no hope of eternal life;

Our striving would be useless, and our virtues without reward. It would be appropriate for us to then "eat, drink, and be merry," for death would mean that we would cease to exist, just like animals; and

We would be ignorant and without any knowledge of God.

Undoubtedly, had that hypothesis been correct, these terrible consequences would have been the worst possible disaster for humanity.

It is evident that the case for the resurrection is the greatest case that a rational, informed person should want to study, as our eternal



The interior of a tomb in Jerusalem dating from around the time of Jesus. As in the gospel accounts of Jesus' burial place, the tomb was sealed by rolling a large stone in front of the entrance.

destiny depends on the truthfulness and meaning of resurrection of Christ. Elements of our everlasting life that depend on the resurrection are:

- whether we will rise on the last day, and
- whether we will rise to “the resurrection of life” or to “the resurrection of condemnation” of eternal anguish in Hell. The latter is obviously a fate worse than no resurrection at all (John 5:29).

A HISTORICAL LOOK AT THE DOCTRINE OF RESURRECTION:

The doctrine of resurrection from the dead is an ancient belief dating back to the earliest days of humanity. The student of history would find reflections of the resurrection in all ancient religions; the Ancient Egyptians believed in reincarnation and immortality, in reward and punishment, and in the justice, power, and wisdom of the Creator who would not let humans expire like animals. This belief is evident in their writings, drawings and paintings on walls of temples, in their pyramids and statues, and in their practice of mummifying their dead.

Similarly, the doctrine of resurrection was professed in the religions and mythologies of the ancient Romans, Greeks, and Babylonians. In contrast to our beliefs about the resurrection, resurrection for these ancient cultures manifested itself as a mixture of wishful thinking, rational deduction, and myth.

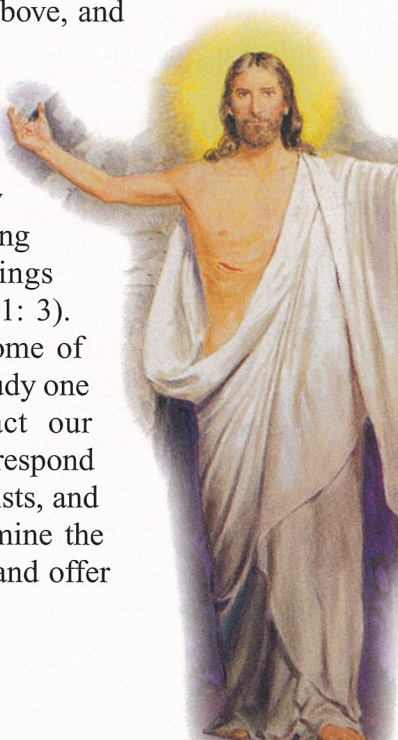
The resurrection is also mentioned in Islam. Resurrection is referred to in Judaism, too, albeit in a vague and mysterious way. The Old Testament contains a number of references to the resurrection, Deut. 32:28, 39; Psalm 16: 9, 10; Ezk. 37; Hos. 6:2, 13:14, perhaps the clearest of which is what the Divine inspiration revealed through Daniel: “[a]nd many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever” (Dan. 12:2,3).

Solomon, too, referred to the fact that God had implanted a desire for eternal life in the hearts of His rational creatures. He said, “He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end” (Eccles. 3:11).

The doctrine of resurrection only reached its perfection with the bright illumination of the Bible; the rising of the Lord Jesus Christ brought God’s revelation of the resurrection to fruition, and the teachings of Christ and of His disciples about the resurrection allowed the doctrine to assume its current position at the center of Christianity.

ANSWERING OPPONENTS’ FALSE CLAIMS “BY MANY INFALIBLE PROOFS”

Why did the Lord Jesus Christ not ascend to heaven immediately upon rising from the grave, but instead waited forty days? There are several reasons, but the most important was to strengthen the faith of the apostles and of the whole world in the doctrine of resurrection. In so doing, Christ established the paramount importance of the resurrection, as noted above, and addressed the doubts of the disciples, as well as of believers of all generations. The Holy Bible speaks of “[the apostles] to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1: 3). Accordingly, it is apt that we examine some of those “many infallible proofs” when we study one of the most serious issues that impact our salvation and resurrection, and when we respond to the false claims of non-Christians, atheists, and agnostics. In what follows, we will examine the key arguments of those infallible proofs, and offer a rebuttal.



Chapter One

THE GREAT LIE: “THE BODY WAS STOLEN”

The gospel of St. Matthew mentions the origin of the lie that, “the body was stolen.” The high priests and elders of the Jewish people wove the threads of this falsehood in the first few hours after Christ arose, after the soldiers guarding the tomb informed them about what had occurred. The guards told the high priests and elders about the earthquake, the descent of an angel who rolled the huge stone blocking the tomb out of the way, and the appearance of the living Christ to the Mary’s, etc. (Matt. 28). The high priests and elders panicked and acted impulsively: “They gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, ‘tell them, His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept. And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will appease him and make you secure.’ So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day” (Matt. 28: 11-15).

Rebuttal: To rebut this naïve claim, we draw attention to the following considerations:

1. It defies common sense to claim that all the guards fell asleep simultaneously. The Gospel of St. Matthew states in 27:27, “the soldiers of the governor ... gathered the whole garrison around Him.” The Roman garrison consisted of 70 soldiers and was accompanied by a number of Jewish guards.

It is impossible that all the guards would fall asleep on the third day in particular, as they were under strict orders to be on the highest state of alert that day. Consider the following:

They knew that Christ had stated that He would rise on that day;
They feared that the disciples would steal the body and claim that Jesus rose from the dead;

They requested that Pontius Pilate tighten security at the tomb “lest the last deception would be worse than the first;” and

Pilate replied “[y]ou have a guard; go your way, make it as secure



as you know how.” So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard” (Matt. 27: 62-66).

It would make no sense for the guards to confess that they fell asleep:

Under Roman law, the penalty for this crime was death! (See also Acts 12:19, 16:27).

How did the guards know who stole the body?

If they had fallen asleep, how would they know who stole the body? Would such testimony be accepted in a court of law?

Where would the unarmed disciples get the courage and power to invade the lines of armed guards and remove the body, when just 3 days earlier, those scared few had deserted their Master when He was arrested?

How was the huge stone that covered the tomb have rolled without awakening any of the “sleeping” guards, when it had been sealed.

The linen cloths wrapped around Christ’s body were left lying there, and the handkerchief that was wrapped around His head was folded by itself (John 20:6,7). Would the disciples unwrap the body and steal it naked? Or would they leisurely spend time unwrapping the body and then folding handkerchiefs with guards posted outside?

Would the character of the disciples allow them to steal, lie, mislead and deceive? The disciples were the epitome of honesty, truthfulness, and holiness. Recall how, when Ananias and his wife Sapphira were confronted by St. Peter for lying to God, they fell dead on the spot (Acts 5:1-10).

How would the disciples benefit from stealing a corpse and claiming that the dead person, i.e., Jesus Christ, arose, when that would bring them not riches or high office, but rather imprisonment, torture and possible execution?

Why were the disciples not put on trial for allegedly stealing the body? To the contrary, they filled the whole world with the news about Christ's resurrection in some *fifteen* languages, preaching with power, courage and joy while performing miracles. They added scores of new believers to the faith, boldly accusing the Jews of killing the Master of Life, who rose victorious over death. All of this took place under the eyes and ears of the Jews and Romans, who did not arrest and/or try the alleged thieves. Rather, the disciples were ordered not to preach about Christ's resurrection then released.

Where is the “*Corpus Delicti*” or body of the crime? Why did the Jews not search for and produce the alleged stolen body to defend themselves? If the body really had been stolen, producing it would have proven that the disciples were indeed lying, and the Jews could have once-and-for-all put an end to this new sect, i.e., Christianity. Jerusalem is a small city, it is almost certain that the Jews and Romans searched every inch of it, but failed to find the alleged stolen body.

If the guards had really been so criminally incompetent and disloyal in such a crucial assignment, why would the chief priests appeal to the Governor to pardon them, rather than call for their severe punishment? The chief priests' defense of their guards reveals that they were conspirators in fabricating the false claim regarding the theft of the body.

It is evident that Christ's resurrection is a fact, proven beyond doubt as we have seen above and will continue to see. “He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days” (Acts 1:3).

Chapter Two

THE CLAIM THAT THE DISCIPLES LIED AND DECEIVED THE WHOLE WORLD

Some enemies of Christianity attempted to attack the doctrine of the resurrection by claiming that the disciples lied to the whole world and had invented the story of the resurrection out of respect and adoration for their hero. However, only an insignificant minority of atheists holds that view today, and a rational, informed person has no alternative but to reject it.

Witnesses to the Resurrection

1. Over 600 Eyewitnesses with First-Hand Knowledge:

Courts normally accept the testimony of two or three witnesses, whether under the ancient laws (such as the Roman or the Pharaonic laws), or under Jewish and Islamic Shariia (Islamic Law). This remains the case in civil and criminal proceedings dealing with modern Civil or Common Law, including the laws of evidence in such countries as France, England, USA, Egypt and others.

In the case for Christ's resurrection, however, we have no fewer than 600 eyewitnesses. This is perhaps the largest number of eyewitnesses ever present for any case in history.

We have:

The twelve (12) disciples (John 20:19-20; 1 Cor. 15:5);

The seventy (70) apostles (Luke 10:1);

The women (6) (the Virgin Mary, her sister Mary the wife of Clopas, Mary Magdalene, Mary and Martha the sisters of Lazarus, Joanna (Luke 24:1));

The one hundred and twenty (120) who were gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem after the ascension (Acts 1:15); and

The five hundred (500) brethren, most of whom were still alive when the First Epistle to the Corinthians was written (1Cor. 15:6).

If we add all these numbers, we get a total of 708 eyewitnesses: $12+70+6+120+500=708$. Even if we assume that the 120 mentioned in Acts 1:15 included the disciples and apostles, we get at least 600 witnesses, which is more than enough to convince any rational mind and good conscience, especially in view of the two points which follow.

The Character of the Witnesses:

Courts consider not only the number of witnesses, but also the character of each witness, i.e. whether he/she has previously been convicted for any crime bearing on truthfulness, e.g., fraud, perjury, or any other crime that would provide a reason to doubt his/her truthfulness. The witnesses in this case are holy men (on the level of prophets or even greater). Not only did they preach the greatest virtues and highest ethics in the history of mankind, but they also demonstrated model behavior that measured up to those teachings.

Their mission was supported by the power from God that enabled them to perform miracles, including healing the sick, exorcizing demons, and even raising the dead. Accordingly, how can any sane person accuse them of lying and deceiving the world?



The Interests of the Witnesses:

Did these witnesses have any reason or interest in lying? Did they collect huge fortunes or rise to great standing? Quite the contrary, they lived poor, were persecuted, and exposed to the worst torture, such as imprisonment, scourging, death by crucifixion, beheading, and burning to death. All of this came as a result of publicly proclaiming Christ's resurrection, and at no time did any one of

them recant his testimony, even unto death. This is not how false witnesses behave; rather this is solid proof that they had nothing to gain, i.e., they were *disinterested* witnesses.

The Empty Tomb Rebutts the Charge of Lying:

Even if we were to assume for the sake of argument that the disciples falsely claimed that Christ rose, how could we explain the empty tomb? It has been proven with certainty that the tomb in which Christ had been buried became empty as of the dawn of the third day. If the Jews and Romans did not verify that, they would have produced the body and put it on display for all to see, unequivocally proving that the disciples had lied.

Accordingly, they had no alternative; they had to confirm that the tomb was empty. The only explanation they could come up with was the absurd idea that the disciples had stolen the body. As we have seen, though, that explanation does not make sense. This leaves the empty tomb as irrefutable evidence of Christ's resurrection.

The Written Evidence:

There are six people who provided written testimony of Christ's resurrection, namely: Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter and Paul. In addition to these six, there are their disciples, Saints Ignatius, Polycarp, Justine and Irenaeus, who also wrote about the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Most of these men were eyewitnesses, and the rest are among the Fathers of the first and second centuries, A.D. Historians agree that three of the gospels were written before the destruction of Jerusalem or pre- 70 A.D., and that the authors had been preaching the news long before setting it on paper.

Each of those testimonies corresponds closely with all the others. Further, if the resurrection were a fable invented by a human mind, how is it that there is no account of the conspiracy to fabricate the lie in those numerous testimonies? And why had there been no mention of even a single appearance by the risen Christ to His enemies (to make the story more convincing or to add drama to the scenario)?



Furthermore, why is it written that He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, and not to His mother? And why would the Bible assert that He appeared first to women, whose testimony was of no value in that culture, to the extent that it was inadmissible in a court of law or given great weight generally? All the foregoing are indications that the story was not fabricated; rather, all these points suggest that the story was truthfully documented!

The Prophecies and Symbols of the Old Testament contradicts the claim that the disciples lied. To the contrary, these corroborate what the disciples proclaimed hundreds of years later.

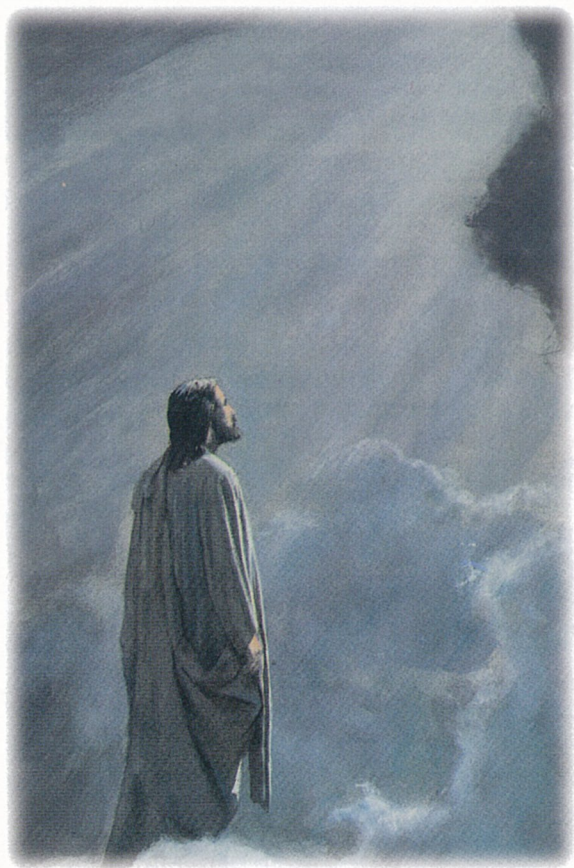
Christ's pre-crucifixion predictions about His resurrection confirm the disciples' testimony.

The method in which the disciples witnessed to the truth, as supported by their miracles, confirms their truthfulness. The fact that they were willing to give their lives, as were more than one million believers in the first 3 centuries, rather than renounce their faith, is proof that there was not a grain of doubt in their minds about the resurrection to eternal life.

The amazing, rapid spread of Christianity without wars or coercion supports the truthfulness of the apostles. This is especially true when one considers that Christianity spread rapidly despite its difficult teachings and dogmas, particularly the dogmas of the *Trinity*, the *Divinity of Christ*, the *Incarnation* and *Redemption* (which are based on His crucifixion and resurrection).

The real-life experience of millions of believers with the power of the living Christ's salvation, the witness of so many of Christ's liberation from the bondage of sin in their lives, His ability to answer prayers, and the life of victory, joy, peace and hope that so many people have experienced over the centuries. These are all the best possible proof that Christ has indeed risen and is living. Additionally, this confirms the validity of the dogma of the resurrection and of the testimony of those who preached it.


Chapter Three



THE DISCIPLES AND FANTASY

Some of those who deny the resurrection maintain that the disciples were neither liars nor deceivers. Rather, they claim that the disciples were deceived. They contend that the disciples' devotion, emotions, immense love, and great hopes for their teacher caused them to imagine that He rose from the dead!

These people theorize that the disciples may have seen the risen Christ in their dreams and hallucinations, and confused that with reality. They cite modern psychology that discusses psychological disorders, including hallucinations, as support for their theory.



In rebuttal, consider the following:

First: Psychology, and the studies of dreams, fantasies, and hallucinations are governed by certain laws that are inapplicable to this case:

Psychology asserts that fantasies are very personal, differing from one individual to the next. This is because fantasies stem from a person's subconscious and from the memories, thoughts, and actions contained therein. Undoubtedly, the nearly 600 persons who proclaimed witnessing Christ's resurrection do not fit the scientific profile that this theory attempts to explain.

Psychology labels the hallucinatory condition as schizophrenia, a well-known mental disorder. Is it possible that all those witnesses were suffering from that mental disorder, or is it more likely that whoever makes such a claim is?!!

Only a certain type of person is prone to hallucinations. A nervous, impressionable person may be susceptible to this condition, while a calm, quiet person may not be. Recall doubting Thomas? He had refused to believe unless he saw and felt with his fingers the holes caused by the nails and by the spear. Yet, he became, together with all the disciples, a witness to the risen Christ. The disciples were healthy, truthful, wise, holy miracle-workers; they were the type of men that were not given to hallucinations.

Skeptics contend, "people usually imagine what they have been expecting."

A mother waiting for her son to come back from the war may imagine his return, but *the disciples never expected*

Christ to rise. They never understood His predictions, and as a result, were totally devastated and despondent after His crucifixion. This explains their initial doubts and disbelief. These doubts were only dismissed when the Lord Jesus appeared to them repeatedly, answered all their questions, convinced them that indeed He arose, and turned their grief into joy, their weakness into strength, and their fear and despair into courage and hope.

Hallucinations occur only at certain times (like evenings), and only in certain settings (like dark rooms or deserted ruins).

Jesus' appearances, on the other hand, occurred at many different times of the day and in very different places. Also, those appearances were not silent, nor were they identical or even similar. Rather, He sat among them, walked with them, ate with them, debated with them, asked and answered their questions, and explained the scriptures and the prophesies concerning His incarnation, redemption, crucifixion, resurrection, nearing ascension and the following procession of His Holy Spirit. "To whom [the disciples] He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).

According to psychologists, most hallucinatory diseases are hereditary — or at least heredity plays a significant role in them. Most hallucinatory diseases are also said to develop gradually. These diseases are difficult to cure, and require lengthy treatment.

This implies that recovery from a hallucinatory disease would also be gradual. Is it rational to say that all those witnesses had inherited the same type of disease, that they were all cured simultaneously and specifically after forty days?

Logic dictates otherwise, primarily because not a single one of the numerous eyewitnesses claimed that he had seen the Lord Jesus or met Him after the fortieth day.

It is ludicrous to accuse hundreds of witnesses of being mentally ill.

Mental illnesses have known symptoms. Otherwise, it would be very easy to impeach the credibility of the most credible and competent witnesses by simply labeling them “mentally ill.”

Second, the empty tomb disproves this claim of hallucination. It is certain that the tomb was empty on the third day; that in and of itself refutes this argument and confirms the glorious resurrection.

Third, the disciples themselves could differentiate well between spiritual visions and actual sight.

The disciples wrote about each of these two phenomena, and drew a clear distinction between them. Examples of visions are recorded in Acts 10:10-11: “he [Peter] fell into a trance and saw heaven opened...;” in Acts 9:10: “And to him [Ananias] the Lord said in a vision, ‘Ananias...,’” and in Acts 22:17 “When I [Paul] ...was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance and saw Him saying to me...”

However, when they talked about Christ actually appearing to them, they stated unequivocally that they had seen, touched and interacted with Him. Examples of this are: 1 John 1:1 “[t]hat ...which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life...” and in Acts 10:41: “[t]o us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead,” and in Luke 24 (wherein St. Luke recorded the appearances of Christ and His answers to their initial reaction – that they must have been seeing a spirit).

From the outset, it is clear that any attempt to cast doubts upon the mental capacity of the witnesses is nothing but another attempt by Satan to mislead and confuse. Clearly, Satan wants to confuse our faith in all divine matters.

Chapter Four



THE DISCIPLES AND SUMMONING THE SPIRITS

Proponents of yet another theory claim that the disciples were not fantasizing, but that they actually saw a *spirit*. However, reality dictates otherwise:

First, Christ Himself responded to this: “But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, ‘why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have ’” (Luke 24:37-39).

Second, Christ demonstrated that He was

✓ **human**, not a spirit, when “He asked ‘Have you any food here?’ So they gave Him a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate it in their presence” (Luke 24:41-43).

Third, summoning a spirit pre-supposes a patron that seeks that spirit, however, seeing the risen Christ was a complete surprise to the disciples.

Fourth, summoning the spirit requires a “medium,” and the availability of a certain location wherein the spirit could come forth to speak to those seeking it. But the risen Christ showed Himself directly to hundreds without a medium. Sometimes

He appeared to individuals, and at other times to groups. On a number of occasions He appeared inside homes, and in various other places such as, at the seashore, on the road, and in the mountains.

Fifth, how does this theory explain the empty tomb? It cannot, for summoning the spirit of a dead person does not empty that person’s tomb! Additionally, all the other proofs of the resurrection demonstrate how preposterous this theory is!

Chapter Five

“JESUS DID NOT REALLY DIE, BUT MERELY FAINTED!”

Proponents of this absurd theory claim that Christ did not die, but rather that He simply fainted due to the excruciating pain of the crucifixion and the heavy blood loss, and as a result they claim that His followers were thus led to think that He died. Supporters of this theory claim that, after being buried alive for three days, Jesus came-to, left the tomb, and appeared to His disciples, who thought that He rose from the dead!

While those who support this theory recognize the fact that the tomb was empty and that the disciples had actually seen the living Christ in person after His burial, their ridiculous claim that He never really died falls flat on its face due to the following considerations:

First, The Roman soldiers who carried out the crucifixion ascertained the death of Christ:

The scourging, the nails driven through His hands and feet, the crown of thorns, the piercing of His side below the chest with a spear, the blood loss, and the terrible thirst were all enough to cause death: “when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, ‘truly this Man was the Son of God’” (Mark 15:39). Also, “Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph” (Mark 15:44,45).

Second, the Jews established that He was dead:

The soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves to accelerate their deaths so that their bodies would not remain on their respective crosses on the Sabbath, “but when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs” (John 19:33).

Third, those who buried Him made certain that He died:

Those who took the body down from the cross to bury it, joined by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, bound Him in strips of linen with myrrh and aloes. The Mary's also brought spices and fragrant oils to the tomb after the Sabbath to complete the rituals of burial on a body that was certainly lifeless.

Fourth, is it plausible that a person who had thus been tortured, crucified and buried for three days without food or water would remain alive?

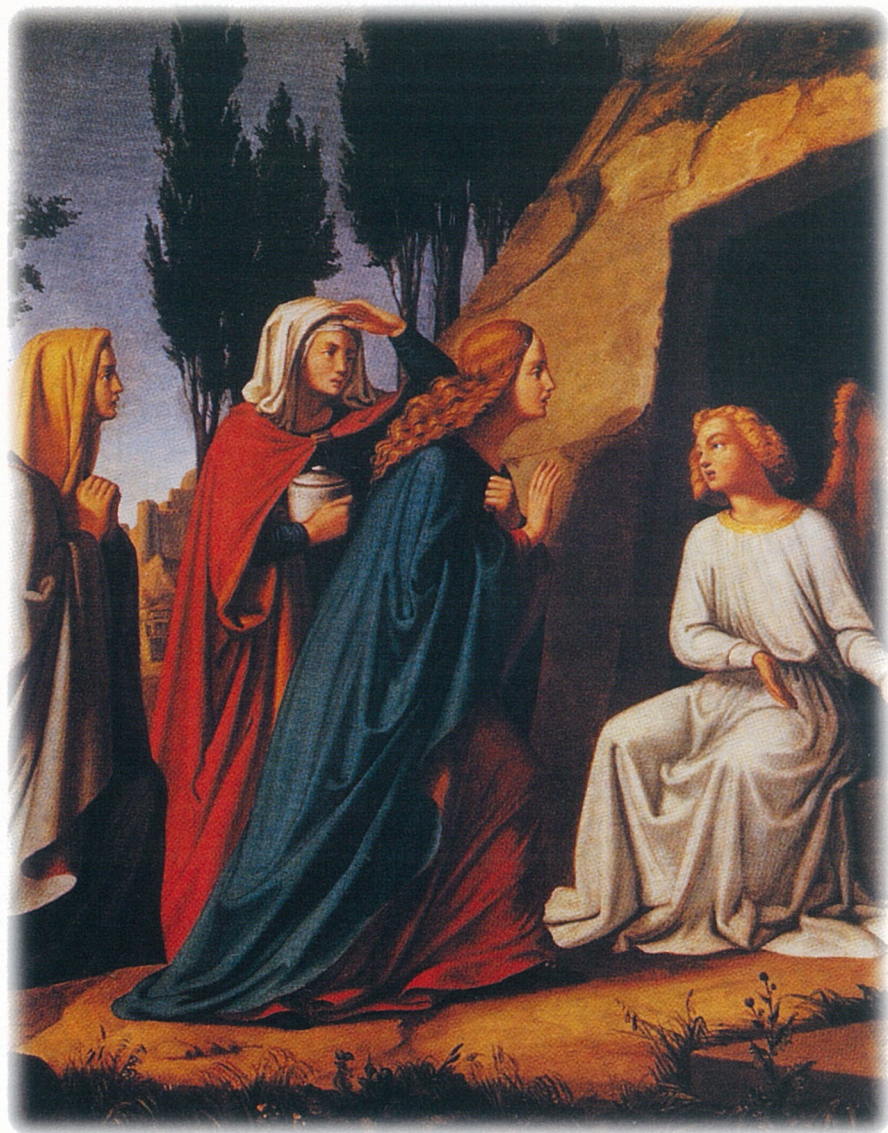
Logic dictates that such a person would have died. Furthermore, would a person who had merely “fainted” be able, after three days of burial, to unwrap the cloth, move the heavy stone, overcome the guards, and travel on His feet (with the large nail wounds from Jerusalem to Emmaus and back – approximately 32 miles)?

Fifth, if this theory were true, then Christ would be an ingenious deceiver, since He predicted His certain death and rising long before He was crucified.

I cannot imagine a sane person accusing Christ of deception, but for the sake of argument, I will dignify such an absurd accusation with a response: If Christ was deceptive, how was it possible for Him to do super-natural things (such as going through closed doors and ascending to heaven) if He had not really died and risen in the first place? And if He did not ascend to heaven, then where did He go, and how do we explain His sudden disappearance from this planet?

Sixth, faith in the truthfulness of the Divine inspiration of the prophets, and faith in the subsequent sayings of Christ Himself, is supported by miracles and leads to understanding that the goal of Christ's incarnation was redemption, death on the cross to save humanity, and resurrection to justify it. Thus, He is the Lord of resurrection who has conquered death, and who has raised the dead. In the last day all the dead will come forth upon hearing His voice (John 5:25, 28). The Church recites this faith during every service believing that, it was Christ who actually died, lived, and will come again to judge the living and the dead (*The Nicaen Creed*).

Chapter Six



MISTAKING THE TOMB

When all the previously made claims failed to cast doubt on Christ's resurrection, some claimed as a last resort that the disciples

simply mistook the tomb. This fallacy suggests that the disciples went to an empty tomb that was not Christ's, and as a result they thought that Christ had risen from the dead, and started preaching what they mistakenly believed!

While such a claim is so naïve that it does not deserve a response, we will respond to it in the interest of completeness:

The Bible and history tell us that the tomb was owned by Joseph the Arimathean, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, a rich, honorable and prominent man who had privileges with the Roman ruler, Pontius Pilate, and that he "went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in clean linen strips, and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb" (Matt. 27:58-61; Mk.15: 43-47; Lk. 23: 50-55). Knowing this:

Is it rational to claim that Joseph did not recognize his own new tomb, which he himself had hewn out of the rock?

Is it reasonable to suggest that the Mary's did not recognize the tomb where they had witnessed the burial, hours before (the burial took place on Friday afternoon and the resurrection happened at dawn on Sunday)?

According to the Bible, the tomb was secured, the stone covering the entrance sealed, and the guards were set when Pontius Pilate assented to the Jewish chief priests' and Pharisees' request of the for extra security (Matt. 27:62-66). Is it possible for *all* those involved to mistake that particular tomb?

The gospel of St. John sheds more light by providing additional details, including the fact that Nicodemus had joined Joseph the Arimathean in the preparation of Christ's body for burial. His gospel also adds that the tomb was a new one in the garden where Christ was crucified (John 19: 39-42). Does it make sense that all the people involved would mistake such a distinctive tomb for another tomb?

Even if we were to assume for the sake of argument that all those eyewitnesses mistook the real tomb for an empty one, would that make the real tomb empty? Clearly not! And if not, then why did the Romans and Jews (especially the Sadducees who do not believe in life after death) not produce the body of Christ and exhibit it to the whole world in order to prove that He did not rise, and that they were innocent of killing the Messiah, the Son of God?

How can one imagine that such a monumental case—one which was witnessed by more than 2 million Jews on Passover, which engaged the public, the authorities, the religious rank and file, and the Romans and the Jews, and which was accompanied by a great earthquake, the darkening of the sun at noon, and the resurrection of several dead saints and their subsequent apparitions to many people in Jerusalem—would have an unpretentious ending like the mistaking of another tomb for Christ's tomb by the disciples?

The well-known Jewish historian, Josephus, wrote that Pontius Pilate sent a report of the miracles, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ to Emperor Tiberius in Rome; this contradicts the claim of the Jews regarding the day of the resurrection – they claimed that the disciples had stolen the body while the guards slept.

All the aforementioned rebuttals remain valid, e.g., the inability to produce the body, the empty tomb, the testimony of over 600 eyewitness of the risen Christ, the strength of their testimony as supported by miracles, the addition of thousands to the faith daily, etc. Accordingly, this absurd theory falls flat on its face like all the others before it, and cannot stand the tests of reason, history, or the Bible.



Chapter Seven



MANY OTHER PROOFS OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

The case for the resurrection is a sure win, and believers know that its certainty is beyond a shadow of doubt. Indeed, the resurrection is the crucial foundation of Christians' faith and salvation. The aforementioned points were aimed at rebutting anti-resurrection theories, old and new, so that anyone who is weak in faith will not stumble, but will rather deepen their faith in Christ's resurrection, Divinity and salvation, and will consequently deepen their faith in their own resurrection in Him.

In this section, I will present other positive proofs from the scriptures, history and the personal experience of believers:

The earliest Christian Greeting:

In Greek... “ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕCΤΗ...ΑΛΗΘΟΣ ΑΝΕCΤΗ (KRICTOS ANECTI... ALITHOS ANECTI),” meaning “Christ is Risen ... He is Risen Indeed.” This joyful greeting began on the day of the resurrection itself, which later became known as “EASTER.” Easter is the occasion that we Christians celebrate because it marks the completion of our salvation, the assurance of our resurrection, Christ's victory over Satan, sin and death, and the opening of the gates of heaven for eternal life of the believers.

Changing the Jewish Sabbath to the Christian Sunday after thousands of years, because of the resurrection:

Christ's resurrection at dawn on Sunday began a new era. Thus, the church, from its inception, met for prayer, reading

the scriptures, and breaking bread on the first day of the week, i.e., Sunday, as that was the day of Christ's resurrection and victory (Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10). All Christian churches continue to celebrate that day weekly to commemorate the resurrection.

Christian evangelism can be summed up in the resurrection:

The book of Acts summarizes evangelism in the earliest days of Christianity in two words, namely Jesus and His Resurrection (*see* Acts 17:18).

The disciples' amazing courage in preaching the resurrection:

The dramatic change in the disciples' personalities, behavior, life and ministry cannot be explained except by Christ's rising. Compare St. Peter's personality and actions when he denied Christ in front of a *servant girl*, with his subsequent actions and charismatic personality on Pentecost (less than 2 months later), when he spoke with the courage of a lion, accusing the Jewish nation of murdering the Messiah and witnessing to His resurrection,

Men of Israel...you have taken [Jesus] by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death.... David, being a prophet... foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus, God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses

(Acts 2: 22-32).

He reiterated the same message later, "and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses...to you first, God, having raised up His servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities" (Acts 3: 15-26). When they were

arrested for preaching in the name of the Lord Jesus, this exchange took place:

Again, the high priest asked them ‘Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us.’ But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging up on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5: 28-31) (*See also* Acts 10: 40-41, 4: 33).

Witnessing Christ’s resurrection was a condition of apostleship:

When the disciples wanted to select a new disciple to replace Judas Iscariot the traitor, they stipulated that he had to be an eyewitness of Christ from the beginning of His ministry, when He was baptized by St. John the Baptist, be a witness to His resurrection, until His ascension (Acts 1:22).



Christianity’s first martyr witnessed to the resurrection unto death:

The Bible records that Stephen, during his trial and in the last hour of his life testified,

But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, ‘Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of

God!'. Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 'then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

(Acts7: 55-60).

Prophecies and symbols that predicted Christ's resurrection hundreds and thousands of years in advance:

David in 1000 B.C. stated: "For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption" (Psalm 16:10, Acts 2:26-36). He also prophesized that Christ will be victorious, glorified, raised, and ascend to sit at the right hand of the Father, "The Lord said to my Lord, sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool" (Psalm 110:1; Acts 2: 34; *See also* Psalm 24:7; 47:5; 68:18; 3:5).

Job (approximately 2,000 B.C.) also prophesized about rising from the dead: "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God" (Job 19:25- 26).

Jonah's stay for 3 days inside the belly of the great fish and his emergence alive was a prophecy and a symbol of Christ's rising after 3 days. Christ explained this symbol and applied it to Himself (Jonah1:17; Matt. 12:40. Also review the symbol of Isaac's returning alive in Genesis 22; Proverbs 30:4; Hosea 6:2).

The symbol of the two birds in the law of cleansing a leper: the killed bird symbolizes the crucified Christ, and the living bird that is dipped in the blood of the killed bird

then let loose in the open field symbolizes the risen Christ (Lev. 14).

From all this we conclude that Christ's resurrection had been predestinated in God's foreknowledge from eternity, and that He announced it long before the fact to prepare humans to accept salvation. It conforms to God's nature as the Lord of the resurrection and life, the omnipotent.

St. Paul on the resurrection:

The Apostle St. Paul talked about the resurrection more than any other disciple. Hardly any of his fourteen epistles is void of a reference to it. A few examples will suffice: "[Jesus Christ]... declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom 1:4); "who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification" (Rom 4:25),

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection

(Rom6:4-5), "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Rom. 8:11). St. Paul dedicated the entire fifteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians to Christ's rising and ours. *See also* Philippians 3:10; Colossians 3:1; Ephesians 1:20, 2:6; Acts 17: 18; 2 Timothy 2:8, Hebrews 13:20-21.

Testimony of the Other Apostles':

Earlier, we noted St. Peter's numerous references to the resurrection in the book of Acts. St. Peter also referenced the Resurrection in his epistles (*see* 1 Pet. 1:3, 4,21). The four evangelists also testified to Christ's rising at the end of



their gospels. John also confirmed this in Revelation 1:18, when Christ appeared to him saying, “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.” And again in Revelation 5:6, “And behold, ... stood a Lamb as though it had been slain,” where the standing slain lamb denotes that Christ’s resurrection made His atoning death a continuous recompense for the sins of all humanity for all ages.

Jesus’ prior predictions and their subsequent fulfillments:

“Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead” (Matt. 17:9).

“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again” (Matt. 20:18).

“I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25).

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up...But He was speaking of the temple of His body” (John 2:19-21).

After He rose, He told the apostles “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the 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 to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:46-48).

“For the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth” (John 5:28).



Conclusion

From the evidence listed above, it is clear that the doctrine of the resurrection is not new, and that Christ's disciples were not the first to proclaim it. Rather, the Holy Spirit guided prophets dating back to thousands of years prior to the Lord Jesus' life on earth to prophecy about His death and resurrection. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself talked about the resurrection both before and after it occurred. Hundreds of godly witnesses testified about it. Millions of people all over the world and over thousands of years have believed in it, experiencing first hand its power and effectiveness in their lives. It is a necessary condition of salvation, for the Bible states "[t]hat if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). Accordingly, the Resurrection entered the Christian Creed, and the church's sacraments such as Baptism and Holy Communion. The case for the resurrection is indeed a shut case, one that is indisputable; the case for the resurrection is a gigantic fortress upon which the arrows of skeptics and cynics shatter.

Yes, Christ is a living God, and the death that He underwent voluntarily as an incarnate God in order to redeem humanity He rose from by His power and will. Because He is holy and without sin, death could not take hold Him. Rather He rose victorious, destroying the pangs of death. He is alive, and He intercedes for believers at all times, completing their salvation. This is why He said "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20).

Additional Information

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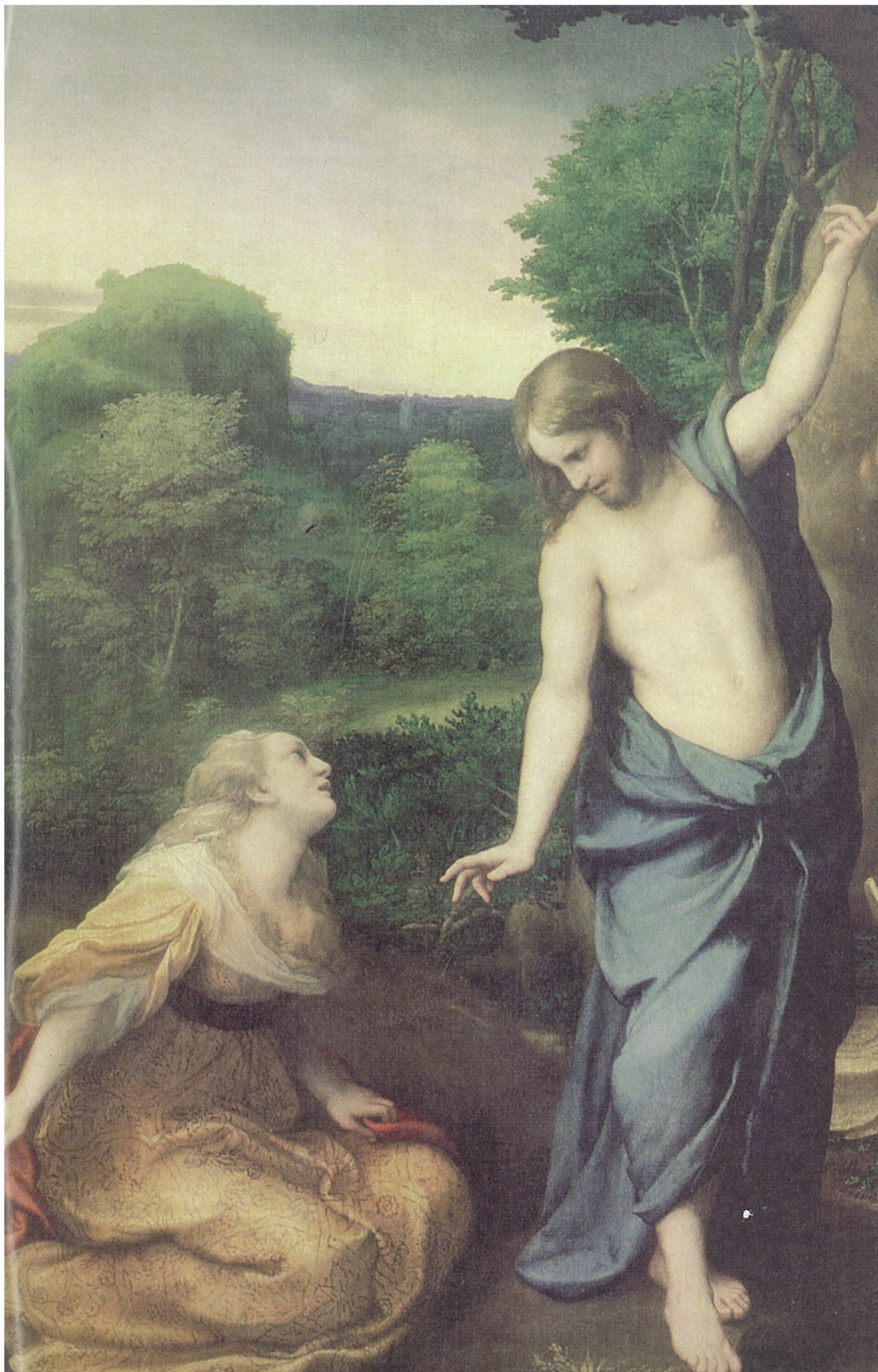


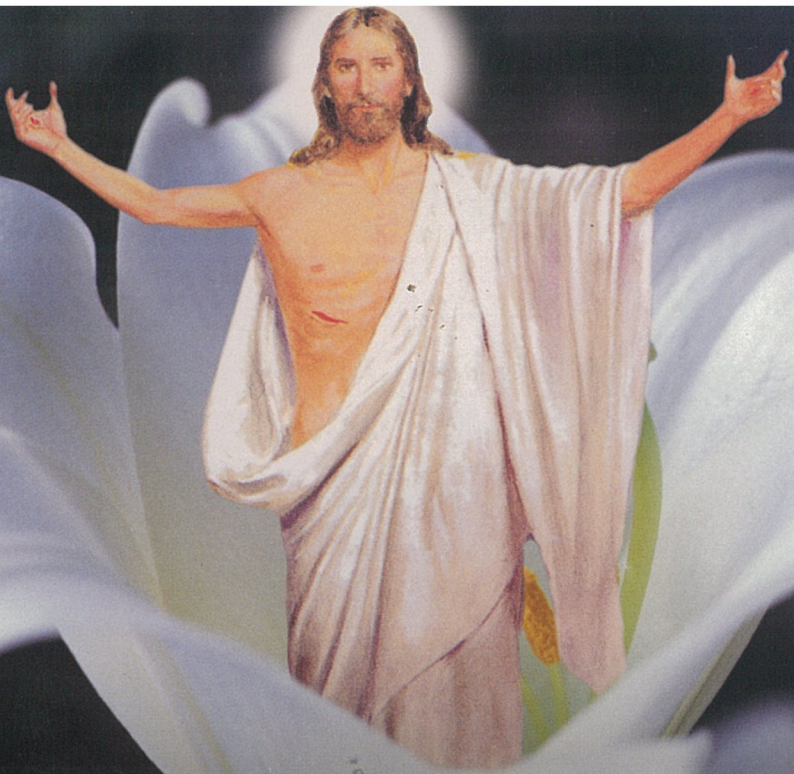
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The Case of the Resurrection by Fr. Augustinos R. Hanna, of St. John Coptic Orthodox Church. As an attorney for over 25 years prior to his ordination to the priesthood, Fr. Augustinos points out the fallacies and weaknesses behind all the arguments made by the Jewish Leaders, at the time, who claimed that the Lord's body was stolen and by all those who throughout time challenged the Resurrection as a myth or fairytale made up by the followers of the Lord Jesus. the book deals with the following arguments:

1. The followers of Christ were deceivers;
2. The followers of Christ were themselves deceived;
3. The resurrection was nothing other than the calling of a spirit from the dead;
4. The resurrection was nothing more than a near-death experience;
5. The followers of Christ were mistaken as to the correct tomb;
6. Evidence for the Resurrection;
 - a. Witnesses of the Resurrection;
 - b. Credibility of the Witnesses;
 - c. Reliability of the Witnesses;
 - d. Prophetic Evidence;
 - e. And much more.

