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Stephen Rogers
Providence College

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Stephen Rogers

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Father Nicanor Austriaco, OP

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Investigating the Reliability of Eyewitness Testimony in the Case of the Resurrection

The resurrection is the most important moment in the history of Christianity. As St. Paul wrote, “If Christ be not risen from the dead, our faith is in vain” (*Revised Standard Version*, 1 Cor 15:17). Though its theological implications are enormous, it is important to remember that the resurrection is also alleged to be a historical event. For this reason, it is valuable to examine the evidence that we are left with regarding this vital moment. While there is good reason to believe that the resurrection has occurred, there are also reasonable arguments which deny the occurrence of the resurrection. Some of the most thought-provoking theories denying the resurrection appeal not to the transmission of the Gospel texts or their content, but to the lack of reliability of eyewitness accounts. Any theory denying the resurrection must also provide a narrative explaining what might have happened if the disciples did not actually see Jesus, as they claimed to.

The resurrection is held to be the central moment in all of salvation history; Jesus, after being dead for three days, rises from the dead, redeeming mankind from its sins and defeating death itself. However, the resurrection cannot be relegated to the realm of theology. The

resurrection either occurred at some point in history, or did not. If the Jesus did rise from the dead, the truthfulness of the entire Christian religion is assured. For this reason, I believe it is valuable to reflect upon the evidence we have for this event. Because it is reported to be a historical event, the resurrection might be subject to the same kinds of investigation that other historical moments are. To be sure, the resurrection is incredibly important to many people, and denied vehemently by others, so it is a topic that is difficult to examine impartially. A worldview which is staunchly Christian rests on belief in an all-powerful God who can act through miracles, making it easy for many Christians to view the resurrection as a plausible occurrence. In the same way, a strict materialist has already constructed a worldview devoid of the supernatural, so the resurrection is viewed as impossible from the start. I will attempt to examine the question of the validity of the resurrection as a historical event as impartially as possible, using the same criteria that can be applied to discussions on any other purportedly historical event: the examination of evidence, the reasonability of an event occurring given what is commonly known about how the world operates, and the ability of any historical claim to explain reality as it can be found today. The well-known traditional Christian narrative presented in the Gospels will be examined using these criteria, as will a potential alternative narrative, in which the resurrection did not actually occur.

Before analyzing the claims of either side, it might be beneficial to begin by finding a starting point on which both sides can agree. To start with, I will make the assumption that the historical figure of Jesus did actually exist at some point. Ancient written accounts exist from non-Christian scholars regarding Jesus, including the Roman historian Tacitus. Tacitus wrote about the blame placed on the Christians by Nero for the Great Fire of Rome, making reference to their reverence for “Christus”, who was put to death during the reign of Tiberius, under

Pontius Pilate (15.44). The Jewish historian Josephus also makes mention of Jesus, and the version of his work which survives today even claims that Jesus rose from the dead (18.3.3). However, there is considerable suspicion that the passage may have been edited by the time it was in the form of the Medieval manuscript which is our source for his work (Roberts 133). Putting the resurrection account aside, these and other historians agree that a man fitting Jesus' description did in fact live and die in Judea at the time claimed by the Gospels. While it may seem obvious, it might also be beneficial to explicitly state that Christianity remains a successful religion to this day, despite the harsh conditions in which it began. Any account of the resurrection worthy of being taken seriously must be able to explain the fact that Christianity managed to thrive against significant persecution, and that the Gospel accounts do in fact exist.

Common Criticisms of the Historicity and Content of the Gospels

Accounts of the resurrection are found in several books of the New Testament, including the Gospels. It has been posited by many scholars that the Gospels were not necessarily intended to be strictly historical documents. Mark D. Roberts writes that "though there is plenty of history in Scripture, the biblical writers weren't telling merely a human story. Rather, they focused primarily on the actions of God in history, especially on the story of God's salvation of the world" (25-26). While this may be true, the resurrection is one event which must have historical accuracy if Christianity is to be considered valid. In analyzing the resurrection accounts of the New Testament, I will begin with the history of their transmission. Most biblical scholars believe that the Gospels were first written down starting around 65 AD with the Gospel of Mark (McCormick 45), at least 30 years after the death of Jesus. During the time in between the death of Jesus and the writing down of the Gospels, the stories would have been handed down orally,

or retold by eyewitnesses (44). However, the oldest *existing* manuscript we have access to is a small fragment of the Gospel of John, known as P⁵², which is dated to be from approximately 125 AD (45). This gap has raised the suspicions of many. But as Marks points out, this gap between the original writing and the age of the oldest existing manuscript is actually quite small compared to that of other writings typically taken to be historical, including those of Tacitus and Josephus, which have gaps of at least 800 years between the estimated dates of their inception and the oldest existing manuscript (29). The time gap between the origins of the Gospels and the oldest manuscripts we have access to does not seem to me to be strong evidence denying the validity of the resurrection narratives.

Many have raised concerns over how many people the Gospel stories might have passed through by the time they were formally recorded. Some modern accounts hold that the stories must have passed from the alleged witnesses, to others who repeated the story, to the Gospel authors (McCormick 43). Richard Bauckham believes that this is not the case. He holds that the Gospels are eyewitness accounts, “written within living memory of the events they recount” (7). This grants the Gospels more legitimacy, since it is possible that the eyewitnesses could have either written the Gospels themselves, or at least recounted them directly to the author. Bauckham argues that “the period between the ‘historical’ Jesus and the Gospels was actually spanned, not by anonymous community transmission, but by the continuing presence and testimony of the eyewitnesses, who remained the authoritative sources of their traditions until their deaths” (8). More than that, Bauckham claims that oral testimony was actually held in higher esteem than written sources in ancient times (10), further undermining the common criticism of the Gospel stories based on their not being written immediately after Jesus’ death. It seems reasonable to me that the Gospels were written at least under the direct supervision of the

eyewitnesses. Even if they were not, I doubt that the resurrection accounts could be dismissed solely off this fact. The story of the resurrection is important enough to survive transmission.

In between the time of the writing of the original Gospel documents and the versions which we have today, the manuscripts would have been copied many times over to preserve them. Some have raised concern that copyists of the Gospels may have made changes to the original manuscripts, either through error or on purpose (McCormick 40-43). This may be true, but it seems doubtful to me that a copyist could covertly add an entire Resurrection account to a Gospel without a significant number of people noticing. The long ending of the Gospel of Mark has been brought into question, but aside from this, I doubt that the overall question of the resurrection's occurrence can be settled by discussing the extent of editing among copyists of the Gospels.

It is now necessary to examine the actual resurrection accounts in the New Testament. The resurrected Jesus appears in Matthew, Luke, John, the long ending of Mark, Acts, and is mentioned by Paul. However, the details of the resurrection accounts differ in each source. In Matthew, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary witness a large earthquake when an angel rolls back the stone sealing Jesus' tomb, and they run to tell the apostles (Mt 28). Mark's long ending features Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome finding an already-opened tomb. They are told by a man in a white robe to notify Peter that Jesus has risen. Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene first, then two disciples, then the apostles as a group (Mk 16). Luke's resurrection account claims that the women mentioned in the other Gospels, plus Joanna and others, find the tomb empty except for two men in dazzling white garb. Peter runs to the tomb but only finds a cloth. Jesus appears to two disciples on their way to Emmaus, but they do not recognize him at first. Jesus then appears to his apostles, and there is an account of him

ascending to heaven (Lk 24). John's story is also slightly different. Mary Magdalene notices the tomb is open and brings back Peter and the beloved apostle, who leave after finding the tomb empty. However, two angels and then Jesus appear to Mary at the tomb. Interestingly, Mary does not recognize Jesus at first, "supposing him to be the gardener" (Jn 20:15). Only John's Gospel includes the encounter with "doubting" Thomas, and has Jesus with the disciples in Galilee (Jn 20-21). The Acts of the Apostles features another ascension account, after Jesus promises the Spirit will come to the apostles (Acts 1:8-9). Finally, Paul gives a different order of appearances in his first letter to the Corinthians. He says that Jesus appeared to Cephas and then the twelve, and includes that he himself has seen the risen Christ (1 Cor 4-8). It is important to note that Paul would have seen Jesus after his ascension.

Investigating the content of each Gospel's resurrection narrative, it is clear that they differ in their details. Regarding these apparent conflicts, McCormick claims that "The sources we have differ on every important detail about the resurrection" (47). These differences include who actually sees the risen Christ, the order in which they see him, and the events which occur at the tomb and afterwards. Many have taken these differences to mean that any passages including the risen Christ in the Gospels cannot be trusted. Michael Martin claims that "the accounts of what happened at the tomb are either inconsistent or can only be made consistent with the aid of implausible interpretations" (81). Martin is also disturbed by the lack of eyewitnesses to the actual resurrection event, and the fact that Paul's testimony is by far the earliest written reference of Jesus being risen from the dead (81). According to Martin, the Christian narrative is difficult to accept because of the gap in actual witness between Jesus' death and his appearances to the disciples. The Christian response must answer these concerns, if it is to be taken seriously in a historical sense.

Interestingly, many Christian thinkers have taken the same characteristics of the Gospel accounts that give pause to Martin and McCormick, and effectively use them as evidence for the validity of the Gospels. These thinkers have made arguments which attempt to establish the Gospels as actual eyewitness accounts. For example, James Riggs emphasizes that the resurrection stories found in the Gospels clearly come from different sources, and have “in no way been harmonized. They are personal reminiscences, whose variations are natural to this kind of testimony” (5). According to Riggs, the fact that the resurrection narratives differ is actually evidence that they are legitimate eyewitness accounts, since no two personal accounts tend to be identical in details. More than that, if these accounts differ, there was probably no attempt made to reconcile them by copyists, evading the fear of purposeful editing mentioned earlier. Patrick Simpson points out that none of the Gospel accounts provide a narrative of the resurrection itself (7). This makes sense for an eyewitness testimony, since none of the evangelists could have been present inside a sealed tomb. Simpson continues by saying that the evangelists “resisted the temptation to compose an imaginative description of what they knew must have happened” (7), adding more weight to the claim that the stories of the resurrection are legitimate and not intentionally altered from their original form. What is important, according to Riggs, is that all of the sources of resurrection stories make mention to an empty tomb and a risen Lord (6), and these two facts are enough to establish a reliable story of Jesus rising from the dead. The Gospel accounts of the resurrection clearly appear to have some elements of eyewitness account.

Even if the stories of Jesus rising from the dead do appear to be either direct eyewitness accounts, or at least to be based off eyewitness accounts, it is necessary to investigate the reliability of eyewitness testimony itself. Matthew S. McCormick, in his *Atheism and the Case Against Christ*, attempts to demonstrate how weak eyewitness testimony can be, especially in the

case of the disciples. According to the various stories of the New Testament, Jesus appeared to several of his disciples. Although the details differ on who exactly saw him and what Jesus did after he rose from the dead, any reports of the resurrection had to come originally from someone who claimed to personally see Jesus. Some have said that the supposed eyewitnesses were lying. Another theory is that the “Christian affirmation of the resurrection is not a statement of *fact*, but an expressive symbol” (Simpson p 228). However, neither of these theories is able to fully explain the establishment of the Christian Church in the face of persecution or the willingness of so many people to die as martyrs. It is doubtful that so many people would die for something they knew to be a symbol or a fabrication. McCormick argues that the eyewitnesses were not swindlers or attempting to establish a tradition based on symbolism; they really did think that they saw *something*, whether they were mistaken or not.

Relevant Psychological Research on Memory

Elizabeth Loftus has done a significant amount of research on memory, and her work suggests that eyewitness testimony is not as trustworthy as society has always taken it to be. Loftus has developed a controlled procedure for implanting entirely false memories in the minds of her subjects, using the power of suggestion. For example, in one experiment, she showed subjects videos of four real crime scenes. A week later, she had the subjects answer a questionnaire about the events, plus a drug bust, which was not included in the set of video clips. The subjects were able to recall details about all of the events they actually witnessed, and 64 percent of the subjects reported details about the drug bust, which did not occur. Of the details reported on the false event, 76 percent were from another event, and 24 percent was fully invented (Loftus, “Illusions of Memory” 61-62). Her group has also been able to implant entirely

false childhood memories, including an episode of being lost in a shopping mall as a child, with a 25 percent success rate (63-64). It is clear from these results and others that human memory is open to subconscious retroactive editing, without any intent of doing so by the holder of the memory. Loftus' work suggests that human memory is not always an accurate portrayal of events witnessed in the past. More than that, it is possible for memories of significant events to be entirely fabricated in the right situations. It seems to me unlikely that the entire memory of the resurrection was false, but perhaps it is possible that a memory of a somewhat insignificant event could have had details unintentionally added to it, becoming the resurrection accounts we have today.

In a review on a number of psychological experiments, Garry and Polaschek report on a phenomenon called "imagination inflation". What they are referring to is a human tendency to become more confident that an event actually occurred the more an event is re-imagined. This is the case even for events which did not actually occur: "research has consistently shown that briefly imagining the sketchiest details of a counterfactual event is enough to produce imagination inflation" (7). The results of these studies, along with those of Loftus' studies, suggest that human memory is far more plastic than it appears to be. More than that, even memories which are believed to be true are subject to alteration by outside suggestion, and can be changed simply by re-imagining them. The details of memories can be altered significantly, without the holder of the memory noticing, and while making the memory holder more confident that it is based on truth.

The lack of reliability of human memory is not limited to controlled laboratory scenarios. There are many documented real world examples of human memory being fully mistaken, despite the sincere beliefs of the holders of the memory. Steven E Clark and Elizabeth F Loftus,

in a review in *Psychological Inquiry*, synthesize the results of several studies involving common cases of false memories in the general population. These include cases of people who think that they have been abducted by space aliens. In these cases, the memory of abduction is often linked to sleep or long drives, and so might be result of “hypnogogic and hypnopompic hallucinations, nightmares, and missing time” (141). The first two terms relate to hallucinations which occur either when a person is falling asleep or just waking up, and are relatively common phenomena. Even with the possibility for hallucinations in such situations, it seems odd that so many people would believe these to be actual experiences. Importantly, research has suggested that it is especially easy to plant the seed of alien abduction memories using hypnosis (142), implying that even a memory as intricate and unusual as a space alien abduction can be implanted and strengthened by the power of suggestion. Perhaps memories of an event as extraordinary as the resurrection might also be open to alteration or even creation by the power of suggestion, or be the result of some kind of hallucination. Abduction memories are also “held with high confidence” (142). Clark and Loftus report that “the relation between confidence and accuracy in memory is in fact not strong and sometimes negative” (142). These findings may have deep implications for the resurrection accounts: even if some of the disciples were convinced they had met the risen Christ, so much so that they accepted persecution for their beliefs, their confidence does not make the content of their memories any more likely to be true.

It has also been shown that social factors have a major effect on the formation of memories. Maria S. Zaragoza et al. investigate the issues of forced confabulation and confirmatory feedback on false memory construction in a study published in *Psychological Science*. They report that the literature suggests that interrogation practices have led to many false convictions based on incorrect eyewitness testimony (473). Wanting to investigate further,

the researchers designed a study in which participants were shown a movie, and asked questions about it, some of which were about events that did not occur in the movie. One group of participants was forced to give answers for every question, even the ones not based on the film. Importantly, the researchers provided varying degrees of positive feedback for each answer, giving the impression that certain answers, for the questions that were not based on anything the participants had actually seen, were true. To test the effects of forced confabulation and confirmatory feedback, the researchers called the participants back after a week. The participants were asked which of the questions were based on things they had actually seen, and which were not. They were called back in by the researchers once more after four to six weeks, and asked to freely give a narrative of what they had seen (474). The results were fascinating. “Participants developed false memories for events they had been forced to confabulate, and confirmatory feedback increased this false memory effect. It is also important to note that participants did not answer false-event questions unless forced to” (474-475). These findings also have serious implications for eyewitness accounts of the resurrection. If one of the eyewitnesses thought that there was even a small chance that he had seen the resurrected Christ, it is likely that his fellow disciples would have responded very enthusiastically. Positive feedback strengthens even weak false memories, and the eyewitnesses would have had a great deal of positive feedback from other believers, who would also be desperately hoping for a resurrection. Thus the whole group would become more likely to believe something that might not have actually happened.

I will discuss one final study that might serve as evidence undermining the reliability of the eyewitness accounts of the resurrection. This study, performed in Gothenburg, Sweden, investigated the occurrence of “bereavement hallucinations” among people who had recently lost a spouse. The study found that, out of 14 men and 36 women, “Half of the subjects felt the

presence of the deceased (illusions); about one third reported seeing hearing and talking to the deceased (hallucinations)” (Grimby). While the sample size of this study was relatively small, it carries some major implications. Its results suggest that it is not uncommon for people to think that they see or hear loved ones who have recently died. McCormick cites this study directly. The probability of multiple eyewitnesses having such a hallucination seems to be slim. However, it might be reasonable that one eyewitness could have had a bereavement hallucination of Jesus. The disciples held Jesus in enormous esteem, and spent a great deal of time traveling and speaking with him, and so would have been emotionally devastated after his brutal public execution. Once one of the disciples had a bereavement hallucination, the memory of this experience could be strengthened and expanded upon by the psychological phenomena discussed earlier.

Eyewitness Testimony and Memory of the Resurrection

McCormick builds his case against the eyewitness testimony of the resurrection accounts on knowledge regarding the faultiness and malleability of human memory. McCormick starts off by saying that the reports of the number of people who saw the resurrected Jesus could have been exaggerated; it is only necessary that there was one person who told the author of Mark about the resurrection (49). This person could have been Peter or any other disciple, but it is only absolutely necessary that one person reported the story. There are several resurrection accounts in the Bible, but these could have been adaptations or retellings of the original story. If this were the case, McCormick is concerned that “As the stories got retold and passed on, we would expect certain details to get embellished, omitted, or adjusted” (50). The probability of one eyewitness being mistaken in thinking that he or she had seen Jesus is certainly greater than the probability

that multiple eyewitnesses did so. The fact that the Gospel stories differ on the details of how many people, and who these people were, saw Jesus also leads McCormick to think that these reports could be exaggerated (86).

Returning to the psychological factors discussed earlier, McCormick argues that these phenomena make it possible for this one or few disciples to have a subjective experience which was taken to be a legitimate sighting of the risen Christ. He says that some of the disciples would most likely have had some level of bereavement hallucinations. After that, they would have “talked with each other, encouraged each other, adjusted their stories, and filled in or altered the details just as normal people do when they talk to each other about important events” (p 86). As the psychological research explained earlier suggests, the more a memory is discussed and recalled, the more opportunities there are for it to be unintentionally altered and made more realistic in the mind of the memory-holder (Garry and Polaschek 7). The disciples would almost definitely have encouraged each other after hearing these stories, since all of them would have been happy to hear that their teacher had been resurrected. Their positive feedback might further reinforce these memories (Zaragoza et al.). Importantly, just because these memories are not based entirely on truth would not make them any less compelling for the disciples. The accuracy of a memory does not appear to correlate with the confidence with which the memory is held (Clark and Loftus 142), making it possible for belief in a resurrected Jesus to be a very powerful and sincere one.

McCormick goes beyond these psychological phenomena that are common to all humans, and argues that the disciples would have been especially prone to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead, even if he had not. He claims that people living at the time of Christ knew much less about the way the world functions than we do, and so would be likely to believe that a

miracle had occurred than we would be. “Generally, people living in an agrarian, Iron Age society with very low levels of scientific knowledge, education, and literacy will have a low level of skepticism for what we would identify as supernatural, miraculous, or paranormal claims” (81). McCormick is not claiming that the people of Jesus’ day were gullible. In fact, he says that even the most “discerning and informed” people of the day would not have had the correct explanation available for many important phenomena. These include things as vital to the human experience as what exactly causes disease, pregnancy, or death (81). People living at Jesus’ time had no conception of how the brain worked or its ability to simulate certain experiences, and so would be more likely to believe that something they had hallucinated or imagined was due to a supernatural vision, a ghost, or that it had actually occurred than we would be (84). It would be difficult for us to even imagine what a person in the Iron Age would have thought about the things we see on a daily basis, and assume can be accounted for by naturalistic phenomena. To say that the people of Jesus’ day would have been as skeptical as we are about miracles seems unreasonable, considering how much of their world was totally unexplainable to them in the way that it is to us. McCormick also argues that “enthusiasm, desire, ideological commitments, emotional attachments” (80), and other factors would have pushed the disciples’ threshold for believing in supernatural events even lower, making them unreliable eyewitnesses in the case of the resurrection.

After examining the psychological phenomena common to all humans and the factors which would have made the disciples especially likely to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead, McCormick provides a rough narrative for what might have happened if the eyewitnesses were mistaken in what they had seen. He claims that:

It is easy to imagine how some of the followers could have seen or felt something, and then as they recalled and discussed it, the details of their stories began to converge. Then rumors spread, stories were repeated, memories were embellished, and by the time the stories had been transmitted across thirty years, to the author of Mark, perhaps it appeared to that author that Jesus appeared jointly to all of the disciples (86).

McCormick's narrative hinges on the lower degree of skepticism that he believes the disciples would have possessed compared to people today, and the malleability of human memory discussed earlier. The most important question regarding his narrative is whether or not it has the ability to explain the world as we see it today. Could a hallucination or mistaken sighting of an eyewitness or two explain the creation of the Church and its persistence to this day? If our ultimately unreliable memories exert as powerful of an influence on our beliefs and behavior as recent psychological research suggests, this question might warrant more reflection than it appears to.

Speculating on an Alternative Narrative

It may be possible to formulate a more detailed narrative explaining how a mistaken eyewitness thought he or she saw a resurrected Jesus after he had died. One of the disciples, be it one of the women, Peter, or anyone else, goes to the tomb after Jesus' burial. It was, most likely, empty. It seems unlikely that the early Church would have won any converts if the tomb, which was within walking distance from Jerusalem, was still occupied. In my opinion, if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then the tomb was either empty due to a case of grave robbery, or Jesus was not buried in the tomb he was reported to be in. In any case, that disciple has an experience with something or someone he or she takes to be Jesus. This could have been a case of bereavement

hallucination, which the disciple would not have been equipped to explain using what is known today about the brain. Such a hallucination could only be explained as either actually seeing Jesus, or a vision sent from the supernatural.

Alternatively, it might have been possible that the disciple met someone else, who he or she took to be Jesus. I think that this may be possible based on some passages in the Gospels. In John's Gospel, Mary Magdalene, who is the first to see Jesus, does not recognize him at first, and thinks that he is the gardener (Jn 20:15). Later on, the disciples, who are fishing, see Jesus, but John writes that they "did not know it was him" at first, even after speaking to him (Jn 21:4-7). In Luke, some disciples on the road to Emmaus do not recognize Jesus until he breaks bread with them (Lk 24:13-35). These passages could be taken to mean that the eyewitnesses reported seeing Jesus in a form that was different from how he appeared before dying. If this was the case, and Jesus did not actual resurrect, the eyewitnesses may simply have been mistaken, and taken a different person to be Jesus once they heard him say something Jesus might have said. The stories in the Gospels in which eyewitnesses actually recognize Jesus could have been an imaginative alteration of memory.

Continuing with the narrative, after the eyewitness thought that he heard or saw the resurrected Christ, he or she would have quickly told the other disciples. The others would most likely have been both frightened and overjoyed to hear that Jesus had resurrected. After all, Jesus was a person they had left their families and communities to follow for at least three years, and who they had taken to be more than a normal man. Hearing that Jesus was resurrected would also have made sense of Jesus' seemingly cryptic claims about returning again after being killed (Mk 8:31, Mt 17:22, Lk 9:22). The original eyewitness, after hearing the positive feedback of the other disciples, would have become more and more confident in his memory. He or she may

have even been able to subconsciously fill in some details based on the suggestions of the others (“Did he look like he used to?” “He must have looked heavenly!” “Were there angels present to announce his return?”). After hearing this initial report, the other disciples might have been more likely to think that they had seen Jesus themselves in later encounters. As their individual stories were repeated and shared, we might be left with a collective of narratives which differ in details, as is the case with the Gospel accounts.

Once the story has been strengthened in the minds of the disciples, it becomes a legitimate belief, regardless of whether or not it is based on truth. Such beliefs can be very powerful. However, whether or not these beliefs could have been powerful enough to lead these disciples to give up their lives is a difficult question to answer. I do believe that once the religion was established, Christianity has enough inherent appeal to flourish and win the sincere belief of many people. With its focus on the dignity and worth of all people, humility, and kindness, Christianity would survive and eventually flourish among the oppressed peoples of the Roman world, who would never have heard anything like this message before. For that reason, I do not think that we can look at the rest of Church history to understand the resurrection accounts. What matters, in my opinion, is whether or not the eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ themselves were mistaken.

The resurrection is one of many topics integral to the Christian faith which are difficult to discuss without bringing a great deal of bias, both for those defending and those denying its occurrence. My only hope is that both sides can attempt to have as unbiased a debate as possible about the resurrection. The importance of this event cannot be overstated, and I think that the resurrection warrants both personal reflection and open discussion, rather than being either accepted strictly on faith or rejected strictly based on a materialistic worldview. I hope that both

believers and nonbelievers can become more honest in their respective positions by examining this issue thoroughly.

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