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Seven Reasons Why I Believe in THE BODILY RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

From the book *CHRISTIAN FOUNDATIONS*

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WStS Note: This etext was typed and reformatted by Tom and Katie Stewart from a reprint (1971-- uncopyrighted) of the original edition. The use of the letter "s" instead of "z" was correct at the time of publishing.

CHRISTIANITY IS FOUNDED on "the empty tomb." Its throbbing vitality is the fact that the Christ who bled and suffered on the Cross is gloriously risen from the dead and is alive for evermore. The Church's only justification for its origin and doctrine is that Christ is risen from Joseph's tomb. The vacated sepulchre alone vindicates the Church's existence. The gospel stakes all on the actuality that the Lord Jesus rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

The Resurrection is essential to Christianity, for by it alone can Christianity be confirmed. The Resurrection is the great corroborator of the Christian gospel. Remove this keystone and the goodly temple crashes into ruin. As life is essential to living so the Resurrection is essential to a living Christianity. Take away the Resurrection and Christianity becomes a dead letter, but another contribution to the world's Pantheon.

The Resurrection is the Essential of the essentials of the Christian faith. Because of this it is the most important fact in history, for thereupon hangs eternal destiny. Not only is it the most important fact but it is the best attested fact in history. The foundation of God standeth sure.

Those who glibly deny the bodily resurrection of Christ never honestly faced the evidence which supports this, the mighty foundation stone of the Gospel. The evidence is most convincing and conclusive.

The account of the conversion of two of the most notable sceptics of the eighteenth century is a good illustration of just how convincing and conclusive is this evidence. These two men, Gilbert West and Lord Lyttleton, ranked among the most brilliant intellectuals of their day. After many clever sallies against Biblical Christianity they decided that if two great fundamentals of the Gospel were overthrown, Christianity would crumble into ruin. These fundamentals were, the Resurrection of Christ and the Conversion of St. Paul. So West undertook to write a treatise on the Resurrection proving it to be a fabrication, and Lyttleton vowed to produce a treatise demonstrating that St. Paul was not miraculously converted on the Damascus Road. They therefore started to sift the evidence which they believed was pure fabrication and which they were determined to expose and explode. From time to time they met in conference and then one day West said to Lyttleton,

"I have something very important to relate. You know, Lyttleton, how keen I was to expose as pure fabrication the Resurrection of Christ. I therefore determined to thoroughly sift the evidence and in doing so I had to be honest, I had to be sincere, I had to be honourable and I had to forsake my prejudice and act on strict legal principle. Having pursued this line I have been forced to the conclusion that Jesus Christ really rose from the dead. Now, you may laugh at me if you like, Lyttleton, but I got down on my knees and asked the risen Saviour to save me and He has done it."

Lyttleton replied,

"Strange to relate, I have had a similar experience. I, too, sifted the evidence, sincerely, candidly and honestly, and the more I weighed the evidence the more I was forced to the conclusion that St. Paul was really remarkably converted on the Damascus Road. That being so, West, as an honest person I could do no other but fall on my knees and ask the same Christ to save me and He has done it."

In the course of time the treatises of West and Lyttleton appeared. West's treatise vindicated the Resurrection and Lyttleton's the Conversion of St. Paul. Both these treatises can be found in our libraries to-day. To them unbelief has never been able to fabricate an answer. They stand as monuments to the fact that if the evidence for the Resurrection of Christ is sifted and weighed honestly, it will be found to be convincing and conclusive.

Let us then survey some of this evidence.

FIRST REASON: THE BODILY RESURRECTION WAS PROPHETICALLY ANTICIPATED BY CHRIST HIMSELF

"But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," Matthew 12:39, 40.

"And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day *he shall rise again*," Matthew 20:17-19.

"And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the *Son of man were risen from the dead*," Mark 9:9.

"But after that *I am risen*, I will go before you into Galilee," Mark 14:28.

"Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, *and be raised the third day*," Luke 9:22.

"Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days *I will raise it up*. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said," John 2:18-22.

The great sign of His Messiahship was the Resurrection. That Christ was not referring to a mere resurrection of spirit is clear from His speech to the unbelieving Jews concerning the destruction and resurrection of the temple of His body. The Bible knows no other resurrection than that of the body for the Scriptures teach implicitly that the spirit never dies but at death is in a state of separation from the body.

All the prophecies which Christ made, have, when the time for the fulfillment came, been completely vindicated. Their absolute truthfulness has been vividly displayed in the course of time. History has been their great corroborator.

The destruction of Jerusalem, the Coming of the Holy Spirit, the Building of the Church, the Rise of false prophets and false christs and the Division of households through Christianity -- these and many more happenings all carefully predicted by Christ have been fulfilled to the last letter. Fulfilled prophecy is a witness to the truthfulness of Christ which cannot be silenced. No honest person dare reject this prophetic phenomenon. Now this being so by what law can we reject Christ's prophecy concerning His own resurrection as untrue?

We have already discovered that, tested by every known law, Christ stands forth as the One who has completely established all His claims and fulfilled all His promises. This being so, His prophecy concerning this most important event of all, must be true. To accept that Christ's prophecy concerning His betrayal, delivery into the hands of the Gentiles, and crucifixion was true, but to reject the climax of it all, His Bodily Resurrection, is to act dishonestly and only demonstrates prejudice against the supernatural.

The Resurrection, the climax of Christ's Life and absolutely unparalleled in itself and in its circumstances, is to be taken in connection with the whole course of Christ's Life and with the sum of the great miraculous demonstrations which from time to time He made manifest with overwhelming power. When viewed in this light, we could only accept that the climax of His miraculous Life would be the Miracle of miracles itself. To this supreme miracle Christ prophetically pointed as the great sign that He was the Christ, the Chosen of God.

The argument that Christ predicted His death by a deduction from antagonistic circumstances cannot stand. His prophecy in John chapter two came early on in His ministry, long before the religious leaders organised themselves against Him. Again, Peter and the other disciples were ever alarmists, and yet when Christ spoke of His death they repudiated it as impossible. "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men," Matthew 16:21-23.

As the prophetic accuracy of the Lord Jesus is a well attested fact, I believe in the Bodily Resurrection because it was anticipated by Himself.

SECOND REASON: THE BODILY RESURRECTION IS PERFECTLY SUBSTANTIATED BY THE GOSPEL NARRATIVES

The combined testimony of the Evangelists witnesses that the tomb is empty. A resurrected Christ is the climax of their gospels. In perfect harmony they declare that Christ is risen from the dead.

Matthew

Matthew records two appearances of the Risen Christ.

- The First to the women going from the sepulchre. "And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him," Matthew 28:9.
- The Second, the appearance upon a mountain in Galilee. "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted," Matthew 28:16, 17.

Mark

Mark records three appearances.

- First to Mary Magdalene. "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not," Mark 16:9-11.
- Second, to the two on the road to Emmaus. "After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them," Mark 16:12, 13.
- Third, to the eleven. "Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen," Mark 16:14.

Luke

Luke records four appearances.

- First, to the two going to Emmaus. "And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them," Luke 24:15.
- Second, to Peter. "And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon," Luke 24:33, 34.

- Third, to the eleven in Jerusalem. "And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? 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. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet," Luke 24:36-40.
- Fourth, at the ascension. "And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them," Luke 24:50.

John

John records four appearances.

- First to Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre. "Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God," John 20:16, 17.
- Second, to the Apostles apart from Thomas. "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you," John 20:19.
- Third, after eight days to the apostles, Thomas being present. "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you," John 20:26.
- Fourth, to seven disciples on the shore of Tiberias. "After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples," John 21:1, 2.

Of these narratives, Professor F. Godet states:

"Let us note in these evangelic records two characteristics: the variations in the details, the agreement in the substance of the story. The substance is the fact of the resurrection. On this the accounts are unanimous. The diversity in the details is the consequence of that between the witnesses who communicated the facts to the writers, or who themselves drew up these records. It proves that no previous agreement, no ingenious calculation, guided them in drawing them up.

"On looking back upon the whole, we easily perceive how wonderfully the several fragments of the picture fit into each other. But the records themselves give not the slightest hint respecting this mutual interconnection and this natural progress of the advancing steps of the story. 'What a proof is this of the perfect faithfulness, as well as intrinsic truthfulness, of these primitive records!'"

These gospel records are further corroborated by Paul. "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how 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: And that 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, 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," 1 Corinthians 15:3-8.

Now the truthfulness of the Gospel narratives is self-evident. A study of the intimate details recorded by the Evangelists demonstrates their veracity. "But go your way, tell his disciples *and Peter* that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you," Mark 16:7.

Notice the emphasis "*and Peter*." Peter was surely one of the disciples, why then this special addition? Peter's conduct is undoubtedly in mind. He denied his Lord with oaths and cursing and by this time concluded that he was no longer reckoned a disciple. If the message had named only the disciples, Peter would have excluded himself. Here, however, we have a real portrayal of Christ. He remembered Peter, and in order to show His infinite compassion He adds in wondrous grace the words

"and Peter." No artful contriver would have thought of such an addition. This is no invention. It is something reported by an eyewitness of the very event.

Again, take the narratives of the vision of angels. Minute details are given of their positions in the tomb, their dress, their number, and the very degrees of light which radiated from their apparel. We read in Mark that the "young man" was seated on the right side of the tomb, and was clad in a "long white raiment." Matthew records that the angel's raiment was "white like snow." Luke records that the angels appeared in "shining garments." John speaks of them as being in "white."

Why such minute description? Without doubt the angels' raiment is recorded as was seen by the eyewitnesses. The narratives are authentic accounts and not manufactured novels. The details display undesigned veracity.

Because of the self-evident truthfulness of the Gospel records I therefore believe in the Bodily Resurrection of Christ which these records perfectly substantiate.

THIRD REASON: THE BODILY RESURRECTION IS PRACTICALLY DEMONSTRATED BY THE APOSTLES' TRANSFORMATION

The great contrast between the disposition of the apostles at the time of Christ's death and their disposition as portrayed in the Acts of the Apostles can not be satisfactorily explained apart from the Resurrection. Their Messianic expectation of Christ reigning at Jerusalem with them as His princely courtiers had been rudely dashed by Christ's apprehension and subsequent crucifixion. The dark treason of Judas, the blasphemous denial of Peter, their own cowardice at the hour of crisis, the base victory of the Sanhedrin, the wild infuriation of the people and the awful crucifixion and sad burial of their Master had left them hopeless and heartless, a byword and a contempt in the eyes of their enemies.

We realise something of their state in the pathetic exclamation concerning Christ, of the two who travelled to Emmaus, "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done," Luke 24:21.

After the third day, however, a unique moral transformation takes place. Their fears are exchanged for a rugged fearlessness, their hopelessness for a transforming hope, their cowardice for an unflinching courage and their backwardness for a triumphant boldness. In the power of that transformation they issued forth recklessly regardless of persecution and martyrdom, to proclaim in the face of an antagonistic world the fact of Christ's Resurrection from the dead.

Dr. Philip Schaff comments in his valuable "Apostolic Christianity":

"This revolution was not isolated, but general among them; it was not the result of any easy credulity, but brought about in spite of doubt and hesitation; it was not superficial and monetary, but radical and lasting; it affected not only the apostles, but the whole history of the world. It reached even the leaders of the persecution, Saul of Tarsus, one of the clearest and strongest intellects, and converted him into the most devoted and faithful champion of this very gospel to the hour of his martyrdom.

"This is a fact patent to every reader of the closing chapters of the Gospels, and is freely admitted even by the most advanced sceptics."

Contrast, for example, Peter and John at the trial of Jesus by the Sanhedrin, and Peter and John defying the very same hierarchy and proclaiming:

"Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," Acts 4:19, 20.

"We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him," Acts 5:29-32.

Well may Bishop Westcott ask:

"If the crucified Lord did rise again, we can point to effects which answer completely to what we may suppose

to have been the working of the stupendous miracle on those who were the first witnesses of it: if He did not, to what must we look for an explanation of phenomena for which the Resurrection is no more than an adequate cause?"

There is only one answer to this stupendous transformation in the apostles, and that is that they were eyewitnesses of the bodily presence of their once crucified but now risen Lord.

Therefore I believe in the Bodily Resurrection of Christ because it is practically demonstrated by the Apostles' Transformation.

FOURTH REASON: BECAUSE THE BODILY RESURRECTION IS POWERFULLY VINDICATED BY CHRISTIANITY'S HISTORY

If the Resurrection is not a fact then Christianity is inexplicable. The Resurrection is the foundation of Christianity but if this foundation does not exist whence then Christianity? Dr. Philip Schaff comments:

"The Christian Church rests on the resurrection of its Founder. Without this fact the church could never have been born, or if born, it would soon have died a natural death. The miracle of the resurrection and the existence of Christianity are so closely connected that they must stand or fall together. If Christ was raised from the dead, then all his other miracles are sure, and our faith is impregnable; if he was not raised, he died in vain, and our faith is vain. It was only his resurrection that made his death available for our atonement, justification and salvation; without the resurrection, his death would be the grave of our hopes; we should be still unredeemed and under the power of our sins. A gospel of a dead Saviour would be a contradiction and wretched delusion. This is the reasoning of St. Paul, and its force irresistible."

Beyond question, the Resurrection was the foundation truth of the apostolic gospel. The primitive church is best described in the words of Luke. "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all," Acts 4:33.

If the Resurrection of Christ was not an incontrovertible fact how dare the disciples proclaim it in the very place where it happened? Is it likely, if it were a fraud, that the people would have tolerated, let alone believed, the apostolic gospel?

The empty tomb was an objective fact open for their investigation. If the tomb had not been emptied of its precious contents by the miracle of Resurrection, then the production of Christ's body would soon have exposed the fraud. Is it credible to suppose that if the disciples stole away the body, as the Jews in their dilemma lyingly suggested, that they would have been prepared to be martyred for their deception?

That the main emphasis of the apostles was on the actuality of the Resurrection is further illustrated by the source from which their main opposition came. In that invaluable book "Undesigned Coincidences," Dr. J. J. Blunt points out:

"There is a difference in the quarter from which opposition to the Gospel of Christ proceeded, as represented in the Gospels and in the Acts, most characteristic of truth, though most unobtrusive in itself. Indeed, these two portions of the New Testament might be read many times over without the feature I allude to happening to present itself.

"Throughout the *Gospels*, the hostility to the Christian cause manifested itself almost exclusively from the *Pharisees*. Jesus evidently considers them as a sect systematically adverse to it. 'Woe unto you, Scribes and *Pharisees*, hypocrites! Ye are the children of them which killed the prophets Fill ye up the measure of your fathers.' And before Jesus came up to the last Passover, 'the chief priests and *Pharisees*,' we read, 'gave commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him.' And when Judas proposed to betray Him, 'he received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and *Pharisees*.' On the other hand, throughout the *Acts*, the like hostility is discovered to proceed from the *Sadducees*. Thus, 'And as they' (Peter and John) 'spake thus unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the *Sadducees*, came upon them.' And again, on another occasion, 'the high priest rose up, and all that were with him, which is the sect of the *Sadducees*, and were filled with indignation and laid their hands on the Apostles, and put them in the common prison.' And again, in a still more remarkable case: when Paul was maltreated before Ananias, and there was danger perhaps to his life, he, 'perceiving,' we read, 'that the one part were *Sadducees*, and the other *Pharisees*, cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a

Pharisee:' evidently considering the Pharisees now to be the friendly faction, and soliciting their support against the *Sadducees*, whom he equally regarded as a hostile one; nor was he disappointed in his appeal.

"Whence then, this extraordinary change in the relations of these parties respectively to the Christians? No doubt, because the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which, before Christ's own resurrection, i.e., during the period comprised in the Gospels, had been so far from dispersed by the disciples, that they scarcely knew what it meant (Mark 9:10), had now become a leading doctrine with them."

Of all people, the Sadducees would have exposed Christ's Resurrection as a deception if they had been able to do so. It was the incontrovertible actuality of the empty tomb and Resurrected Christ, and the consequent refutation of their own doctrine of no resurrection, which goaded them on to such acts of violence against the early church.

Bishop Westcott in "The Gospel of the Resurrection" says:

"From the time of the first preaching of the Apostles, Christianity has been a power in the world acting upon society and acted upon by it. It conquered the Roman Empire, and remained unshaken by its fall. It sustained the shock of the northern nations, and in turn civilised them. It suffered persecution and it wielded sovereignty. It preserved the treasures of ancient thought and turned them to new uses. It inspired science, while it cherished mysteries with which science could not deal. It assumed the most varied forms and it molded the most discordant characters. And all this was done and borne in virtue of its historic foundation. For its strength lay not in the zeal of a hierarchy who were the depositaries of hidden doctrines, but in the open proclamation of a Divine Saviour."

Now the whole history of the triumph of Christianity is a powerful vindication of the Risen Christ. In fact, the whole history of the last 2,000 years is the guarantee of the reality that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. The spiritual force of Christianity is inexplicable, apart from the doctrine of the Bodily Resurrection.

So I believe in the Bodily Resurrection of Christ because it is powerfully vindicated by Christianity's History.

FIFTH REASON: THE BODILY RESURRECTION IS PERPETUALLY COMMEMORATED BY THE LORD'S DAY

How did the seventh day cease so suddenly to the early Jewish Christians to be their day for worship? Why the change to the first day of the week? There is only one explanation, the Resurrection of Christ. John Bunyan said of the Lord's Day, the Lord Himself began it, the Holy Spirit seconded it (Pentecost was on the first day of the week, see Leviticus 23:16) and the Apostolic Church practised it. Its basis was the Resurrection of Christ.

The first day of the week is the only day mentioned in the New Testament as a special day. It was on the first day our Lord arose; that He appeared to Mary, and to the disciples on the Emmaus Road, to Peter and to all the disciples apart from Thomas. It was on the first day again He appeared to the disciples, Thomas being with them.

Paul waited for that day in Troas, and when it came remembered his Lord in the breaking of bread and preached to the assembled disciples. Again, it was on the first day of the week that Paul commanded the Galatian and Corinthian Christians to give their offerings to the Lord's work. In Revelation it was on the Lord's Day that John was granted his stupendous apocalyptic vision.

The assertion of the Seventh Day Adventists that the Pope and the Church of Rome changed the day under Constantine is a pure fallacy, a sectarian invention with no historical foundation whatever. Dr. Schaff, the great authority in Church History, states:

"The universal and uncontradicted Sunday observance in the second century can only be explained by the fact that it had its roots in apostolic practice. Such observance is the more to be appreciated as it has no support in civil legislation before the age of Constantine, and must have been connected with many inconveniences, considering the lowly social condition of the majority of Christians and their dependence upon their heathen masters and employers. Sunday thus became, by an easy and natural transformation, the Christian Sabbath or weekly day of rest, at once answering the typical import of the eternal rest of the people of God in the heavenly Canaan."

Now the Lord's day had its own prophetic anticipation. Over in Leviticus we have its type in the feast of the Firstfruits.

"Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it," Leviticus 23:10, 11.

Notice the time of this feast, "*the day after the Sabbath*." Now this day was the third day after the passover lamb was slain, so at the very time when in the temple the priests were preparing the wave offering, Christ arose. Adolph Saphir says:

"Exactly as the type had prefigured it, so was He offered up unto God. And on the morrow after the Sabbath He came forth the Sheaf, the Branch out of the earth ... Suffering and death were behind Him. He had died once unto sin, but now He lived unto God."

It was of this feast of the first-fruits that Paul was thinking when he wrote:

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept," 1 Corinthians 15:20.

In Psalm 118 we have a direct prophecy concerning the Lord's day. "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is *the day* which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it," Psalm 118:22-24. We have the fulfillment of this prophecy mentioned by Peter to the Sanhedrin: "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner," Acts 4:10, 11.

The day was not of man's making, it was the day which the Lord made, by the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Resurrection is the only warrant for our keeping the first day of the week sanctified to the Lord.

Blest morning, whose first dawning rays
Beheld the Son of God
Arise triumphant from the grave,
And leave His dark abode!

Wrapt in the silence of the tomb
The great Redeemer lay.
Till the revolving skies had brought
The third, the appointed day.

Hell and the grace combined their force
To hold our Lord in vain;
Sudden the Conqueror arose,
And burst their feeble chain.

To thy great name, Almighty Lord,
We sacred honours pay,
And loud hosannas shall proclaim
The triumphs of the day.

Hence I believe in the Bodily Resurrection of Christ because it is perpetually commemorated by the Lord's Day.

SIXTH REASON: THE BODILY RESURRECTION IS PLAINLY INDICATED BY THE IMPOSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES

When one places the onus of the proof on those who deny the Bodily Resurrection, the reality of the Resurrection is confirmed rather than refuted. Three possible theories have been advanced down through the centuries to prove that Christ did not rise from the dead. These theories have been put forward at different times in different ways, but their substance has ever been the same.

The Fraud Theory

The invention of the Jewish leaders is put forth as the real truth. The disciples stole the body of Jesus from Joseph's tomb,

while the guards slept, and have concealed it, deceived the world. This theory carries its own refutation, for if the guards were sleeping how did they know it was the disciples who stole the body, and if they were not sleeping then they would have prevented the crime. Again, if they really slept at the post of duty, as Romans they would never have confessed such an awful crime. As for the disciples, they were too cowardly at this time to do such a daring act and too honest to connive to cheat the whole world. How could such a fraud have nerved its perpetrators with such Christian patience and fortitude? It is clear that the fraud theory is a fraud and is rightly described as "a wicked absurdity."

The Swoon Theory

This theory holds that Jesus did not really die on the cross but that He merely swooned from loss of blood. Nicodemus and Joseph discovered this and with the help of others, by careful medical attention, restored Christ to life. Later He died a natural death. Others have even absurdly stated that He recovered from the swoon of the cross in the cold tomb and by His own medical attention recovered and somehow or other got out of the sepulchre. Besides insurmountable physical difficulties this theory could never account for the marvellous transformation of the apostles. The experience of a weary, wounded sickly Jesus hiding away from His enemies and eventually succumbing to death, would have overwhelmed the disciples completely in utter despair.

The Vision Theory

The exponents of this theory have adopted all sorts of ingenuous methods to dispose of the fact of the empty tomb. Some say Mary and the disciples visited another tomb which was not occupied. Others say the body was taken away by the enemies of Christ. Another theory held by "Jehovah Witnesses" that the body dissolved into gases has recently been advocated by no less a person than an ex-President of the Methodist Church, Dr. Leslie Weatherford. In a recent essay on the subject he states:

"It would not be wise to suppose that Christ walked out of the tomb in the same physical body that died on the Cross, for that only postpones the question 'What then finally happened to His body?' Perhaps it completely dematerialised, that is, became nothingness, so far as matter is concerned. It is easier to suppose that through the speeding up of molecular movement, it became gaseous and escaped through chinks in the cave, not, of course, made airtight by the rough circular stone, and that either

- (1) those particles were used by Him to materialise again outside the tomb, or
- (2) -- the hypothesis I prefer -- that a spiritual or etheric existence, which had the same effect on human senses as a physical one, was the means of the post-Resurrection appearance."

This theory goes on to state as Dr. Weatherhead does, that the Resurrection appearances were merely visions of one kind or another. Dr. Weatherhead finds the best explanation is spiritism. The insurmountable arguments against this theory are many.

What of the tomb? Are we to believe that the majestic discourses attributed to the Risen Christ proceeded from "dreamy and self-deluded enthusiasts and crazy fanatics"? Are we to accept these appearances as ghost stories? Why did these visions suddenly end on the fortieth day? Why did they not continue? Dr. Schaff says:

"The chief objection to the vision-hypothesis is its intrinsic impossibility. It makes the most exorbitant claim upon our credulity. It requires us to believe that many persons, singly and collectively, at different times, and in different places, from Jerusalem to Damascus, had the same vision and dreamed the same dream; that the women at the open sepulchre early in the morning, Peter and John soon afterwards, the two disciples journeying to Emmaus on the afternoon of the resurrection day, the assembled apostles on the evening in the absence of Thomas, and again on the Lord's Day in the presence of the sceptical Thomas, seven apostles at the lake of Tiberias, on one occasion five hundred brethren at once most of whom were still alive when Paul reported the fact, then James, the brother of the Lord, who formerly did not believe in him, again all the apostles on Mount Olivet at the ascension, and at last the clear-headed, strong-minded persecutor on the way to Damascus -- that all these men and women on these different occasions vainly imagined they saw and heard the self-same Jesus in bodily shape and form; and that they were by this baseless vision raised all at once from the deepest gloom in which the crucifixion of their Lord had left them, to the boldest faith and strongest hope which impelled them to proclaim the gospel of the resurrection from Jerusalem to Rome to the end of their lives!

"The vision-hypothesis, instead of getting rid of the miracle, only shifts it from the fact to fiction; it makes an empty delusion more powerful than the truth, or turns all history itself at last into a delusion. Before we can

reason the resurrection of Christ out of history we must reason the apostles and Christianity itself out of existence. We must either admit the miracle, or frankly confess that we stand here before an inexplicable mystery."

All these impossible alternatives plainly indicate the fact of the Resurrection. The enemies of the Risen Christ cannot prove He did not triumphantly vacate the tomb. That rugged empty tomb smashes all opposition.

Death could not keep its prey,
Jesus, my Saviour!
He tore the bars away,
Jesus, my Lord!

Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes.
He arose a Victor o'er the dark domain,
And He lives for ever with His saints to reign!
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

Hence I believe in the Bodily Resurrection of Christ because it is plainly indicated by the impossible alternatives.

SEVENTH REASON: THE BODILY RESURRECTION IS PERSONALLY CORROBORATED BY THE BELIEVER'S EXPERIENCE

Joseph's tomb is not only emptied of Christ's body but it is emptied of our curse. Christ was delivered because of our offences, He was raised because of our justification. His death discharged our awful debt, His resurrection is the great receipt that the full price has been paid.

Jesus, once numbered with the dead,
Unseals His eyes to sleep no more,
And ever lives their cause to plead,
For whom the pains of death He bore.

Our Surety freed declares us free,
For whose offences He was seized;
In His release our own we see,
And shout to view Jehovah pleased.

This experience of justification in the heart of the believer is a personal corroboration that Christ is risen from the dead, In the joy of this experience the believer can say with Job, "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me," Job 19:25-27.

Thus the evidence of faith confirms the fact of the Resurrection. Of the empty tomb Professor Godet writes:

"Let us often visit this spot; it is not necessary for this end to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem; the entrance into the holy sepulchre opens in the depths of the heart of each one of us. Let us descend into it, to find there the pledges of our adoption, the shreds of the letter of acknowledgement of debt, which bore witness against us, and which the hand of our Heavenly Creditor has torn up, the fragments of the sceptre of Death, which the foot of our deliverer has broken to pieces; and lastly, the helmet of hope, which His hand has deposited there in order that each believer may go thither to put it on his head. Ah! what good such a visit does to the overwhelmed soul! She returns out of it as John came out of the sepulchre after seeing in it the linen clothes wrapped together, and the napkin folded and laid by in a place by itself. 'He saw and believed,' he tells us himself; summing up in these two words the deepest experience of his life. Let us believe in the testimony of those who saw, in that which authenticates itself to our hearts as holy, and therefore true, and then we too shall see; we shall behold, even here on earth, the glory of God."

I believe in the Bodily Resurrection of Christ, because my experience of the Saviour tells me it is so.

The day of resurrection!
Earth, tell it out abroad;
The passover of gladness,
The passover of God!
From death to life eternal,
From earth unto the sky,
Our Christ hath brought us over
With hymns of victory.

Now let the heavens be joyful;
Let earth her song begin;
Let the round world keep triumph,
And all that is therein;
Invisible and visible,
Their notes let all things blend,
For Christ the Lord hath risen,
Our joy that hath no end.

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THE END