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## Evidence for a Resurrection

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## Evidence for a Resurrection [\[1\]](#)

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"Now when the Athenians heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; but others said, 'We will hear you again about this.'"

*Acts of the Apostles 17:32*

### Introduction

1. Christianity has been universally understood by its critics, and widely interpreted by its defenders, as having placed at its center the bold claim that Jesus of Nazareth was raised from death to live an indestructible life. Peter Carnley sums up the significance of the Resurrection for incarnational theology in the words: 'It is the resurrection which is the foundation of the Church, its worship and its theology, for the Church gathers not just around the rehearsal of the story of the incarnation of God, but around the perceived presence of the raised Christ *himself*' (Carnley 1987: 8, orig. ital.).

2. Many views about the Resurrection have been and continue to be debated. Tradition understands the texts that describe the Resurrection at face value, and harmonizes the various accounts to produce a seamless whole. Some theologians, however, question the historicity of the accounts, especially those describing various encounters with the Risen Jesus. Other theologians consider the Resurrection to be eschatological in character, not historical, and for that reason not suitable for historical analysis in the usual way. Still other theologians are not sure that sacred texts used for liturgical purposes, which these texts were, can be plausibly interpreted as purporting to describe any event at all, let alone an extraordinary one. And so on. These and other interpretive issues surrounding the Resurrection obviously deserve attention, but I doubt that the original interpretation construing the Resurrection as an historical claim will ever be displaced. This remains the default against which other interpretations compete, and certainly characterizes the view of the Ante-Nicene fathers during the crucial period of the Church when central doctrines were formulated and sacred texts were established. The purpose of this essay is primarily to consider the plausibility of the default view. I will approach this question by considering the evidence that would be needed for claiming that anyone at all has come back to life, that is, has been resuscitated.

3. The extraordinary amount of criticism directed to the Resurrection belief and the sacred texts that speak of it might suggest that the topic is exhausted. However, theologians have been so eager to evaluate the cogency of the Resurrection belief itself that they have not given sufficient attention to the question of what kind of evidence would be needed to defend the return to life of anyone at all. I will pay particular attention to this question, showing that his approach yields some important results. I will identify the weak points in the traditional defense for the Resurrection, and suggest some fruitful new sources.

4. The NT describes a number of instances of people coming back to life, but the Resurrection of Jesus is implicitly distinguished from these in I Corinthians 15. Paul's remarks in this seminal passage on the Resurrection describe it as the defeat of death itself, and the model for an event that some day will be experienced by both the living and the dead. Paul says that the body that was raised from death was glorious, not dishonorable; imperishable, not perishable; powerful, not weak; immortal, not mortal; and spiritual, not physical. In John's gospel we read how Lazarus was brought back to life by Jesus, but none of these attributes is ascribed to the resuscitated body of Lazarus. So the Resurrection is different than the resuscitations described in the NT.

5. Nevertheless, the Resurrection evidently shares some characteristics of resuscitations. Three conditions must be satisfied in order to assert that a resuscitation has occurred: (a) a person must truly have died, (b) the person's corpse must no longer exist after the resuscitation has taken place, and (c) the person must be seen to be alive again. The NT writers go to some length to assert that these conditions were met in the Resurrection of Jesus, which also requires that the person lives an indestructible and glorious life. Although Paul does not evince explicit knowledge of the empty tomb tradition in I Corinthians 15, he pointedly says that Jesus died and was buried, that he was raised from death, and that he was seen again. Paul seems to appreciate the minimal requirements for even resuscitation. In my discussion of evidence I will make reference to items frequently mentioned in connection with the Resurrection, e.g., the changed attitude of the disciples of Jesus, the empty tomb, the post-Resurrection appearances, the rise of the Church, and so on.

### Confirming Evidence

6. Although philosophers have not reached consensus on definitive criteria for confirming evidence, [\[2\]](#) such evidence for a hypothesis can seemingly be found in chains of events thought to be causally connected. This can be brought out in an example. We might not be present to watch a glacier calve, but evidence for the hypothesis that the glacier has recently calved is supplied by observing that the level of the lake has increased during a period in which no rainfall was recorded, by noting the drop in the water's temperature, and perhaps even by finding newly deposited detritus on some sandy shore. These items are evidence that the glacier has calved, for each can be causally linked to the hypothesized events. Of course, each one of these observed events might have other causal sources than the glacier's calving, but their simultaneous occurrence suggests a single cause that is plausibly satisfied by the conjecture that a glacier at the water's edge has calved.

7. Circumstances in which events are causally linked might not be the only ones in which confirming evidence is found. For example, finding that a certain percentage of the people in each of half a dozen government departments are habitually late for work seems to be confirming evidence (however modest) for the conjecture that a similar percentage of the people in the seventh department will also be found to be tardy. No obvious causal link appears to exist between these effects, although they might be remote consequences of hiring practices or some other phenomenon providing a causal link. This possible causal link seems to provide the basis for considering the events to be evidentially related. [\[3\]](#) In the discussion that follows I will cautiously offer judgments both about whether one event is or is not confirming evidence for a hypothesis, as well as whether one event is stronger as confirming evidence than another. These judgments should also be considered conjectures, open to further debate and criticism, as are the hypotheses for which events provide confirming evidence.

### Resurrection, Resuscitation, and Establishing Death

8. The phenomenon of someone coming back to life seems almost incomprehensible. The well publicized research into near-death experiences (NDEs) during the last twenty-five years might appear to have expanded our understanding of someone coming back to life, but this kind of experience is still under critical scrutiny. The people undergoing NDEs might be brain-dead, [\[3\]](#) perhaps even temporarily devoid of heartbeat and the capacity to breathe, but the claim that they are fully dead is not universally conceded. If we understand resuscitation as having someone who is genuinely dead come back to life, we might do well to avoid describing people who are revived after a NDE as having been resuscitated.

9. The first challenge facing anyone reporting a resuscitation is showing that the person said to have been resuscitated was dead. People have been comatose for long periods and have exhibited no vital signs, so that observers of their condition, even trained observers, regard them as dead. However, when the comatose revive, contrary to all expectations, that is generally taken to be evidence that they were not truly dead. Those who are prepared to defend the historical authenticity of resuscitations, e.g., of Lazarus, have to face this issue, and it has of course been raised concerning the Resurrection of Jesus. Usually the extensive character of Jesus's wounds and the belief that the Roman

soldiers responsible for his execution would not have allowed him to be removed from the cross until dead are taken to be sufficient to set this doubt aside. But a residue of doubt remains, and seems incapable of being removed. For example, Holger Kersten and Elmar Gruber (1993: sec. 3 & 4) make this claim central to their recent analysis of the Shroud of Turin. They consider the Shroud to be that of Jesus, and argue that the amount of blood found on it shows that Jesus was not dead when he was placed in it.

### *The Evidence of an Empty Grave*

10. If someone were to be resuscitated, we would expect the grave in which the person had been placed (assuming he or she had been buried) to be empty. Of course we can conceive of circumstances where this might not be the case, e.g., when people who are revived by medical intervention are still so fragile from a medical standpoint that they cannot move from their hospital beds.<sup>[4]</sup> In the story of Lazarus the implication is left that he was brought back to life in such a way that he was able to carry on with normal life. A resuscitation that left the person hardly better than the condition he or she was in shortly before death would hardly be a welcome event! If we interpret resuscitation so that it is considered inconsistent with being sick or weak, say, that suggests that resuscitation is being understood as having its source in a Divine act that also heals. This is not the way I wish to interpret resuscitation, however. I wish to leave open the question of the degree to which a resuscitated person might be free of bodily ailments, and do not want to build into its meaning something about its cause. I wish to interpret resuscitation so that a full range of possible explanations for its occurrence, both natural and nonnatural, might be entertained.

11. While we would reasonably expect a grave to be empty if a resuscitation took place, the converse does not hold. Just because the place in which a person was buried was found not to contain the corpse, we cannot plausibly assert that the person was resuscitated. Grave robbers have no doubt been found in most places of the world at various times, and reasons exist for exhuming or moving corpses. The Gospel accounts of the Resurrection indicate that questions were raised about whether the body of Jesus had been moved.<sup>[5]</sup> Of course, if none of the graves or places where a corpse might be kept contained a particular body, we might wonder whether the person had been raised from death. However, this condition cannot be met in real life, for a corpse could be buried or hid in an innumerable number of places. An empty tomb is confirming evidence for resuscitation, but not very significant evidence, for it is only a probable causal consequence of resuscitation (assuming the mobility of the resuscitated person). An empty tomb is clearly not sufficient evidence of resuscitation. Evidence that a corpse went out of existence would be much more impressive evidence, but even this would not be complete, for we would want some evidence that the person continued to exist in some other form.

12. A recent conjecture about the way in which the Shroud of Turin might have been formed is useful to this discussion. Introducing the Shroud might seem excessively speculative, since its origins and the identity of the person portrayed on it are very much in doubt, but the point I shall make here -- a conceptual point -- does not depend on the man's identity or the conjecture's truth. I shall make further remarks about the possible authenticity of the Shroud of Turin below.

13. Physicists John Jackson (1991) and Thaddeus Trenn (1996, 1997) have suggested in recent papers that the Shroud shows evidence of the person depicted on it having "weakly dematerialized." They hypothesize that the nuclei of the atoms constituting the body of the Man broke apart, and that the freed sub-atomic particles formed a flux through which the Shroud fell. These particles left their "imprint" on the cloth, so that the color variations that form the image resulted from the number of subatomic particles through which the cloth moved -- the fewer the particles, the lighter the image (on the original cloth), and the greater the number of particles, the darker the image. Jackson and Trenn claim that this theory can account for various features of the Image.

14. This theory is of interest here because it asserts that the Shroud shows evidence of a person's body having disappeared, perhaps in a shower of subatomic particles, so that no remains of the person would ever be found.<sup>[6]</sup> This theory, if correct, would allow us to hold that the Shroud constitutes evidence that a body disappeared in just the way required for a resuscitation. The Shroud would be substantially stronger evidence than an empty tomb, moreover, for an empty tomb, while necessary for resuscitation, does not adequately address the question of whether the body had been moved to another place. But even the Shroud, assuming that it was formed in accordance with the Jackson-Trenn hypothesis, does not provide complete evidence for a resuscitation, since that claim also requires evidence that the resuscitated person has been seen alive since his or her death. Their hypothesis is silent about subsequent appearances.

### *The Evidence of Appearances*

15. A probable consequence of an resuscitation would be that someone would see the resuscitated person somewhere, at some time, although we can again imagine a circumstance where this might not happen. For example, a habitual recluse might somehow die and be resuscitated without anyone noticing, and then go back to live the same life as before. But this seems quite extraordinary. The social dispositions of most people bring them into contact with others, so that someone is apt to see even a recluse.<sup>[7]</sup> We can plausibly say that if a person were to experience a resuscitation, he or she would probably be seen again. This point is reinforced by the fact that no one would be inclined to assert the resuscitation of another unless that resuscitated person were to be seen by *someone else*. Asserting that resuscitation has occurred is an extraordinary metaphysical claim, and it cannot be advanced as credible without satisfying this significant epistemic demand.

16. The converse relationship between appearances and resuscitation might not hold however, although this would depend on one's view of apparitions of the dead. The fact that someone now dead is said to have been seen, even if conceded to be true, is generally not taken as evidence that the person seen has been resuscitated. For example, Sir Alister Hardy reported (1975: 220) that C. S. Lewis appeared twice after his death to J. B. Phillips, well known translator of the New Testament. But no one considers appearances such as these as evidence for Lewis's *resuscitation*. Such appearances might be considered evidence for the claim that people (or their "souls") somehow survive their deaths, perhaps even for the stronger claim of immortality, but not for resuscitation. We can summarize the significance of appearances of those thought dead by saying that such appearances are not sufficient to render a resuscitation claim plausible, but they are likely to follow a resuscitation.

17. Apparitions are controversial, of course, and reports cannot be rendered authentic in any straightforward way. The possibilities of hallucination, fraud, and misinterpretation of perceptual experiences need to be ruled out before we can plausibly concede that someone known to have died actually appeared. I will not take the space here to reply to these important skeptical challenges, but I think they can be met in principle. Reports of apparitions are easily as numerous as the visions associated with near-death experiences, and the latter seem to have become accepted as authentic.

18. One more qualification (at least) to the above seems necessary. The remarkable claim about the Assumption of the Virgin Mary's body into heaven, combined with the spate of Marian apparitions, seems to meet the three conditions for resuscitation outlined. She is asserted to have died, her body is said to have disappeared, and she is reported as appearing in apparitions to people all over the world, albeit not immediately after her body's disappearance. Even if we concede the accuracy of all three claims, however, we might understandably balk at conceding that she was resuscitated. The difficulty appears to stem from the fact that a close causal link does not appear to be present between her earthly life and her subsequent post-mortem life. The post-mortem appearances do not seem to have occurred sufficiently close in time after the disappearance of her body, nor do these appearances seem to have occurred near the place of her body's disappearance. The nature of the events alleged renders the claim that she was resuscitated implausible.

### *The Problem of Identity*

19. If someone thought to have died were to appear to have been resuscitated, we probably would not only question whether the person really had died, but also whether the person really was who he or she purported to be. A person present for the death and burial of Lazarus, for example, who had not heard about his resuscitation but happened to visit his home some months later and found someone looking ever so much like Lazarus living there, would understandably wonder about the identity of that person. She would perhaps examine the grave in which Lazarus had been buried, to ensure that it was no longer occupied. She might wonder if Lazarus had a twin brother, who bore an unmistakable likeness to Lazarus, about whom she had never been told. I surmise she would put a series of questions to the one purporting to be Lazarus, to ensure that he was in fact Lazarus. The usual criteria suggested by philosophers to be required in asserting continuing personal identity, such as continuity of memory and similarity of personality, would become very important in defending the claim to resuscitation. Similarity of outward form would also count for something, surely, for one would not take

seriously any claim that *Lazarus* had been resuscitated if the person purporting to be Lazarus did not look anything like him. Allegations of *reincarnation*, such as those investigated by Ian Stevenson (1974), turn significantly on the apparent identity of two very different looking people. I suppose nothing about a resuscitation *requires* that the resuscitated person must look very much like he or she did at some point prior to death, but the claim is certainly helped by similarity of physical form.<sup>[8]</sup>

20. Another factor that would help to settle questions about the identity of a person purported to have been resuscitated is having the resuscitated body maintain spatio-temporal continuity with the corpse. The story of the resuscitation of Lazarus has him emerging out of the tomb in which he had been buried. This circumstance contributes significantly to the claim that it was *Lazarus* that was resuscitated, although it does not seem to be necessary, for similarity of personality and continuity of memory would appear to secure continuing identity on their own. In the gospel narrative of the resuscitation of the widow's son, Jesus stops the funeral procession and brings the man in the coffin back to life. The fact that the corpse comes back to life stifles any queries about the identity of the resuscitated person — he is identical to the dead son (assuming he was dead).

21. The Christian doctrine of the General Resurrection of the dead is often criticized because of the imagined difficulty of asserting the identity of corpses with their resurrected counterparts in cases where no spatio-temporal continuity can be plausibly expected, for example, when people are lost at sea or in fires. Opposition to cremation within some of the Christian churches seems to be linked to the evidential value of continuity between a corpse and its hoped-for resurrected counterpart. However, spatio-temporal continuity does not appear to be necessary to advance resuscitation (or resurrection) with plausibility. Someone who was cremated, and whose remains were scattered to the four winds, could conceivably come back to life in the General Resurrection.

### *The Effects of Beliefs*

22. We can safely surmise that someone who came to believe that a close friend or a formidable foe had been resuscitated would undergo significant psychological changes. Joy and excitement at seeing one's friend again would replace a sense of loss because of the friend's death, or new fears would replace a sense of relief at no longer being at risk from a foe. The *belief* that another has been resuscitated can of course be produced by events other than that person's resuscitation. Given the improbability of a resuscitation claim and the fact that false beliefs about the world are continually being generated, the psychological changes in people produced by the belief that someone has been resuscitated do not constitute significant evidence for a resuscitation. If we had discovered that Lazarus's sister Martha was elated at having had her brother come back to life, but could neither establish that his body had disappeared nor that he had been seen after his supposed resuscitation, we would understandably wonder about the source of her belief. We cannot plausibly argue that her psychological state has no evidential value at all, for it fits into a causal chain of events that we could expect if Lazarus had been resuscitated. However, her psychological state is an effect of her belief, and the belief in his resuscitation could be produced without that event ever having taken place. In defenses of the Resurrection of Jesus, reference is frequently made to the changed attitude of his disciples: instead of being beaten men, they courageously and enthusiastically defended the Resurrection. The appropriate reply to "the beaten men argument," as this is known, is that the *belief* that Jesus was resurrected is sufficient to explain their change in psychological state. His Resurrection is not (causally) necessary.

23. A similar objection effectively counters the argument that the Resurrection best explains the dramatic growth of the Church. Again, the *belief* that the Resurrection took place can plausibly account for this growth. Considering parallels from other religious movements alleging some remarkable events reinforces this point. The dramatic rise of the Mormon Church, for example, is not usually considered to provide significant evidence for the authenticity of the extraordinary events claimed by Joseph Smith.<sup>[9]</sup> The *belief* that these extraordinary events took place seems sufficient to account for the rise of this church.

### *Other Evidence*

24. All of the kinds of evidence discussed to this point are drawn from the causal nexus that can be plausibly conjectured to surround resuscitation. However, another kind of evidence needs to be considered. It might be thought that evidence for a resuscitation (or resurrection) could be provided by finding that someone correctly predicted a remarkable number of events, and then predicted his own resuscitation. Jesus is portrayed in the gospels as predicting his rising from death. This evidence seems very modest, however, and would not take precedence over evidence arising out of the causal nexus of a resuscitation or resurrection.

25. One more kind of supposed evidence requires a brief comment. The claim that a particular resuscitation (or resurrection) occurred might be thought to be strengthened by finding that it is part of a pattern. So the Old Testament allegations of resuscitation associated with several prophets from that era, as well as similar allegations from the NT era associated with the ministry of Jesus, might be thought to have such evidential value. Someone might even be tempted to add resuscitations claimed in religious contexts other than Judaism and Christianity. John Hick says that two examples of resurrections can be found in Hinduism from the last one hundred years (1993: 42): Sri Yukteswar is said to have appeared after his death to Paramahansa Yogananda, in a hotel bedroom in Bombay, and Yogananda also reports that Sri Yukteswar saw his own guru in 1895.

26. This evidence is not impressive, however. Hick's examples are almost completely without evidential value, for they involve only apparitions of the dead. These apparitions would need to be combined with evidence suggesting that the bodies of the dead persons were nowhere to be found.<sup>[10]</sup> In addition, we cannot argue that a new resuscitation claim is rendered credible by other cases of resuscitation unless the detailed arguments for the latter, presented in accordance with the requirements outlined above, are in place. To argue that a particular resuscitation claim is cogent because other claims to resuscitation have been made is to beg the question of what makes the latter claims plausible.

### *Cumulative Evidence*

27. Cumulative evidence has received considerable attention in recent natural theology (e.g. Mitchell 1981: ch. 3; Davis 1989: ch. 4), and it is significant concerning resuscitation claims. The point behind it is that two or more items of evidence for a hypothesis might not be particularly impressive individually, but their cumulative effect might be much greater than their sum taken individually. As I said earlier, we are not presupposing exact measures of evidential strength.

28. I remarked above that neither finding an empty grave nor seeing someone after her death provides significant evidence for her resuscitation. But the cumulative effect of these two conditions in combination is impressive. If we were to see someone alive after having witnessed her death and burial, and then were to discover that the grave in which she was buried contained no remains of her corpse, we would have significant evidence for her resuscitation.<sup>[11]</sup> Of course, we would need to ensure that her corpse had not been moved to another place, that she really was the person we took her to be, and that we were not merely hallucinating when we thought we saw her. But if we were satisfied that such conditions had been met, we could plausibly claim that she had been resuscitated. The radical character of a resuscitation claim would of course place extraordinary "epistemic pressure" on each of the conditions.<sup>[12]</sup> Perhaps only someone who knew the deceased extremely well would be in a position to undertake the requisite investigations — and then the plausibility of the resuscitation claim would depend upon the integrity of the investigator. Every claim to truth has some points at which it is vulnerable. Most of the truth claims we encounter in ordinary life are without much significance for our general view of the universe, and so we are unaware of or uncaring about their points of vulnerability. Resurrections (and even resuscitations) have the capacity to challenge views about the universe, however, and thus face great challenges. This is apparent from the amount of debate generated by the Christian belief in the Resurrection.

29. Some defenses of the Resurrection ignore the alleged post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus, but this is flawed from an evidential point of view. Theologian John Stackhouse, for example, has recently defended the Resurrection on the basis of only the empty tomb and the changed attitudes of the disciples (1998: 139-46). But these two conditions would not provide a plausible basis for a resuscitation, and are hardly impressive evidence for the Resurrection, which is an even more demanding claim, inasmuch as Jesus is said to have been raised immortal. Simply finding that a grave that once contained a corpse is empty, and that friends of the deceased believed that a resuscitation had consequently occurred, would provide very meager evidence. One can plausibly assert that these two events would be causally connected to a resuscitation, and so we must concede their evidential value, but they are too insignificant to establish a resuscitation as plausible.

30. I do not think that other combinations of evidence warrant attention. No evidential value, for example, derives from mere *assertions* that a resuscitation has taken place. The question such assertions would legitimately precipitate would be what evidence provides the basis for them. Some theologians, intent on establishing the Resurrection, have mistakenly directed their attention to *texts* asserting it, as though finding early and numerous accounts from ordinarily reliable sources could somehow substitute for securing the *events* needed to make a plausible claim.

31. The discussion to this point indicates that three items of evidence are needed to defend an resuscitation. Although the combined effect of post-mortem appearances and an empty grave would be quite impressive evidence for a resuscitation, even more impressive than an empty grave, as I argued above, would be evidence that no remains of a corpse existed at all. The Shroud of Turin remains the most enigmatic source for this possibility, and it, of course, does not point in the direction of just anyone, but in the direction of Jesus.

#### *The Shroud of Turin*

32. The Shroud of Turin presents a formidable problem in the evaluation of evidence, in part because it involves the complexities of cumulative evidence, but also because some of the items that have been adduced by researchers are only probable, not certain. [13] I can only touch briefly here on some of the relevant issues in considering its authenticity as the burial shroud of Jesus.

33. Impressive reasons can be found for thinking that the Shroud is not an object deliberately created by human art. Many of these reasons are known well enough to require only brief mention here:

1. The image of the man on the Shroud does not appear to have been made by pigment, for no natural direction consistent with brush strokes can be seen, and no cementation between the fibers forming the image has been found (Wilson 1998: 77).
2. The color variations that form the image are so fine that if a brush had been used to produce them, the brush could have had only a single hair, and that thinner than a human hair (Wilson 1988: 113).
3. The image reverses dark and light shades, which is a remarkable feat in itself, given its anatomical correctness. Moreover, the optimal viewing distance is six to ten feet away (Tribbe 1983: 175), so that if an artist did apply some liquid to its surface to produce the image, he or she would have to stand that far away to see what was being painted.
4. The image has a three-dimensional character that defies easy explanation.
5. The blood residues on the Shroud are different than the color variations that form the main image, and these have high levels of bilirubin in them (Wilson 1998: 88-89). Bilirubin is a chemical that turns the bile pigments reddish-orange in color, and is indicative of severe jaundice. It is unlikely that a medieval forger thought of adding bilirubin, whose existence was only discovered in the twentieth century, to give the image a lifelike quality.
6. Tradition has depicted the crucifixion of Jesus so that the crown of thorns was a circuit around his head, not a cluster that covered his head, which the head wounds of the victim suggests. In addition, tradition has depicted the nails as penetrating the hands, not the wrists. The Shroud image depicts the man without thumbs, which is the result of being nailed through the wrists. A medieval forger would not likely have deviated from tradition in these ways.
7. The dorsal foot imprint has an abundance of microscopic dust, atypical of the rest of the image (Wilson 1998: 104-106). An artist would not likely have added this element, for he or she could not have seen the dust, and would have no reason to put it there since no one else could see it either. This dust, incidentally, has a chemical structure identical to that of a relatively rare kind of limestone found in the environs of Jerusalem.

These facts imply that the Shroud is not an object of art, and open up the possibility that it was formed in some other way, including an event associated with the death of the man depicted on it.

34. Reasons exist for thinking that the man depicted on the Shroud might be Jesus. The fact that the man appears to have been crucified is some reason in itself, but not an impressive one, for many people have been put to death by crucifixion. However, the correspondences between the Shroud and the gospel accounts of the crucifixion, e.g., the injuries to the head, the unbroken legs, the pierced heart, the apparent age of the man on the Shroud, and the apparent chinband, support the claim that the man is Jesus. The possible coins over the eyes of the man on the Shroud, supposedly carrying the insignia of Tiberius Caesar (Tribbe 1983: 160f), would be strong evidence for the identity of the man, but this evidence is controversial. The image of a flower garland around the head of the man on the Shroud (Danin 1998) is also significant, for this garland seems to have produced by whatever produced the image. The origin of these flowers in Israel puts the origin of the Shroud there, which would undermine the results of the carbon dating tests in 1988 that appear to show that the Shroud's origin is no earlier than the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

35. Various grounds have been advanced for questioning this date, however:

1. Ian Wilson has produced a chain of historical evidence showing how the Shroud might have been taken from Israel to Southern Turkey in the first century, then taken to Constantinople in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and finally taken to France in the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Wilson 1998: Part 3).
2. The Shroud image resembles a gold Byzantine coin from the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and the Christ Pantocrator icon from the 6<sup>th</sup> century, according a computer overlay technique for comparing these images with the Shroud image developed by Alan Whanger (Tribbe 1983: 155-156).
3. Carbon dating results have varied considerably for certain objects from antiquity. Objects from the Minoan civilization of Crete have been carbon dated fourteen centuries apart, and the Lindow man found in a peatbog in Cheshire, England, was dated once at 300 BC and at another time at 400 AD (Wilson 1991: 170ff). In addition, a mummy in the Manchester museum had its bones dated 800 to 1000 years older than its bandages. These results suggest that carbon dating is not as decisive as it is sometimes supposed, especially with porous objects.
4. The sample taken for the carbon dating test in 1988 was from a corner that was held during public exhibitions, and so would have had contamination from the hands of those who held it (Wilson, 1991: 177).
5. Three mysterious holes are present in the Shroud, as though someone burned it with a hot poker. These holes appear in an illustration of the shroud that buried Jesus found in the Hungarian Pray Manuscript that dates back to 1192 and is strongly reminiscent of the Shroud (Wilson 1991: 150, 160).

These items of evidence cast some doubt on the results of the carbon dating tests, but they are not decisive.

36. The Jackson-Trenn hypothesis that conjectures that the image on the Shroud was formed by the decay of the atoms into subatomic particles (including neutrons) constituting the corpse of the man that lay in it also has implications for carbon-dating the cloth. [14] Although this hypothesis suggests an event apparently unique in human history, it is testable, and hence scientific. Trenn notes that this hypothesis implies that freed neutrons from the nuclei would have converted some nitrogen in the fibers of the cloth into carbon-14, so that the concentrations of carbon-14 would be higher in the body area, and lower at the edges of the cloth (1996: 125). He observes that the hypothesis could be tested in a non-invasive way by covering the entire Shroud with film sensitive to radioactive decay and encasing the Shroud and film in lead for twenty-four hours. Enough carbon-14 would decay during that time to show whether carbon-14 distributions across the Shroud are uniform or not.

37. Several other items of evidence strengthen the Jackson-Trenn hypothesis:

1. A dark spot clearly appears on the image of one of the hands, as though the thumb folded into the palm managed to register its presence. If the image was made in accordance with the Jackson-Trenn conjecture, the additional mass comprising the thumb would have registered as the Shroud fell through the particles comprising the corpse (Jackson 1991: 334, 342).
2. Faint images of the vertebrae, shoulder bones, and other bones have been reported (Wilson 1998:129). Again, the mass represented by these bones would produce an effect.
3. The fibrils impregnated with blood are not torn (Stevenson and Habermas 1990: 137). Many researchers now agree that human blood is on the Shroud, some of which appears to have been transmitted to the cloth by contact with the man. The blood stains in the area of the wrists and forearms, for example, appear to have gotten onto the cloth by the cloth resting upon the bloodied forearms. A problem now arises concerning the tiny fibrils comprising the threads of the blood-impregnated cloth, for these are not torn. It is reasonable to suppose that the blood in contact with the cloth dried, thereby causing the body to stick to the cloth. Three possibilities present themselves: the body rotted, the body was moved, or the body "disappeared," perhaps in the manner conjectured by Jackson and Trenn. The first two possibilities are improbable, however. If the body rotted then each molecule composing it would slowly undergo chemical change, finally resulting in the body falling away in a manner that would not tear the thread fibrils. However, the decomposing body would surely have left some evidence of rot on the cloth lying under the body. Since no rot on the cloth bearing the Image of the back exists, the first possibility is rendered implausible. The second possibility is that the body was removed from the Shroud and perhaps buried in something else. However, the act of removing the body, some parts of which would be stuck to the cloth by the dried blood, would surely tear the blood-impregnated fibrils. The absence of torn fibrils suggests that the body was not taken out of the Shroud. It might be objected here that the body might have been taken out of the Shroud before the blood in contact with the cloth had a chance to dry. But then it is difficult to understand how the detailed image of the man on the Shroud could have been formed, for, according to this suggestion, the man would have been in the Shroud only for only long as it takes blood to dry, probably an hour at most. This response is admittedly speculative, for no mechanism by which the image might have been formed is presently accepted by those most closely associated with research into the Shroud, but it is difficult to conceive of an image forming so quickly that the blood did not have time to dry.<sup>[15]</sup> The third possibility is that the body somehow disappeared, perhaps by weak dematerialization.

Much more could be said about the Shroud and the evidence for and against its being the burial shroud of Jesus. Its primary value for this paper is the way in which it contributes, perhaps unexpectedly, to understanding the evidence that is needed to advance the claim that someone has been brought back to life. We are now in a position to discuss the evidence for the Resurrection.

### *The Traditional Approach to Interpreting the Resurrection*

38. The traditional approach construes the NT accounts of the empty tomb and post-mortem appearances as references to actual events, and attempts to harmonize them into a coherent whole. Implicit in it is the assumption that the Resurrection claim is subject to having evidence brought for or against it in much the way that a resuscitation claim would be subject to evidence. Anything less is seen as denying to the Christian faith its claim to be rooted in history. Well known expositors of this view in recent years are George Ladd (1975), William Lane Craig<sup>16</sup> (1989, 1994), and Gary Habermas (1988, and Moreland 1992).<sup>[16]</sup>

39. Defenders of the traditional view consider Jesus to have been dead when he was placed in his tomb, that his tomb was found empty, that he was seen alive again, and that he lives an immortal and indestructible life. I will briefly review the evidence as interpreted by traditionalists for these four crucial elements.

#### *A. Establishing Death*

40. A number of biblical critics in the nineteenth century questioned whether Jesus actually died by crucifixion, but few seriously consider this possibility now. The NT is now widely considered to provide strong evidence that Jesus was dead when he was taken off the cross. Some who consider the Shroud of Turin to have covered the body of Jesus consider it to provide additional evidence for his death. I will not review this evidence here, but comment on an intriguing implication of the Jackson-Trenn hypothesis concerning the final moments of the earthly life of Jesus.

41. A person usually dies in stages, as each important organ, such as the brain, the heart, and the lungs, no longer fulfills its function in keeping a person alive. The cessation of the unique functions associated with each of these organs has been used to define death over the centuries. However, we know that various cells, for example, those that produce fingernails and hair, continue to grow after these vital organs cease functioning. Eventually all growth comes to an end and the body decays. In the process of decay the molecules that form a physical body undergo chemical change, and become part of the larger universe from which these molecules were originally drawn. The Jackson-Trenn weak dematerialization hypothesis suggests that the process of decay was speeded up dramatically, and carried one step beyond the decay of the molecules comprising the body to include the decay of the atoms themselves. If this theory is correct, then even if the body of Jesus was not dead when it was placed in the Shroud, the conjectured weak dematerialization would bring about a death even more complete than that ordinarily experienced, for it hypothesizes not merely molecular, but atomic dissolution. The Shroud, given the Jackson-Trenn hypothesis, might provide us with better evidence that Jesus died than the evidence supplied by the NT accounts.

#### *B. The Disappearance of the Corpse*

42. In an ideal resuscitation, observers would see a corpse come back to life, so that no doubt would remain either about the fact that the corpse went out of existence or about the identity of the resuscitated person. This condition is not met in the descriptions of the Resurrection, for no eyewitness reports that someone saw the corpse of Jesus metamorphose into a Resurrection body. The apocryphal *Gospel of Peter* almost does this, in its story of two men coming down from heaven, opening the sepulcher in which Jesus was buried, and helping him to walk out. However, this account has not been accorded any authority in the history of the Church. The NT accounts indicate that the objection that the body of Jesus was stolen or moved circulated in the first century, and, as I explained above, finding Jesus's tomb to be empty and his grave clothes abandoned goes only a little way to defend the point that Jesus's corpse went out of existence. Again, the Shroud of Turin could provide stronger evidence than do the reports preserved in the NT.

43. One difficulty the Shroud might be thought to present, on the Jackson-Trenn conjecture of how it was formed, is that it introduces a novel understanding of the Resurrection. On this conjecture, the corpse of Jesus does not come back to life in the way that such people as Lazarus and the widow's son are supposed to have done. Rather, the corpse of Jesus would have gone completely out of existence and another body would have formed to become the resurrected Jesus.<sup>[17]</sup> In reply, we must concede that if this hypothesis were to be accepted, it would revise popular conceptions of the Resurrection. But it would help to make more sense of claim that in the Resurrection Jesus arose from death with a glorious and immortal body, not with the same sort of body he had before his death.

44. Another difficulty with the Jackson-Trenn theory is that it is saddled with establishing the continuity of personal identity between the Jesus who was crucified and the resurrected being. The popular view that construes the resurrected body as "emerging" out of the corpse (which the NT does not adequately support) does not have the problem of establishing the continuity of personal identity. However, I think this problem can be adequately addressed. It requires providing evidence that the usual criteria of continuing personal identity, including continuity of memory, similarity of personality, and perhaps also spatio-temporal continuity between the corpse of Jesus and the resurrected body, are satisfied.

45. We must conclude that the NT does not offer as much evidence that the corpse of Jesus disappeared as a Resurrection claim would appear to require. Again, the Shroud might provide greater evidence. If the image on the Shroud of Turin was formed as Jackson and Trenn conjecture, but the Shroud is not the authentic burial cloth of Jesus, it tantalizingly demonstrates the kind of evidence that is needed, but would be unavailable. The Shroud of Turin, on the assumption that its image was formed by a man who disappeared in a shower of subatomic particles, either provides startling new evidence for the Resurrection claim or exhibits the weakness of the traditional position in an unexpected way. The Shroud also shows that a crucial part of the Resurrection claim cannot be adequately substantiated by texts, but that an object a relic, in this case might do the job.

#### *C. Post-Resurrection Appearances*

46. In an ideal resuscitation the resuscitated body would "emerge" from the corpse and be observed in the public domain to live again. The complete criteria for an event's occurring in the public domain are difficult to establish, but in a case of resuscitation they minimally include the collective, rather than exclusively private, viewing of the resuscitated person, as well as causal traces of the event in the ordinary space-time-causal world. It might be thought that combined sight and touch of an object, which we find in one of Luke's accounts of the post-mortem appearances of Jesus, might do so as well, but many psychiatric researchers regard hallucinations in two sensory modalities to be possible.

47. The NT accounts of the post-Resurrection appearances provide evidence that groups of people, not just individuals, are said to have seen Jesus alive. This counters the claim that all the appearances were hallucinations, as this term is conventionally understood (Wiebe 1997, ch. 7). [18] The NT also offers evidence that the Resurrected Jesus performed acts that left causal effects in the ordinary space-time-causal world. The most noteworthy is the claim that he ate food before his disciples. We are evidently meant to understand that the food disappeared in just the way it does when ordinary people eat food. The *Epistula Apostolorum* offers an equally telling incident, in which Andrew asks Jesus to verify that he is no ghost by leaving an imprint of his foot in the ground (Schneemelcher, 1991: vol. 1, ch. 11). However, the authenticity of this event is not accepted by anyone, to my knowledge.

48. In an ideal resuscitation the resuscitated person would have a consistent appearance, not take on different forms. If Lazarus was indeed resuscitated, he perhaps took on a form that resembled himself shortly before his first death, and he then continued to age in the normal way until he died a second time. We would not expect him to vary substantially in appearance from one day to another. The claim to continuing identity would be challenged by such variations. However, changing appearance is suggested (or even asserted) in the NT with respect to the post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus. [19] The most significant incident concerns the walk to Emmaus described in detail by Luke. The two disciples on their walk are said to have talked about the events of the previous days, including reports of the Resurrection, when they were joined by Jesus. They did not recognize him until they reached their destination and ate with him. Luke's explanation is that their eyes were prevented from recognizing him, but the controversial long ending of Mark evidently preserves this story in the statement: He appeared in a different form to two of them as they walked into the country. Mark's interpretation of the incident as one in which the Resurrection form varied is reinforced by other encounters in which Jesus was not recognized, for instance, by Mary near the tomb, and by his disciples who fished on the Sea of Galilee. Perhaps the doubts about Jesus also mentioned in the gospels, for example, in Matthew's account of his Ascension, also arise from a varying form. However, continuing personal identity does not require unvarying form (or slowly varying form to accommodate normal aging), at least according to most philosophers who have written on this problem. The NT complicates the evidence for the Resurrection from post-Resurrection appearances by suggesting that his form varied, but it supplies enough evidence to forge a plausible case for continuing identity (cf. Wiebe 1997, 135ff).

#### D. Extraordinary Powers

49. The NT accounts attribute new properties to the Resurrected Jesus, inasmuch as he is described by Luke and John as capable of transporting himself instantly and passing through objects normally impervious to ordinary people. These claims are perhaps more intelligible at present than at any previous time, for we now understand more about the structure of matter, includes its permeability. Such remarkable powers are crucial for defending the claim that his Resurrection resulted in an immortal and glorious life, and they simultaneously indicate that his was no resuscitation.

#### Evaluation of the Traditional Interpretation

50. The evidence for the Resurrection is not as complete as traditional defenders have often claimed, as the preceding discussion has shown. A considerable amount of circumstantial evidence for the Resurrection can be adduced if we take the NT accounts as reports of events, but even this interpretive strategy will not quite do the job. Perhaps the early Church's confidence in the Resurrection was dependent upon additional evidence available to the first disciples that was not included in the extant texts. The two most important challenges facing the traditional view, in my opinion, is showing that the corpse of Jesus went out of existence and that appearances took place in the public domain.

#### Other Interpretations of the Resurrection

51. Many critiques of the traditional approach have been developed in the last half-century or so. These are too numerous to discuss here, but I will outline several important responses and briefly comment on how they challenge the default view.

52. Sebastian Moore noted already several decades ago (1980) that a shift had taken place in NT criticism, for so-called "objective" questions about the stone at the sepulcher of Jesus or what had become of his body had been replaced by "subjective" questions, such as what was happening in the minds of the disciples who said, "The Lord is risen." Moore noted that questions were also being raised about whether the appearance stories expressed the faith of those disciples rather than described experiences giving rise to faith. In keeping with this approach, Joseph Grassi suggested a nonliteral interpretation of the story of Jesus appearing to two disciples as they walked to Emmaus (1964). He says this story might be not an attempt to narrate an event, but to teach that Jesus is always present to the Christian through the preaching of the Word and the breaking of bread, especially when these are done by a traveling apostle. A recent example of a nonliteral interpretation of the Resurrection is provided by John Spong (1994). He offers an interpretation of the gospel narratives that reworks them using the method of Jewish midrash, so that they express themes in Jewish life. So the Resurrection and the post-Resurrection appearance "accounts" are reconstructed in relation to the Feast of Tabernacles, described in the Old Testament and part of Jewish religious practice. Martin Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann are often credited with having deflected attention away from the events that were supposedly reported in the texts, and onto the texts themselves. The most significant difficulty for the non-literal approach, as I see it, is the way it conflicts with the interpretation placed upon the Resurrection by the Church of the first three centuries. Such Church fathers as Ignatius, Justin, Clement of Rome, and Tertullian regarded the accounts of the Resurrection as reports of events.

53. Karl Barth is often associated with the "eschatological interpretation" of the Resurrection, although his views changed over the course of his life. This interpretation minimizes the significance of historical evidence. Barth held that the Resurrection occurred in time and consequently is historical, but he also held that it could only be grasped in the category of divine revelation and so is not historical. He considered the appearance narratives not to be history in the usual sense, but stories written in the poetical style of historical saga, dealing with an eschatological event beyond the reach of historical criticism (1960: vol. 3, pt. 2, 452). D. F. Ford says that Barth was not interested in developing either a natural theology or an apologetic for Christian faith, and so was content to interpret the Bible primarily using literary and typological categories (1979: 68f). However, the factuality of the Resurrection was important for Barth, and so he treated accounts of it like realistic novel. Although he did not think that the Gospels were biographies of the life of Jesus, he did not think they were devoid of historical reference. Barth did not want close inquiry into such claims as that Jesus appeared for forty days, maintaining that to do so "can only mean the leading away into a Babylonian captivity in which there is no attestation to this event (1960: vol. 3, pt. 2, 149-150)."

54. If Barth had been dealing with a resuscitation claim he would not have been able to exempt it from historical criticism, but would have been required to scrutinize all of the elements needed to make such a claim plausible. The question facing the eschatological interpretation is what evidential components of a Resurrection claim can be exempted from critical scrutiny. Barth did not want to examine the evidence that Jesus appeared for forty days, but would he have allowed an examination of the claim that Jesus died? That his corpse did not continue to exist? That he appeared at least once? That he bore some resemblance in his post-Resurrection form to his pre-Crucifixion appearance? And so on. Failing to specify the exemptions involved in treating the Resurrection claim as eschatological renders it ambiguous at best, and inferior to ordinary historical claims at worst. The value of considering the evidence needed for resuscitation is that it puts into sharper relief the evidential issues associated with the Resurrection, and demands that defenders of the eschatological view outline their position on evidence.

55. The final interpretive view I will briefly discuss is perhaps the most influential now. The many puzzling and conflicting elements in the post-Resurrection narratives are ingeniously evaluated using critical tools, including those of form, genre, redaction, and historical criticism. The relevant texts are often evaluated in chronological order, and later texts are interpreted in the light of earlier ones. Therefore, Paul's sketchy account of witnesses to the Resurrection in I Corinthians 15 is examined first, then the synoptic gospels and Acts, and finally the gospel of John. A common conclusion is that two early traditions existed, one of which reported only an empty tomb while the other reported only appearances. Many ingenious critical reconstructions of likely events can be found in a literature that is large and growing, but I will briefly mention only three.

56. Raymond Brown advances a position that questions the default view in only modest ways (1973). He does not think the Resurrection was so corporeal and physical that Jesus was just as tangible as he was during his lifetime. But he holds that a special kind of corporeal resurrection took place, causing the risen body of Jesus to be translated into an eschatological sphere, so that it was no longer bound by space and time, and no longer marked by the physical properties that characterized his earthly existence. Brown accepts that the tomb was found empty, and that the disciples' faith was evoked by the appearances, but he does not think that the narratives need to be harmonized.

57. Wolfhart Pannenberg interprets the appearances completely in the light of Paul's account of appearances in I Corinthians 15 (1968). He says that the appearances of Jesus are from heaven, not encounters that took place on earth, and considers that the appearances might be light phenomena accompanied by auditions. He considers the corporeal accounts in which Jesus was touched and seen to eat to be nonhistorical. Although Pannenberg considers the appearances as visionary in character, he rejects the idea that these experiences were wholly subjective, and claims that some kind of extrasubjective reality was encountered. Pannenberg also advances the historicity of the Resurrection as reasonable.

58. According to Gerd Ludemann's recent reconstruction of the Resurrection, the corpse of Jesus is said never to have disappeared, although the tomb might have been reported empty (1994: 180). Ludemann takes the appearances to be visions, the first one of which was experienced by Peter. Peter's vision then became infectious, and other disciples experienced similar visions. Ludemann maintains that "the original seeing of the Easter witnesses was a seeing in the spirit and not the seeing of a revived corpse" (1994: 163). Like Bultmann, he considers the scientific picture of the world to have removed the literal meaning of the traditional interpretation of the universe.

59. These views are merely illustrative of the numerous ways in which various components of the default position have been and continue to be critically evaluated. The appearances reported in the NT have come under particularly strong scrutiny. The ingenuity exhibited in various analyses is both intriguing and disheartening. It is disheartening because no criteria for determining what alleged NT events should be considered authentic seem to command assent. The particulars that are questioned seem to range over all the evidence needed to advance an Resurrection, e.g., whether the tomb was empty; whether the Resurrection body was capable of being seen with the human eye; whether the Resurrection body was capable of being seen collectively; whether the Resurrection body was seen on earth; etc.

60. These qualifications to the default view are significant, especially when viewed against the kind of evidence needed for resuscitation. As we have already seen, the evidence for the Resurrection is incomplete even on the assumptions made by defenders of the traditional view. Elimination of significant additional components threatens to weaken this evidence so that the point is quickly reached where we must call its reasonableness into question. For example, Pannenberg *asserts* that the Resurrection claim is reasonable although he calls into question a significant number of components of the default view. He does not *defend* the reasonableness of this claim, however, by considering the amount of evidence left to him to make good his contention. I suggest that he does not recognize this need because he has not considered the evidence that would be needed to make a resuscitation claim. Ludemann, on the other hand, recognizes that his critical reconstruction requires one to conclude that the Resurrection cannot be understood in a literal sense (1994: 180).

61. The value to critical reconstructionists of examining the evidential requirements for a resuscitation is that it demonstrates that any significant departure from the default position on the Resurrection, which is already very vulnerable, renders it untenable as traditionally understood.

### Conclusion

62. Theologians of a traditional persuasion have generally claimed more evidence for the Resurrection than that to which they are entitled because they seldom dispassionately examine what would be needed for claiming that anyone has come back to life. When faced by arguments that undermine the historicity of the Resurrection, some have retreated to the safe contention that the presence of the Risen Jesus can be felt in a way that makes rational argument superfluous. I would not deny this sense of presence, but without evidence for what looks ever so much like a historical claim, one is hard pressed to explain what it is about certain states of mind that allows them to be identified as the felt presence of the Risen Jesus.

63. Two important sources of evidence need to be considered more closely by those who wish to defend something like a traditional interpretation of the Resurrection. The Shroud of Turin is one of these, given its value in possibly showing that Jesus died and that his corpse disappeared. The second of these is experiences described by people as encounters with the living Christ. The latter are particularly important for corroborating the NT claim that Jesus was seen after his death, and that he possesses the remarkable powers appropriate to an immortal and glorious being. In *Visions of Jesus*, I related my interviews with thirty people who reported direct encounters with a being they considered to be the resurrected Christ. A number of these experiences had features we find in the NT appearance narratives, including the kinds of powers, such as the power to heal, that one might associate with someone immortal and glorious. Such encounters, combined with the Shroud of Turin, could provide people of the twenty-first century with an evidential basis for the Resurrection that rivals, perhaps even exceeds, the evidence that was available in the first century when this bold and radical faith was born.

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#### ENDNOTES

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- [1]. I acknowledge helpful comments from reviewers for this journal.
- [2]. Extensive debates occurred among Carl Hempel, Rudolf Carnap and Karl Popper, and their defenders, about criteria for asserting that something is evidence for a hypothesis, and also the amount of confirming evidence, these debates were inconclusive on many points (cf. Hempel 1965, Carnap 1962, and Popper 1968 for literature that spawned much discussion).
- [3]. This definition of death is now under scrutiny, because of experiences in which people have revived who were deemed brain-dead and were about to have their organs harvested. D. Alan Shewmon (1997) has recently described the basis for revising his view.
- [4]. Healing has been reported in connection with near-death experiences, thus contributing to the mystery associated with them (Koerner 1997: 64).
- [5]. This was Mary Magdalena's question to the unknown person outside the tomb. Contemporary scholarship has called this incident, like many of the appearance accounts, into question. The traditional view is that no one had the means, the motive, and the opportunity to move the body of Jesus. However, if John Pilch is correct in asserting that the practice of venerating holy men at their tombs goes back 4000 years in Mediterranean cultures (1998), some of those who were appalled at the thought that Jesus might be venerated in this way had a motive to move his body.
- [6]. Cremation does not quite do this, for we are left with a pile of ashes that are the "remains" of a person, not to mention the gases given off during cremation.
- [7]. Recluses can even be found in urban areas, but they seem to be rare, as the following example suggests. A national newspaper recently reported that the skeletal remains of a man in Germany were found in his home some five years after his death. He had evidently died seated before his television set. He apparently had no friends or interested family to check on him. His bills were all paid automatically by his bank, so that mail did not accumulate, which might have alerted his neighbors. His original next door neighbors moved away shortly after his death without trying to say goodbye, and the new occupants thought his house was vacant. We can *imagine* that this man was resuscitated a month after his (first) death, continued living as a recluse for a month or two, and then died again! But who would advance such a flight of fancy in the absence of any evidence?!
- [8]. An objector might insist that nothing is *required* for resuscitations, for we have no familiarity with them, and hence cannot produce reliable empirically obtained conditions. This (Wittgensteinian) remark has the merit of reminding us how devoid we are of collective experiences for developing interrelated concepts and criteria appropriate to resuscitation. But it minimizes human ingenuity and creativity, in my opinion, and also overlooks the fact that oddities exist in nature.
- [9]. The widely held intuitive response to this kind of event, while not expressing an indubitable epistemic principle, is the point from which critical analysis must begin, in my opinion. This is in keeping with allowing epistemology to take "the naturalistic turn."
- [10]. Although this claim can never be established beyond all doubt, it can be rendered highly probable.

[11]. The claim about the Assumption of the Virgin Mary is weakened by the paucity of evidence concerning the disappearing of her corpse. Marian apparitions provide very little evidence for the Assumption, for without evidence that her corpse no longer exists, the cumulative effect is lost.

[12]. Herodotus (*The History*: bk. IV, ch.14) tells the story of Aristeas of Proconnesus, said to have dropped dead in a fuller's shop. The fuller went to the relatives of Aristeas to tell them what happened, but a man from Cyzicus who said he had seen Aristeas after his death contradicted his report. The relatives went to the fuller's shop to retrieve the corpse, but it could not be found. Seven years later Aristeas reappeared. Someone might be tempted to advance this "tale" as evidence for a resuscitation, but the vulnerable point is the alleged death of Aristeas. Herodotus does not indicate why he was taken for dead, but I surmise that some people in the ancient world wanted to "disappear for a while," just as they do today.

[13]. Items of evidence whose cumulative effect is greater than the mere sum of the individual items are usually interdependent, which means that standard methods of evaluating evidence, such as that provided by the probability calculus, cannot be applied in a simple way. Also, when items have uncertain evidential value, their relevance is only probable. So we end up with probabilities at two levels, which greatly compounds the assessment of evidential force.

[14]. The possibility that the Shroud was irradiated by neutrons was briefly discussed by physicists Thomas Phillips (1989) and R. E. M. Hedges (1989).

[15]. Ian Wilson has discussed the remarkable images of plants resulting from having been pressed undisturbed for many decades (1988: 114f). These images are very detailed and three-dimensional, but they took many years to be produced.

[16]. The twelve reasons that Habermas and Moreland (1992) identify for advancing the Resurrection fall into the categories identified above.

[17]. Aquinas holds that for a resurrection to occur, it is necessary for the selfsame soul to be united to the selfsame body (*Summa Theologica*, Pt. 3 supp. Q. 79, Art. 2). He requires that "essential and organic parts," of a body retain their position at the resurrection, but not the "accidental parts," such as hair and fingernails (Art. 3). The Jackson-Trenn hypothesis appears to be compatible with the Thomist view of continuing identity, which is much stronger than that normally advanced for continuing personal identity by modern philosophers.

[18]. John Pilch argues (1998) that the post-Resurrection appearances all occurred in altered states of consciousness. I contest this position in Wiebe (2001).

[19]. Post-Scriptural Christian tradition has strongly resisted this possibility, perhaps because of gnostic sympathy to it, and has insisted, for instances, that all appearances and authentic visions of Jesus must have him exhibit his stigmata (cf. Pagels 1979).

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