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**Ramm, Bernard.** Christian apologist and philosopher Bernard Ramm (1916–1992) was born in Butte, Montana. Ramm began his academic career in 1943 at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (now Biola University). He finished his career at the American Baptist Seminary of the West (1959–74; 1978–86). Ramm was author of eighteen books and more than 100 articles and reviews. His works on apologetics include: *Problems in Christian Apologetics* (1949); *Protestant Christian Evidences* (1953); *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (1954); “The Evidence of Prophecy and Miracle” in Carl F. H. Henry, ed., *Revelation and the Bible* (1958); *Varieties of Christian Apologetics* (1962); and *The Witness of the Spirit* (1959). *The God Who Makes a Difference* (1972) was his major apologetic work.

**Ramm’s Apologetic Approach.** Although Ramm’s earlier approach stressed the evidences for Christianity, his mature view was a form of presuppositionalism similar to that of Edward John Carnell. His logical starting point was akin to the scientific method.

**Rejection of Theistic Arguments.** Like other presuppositionalists Ramm rejected traditional theistic arguments for God’s existence. He offered three reasons: First, God cannot be known apart from faith (*Witness of the Spirit*, 82–83). Second, the noetic effects of sin prevent theistic proofs from being effective (*Protestant Christian Evidences*, 29). Third, such proofs are abstract and do not reach the God of revelation (ibid., 41–42; cf. *Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, 101–4).

Ramm concluded that “The philosophical approach to the existence of God and the biblical approach to the reality of the living God are fundamentally different” (*God Who Makes a Difference*, 104). Indeed, “we can say epigrammatically that the proof of the existence of God is Holy Scripture if we know what we are saying.” He explains: “This statement presumes an understanding of Scripture as the vicarious representative of historical events of God’s action and God’s word. Through the use of such events and words the Spirit of God makes God the Reality that he is to us” (ibid., 105). We know God exists, Ramm is saying, not because of any philosophical proofs, but because he acts in history as Scripture attests.

**Logical Starting Point.** Ramm believed one should survey the options, commit to a hypothesis, and then test it. He held that progress in knowledge is possible only if one moves from facts to some theory or hypothesis that integrates and explains the facts (*Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, 32).

The content of Ramm’s choice of presuppositions was: “The Christian religion is the redemptive and revelatory work of the Holy Spirit which reaches its highest expression in revelation and redemption in the Incarnation of God in Christ; and this religion is preserved for all ages and is witnessed for all ages in the inspired Holy Scripture” (ibid., 33).

**Verification of the Presupposition.** According to Ramm, there are three concentric circles of verification. These represent three stages in the confirmation of the Christian truth claim.

**Internal witness.** In the first circle of verification the sinner hears the Gospel and is convinced of its truth by the Holy Spirit. The primary verification of religion must be internal and spiritual, or verification is by a process alien to religion (ibid., 44). This persuasive influence of the Holy Spirit is inward but not subjective (see HOLY SPIRIT, ROLE IN APOLOGETICS).

**God’s action in history.** Ramm affirmed that the primary function of Christian evidences is to provide a favorable reception for the Gospel. These evidences are not the Gospel and do not replace it. God’s action in history, the second circle, verifies that the biblical God makes a difference and “does come into our time, our history, our space, our cosmos. . . . Because God makes this difference, we know that we are believing truth and not fiction or mere religious philosophy” (ibid., 57).

Thus, Christianity is confirmed by objective facts. Miracles and fulfilled prophecies provide the best evidence (see PROPHECY, AS PROOF OF THE BIBLE). “Evidentialists believe that the evidences do establish the divine origin of the Christian faith” (*God Who Makes a Difference*, 55). Supernatural events validate the theological. Revelation is tested by reason.

**Adequacy of worldview.** Christianity is also tested by its ability to provide a synoptic vision of the whole of the world, humankind, and God. The third circle is that Christianity is true because its principles make the most sense out of life and the world. A worldview is “That pattern or that picture which has the most appeal to him, that puts things together for him in the most meaningful way” (ibid., 60). “A responsible synoptic vision” must have taken into account the facts, must be testable from some kind of criteria, and must be internally coherent (ibid., 67).

These criteria are similar to factual fit and logical consistency proposed by Carnell. Carnell is convinced of the validity of the law of noncontradiction (see FIRST PRINCIPLES). It is a necessary test for truth. Indeed, we cannot think without it (ibid., 68–69; *Protestant Christian Evidences*, 41, 54). However, Ramm does not put the kind of emphasis on logic equal to that of such presuppositionalists as Gordon Clark.

**The Question of Certainty.** Ramm distinguished between certainty and certitude. He believed that (1) through Scripture and the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, a Christian may have full spiritual certitude that God is, that Christ is his Lord and Savior, that he is a child of God. The word *probably* is unneeded to answer these questions. Further, (2) Christian faith is a matter of history. Historical facts cannot be known with certainty, but they can be known with a high degree of probability. (3) Christians then rest their faith in full certitude, believing in the objective historical and factual basis of the Christian revelation with a high degree of probability (Carnell, *Philosophy*, 73).

So, the Christian “is convinced of the truth of his faith by the witness of the Spirit. He is convinced of the truth of his faith by the actions of the living God in the Cosmos which make a difference. And he is a Christian because he believes that the Christian faith gives him the most adequate synoptic vision there is with reference to man, humanity, the world, and God” (ibid., 61).

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**Rand, Ayn.** Ayn Rand (1905–1977) was an atheist ( *see* ATHEISM ) writer and intellectual. Born in Russia and educated at the University of Leningrad, Rand emigrated to the United States in 1926. Her most important works, written during the late 1950s and early 1960s, included *Atlas Shrugged* , *For the New Intellectual* , *Fountainhead* , and *The Virtue of Selfishness* (1961).

**Influences on Rand.** Rand’s philosophy, called Objectivism, combined elements from Aristotelian rationalism ( *see* ARISTOTLE ), Nietzschean atheism ( *see* NIETZSCHE, FRIEDRICH ), Adam Smith’s capitalism, Sigmund Freud’s illusionism, and hedonistic egoism. She populated her novels with heroic men and women who, by their courage and independence, changed the face of the earth.

Some philosophers earned Rand’s scorn. She considered W. F. G. Hegel “a witch doctor,” castigated Immanuel Kant for his deleterious influence on modern thought, and branded the pragmatism of William James “neo-mystic.” She decried the philosophy of Karl Marx as pure

materialism which proclaimed that “mind does not exist, that everything is matter” ( *For the New Intellectual* , 32–34).

**Rand’s Beliefs. Atheism.** Rand created her own unique form of optimistic and egocentric atheism. She wrote: “I raise this god over the earth, this god whom men have sought since men came into being, this god who will grant them joy and peace and pride. This god, this one word: I” (ibid., 65).

With Freud she saw belief in God as an illusion: “And that is the whole of their shabby secret,” she wrote. “The secret is all their esoteric philosophies, all their dialectics and super-senses, . . . is to erect upon that plastic fog a single holy absolute: their Wish” (ibid., 149). Rand chides all believers that “those irrational wishes that draw you to their creed, those emotions you worship as an idol, on whose altar you sacrifice the earth, that dark, incoherent passion within you, which you take as the voice of God or of your glands, is nothing more than the corpse of your mind” (ibid., 151).

Rand does not deny that some people feel that they experience God. She only asserts that “When a mystic ( *see* MYSTICISM ) declares that he feels the existence of a power superior to reason, he feels it all right, but that power is not an omniscient super-spirit of the universe. It is the consciousness of any passer-by to whom he has surrendered his own” (ibid., 161). What prompts such surrender? “A mystic is driven by the lure to impress, to cheat, to flatter, to deceive, to force that omnipotent consciousness on others” (ibid.).

“Faith in the supernatural begins as faith in the superiority of others,” Rand avers (ibid.). There is no conscious, rational being other than the human. “Man is the only living species who has to perceive reality—which means to be *conscious* —by choice” (ibid., 5).

Following the First Law of Thermodynamics ( *see* THERMODYNAMICS, LAWS OF ), Rand declared that life spontaneously generated itself from eternal matter ( *see* EVOLUTION, CHEMICAL ): “Matter is indestructible; it changes its forms, but it cannot cease to exist.” It is only “a living organism that faces a constant alternative: the issue of life or death” ( *Virtue of Selfishness* , 15). Life was not created but was self-generated ( *see* EVOLUTION, BIOLOGICAL ). “Life is a process of self-sustaining and self-generated action” (ibid.).

**Human Beings.** According to Rand, humanity is distinguished from other living species in that the human consciousness is volitional (ibid., 19–20). Further, “to think, to feel, to judge, to act are functions of the ego” ( *For the New Intellectual* , 78). Unlike animals, humankind has the ability to make “conceptions” (ibid., 14). Indeed, the mind is the only human weapon (ibid., 78). Rand adds, “Your mind is your only judge of truth—and if others dissent from your verdict, reality is the court of final appeal” (ibid., 126).

A human being, as Aristotle said, is a rational animal. But thinking is not automatic nor instinctive. The laws of logic are needed to direct thinking ( *Virtue of Selfishness* , 21–22).

**The Nature of Truth.** Truth is what corresponds to reality. In Rand’s words, “Truth is the recognition of reality; reason, man’s only means of knowledge, is his only standard of truth”

(ibid.). Indeed, “moral perfection is an unbreached rationality, . . . the acceptance of reason as an absolute” (ibid., 178–79). Hence, truth is objective. It must be measured by the real world. And human reason is the only way to attain truth ( *see* RATIONALISM ).

*The Virtue of Selfishness.* Altruism demands that people live for others and place others above themselves. But no one can live for another, truly sharing the spirit (ibid., 79–80). Hence, morality should teach people, not how to suffer, but how to enjoy and live (ibid., 123). Indeed, “The creed of sacrifice is a morality for the immoral—a morality that declares its own bankruptcy by confessing that it can’t impart to men any personal stake in virtue or values, and that their souls are sewers of depravity, which must be taught to sacrifice” (ibid., 141).

If we choose to love others, they must earn it. Rand wrote that she would not love someone else without reason: “I am neither foe nor friend to my brothers, but such as each of them shall deserve of me. And to earn my love, my brothers must do more than to have been born” (ibid., 65).

Based on her precept that the only god worthy of worship is one’s self, Rand propounds one “ultimate value”: “An organism’s life is its *standard of value*; That which furthers its life is the *good* ; that which threatens it is the *evil* ” (ibid., 17). She opposed a pragmatism that dismissed all absolute principles and standards ( *For the New Intellectual* , 34). “The Objectivist ethics holds man’s life as the *standard of value*—and *his own life* as the ethical *purpose* of every individual man” ( *Virtue of Selfishness* , 25). “No value is higher than self-esteem” ( *For the New Intellectual* , 176). Thus, “every ‘ *is* ’ implies an ‘ *ought* ’ ” (ibid., 22).

*Utopian Goal.* As a capitalist who had fled the USSR, Rand resisted the arguments pressed by communism ( *see* MARX, KARL ). For when it is said “that capitalism has had its chance and has failed, let them remember that what ultimately failed was a ‘mixed’ economy, that the controls were the cause of the failure” (ibid., 53). If “the original American system, *Capitalism* ” were practiced in its pristine purity, a kind of hedonistic utopia would emerge ( *Virtue of Selfishness* , 33). The ones who were the real conquerors of life’s physical realities, she said, were not those who were able to put up with their surroundings, sleeping on their bed of nails, but those who found the way to trade their bed of nails for an innerspring mattress ( *For the New Intellectual* , 170).

**Evaluation. Positive Contributions.** The philosophy of objectivism has insights. Traditional theists can agree with some of her ideas.

As an objectivist, Rand defended an objectively real world. She embraced realism and was an incisive critic of mushy forms of subjectivism, existentialism , and mysticism that dominate contemporary thought. Rand emphasized reason and the objectivity of truth ( *see* TRUTH, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF ). Truth is not putty to be shaped as we wish. It is hard reality.

Rand strongly defended the validity of the laws of logic ( *see* LOGIC ; FIRST PRINCIPLES ). Her emphasis on reason to test the truth and know reality was a welcome corrective to the irrational strain in contemporary philosophy. Rare as an atheist, Rand does not eschew absolutes

( *see* MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF ). She embraced at least the absolute value of human life. Again, this is welcomed by theism .

Rand correctly took Marxism ( *see* MARX, KARL ) to task for its skewed economics and its pure materialism.

*Negative Features.* Some of the difficulties with Rand’s philosophy can be noted in such articles as ATHEISM ; EVOLUTION, BIOLOGICAL ; FREUD, SIGMUND ; HUMANISM, SECULAR , and MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF . On the inadequacy of naturalism, see MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST .

Like most atheists, Rand creates substitutes for God. She even speaks of “the grace of Reality” (God?). She argues that it is “By the grace of reality and the nature of life, [that] man—every man—is an end in himself” (ibid., 123). This is particularly ironic, since it is by the grace of the Ultimate (reality) that each individual is made ultimate.

While criticizing Marxist materialism , she seems unaware that her own materialism is similar. She believes that only matter is eternal and indestructible. If so, then in the final analysis, mind and reason—which she treasures, must be reduced to matter. And thought has no more reality than a chemical process.

Although Rand speaks of the superiority of mind over matter, her materialistic philosophy does not really allow for such a distinction. Mind also is reducible to, and totally dependent on, matter. How then can it be superior to it? Further, the origin of mind is matter. In the beginning, matter produced mind. But how can the effect be greater than the cause. This violates everything reason tells us about reality—the very method she hails for discovering truth.

Her argument for atheism is dependent on a univocal view of being which she never defends ( *see* ANALOGY ). It is commendable that Rand, as an atheist, speaks of objective and ultimate truth. However, Augustine argued that there can be no absolute truth apart from God. Truth is what is known by a mind, and absolute truth must reside ultimately in an Absolute Mind (= God). But Rand’s atheism rejects any Absolute Mind.

A positive dimension of Rand’s thought leads to theism, not to the atheism she professes. For she claims that one has an absolute moral obligation or duty. But absolute prescriptions are only possible if there is an Absolute Prescriber ( *see* MORAL ARGUMENT FOR GOD ). Absolute moral laws can come only from an Absolute Moral Law Giver (= God). The only logical conclusion for an atheist is to deny all moral absolutes, as did Nietzsche and Jean Paul Sartre.

Rand said plainly that “every ‘ *is* ’ implies an ‘ *ought* ’ ” (ibid., 22). But as any good text on logic will inform us, this is a fallacy of reasoning. Just because something is, does not mean that it ought to be. The descriptive is not the basis of the prescriptive. Like other atheists who deny all (or all but one) absolute, Rand inevitably slips into others. For example, she insists that “no man may initiate . . . the use of physical force against others” (ibid., 134). Her stress on reason makes it clear that she also believes that “Everyone should always be rational.” Indeed, her ethical

egoism yields the absolute that “Everyone should always respect the rights of others.” And life is such a fundamental right.

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**Rational Presuppositionalism.** See **APOLOGETICS, PRESUPPOSITIONAL ; CLARK, GORDON .**

**Rationalism.** *Rationalism* as a philosophy stresses reason as the means of determining truth. Mind is given authority over senses, the *a priori* over the *a posteriori* . Rationalists are usually foundationalists ( see FOUNDATIONALISM ), who affirm that there are first principles of knowledge, without which no knowledge is possible (see below). For a rationalist, reason arbitrates truth, and truth is objective ( see TRUTH, NATURE OF ).

Although Aristotle (384–322 B.C. ) believed that knowledge began in the senses, his stress on reason and logic made him the father of Western rationalism. René Descartes (1596–1650), Benedict Spinoza (1632–1677), and Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716) were the chief modern rationalists.

Most worldviews have at least one major rationalist proponent. Leibniz embraced theism . Spinoza held to pantheism . Ayn Rand (1905–1977) professed atheism . Most deists ( see DEISM ) held some form of rationalism. Even pantheism is represented by strong rationalistic proponents, such as Charles Hartshorne (b. 1897). Finite godism has been rationally defended by John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) and others.

The reason that various worldviews all have forms of rationalism is that rationalism is an epistemology, whereas a worldview is an aspect of metaphysics. Rationalism is a means of discerning truth, and most worldviews have exponents who use it to determine and defend truth as they see it.

**Central Premises. Premises Shared by Rationalists.** Some ideas are common to virtually all rationalists. These include the following factors, even though some rationalists defend them, modify them, or limit them in ways others do not.

**Foundationalism.** Foundationalism believes that there are first principles of all knowledge, such as the principle of noncontradiction, the principle of identity, and the principle of the excluded middle ( see LOGIC ). Certain foundationalists believe there are other principles, either the principle of sufficient reason ( see SUFFICIENT REASON, PRINCIPLE OF ) or the principle of causality ( see CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF ). All rationalists are foundationalists, and all foundationalists believe in some foundational principles.

**Objectivism.** Rationalists also believe that there is an objective reality and that it can be known by human reason. This distinguishes them from mysticism , existentialism , and other forms of subjectivism. For a rationalist, the real is rational, and reason is the means of determining what is real.

**Exclusivism.** Rationalists are also exclusivists. They believe that mutually exclusive opposites cannot both be true. According to the law of noncontradiction, if atheism is true, then all nonatheism is false. If Christianity is true, then all non-Christian systems are false. But opposite truth claims cannot both be true ( see PLURALISM, RELIGIOUS ; WORLD RELIGIONS, CHRISTIANITY AND ).

**A Priorism.** All rationalists believe there is an *a priori* element to knowledge. Reason is in some sense independent of experience. Even rationalists who are also empiricists (for example, Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle , and Leibniz ), believe that there is nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses except the mind itself. Without this *a priori* (independent of experience) dimension to knowledge, nothing could be known.

**Differences among Rationalists. The role of the senses.** Some rationalists downplay, if not negate, any determinative role of the senses in the knowing process. They stress the rational exclusively. Spinoza is an example of this view. Others combine senses and reason, such as Aquinas and Leibniz. The former are more deductive in their approach to learning truth; the latter are more inductive and inferential.

**The limits of reason.** A crucial difference among rationalists is found in the scope of reason. Some rationalists, such as Spinoza, give reason an all-encompassing scope. It is the sole means of determining truth. Others, such as Aquinas, believe reason is capable of discovering some truths (for example, the existence of God), but not all truth (for example, the Trinity ). Those in the latter category believe that there are truths that are in accord with reason and some that go beyond reason. Even the latter are not *contrary* to reason. They simply are *beyond* the ability of reason to attain on its own. They can be known only from special revelation ( see REVELATION, SPECIAL ).

**Evaluation.** Rationalism as a whole has both positive and negative dimensions for an apologist. Unlimited rationalism that denies all special revelation, obviously is unacceptable for a theist ( see BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR ; FAITH AND REASON ). Nor is any form of rationalism that denies theism in accord with orthodox Christianity.

However, foundationalism's stress on the need for first principles, is both true and valuable. Also valuable is the belief in objective truth. The rationalist's emphasis on the exclusive nature of truth claims is also a benefit to Christian apologetics.

From a Christian perspective, the rationalist theologian Jonathan Edwards made an important distinction: All truth is given by revelation, either general or special, and it must be received by reason. Reason is the God-given means for discovering the truth that God discloses, whether in his world or his Word. While God wants to reach the heart with truth, he does not bypass the mind along the way. In this modified sense, there is great value in Christian rationalism.

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**Realism.** *Realism* is the view that there is a reality external to our minds that we can know ( *see* EPISTEMOLOGY ). This view is opposed by skepticism, agnosticism, and solipsism. Christian realists believe that there is an infinite Spirit (God) and a real, finite world, comprised of both spirits (angels) and human beings. In contrast to dualism, realists believe that the all finite beings are created and not eternal. Contrary to idealists (e.g., George Berkeley), they believe that there is a real, extra-mental, material world.

Realists also believe that there is a correspondence between thought and thing, between the mind and reality ( *see* TRUTH, NATURE OF ). For classical realists, such as Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, this correspondence is made possible by means of first principles of knowledge. Since Immanuel Kant it has been customary to distinguish critical realism from classical realism. The former begins with the premise that we know the real world, and the latter senses an obligation to prove we do. To state it differently, the post-Kantian realist sees a need to address Kant's agnosticism, since the Kantians do not believe we can know reality.

**Knowledge of Reality.** What is at question is whether our thoughts correspond to the real world. Or, more basically, whether the principles by which we know are adapted to reality. Without such principles of knowledge, classical realists believe that our knowledge of the real world is impossible. Aristotle and Aquinas, for example, held that there are undeniable first principles by which the real world can be known.

Classical realists believe first principles are self-evident. That is, once the terms are known, it is clear to a rational mind that they are true. For example, once we know what *wife* means and what *married women* means, it is self-evident that "All wives are married women." However, for classical realists such as Aquinas, self-evident does not necessarily mean *a priori* or independent of experience. For the realists, first principles are known because the mind knows reality. In fact, these epistemological principles have an ontological basis in reality.

Without such valid principles of knowing reality, it is impossible to really know. There must be a relationship between thought and thing, between the principles of knowledge and the object of knowledge. But what is it, and how can it be established? This is the critical problem for a critical realist.

**First Principles and Reality.** By "reality" a realist means not only the mind, but the extra-mental realm as well. Reality is that which is. It is all that is. Reality is being, and nonreality is nonbeing. For the classical realists it was sufficient *that* we know being (or that we know that we know being) and that in reality our knowledge of first principles is based in our most fundamental knowledge of being. As Eric Mascall pointedly observed, it is as unnecessary to expound one's epistemology before beginning to talk about God as it is to understand human physiology before beginning to walk (Mascall, 45). Aristotle and Aquinas saw no need to justify this knowledge any more than one could directly demonstrate a first principle. They are self-evident. We know that they are true, even before we can explain why they are true. That something exists is known by direct intuition. It is obvious and immediate. This is not to say that there is no way to defend first principles but to note that they are self-evident, once the terms are properly known.

**The Undeniability of First Principles.** As was shown in the article First Principles, these precepts are undeniable or reducible to the undeniable. That is, one cannot deny them without using them. For example, the principle of noncontradiction cannot be denied without using it in the very denial. The statement, "Opposites can be true" assumes that the opposite of that statement cannot be true. While most would grant this, not all skeptics grant that the principle of causality, which is crucial in all cosmological arguments for God, is an undeniable first principle. Not every skeptic admits that something exists. Thus, it is necessary to comment on their undeniability ( *see* VERIFIABILITY STRATEGIES ).

The statement "I exist" is undeniable. Were I to say, "I do not exist," I would have to exist in order to say it. In explicitly denying my existence, I implicitly affirm it. Likewise, one cannot deny that reality is knowable. For the affirmation that reality is not knowable is itself an assertion of knowledge about reality. Total agnosticism is self-defeating.

Realism, then, is unavoidable. The fact that we are sometimes mistaken or deceived about reality does not negate all knowledge of it. Indeed, it requires it. For we could not know an illusion unless it was seen on the backdrop of reality.

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### **Redaction Criticism, New Testament. See BIBLE CRITICISM .**

**Redaction Criticism, Old Testament.** A *redactor* edits or changes a text composed by another. Redaction criticism of the Bible claims that subsequent editors (redactors) changed the text of Scripture. If such alleged changes were substantial, it would seriously damage the credibility of Scripture ( *see* BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR ). We could not be sure what was in the original text. For redaction critical views regarding the New Testament, see the article BIBLE CRITICISM .

**Nature of Redaction Views.** Redaction views are held by both evangelicals and non-evangelicals. The latter are more radical in their assertion of the kinds of changes they believe have occurred in the text.

**Radical Views.** Emanuel Tov is often quoted in support of the redacted-canon view. On the alleged redactions of Jeremiah, he argued that both minor and major details were changed. He believed these changes apparent in

1. text arrangement;
2. the addition of headings to prophecies;
3. repetition of sections;
4. addition of new verses and sections;
5. addition of new details; and
6. changes in content (Tov, 217).

Of courses, substantial changes in content would undermine the credibility of the Old Testament and particularly its apologetic value. How could one be sure that the prophecies were not tampered with later to make them fit what had actually happened.

**“Inspired” Redactors.** Some evangelicals have attempted to accommodate redactional models by proposing an “inspired redactor.” In this way they hope both to explain the evidence for redaction while maintaining the inspiration of the Scriptures ( *see* BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR ; NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS ; OLD TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS ). For example, Bruce Waltke claims “that the books of the Bible seem to have gone through an editorial revision after coming from the mouth of an inspired spokesman.” In the same passage he speaks of “later editorial activity.” Waltke claims there is evidence of redaction from 1800 B.C . to A.D . 200 (Waltke, 78, 79, 92). However, respondents to Waltke’s proposal strongly reject his position (*ibid.*, 133). Even his concessions tend to undermine the biblical text.

**Arguments for Redactors.** Attention is focused here on the Old Testament redaction, especially as held by Waltke and some other evangelical scholars who insist that “inspired redactors” made substantial changes in the biblical writings. Along with more critical redactors, they believe that the content of biblical writers underwent continual changes until it reached its final form.

In support of this position the following arguments are sometimes offered.

1. Someone after Moses, possibly Joshua, wrote the last chapter of Deuteronomy (chap. 34 ), since it is not prophetic and records Moses’s death.
2. Certain sections of Deuteronomy ( 2:10–12 , 20–23 ) show evidence of a later redactor. They are editorial and parenthetical in nature.
3. Arrangement of the psalms into five books or sections is undoubtedly the work of compiler-editors.
4. Proverbs passed through the hands of editors after Solomon ( 10:1 ; 22:17 ; 25:1 ; 30:1 ; 31:1 ), some of whom lived in Hezekiah’s day, two centuries after Solomon ( 25:1 ).
5. Some books, such as Jeremiah, survive in two substantially different versions. The longer (Hebrew) version is one-seventh larger than the Greek Septuagint version, an example of which survives in fragments from Qumran (4 QJerb).
6. The books of Chronicles present themselves as being based on prior prophetic records ( 1 Chron. 9:1 ; 27:24 ; 29:29 ; 2 Chron. 9:29 ; 13:22 ; 16:11 ; 20:34 ; 25:26 ; 27:7 ; 28:26 ; 32:32 ; 33:19 ; 35:27 ; 36:8 ) which were redacted by the author(s) of Chronicles.

**Response to Arguments.** None of the arguments advanced in support of inspired redaction are definitive. Merrill Unger granted only slight “editorial additions to the Pentateuch, regarded as *authentically* Mosaic.” But he flatly rejected the notion that later non-Mosaic additions were made on the Pentateuch by redactors, inspired or not (Unger, 231–32). The response to the “inspired redactor” theory will follow the order of their arguments given above.

**The Account of Moses’ Death.** For a full discussion of this point, see PENTATEUCH, MOSAIC AUTHORSHIP OF . That Moses might not have written Deuteronomy 34 has long been accepted by

conservative scholars, even Unger. However, this is not a *redaction* in the content of anything Moses wrote. It is an *addition* of events that, humanly speaking, Moses could not have written, namely, an account of his own funeral ( Deuteronomy 34 ). Of course, it is always possible that Moses could have written this by supernatural revelation, but there is no claim or evidence that he did. Completion of the book by another inspired prophet, Joshua in particular, would not compromise its authority.

*Editorial Comments in Deuteronomy 2* . This is also discussed in PENTATEUCH, MOSAIC AUTHORSHIP OF . The parenthetical sections in Deuteronomy 2 need not be later redactions. They fit into the text, and there is no reason Moses could not have included them to amplify and clarify. If these additions were made by later scribes, they are uninspired and subject to the same textual skepticism as Mark 16:9–20 and John 8:1–11 . Lacking evidence to the contrary, it seems reasonable to consider these to be editorial comments by Moses.

*Adding and Rearranging*. Simply compiling and arranging inspired writings (individual psalms) is not proof of the redaction model. Adding psalms to the psalter as they were written fits perfectly with the prophetic model of the canon. What the redactional model would have to prove is that later inspired writers made deliberate content changes in Psalms (or other books) already in the canon, not simply rearranging what is there. There is no proof of this in the Psalms.

Small *editorial* additions to a text are not the problem. The inspired redactor view accepts *substantial* changes in content.

*Proverbs Shows No Evidence of Redaction*. None of the passages cited from Proverbs prove that the original author's writing (whether Solomon [ 1–29 ], Agur [ 30 ], or Lemuel [ 31 ]) were not accepted by the believing community immediately and continuously without subsequent content changes. The phrase out" ( 25:1 ) does not mean "changed in content" but merely transcribed onto another manuscript. Whether this process involved a selection and rearrangement of what Solomon had previously written is irrelevant. As with Psalms, there is a big difference between *rearranging* what Solomon wrote and *redacting* (changing) its content. There is no evidence of the latter.

*Two Editions by Jeremiah*. Conservative scholars acknowledge that there may have been two versions (editions) of Jeremiah that originated with Jeremiah himself, possibly through Baruch his scribe (Archer, 361–62). This would account for differences found in the manuscripts. In this case there is no need to posit a *later* redactor. Jeremiah himself, while alive, could have directed a later version of his book with more prophecies in it. Jeremiah preached and prophesied as the occasion called for it. It is understandable that the collection of his writings would grow. The *Septuagint's* scholars may have had access to a preliminary version.

*Citing Other Sources*. The passages cited in Chronicles ( 1 Chron. 9:1 ; 27:24 , etc.) do not mean that the writer of Chronicles (possibly Ezra) was *redacting* some other books. Rather he used them as sources to write his own book, just as Daniel ( 9 ) uses Jeremiah ( 25 ), and 2 Samuel 22 uses Psalm 18 . Luke evidently used other records ( Luke 1:1–4 ).

Further, it is not necessary to take all these Old Testament citations as being from inspired writings. Some were court records (e.g., 1 Chron. 9:1 ; 27:24 ; 2 Chron. 20:34 ). The books by "Samuel the Seer and Nathan the Prophet" ( 1 Chron. 29:29 ) may be the prophetic writing now known as 1 Samuel. Still others may have been uninspired commentaries (e.g., 1 Chron. 13:22 ). Paul uses uninspired sources in his works (cf. Acts 17:28 ; Titus 1:12 ). This is not making changes in an inspired book.

***Problems with "Inspired" Redaction.*** The inspired-redactors view that editors made deliberate and substantial changes in the content of previous prophetic material is unacceptable.

*It Is Contrary to God's Warning*. God gave repeated warning to his prophets not to "add to the word which I [God] am commanding you" ( Deut. 4:2 ; cf. Prov. 30:4 ; Rev. 22:18–19 ). This of course does not mean that another prophet cannot have added separate revelation to complete Deuteronomy. It does mean that no one was permitted to change (redact) the revelation God had given to another prophet, or, for that matter, to himself. No one was to add to or take away from what God had spoken (cf. Rev. 22:19 ).

*It Confuses Textual Criticism and Canonicity*. The redaction view confuses canonicity and lower textual criticism ( see BIBLE CRITICISM ). Canonicity (Gk. *canon* , rule or norm) deals with which books are inspired and belong in the Bible ( see BIBLE, CANONICITY OF ). Lower textual criticism studies the text of canonical books, attempting to get as close to the original text as possible. Now the question of scribal changes in transmitting a manuscript of an inspired book is one of lower textual criticism, not canonicity. Likewise, if material was added later, as in 1 John 5:7 ( KJV ) or John 8:1–11 , this is a matter of textual criticism to determine whether it was in the original writing. It is not properly a question of canonicity.

Lower textual criticism is a legitimate discipline because it does not seek to change or *redact* the original text but simply to *reconstruct* it from the available manuscripts.

*It Is Contrary to the Meaning of Inspired*. The so-called "inspired redactor" view is contrary to the biblical use of the word *inspired* or *God-breathed* in 2 Timothy 3:16 . The Bible does not speak of inspired *writers* , but only of inspired *writings* ( see BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR ). An inspired author would be infallible and inerrant, not simply the author of an infallible and inerrant book.

*It Is Contrary to Inspired Autographs*. This redaction view is contrary to the evangelical view that only the autographs (original texts) are inspired. The *autograph* is the original text (or an exact replica) as it came from the prophet. Only this is believed to be inspired and, therefore, without error. Copies are inspired to the degree that they accurately reproduce the original.

But according to the "inspired redactor" view, the final redacted version is inspired. If this is so, then the original writings were not the ones breathed out by God. For God cannot err ( Titus 1:2 ; Heb. 6:18 ), nor change ( Mal. 3:6 ; Heb. 1:12 ; 13:8 ; James 1:17 ). If there was an "inspired redactor," God made content changes in his successive inspired editions.

Further, the “inspired redactor” view requires rejection of the evangelical view of a definite written original that God breathed out through a given prophet. Instead, the autographs would be a fluid manuscript in process, perhaps over centuries. It would in effect promote scribes to the rank of prophets. God would have to breathe out the copies (including their errors) as well as the originals.

*It Eliminates Verification of a Work.* Inspired redaction eliminates the means by which a prophetic utterance could be tested by those to whom it was given. According to the redaction view, the prophetic work as such was not presented to the contemporary believing community. Rather it was finished and endowed to the church by someone decades (or even centuries) later. When there was need, God confirmed his prophets by signs and wonders (cf. Exodus 3–4 ; 1 Kings 18 ; Acts 2:22 ; Heb. 2:3–4 ). Contemporaries of the prophet could test the man of God’s claims (cf. Deuteronomy 18 ). But if the “inspired redactor” view is correct, there is no way to confirm whether that writing (in its eventual edited form) actually came from a prophet of God. Only if the original and unchanged message was confirmed by the original audience can we have assurance of its rightful place in the canon.

*It Shifts Authority away from Scripture.* The redaction model shifts the locus of divine authority from the original prophetic message (given by God through the prophet) to the community of believers generations later. It is contrary to the principle of canonicity that God *determines* canonicity and the people of God *discover* what God determined as inspired. In effect the redaction model locates the authority in the church rather than in the God-given prophetic message to the church.

*It Involves Deception.* A redaction model of canonicity entails acceptance of deception as a means of divine communication. In significant ways, a message or book which claims to come from a prophet came actually from later redactors. As applied to the Gospels, redaction criticism claims that Jesus did not necessarily say or do what the Gospel writer claims he did. Redactors literally put their own words in Jesus’ mouth. But this involves intentional misrepresentation, which is deceptive ( *see* NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF ). The same criticism applies if later redactors changed what a prophet wrote. That would be a deception, misleading the reader to believe that God directed what original writers had said. But God cannot lie ( Heb. 6:18 ).

*It Confuses Proper Editing with Redacting.* The redaction model of the canon confuses legitimate scribal activity, involving grammatical *form* , up dating of names and arrangement of prophetic material, with the illegitimate redactional changes in actual *content* of a previous prophet’s message. It confuses acceptable scribal *transmission* with unacceptable redactional *tampering* . It confuses proper discussion of which is the earlier *text* with improper claims that latter prophets changed the *truth* of earlier texts?

*It Is Refuted by Jewish History.* The redaction theory assumes there were inspired redactors well beyond the period in which there were prophets (viz., fourth century B.C. ). There can be no inspired works unless there are living prophets. And the Jews recognized no prophets after the time of Malachi (ca. 400 B.C. ). Josephus, the Jewish historian, explicitly referred to revelation ceasing by “the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia” (Josephus, 1.8). He added: “From Artaxerxes

until our time everything has been recorded, but has not been deemed worthy of like credit with what preceded, because the exact succession of the prophets ceased” (ibid.).

Additional rabbinical statements on the cessation of prophecy support this (see Beckwith, 370): Seder Olam Rabbah 30 declares “Until then [the coming of Alexander the Great] the prophets prophesied through the Holy Spirit. From then on, ‘Incline thine ear and hear the words of the wise.’ ” Baba Bathra 12b declares: “Since the day when the Temple was destroyed, prophecy has been taken from the prophets and given to the wise.” Rabbi Samuel bar Inia said, “The Second Temple lacked five things which the First Temple possessed, namely, the fire, the ark, the urim and thummim, the oil of anointing and the Holy Spirit [of prophecy].”

Thus, any changes in the Old Testament text after this time could not have been inspired, since there were no prophets. Thus they are a matter of textual criticism, not canonicity.

*It Is Refuted by Textual Criticism.* The scholarly discipline of textual criticism refutes the claims of redaction criticism. For the history of the biblical text is well known ( *see* NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS ). Thousands of manuscripts trace the changes. The original text can be reconstructed with a great degree of confidence. There are no redactions in the content of the prophetic message by either inspired or uninspired editors. Most changes have to do with form, not content. They are grammatical, not theological. The scribes were faithful in copying the text. This being the case, there is no reason to believe the original message of the biblical writer has been redacted. The brief time gap and the large number of manuscripts compared to other works of antiquity vouch for the fact that the content of the biblical texts has been unchanged.

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**Reductio ad Absurdum.** *Reductio ad Absurdum* refers to a logic-based argument that reduces opposing views to the absurd by showing that two or more of its central premises, or those that



follow logically from them, are logically contradictory ( *see* LOGIC ). One system of Christian apologetics, the rational presuppositionalism of Gordon Clark , depends entirely on this type of argument ( *see* APOLOGETICS, PRESUPPOSITIONAL ).

**Reid, Thomas.** Thomas Reid (1710–1796) was a founder of the Scottish philosophy of common sense. Born in Strachan near Aberdeen, Reid was influenced by his teacher at Marischal College, George Turnbull, who stressed the priority of sense knowledge, though under the cloak of Berkeleyism. After studying David Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), Reid renounced his Berkeleyian views ( *see* BERKELEY, GEORGE ). Reid taught at King’s College, Aberdeen, until 1751. He helped form the Aberdeen Philosophical Society, which often discussed Hume. In 1764 he published his *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* and the same year began teaching at Old College in Glasgow. His two major works were *Essay on the Intellectual Powers* (1785) and *Essay on the Active Powers* (1788).

**Philosophical Views.** Unlike David Hume , Reid believed that conceptions rise from the innate powers of conception in the mind that manifest themselves in accordance with original first principles of the mind. Evidence is the ground of belief and arises out of the use of intellect. We know these faculties are trustworthy because, however we try to refute these principles, they prevail. Further, all thinking depends on the assumption that they are reliable. In response to skeptics who distrust their faculties, Reid observes that even Hume trusted his senses in practice and is guilty of pragmatic inconsistency.

By virtue of his belief in active powers, Reid held that he was the active cause of his own acts. Free acts are not the result of antecedent causes but of will. Free actions are neither determined by another ( *see* DETERMINISM ) nor fortuitous ( *see* INDETERMINISM ), but are caused by oneself ( *see* FREE WILL ).

Reid taught that common sense beliefs are “the inspiration of the Almighty.” One does not have to believe in God in order to hold them, but they are imposed by our created nature. When we try to explain them we understand that God gave them to us. Indeed, we have the same evidence for God that we have for intelligence and will in another person. So those who reject God should also reject the existence of other minds.

Reid’s common sense realism had an extensive influence, particularly on Old Princeton including Charles \*Hodge and B. B. Warfield ( *see* PRINCETON SCHOOL OF APOLOGETICS ) in America ( *see* Martin).

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**Reimarus, Hermann.** *See* JESUS, QUEST FOR HISTORICAL .

**Reincarnation.** *Reincarnation* means literally “to come again in the flesh.” This is not to be confused with Christ’s “incarnation” as when he came “in the flesh” once and for all ( 1 John 4:1–2 ) ( *see* CHRIST, DEITY OF ). *Re-* incarnation means that after death the human soul attaches to another body and returns to live another life.

There are many forms of reincarnation. The most common spring from Hinduism and Buddhism ( *see* ZEN BUDDHISM ) and are based in the inexorable law of *karma* . Under the law of *karma* , what one sows in this life is reaped in the next. Every action in this life has a reaction or consequence in this life or in the next.

**Cycles of Life. Popularity of Reincarnation.** Reincarnation is not only the dominant belief in Eastern religions, but it has gained increased popularity in the Western world. About one in four Americans believe in reincarnation. Among college age young people the figure is nearly one in three. Surprisingly, about one in five who attend church regularly also believe in reincarnation, in spite of the fact that the Bible and orthodox Christian belief reject reincarnation.

Many celebrities have proclaimed their belief in reincarnation. One of the most vocal has been Shirley MacLaine. Other famous celebrities who believe in reincarnation have included Glenn Ford, Anne Francis ( *Honey West* ), Sylvester Stallone ( *Rocky* , *Rambo* ), Audry Landers ( *Dallas* ), Paddy Chayevsky (author of *Marty* , *The Hospital* , *Alienated States* ), General George S. Patton, Henry Ford, Salvador Dali, and Mark Twain. In music, ex-Beatle George Harrison, Ravi Shankar, Mahavishnu, John McLaughlin, and John Denver have been dedicated to spreading the message of their spiritual beliefs in a second chance. Even some comic books have gotten in on the act. *Camelot 3000* , *Ronin* , and *Dr. Strange* have all dealt with themes of reincarnation.

**Source of the Doctrine.** Reincarnation has a long history. Many believe that the original source of the doctrine appears to be the Hindu Vedas (Scriptures). Buddhist, Jainist, and Sikh forms seem to have been derived from these, as have teachings of Transcendental Meditation and Hare Krishna. Some Western forms may have arisen from Greek philosophy without direct influence from the Hindu teaching, beginning with the Pythagoreans. Psychic Edgar Cayce and adherents of the late-eighteenth-century theosophical movement, including writer Helena Blavatsky, were influential teachers about multiple lives. Several Christian theologians have attempted to harmonize forms of reincarnation with Christianity, among them Geddes MacGregor and John Hick .

**Kinds of Reincarnation.** Philosophically, reincarnation is wrapped up in Eastern religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism. It is strongly rejected by Islam, Judaism, and Christianity). But it was never confined to the East. Some early Western philosophers also

believed that the soul lives on in different forms. Pythagoras (ca. 580–ca. 500 B.C. ), Plato (428–348 B.C. ), and Plotinus (205–270) all believed that the spirit or soul was eternal and could not be destroyed ( *see* IMMORTALITY ).

Plato taught that the immortal soul takes on a body only as punishment for some sin, for which suffering will be tenfold; the soul must leave the ideal realm and enter into the material world. Man is “a soul in a body, and his soul needs to grow toward the highest good, that it may no longer have to suffer continued rebirth but go into that state in which it may, like God, behold and enjoy forever the hierarchy of ideal forms, in all their truth, beauty, and goodness” (Noss, 52). Before this final blissful state is realized we may come back, even as animals.

The similarities between Plato and the Hindu doctrine are striking, especially Ramanuja’s “personal” system. This school developed from the earlier “impersonal” view, but the key ingredients are the same: The soul is called *jiva* or *jivatman* and it survives death as a mental entity called the *subtle body* . This entity will enter a new embryo, bringing with it the *karma* of all its past lives. *Karma* includes both actions and the ethical consequences attached to them. You definitely reap what you sow. If you do good deeds, you are born into a “pleasant womb.” If you do evil, your destiny will be proportionately less noble. You might even find yourself in a “foul and stinking womb,” be it animal, vegetable, or mineral. The cycle of death and rebirth ( *samsara* ) is often depicted as a wheel, with death as the gateway to new life. The goal, though, is to escape from this cycle.

This escape is called *moksha* , and it is here that the difference arises between the personal and impersonal forms of the doctrine. The impersonal version says that once all karmic debt is eliminated, the soul loses all identity and simply becomes one with the One; the self merges with Brahman, a divine, impersonal force. The personal view says that the soul is simply liberated to be itself, fully devoted to *Bhagwan* (the personal God).

Other forms of the doctrine of reincarnation differ with regard to what happens at the point of death and the nature of the ultimate state of *moksha* , but the general pattern is retained. Buddhists say that the unconscious soul ( *vinna* ) continues, but the self (intellect, emotions, and consciousness) is obliterated at death. Its *karma* remains in the cycle of rebirth called *samsara* . There are four interpretations of the final state in Buddhism, *nirvana* , which is attained by the grace of Buddha. Jainism and Sikhism follow the same patterns as personal and impersonal Hinduism, respectively.

Most unorthodox Christian forms of reincarnation do not differ in their basic concept, but are influenced by other factors. Most important, during human existence, a decision is made about whether to accept or reject Christ. In the simplest model, those who accept Christ go to be with God, while those who reject him are reincarnated. The cycle will continue until all recognize Christ. In this way, all will eventually be saved ( *see* UNIVERSALISM ). Some Christian reincarnation theories provide ultimate punishment for those who are lost causes. In MacGregor’s view the punishment is annihilation ( *see* ANNIHILATIONISM ). Hick’s theory is somewhat novel in that he supposes that humans are reincarnated to lives on other planets.

**Reason for Belief.** Several rationales are given to justify belief in reincarnation. Three of the most basic reasons are the belief in an immortal soul, psychological evidence of past-lives, and the argument from justice through reincarnation.

**Immortality of the Soul.** Plato’s main reason for believing in transmigration of souls (another name for souls going to a different body) was that he considered the immaterial part of each human being to be uncreated and indestructible. It existed before we were born, and it continues to exist after we die. Nothing, either good or evil, can corrupt it. If that is the case, then reincarnationists argue that it is likely that it appears in the world in different bodies at various times. This is part of its perfecting process. In the same way, pantheistic philosophies assume that all is eternal and divine, so the soul is equally incorruptible.

**Psychological Evidences.** Ian Stevenson, a parapsychologist and researcher of past-life recall, has said,

The idea of reincarnation may contribute to an improved understanding of such diverse matters as: phobias and phobias of childhood; skills not learned in early life; abnormalities of child-parent relationships; vendettas and bellicose nationalism; childhood sexuality and gender identity confusion; birthmarks, congenital deformities and internal diseases; differences between members of monozygotic twin pairs; and abnormal appetites during pregnancy. [Stevenson, 305]

Past life regression, through hypnosis or other altered consciousness states, has been helpful to some to explain feelings that the patient cannot account for or overcome. By finding some experience in a past life, many have been relieved of feelings of fear, depression, or unwantedness. Though many psychologists and hypnotists who work with past-life recall do not really believe that the events recounted by their patients are real, they use it because it works. As one therapist said, “It doesn’t matter if it is real or imagined if it helps someone make sense out of their lives. . . . If it works, who cares?” (Boeth, H3).

**Need for Justice.** To many, the idea of having more than one chance at life seems to be the most equitable solution. *Karma* is just. If you do bad things, you pay the price; if you do good, you get a reward. Punishment is in proportion to how bad your *karma* is, not all or nothing. The idea of condemning someone to an everlasting hell for a finite amount of sin sounds too harsh. Also, suffering in this life can be justified if it is really an outworking of *karma* from past lives. This explanation eliminates the need to make God responsible for suffering. All suffering can be explained as the just outworking of bad deeds done in former incarnations.

As Quincy Howe observes, “One of the most attractive aspects of reincarnation is that it removes entirely the possibility of damnation” (Howe, 51). The doctrine of eternal punishment seems totally incompatible with the love of God to many people. Reincarnation suggests a way in which God can punish sin (through the law of *karma* ), demand faith in Christ (during at least one lifetime), and still save everyone ultimately. Someone who rejects Christ gets more chances. This even protects human freedom, because God does not coerce anyone to believe; he merely gives them more time to exercise their freedom. Moral progress and spiritual growth can also

occur during successive lifetimes, which will allow individuals to understand the love of God better. Some think that moral perfection cannot be attained without reincarnation.

Finally, it is argued that reincarnation is just because it makes salvation a personal matter between the individual and God. Rather than dealing with problems of imputed guilt from Adam's sin or being reckoned righteous by faith, everyone is responsible for taking care of his or her own *karma*. Howe, arguing that the atonement by a substitute is no longer valid, says, "Man himself must make his peace with God" (Howe, 107). MacGregor says, "My *karma* is particular to me. It is my problem and the triumph over it is my triumph." This eliminates the injustice of being punished in any way for Adam's sin and the injustice of Christ dying for sins that he did not commit. Instead, Jesus' death becomes our inspiration, "the perfect catalyst" for working out our salvation and assuring us that we stand in the unfailing light of God's love. He died as our example, not as our substitute. In these ways, reincarnation satisfies justice.

**Evaluation.** *Response to the Arguments.* The arguments for reincarnation are without real foundation. At best they show only the possibility of reincarnation, not its reality.

*Immortality does not prove reincarnation.* Even if one could demonstrate the immortality of the soul on purely rational grounds, it would not thereby prove immortality. The soul could survive forever in a disembodied form. Or the soul could be reunited once with its body in a permanent immortal resurrection body, such as orthodox Jews, Muslims, and Christians believe.

*Past life "memories" do not prove reincarnation.* There are other ways to explain the so-called "memories" or past lives. First, they may be false memories. Many other so-called "memories" have been shown to be false. Some people have "remembered" things that were empirically proven not to have happened. Many people have recovered from the false memory syndrome. Second, these so-called "memories" of previous lives are more abundant among those who have been reared in cultures or contexts where they were exposed to the teaching of reincarnation. This suggests that they received these ideas when they were young and later revived them from their memory bank. Third, there are notable cases, such as Bridie Murphy, where the alleged "memories" of past lives turned out to be nothing more than stories her grandmother read to her when she was a little girl. Other false memories have been implanted by hypnosis (the power of suggestion) or guided imagery therapy during counseling or teaching sessions. The false memory syndrome is recognized by psychologists today.

*Reincarnation does not solve the problem of justice.* Rather than solving the problem of unjust suffering, reincarnation simply says that it is just after all. The innocent are not really innocent because the *karma* of their past lives is causing suffering. Reincarnationists complain that a Christian faced with the grieving mother of a dying four-month-old can only say, "I don't know." But the law of *karma* can give her an answer: "Your sweet, innocent angel is dying because in an earlier incarnation she was a scumball." This is not a *solution* to the problem, it is merely a *subversion* of it. It doesn't *deal* with the difficulty; it *dismisses* it.

Is it really fair for God to punish children for the sins they don't even remember committing? It seems morally repugnant and terribly unjust to mete out judgment on someone who does not even know what his crime was. Besides this, by putting the guilt back one lifetime, one begins an

infinite regress of explanations that never really pays off with an explanation. If the suffering of each life depends on the sins of a former life, then how did it all begin? If there was a first life, where did the karmic debt come from to explain the suffering in that life? Is evil an eternal principle, right alongside God? You can't keep "back pedaling" forever to solve the problem of evil. The law of *karma* fails to resolve the conflict. It merely pushes the problem back into previous lives without ever coming to a solution.

One gets the impression, and some argue, that *karma* is the same as the biblical law—a rigid, universal moral code. However, *karma* is not a moral prescription. It is a system of retribution only; it has no content to tell us what to do. It is an impersonal, amoral law of act-consequence relations. Even comparisons with the act-consequence relationship in Proverbs fail to recognize that the Old Testament puts these forth as general principles, not absolute, unbreakable sanctions of retribution. For that matter, the law was not as unalterable as *karma*—it was part of a higher law of forgiveness and grace. The comparison is invalid.

*Arguments against Reincarnation.* Not only do the arguments for reincarnation fail to prove it is so, but there are arguments against reincarnation. Several of the most important can be summarized.

*The moral argument.* In pantheistic systems there is no source for the moral standards that *karma* enforces ( *see* PANTHEISM ). Why punish people for some wrong if there is no moral standard of right and wrong? For in pantheism, there is no ultimate difference between good and evil. *Karma* is not a moral law. As for morality, all is relative. Allan Watts, a spokesman for Zen Buddhism, has written, "Buddhism does not share the Western view that there is a moral law, enjoined by God or by nature, which it is man's duty to obey. The Buddha's precepts of conduct—abstinence from taking life, taking what is not given, exploitation of the passions, lying and intoxication—are voluntarily assumed rules of expediency" (Watts, 52).

This relativism poses real problems for reincarnation. Relativism is an impossible position to hold in ethics. You can't say, "Relativism is true," or even, "Relativism is better than absolutism," because these statements assume an absolute value that contradicts relativism. As C. S. Lewis explains,

The moment you say that one set of moral ideas can be better than another, you are, in fact, measuring them both by a standard, saying that one of them conforms to that standard more nearly than the other. But the standard that measures the two things is something different from either. . . . You are, in fact, comparing them both with some Real Morality, admitting that there is such a thing as real Right, independent of what people think, and that some people's ideas get nearer to that real Right than others. [Lewis, 25]

In order to say that relativism is right, you have to assume that some absolute Right exists, which is impossible in relativism. Unless something is absolutely right, nothing can be actually right; and if nothing is right (or wrong), then *karma* has no business punishing anyone for it ( *see* MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF ).

*The humanitarian argument.* Reincarnation is ultimately anti-humanitarian. It generates no social compassion. Anyone who helps the thousands of poor, crippled, maimed, homeless, and starving people on the streets of India is working against the law of *karma*. People suffer to work off their karmic debt and if you helped them, then they would have to come back again and suffer even more to work off that debt. According to traditional Hindu belief, anyone who helps the suffering is not increasing their *karma* but one's own. The social compassion that exists in India is the result of non-Hindu, largely Christian, influence. Hinduism did not produce Mother Teresa.

*The psychological argument.* Reincarnation depends on the premise that an individual had a highly developed sense of self-consciousness before birth, so as to receive and store information for later recall. It is a scientific fact that this ability does not develop until one is about eighteen months of age. This is why we do not remember when we were one year old. To assert that every human being somehow mysteriously "forgets" his/her past highly developed consciousness and that most never regain it—unless they are trained and "enlightened" to do so—is highly implausible. The hypothesis is without foundation and is entirely *Deus ex machina*.

*The scientific argument.* Scientifically, we know that an individual life begins at conception, when the twenty-three chromosomes of a male sperm unite with the twenty-three chromosomes of a female ovum and form a forty-six-chromosome human zygote. At that point a unique, new human life begins. It has life (soul) and a body. It is a unique individual human being. It did not exist before. To claim that its soul (life) existed in previous body has no scientific basis. The scientific evidence points to human conception as the point of origin of an individual human being.

*The social argument.* If reincarnation were correct, society should be improving. After all, if we have had hundreds, even thousands, of chances to improve over millions of years, then there should be some evidence of it. There is no evidence that such moral progress is being made. All we have improved is the means by which we can manifest hate, cruelty, racism, and barbarism toward other human beings. Even a realistic optimist who hopes for a better day must acknowledge that there is no indisputable evidence that any significant moral improvement has occurred over the thousands of years we know about.

*The Problem of Evil and Infinite Regress.* If suffering in this life always results from evil done in a previous life, then there would have to be an infinite regress of previous lives. But an infinite regress in time is not possible, since if there were an infinite number of moments before today, then today would never have come. But today has come ( *see* KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ). Therefore, there was not an infinite number of previous lives as traditional reincarnation seems to entail.

On the other hand, if there were not an infinite number of lives before this one, then there must have been a first life in which a previous incarnation was not the cause of its evil. But this is what Theism holds, namely, that evil originated because of an individual's free choice in that first life-time (e.g., Lucifer among the angels and Adam the first human) ( *see* EVIL, PROBLEM OF ).

*Problem of Infinite Time and Lack of Perfection.* Even on the reincarnationist's assumption that there has been an infinite amount of time before today, his view faces another serious problem. In an infinite amount of moments there is more than enough time to achieve the perfection of all souls which reincarnation is designed to do. In short, all souls should have received oneness with God by now, if there had been an infinite amount of time to do so. But they have not. Hence, reincarnation has failed as a solution to the problem of evil.

*Biblical Arguments. Human beings are created.* Fundamental to all the biblical reasons to reject reincarnation is the doctrine of creation. The Bible is the inspired Word of God ( *see* BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR ). As such, it has divine authority in whatever it teaches. According to the Bible, human beings were created ( Gen. 1:27 ). God is eternal ( 1 Tim. 6:16 ). All other things were created by him ( John 1:3 ; Col. 1:15–16 ). Everything else exists only because God brought it into existence from nothing ( *see* CREATION, VIEWS OF ). This was not only true of Adam and Eve, the first human beings, but of all other human beings after them ( Gen. 5:3 ; Ps. 139:13–16 ; Eccles. 7:29 ). All humans since Adam begin at conception ( Ps. 51:5 ; Matt. 1:20 ). This being the case, there can be no preincarnate existence of our soul.

*The intermediate state is disembodied.* Scriptures teach that, upon death, the soul leaves the body and goes into the spirit world where it awaits resurrection. The apostle Paul wrote: "We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord" ( 2 Cor. 5:8 ). Second, contemplating death, Paul added, "I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far" ( Phil. 1:23 ). The "souls" of those who had just been martyred were conscious in heaven. "When he [Christ] opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained" ( Rev. 6:9 ). Jesus promised the repentant thief on the cross conscious bliss that very day of his death, saying: "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" ( Luke 23:43 ). Even Moses and Elijah, who had been dead for centuries, were consciously engaging in conversation about Christ's death on the Mount of Transfiguration ( Matt. 17:3 ). Even the disembodied souls of the lost are conscious. For the beast and false prophet who were thrown alive into the Lake of Fire ( Rev. 19:20 ) were still conscious "a thousand years" later ( Rev. 20:10 ). There is not the slightest hint anywhere in Scripture that the soul after death goes into another body, as reincarnationists claim. It simply goes into the spirit world to await the resurrection.

*The state after disembodiment is resurrection.* Reincarnation is the belief that, after death, the soul passes on to another body. By contrast, the Bible declares that, after death, the same physical body is made incorruptible at the resurrection ( *see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR ). Rather than a series of bodies that die, resurrection makes alive forever the same body that died. Rather than seeing personhood as a soul in a body, resurrection sees each human being as a soul-body unity. While reincarnation is a process of perfection, resurrection is a perfected state. Reincarnation is an intermediate state, while the soul longs to be disembodied and absorbed in God; but, resurrection is an ultimate state, in which the whole person, body and soul, enjoys the goodness of God.

The differences between resurrection and reincarnation are as follows:

Resurrection	Reincarnation
happens once	occurs many times
into the same body	into a different body
into an immortal body	into a mortal body
a perfect state	an imperfect state
an ultimate state	an intermediate state

So there is a vast difference between the Christian doctrine of resurrection and the doctrine of reincarnation. The Bible teaching of the resurrection (for example, in John 5:28–29 ; 1 Corinthians 15 ; Rev. 20:4–15 ), therefore, is contrary to the doctrine of reincarnation.

*Humans die only once.* According to Scripture, human beings die only once, followed by the judgment. For “Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” ( Heb. 9:27 ). We are born once, we live once, and we die once. But according to reincarnation, we live many times. We are born and reborn over and over again. The Hindu apologist Radhakrishna recognized that this verse spelled the definitive difference between Christianity and Hinduism. He wrote: “There is a fundamental difference between Christianity and Hinduism; it is said that it consists in this: that while the Hindu to whatever school he belongs believes in a succession of lives, the Christian believes that ‘it is appointed to men once to die, but after this the judgment’ ” (Radhakrishna, 14, 118).

*Judgment is final.* Not only do human beings live and die once, followed by judgment, but the judgment is final ( see HELL ). Once one goes to his destiny, there is a “great gulf fixed” that no one can cross ( Luke 16:26 ). Indeed, the judgment is described as “eternal destruction” ( 2 Thess. 1:9 ) and “everlasting fire” ( Matt. 25:41 ). If it lasts forever, then there is no possibility of a reincarnation into another body. There is resurrection into one’s own body, which receives the final judgment of salvation or of damnation ( John 5:28–29 ).

*Jesus rejected reincarnation.* When asked whether a man’s sin before birth was the cause of his sin, Jesus replied: “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life” ( John 9:3 ). Whereas this is probably a reference to the false Jewish belief that one could sin in the womb before birth, thus producing physical deformity, Jesus’ reply excludes any belief in prebirth sins and *karma* . Elsewhere, Jesus made it very emphatic that one person’s unfortunate lot in life is not necessarily because of sin ( Luke 13:4–5 ). This is true whether one is referring to early life, prenatal life, or alleged preincarnate life.

*Grace is contrary to reincarnation.* Reincarnation is based in the doctrine of *karma* , which dictates that, whatever one sows in this life, one reaps in the next life. *Karma* is an inexorable law, with no exceptions. Sins cannot be forgiven; they must be punished. If one does not get his due in this life, he must get it in the next life.

But, according to Christianity, forgiveness is possible. Jesus forgave his enemies who crucified him ( Luke 24:34 ). Christians are to forgive as Christ forgave us ( Col. 3:13 ).

Forgiveness is contrary to the doctrine of *karma* and renders reincarnation entirely unnecessary. Salvation is a “gift” ( John 4:10 ; Rom. 3:24 ; 5:15–17 ; 6:23 ; 2 Cor. 9:15 ; Eph. 2:8 ; Heb. 6:4 ) which is received by faith. Rather than working to merit God’s favor, the believer is given grace or unmerited favor and pronounced righteous. God’s justice is satisfied because Jesus was punished for the sins of the whole world in his death. Our sins were not simply ignored, or swept under the rug. Jesus paid ( Rom. 3:25 ; Heb. 2:17 ; 1 John 2:2 ; 4:10 ) God’s demand for justice by bearing our guilt as our substitute. This penalty paid by Christ is contrary to the karmic doctrine and strikes at the heart of the need for reincarnation.

**Summary.** The doctrine of reincarnation, based on *karma* , is without objective evidence. It is contrary to common sense, science, sound psychology of human development, and morality. Further, it is opposed by clear teaching of Scripture. Hence, in spite of its popularity, even in the West, it is without rational and evidential foundation.

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**Relativism.** See TRUTH, NATURE OF ; MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF .

**Relativity, Moral.** See MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF .

**Religious Argument for God.** See APOLOGETICS, EXPERIENTIAL ; GOD, EVIDENCE FOR ; TRUEBLOOD, ELTON .

**Religious Experience.** See APOLOGETICS, EXPERIENTIAL ; GOD, EVIDENCE FOR ; TRUEBLOOD, ELTON .

**Religious Language.** See ANALOGY, PRINCIPLE OF .

**Resurrection, Alternate Theories of.** The evidence for the supernatural physical resurrection of Christ is compelling ( see RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR , and RESURRECTION, PHYSICAL NATURE OF ), and the objections can be adequately answered ( see RESURRECTION, OBJECTIONS TO ). Alternate explanations to a supernatural physical resurrection have been attempted, but a brief survey will show that they too fail.

**Naturalistic Theories.** In all naturalistic theories, in which the assumption is that Jesus died and did not return to life, two issues are inevitable problems: First, given the inescapable fact that Jesus actually died on the cross ( see CHRIST, DEATH OF ; SWOON THEORY ), a basic problem with all naturalistic theories is to explain what happened to the body. It is necessary to explain why the earliest records speak of an empty tomb or why the dead body was never found. Second, the earliest disciples testified to seeing an empty tomb and being with Jesus in the weeks after his death. If untrue, why did these reports so motivate them to extraordinary actions?

**The Authorities Moved the Body.** One hypothesis proposes that the Roman or Jewish authorities took the body from the tomb to another place, leaving the tomb empty. The disciples wrongly presumed Jesus to be raised from the dead.

If the Romans or the Sanhedrin had the body, why did they accuse the disciples of stealing it ( Matt. 28:11–15 )? Such a charge would have been senseless. And if the opponents of Christianity had the body, why didn't they produce it to stop the resurrection story? The reaction of the authorities reveals that they did not know where the body was. They continually *resisted* the apostles' teaching, but never attempted to refute it.

This theory is contrary to the conversion of James and especially Saul. How could such a severe critic as Saul of Tarsus (cf. Acts 8–9 ) be so duped?

Certainly, this theory does not explain the resurrection appearances. Why did Jesus keep appearing to all these people in the same nail-scarred body in which he was placed in the tomb? It is also contrary to the conversions of people from the opposition to Jesus' side. It assumes Paul was duped when he was deep in the Jewish anti-Christian camp yet unaware the body was available. And he was duped into believing in the resurrection.

The stolen body hypothesis is a fallacious argument from innocence. There is not a shred of evidence to support it.

**The Tomb Was Never Visited.** One theory is that in the two months after Jesus' death he appeared in some spiritual form to some of the disciples, and they preached the resurrection based on this. But no one ever checked the tomb to see if Jesus' dead body actually was there. Why should they, if they had already seen him alive?

If we can believe nothing else from the earliest record in the Gospels, we can hardly avoid the point that Jesus' tomb was a busy place on that early morning. If the issue just never came up, it certainly burned the minds of the writers of the Gospels. A harmonization of the order of events is found in the article RESURRECTION, OBJECTIONS TO . The women who came to finish burial procedures ( Mark 15:1 ) saw the stone rolled away and the empty tomb. John reached the grave site and saw the burial clothes, followed by Peter who entered the tomb and saw the grave clothes and a headcloth (a strip wrapped around the head to keep the jaw closed) lying separately ( John 20:3–8 ). While Paul does not mention the empty tomb explicitly, he implies it when speaking of Jesus' burial as a precondition of his resurrection ( 1 Cor. 15:4 ).

The guards were sure to have made a thorough search of the tomb before they reported to the Jewish leaders that his body had vanished ( Matt. 28:11–15 ). Their lives were forfeited if they had been derelict in their duty. These guards would not have had to agree to the cover story that the disciples had stolen the body if they could have offered some reasonable alternative explanation. But the story of the guards does not explain the resurrection appearances, the transformation of the disciples, or the mass conversions of people only weeks later in the very city where it had happened.

**The Women Went to the Wrong Tomb.** Some suggest that the women went to the wrong tomb in the darkness, saw it empty and thought he had risen. This story was then spread by them through the ranks of the disciples and led to their belief in the resurrections of Christ. There are serious problems with such a simplistic story. If it was so dark, why did Mary Magdalene assume the gardener was working ( John 20:15 )? Why did Peter and John make the same mistake as the women when they arrived later, in daylight ( John 20:4–6 )? It was light enough to see the grave clothes and the rolled-up headcloth in a dim, cave-like tomb (vs. 7 ).

If the disciples went to the wrong tomb, the authorities had only to go to the right one and show them the body. That would have easily disproved all claims to a resurrection.

And, as with other naturalistic theories ( see NATURALISM ), this offers no explanation for the reports that Jesus appeared.

*The Disciples Stole the Body.* The guards spread the story that the disciples had stolen the body in the night and took it to an unknown location. This is still a popular claim, particularly in Jewish circles. It explains the story of an empty tomb and the inability of anyone to disprove the claim that Jesus rose from the dead.

Grave robbery is not in keeping with what we know of the moral character of the disciples. They were honest men. They taught and lived according to the highest moral principles of honesty and integrity. Peter specifically denied that the apostles followed cleverly devised tales ( 2 Peter 1:16 ). Furthermore, the disciples do not come off as particularly subtle or clever. If they were trying to make Christ's predictions come true, up until this time they had not understood how the prophecies fit Jesus. They had not even understood that he was going to die, let alone that he was to be raised ( John 13:36 ).

At the grave scene we find these conspirators confused and bewildered, just as we would suspect if they had not a clue what was happening. They did not know what to think when they first saw the empty tomb ( John 20:9 ). They scattered and hid in fear of being caught ( Mark 14:50 ).

Perhaps the most serious objection is that the hoax was so totally successful. For that to happen the apostles had to persist in this conspiracy to the death and to die for what they knew to be false. People will sometimes die for what they believe to be true, but they have little motivation to die for what they know to be a lie. It seems unbelievable that no disciple ever recanted belief in the resurrection of Christ, in spite of suffering and persecution (cf. 2 Cor. 11:22–33 ; Heb. 11:32–40 ). Not only did they die for this “lie,” but the apostles placed belief in the resurrection at the center of their faith ( Rom. 10:9 ; 1 Cor. 15:1–5 , 12–19 ). Indeed, it was the theme of the earliest preaching by the apostles ( Acts 2:30–31 ; 3:15 ; and 4:10 , 33 ).

It is contrary to the conversions of James and Paul ( John 7:5 ; Acts 9 , and 1 Cor. 15:7 ). These skeptics would certainly have learned of the plot eventually, and they would never have remained in the faith on such a basis.

Finally, if the body was stolen and still dead, then why did it keep appearing alive, both to disciples and to others who were not disciples? Jesus appeared bodily to Mary, to James (Jesus' unbelieving brother), and later to Paul, the greatest Jewish opponent of early Christianity.

*Joseph of Arimathea Took the Body.* A similar notion is that Joseph of Arimathea stole the body of Jesus. He was a secret believer in Jesus, and Jesus was buried in Joseph's tomb. The problems of this theory boil down to “Why?” “When?” and “Where?”

Why would he take the body? Joseph really had no reason. It could not be to prevent the disciples from stealing it, since he was a disciple ( Luke 23:50–51 ). If he had not been a follower of Christ, he could have produced the body and squelched the whole story.

When could he (or the disciples for that matter) have taken it? Joseph was a devout Jew who would not have broken the Sabbath (see Luke 23:50–56 ). At night, the torches he carried would

have been seen. A Roman guard was posted in front of the tomb ( Matt. 27:62–66 ). The following morning the women came by dawn ( Luke 24:1 ). There was simply no opportunity.

If Joseph took it, where did he put it? The body was never found, even though almost two months elapsed before the disciples began preaching. This was plenty of time to expose a fraud. There is no motive, opportunity, or method to support this theory, and it gives no explanation of the appearances of Christ in his resurrected body.

And again, there is no good explanation, other than a supernatural resurrection, for eleven appearances over the subsequent forty days to more than 500 people ( see RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR ). They saw him, handled him, ate with him, talked with him, and were completely transformed overnight from scared, scattered, skeptics to the world's greatest missionary society. Much of it happened in the same city in which Jesus was crucified.

*Appearances Were Mistaken Identity.* One naturalistic theory made more visible by Schonfield's *The Passover Plot* is that the post-death appearances that were the heart of the disciples' belief in the resurrection were all cases of mistaken identity. This is allegedly reinforced by the fact that the disciples themselves even believed at first that the person appearing was not Jesus. Mary thought she saw a gardener ( John 20 ). The two disciples thought it was a stranger traveling in Jerusalem ( Luke 24 ), and later they supposed they saw a spirit ( Luke 24:38–39 ). Mark even admits the appearance was in “a different form” ( Mark 16:12 ). According to Schonfield, the disciples mistook Jesus for different people at different times (Schonfield, 170–73).

This theory is beset with many difficulties. First, on none of these occasions mentioned did the disciples go away with any doubt in their minds that it was really the same Jesus they had known intimately for years who was appearing to them in physical form. Their doubts were only initial and momentary. By the time the appearance was over, Jesus had convinced them by his scars, his ability to eat food, by their touching him, by his teaching, by his voice, and/or by miracles that he was the same person with whom they had spent over three years ( see RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR ). Schonfield neglects all this evidence and takes their initial doubt, which is a sign of the authenticity of the account, totally out of context.

Second, the mistaken identity hypothesis does not account for the permanently empty tomb. If the disciples were seeing different persons, the Jews or Romans could have gone to Jesus' tomb and produced the body to refute their claim. But there is no evidence that they did, even though they had every reason to want to do so. The fact is that no one ever found the body. Instead, the disciples were absolutely convinced they were encountering the same Jesus in his same resurrected physical body whom they had known so closely all those years.

Third, this speculation does not account for the transformation of the disciples. Mistaken identity and a dead body rotting in some grave does not explain why the scared, scattered, and skeptical disciples were transformed into the world's greatest missionary society overnight by their mistaken encounter with several mortal beings.

Fourth, it is highly unlikely that many people could be fooled on that many occasions. After all, Jesus appeared to over five hundred people on eleven different occasions over a forty-day period. It is less miraculous to hold in the supernatural resurrection of Christ than to believe that all of these people on all of these occasions who totally deceived and yet so totally transformed. It is easier to believe in the resurrection.

Finally, it is contrary to the conversion of skeptics as James and Saul of Tarsus. How could such critics be so duped?

*God Destroyed (Transformed) the Body.* All of the above theories are purely naturalistic. Another group contends that some kind of miracle occurred, but it was not the miracle of a physical resurrection of the body of Jesus after he had died. Rather, this alternative to the physical resurrection contends that God destroyed (transformed) the body of Jesus so that it mysteriously and immediately disappeared from view (see Harris). The later appearances of Christ were, according to some, theophany-like appearances, and according to others, they were appearances wherein Jesus assumed bodily form(s) in which the scars he showed were replicas to convince others of his reality but not of his materiality. This view is far more sophisticated and less naturalistic. It does not fall into the typical naturalistic or liberal camp. Rather, it is more in line with the neo-orthodox error on the resurrection. Many cults, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, hold a form of this view. But like the naturalistic views, these views too are subject to fatal flaws.

To explain away the one simple miracle of Jesus being raised immortal in the same physical body in which he died, those who seek a spiritual-body explanation posit that at least two miracles happened. First God immediately and mysteriously destroyed or transformed the physical body into a nonphysical body. Some say it was turned into gases which leaked out of the tomb ( see BOYCE ), others that it was vaporized or transmuted. God also had to miraculously enable the non-physical Jesus to assume physical form(s) on different occasions by which he could convince the apostles that he was alive.

This hypothesis uses two miracles to explain away one and in the process makes Jesus into a deceiver. For he told his disciples both before and after his resurrection that he would be raised in the same body. He even left the empty tomb and grave clothes as evidence, yet he was not raised immortal in the body that died. Speaking of his resurrection, Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple [physical body], and I will raise *it* [the same physical body] again in three days" ( John 2:19 , emphasis added). This was a lie unless Jesus was raised in the numerically same physical body in which he died. Furthermore, after his resurrection Jesus presented his crucifixion wounds to his disciples as evidence that he had indeed risen in the same body in which he was crucified (cf. John 20:27 ). "While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have' " ( Luke 24:36–39 ). It would have been nothing short of deceptions to offer his crucifixion wounds as evidence that he had really risen unless it was in the same body that had been crucified. The whole point of the empty grave clothes ( John 20:6–7 ; cf. Mark 16:5 ) was to show that the body that died was the one that had risen (cf. John 20:8 ). If Jesus had risen in a spiritual form there is no reason the physical body could not remain in the

tomb. After all God is capable of convincing people of his presence and reality without a bodily form. he can do it with a voice from heaven and other miracles, as he did on other occasions (cf. Gen. 22:1 , 11 ; Exod. 3:2 ; Matt. 3:17 ).

This view would make the apostles' testimony to the resurrection false, since they affirmed that Jesus was raised from the dead in the same physical body in which he died. Speaking of the *resurrection* , Peter said: "he [David] foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that his soul was not left in hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses" ( Acts 2:31–32 ). If this is true, then Jesus body was not destroyed; his same body of "flesh" ( *sarx* ) was raised up. It was "this Jesus," the same one who was "crucified" (vs. 23 ), "dead and buried" (vs. 29 ). The apostle John shows the continuity between the preresurrection body of flesh and the one in which Jesus was raised and still has at the right hand of the Father. John wrote, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched — this we proclaim concerning the Word of life" ( 1 John 1:1 ). John said that "every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come [and now remains] in the flesh is from God" ( 1 John 4:2 ). The use of the perfect participial (past action with continuing results in the present), along with the present tense ( 2 John 7 ) in a parallel passages emphasizes that Jesus was still (now in heaven) in the same flesh in which he came into this world. Thus, to deny that Jesus was raised in the same physical body in which he died makes Jesus a deceiver and his disciples false teachers.

Such a conception is strongly contrary to Jewish and biblical understanding of the resurrection, whereby the body that died is the one that comes out of the grave in the flesh. Job said, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God" ( Job 19:25–26 ). Daniel spoke of a physical resurrection from the grave, saying, "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt" ( Dan. 12:2 ). Jesus affirmed that what is resurrected is the physical bodies that come out from the grave: "a time is coming when all who are *in their graves will hear his voice and come out*— those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned" ( John 5:28–29 ). Paul held out to bereaved believers the expectation of seeing their loved ones in their resurrection bodies ( 1 Thess. 4:13–18 ), noting that we will have bodies like Christ's ( Phil. 3:21 ).

**Conclusion.** There are various attempts to explain away the physical resurrection of Christ. Besides the overwhelming evidence for the physical resurrection of Christ in the same body in which he lived and died ( see RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR ), there is no basis in fact for any of these theories. None of them explain the data. Most are purely naturalistic, which is contrary to the fact that God exists ( see COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ; MORAL ARGUMENT FOR GOD ; TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ) and that he can do and has done miracles ( see MIRACLE ; MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST ). Others allow some kind of mysterious divine intervention to produce an empty tomb, but at the same time unnecessarily demean both the biblical data and the character of Christ ( see CHRIST, UNIQUENESS OF ).

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**Resurrection Apologetics. See APOLOGETICS, TYPES OF ; APOLOGETICS, HISTORICAL ; RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR .**

**Resurrection of Christ.**

*Order of Events. Background.* Critics often object that the Gospel record, especially that of the resurrection, is not credible because of the contradictions in the accounts. For example, the order of events appears to be different in the various accounts. For example, the Gospels list Mary as the first person who saw Jesus after his resurrection whereas 1 Corinthians 15:5 lists Peter as first. Likewise Matthew 28:2 lists Mary Magdalene and the other Mary as the first at the tomb whereas John 20:1 names only Mary Magdalene as being there.

Nonetheless, despite these differences, closer scrutiny of the resurrection accounts reveals a hidden harmony. Indeed, it demonstrates the kinds of unity in differences one would expect from independent, reliable witnesses who were not in collusion. Hence, the contention that the Gospels contradict each other fails for many reasons.

*The Harmony of the Resurrection Accounts.* There is a discernible overall order of postresurrection events in the New Testament accounts. All the other events can be fit into this overall list as follows.

	Matt	Mark †	Luke	John	Acts	1 Cor.
1. Mary Magdalene		×		×		
2. Mary &	×	×				

† These verses in Mark are not in some of the earliest mss. of the NT

Women

3. Peter			×			×
4. Two Disciples	×		×			
5. Ten Apostles			×		×	
6. Eleven Apostles					×	
7. Seven Apostles					×	
8. All Apostles (Gt. Commission)	×	×				×
9. 500 Brethren						×
10. James						×
11. All Apostles (Ascension)	×					
12. Paul					×	×

Peter saw the empty tomb, not Christ

Other scholars (cf. Wenham, 139) reverse numbers 3 and 4 (but see Luke 24:34 ) and some combine 8 and 9. But this is of no consequence in reconciling all the data. There is no demonstrable contradiction either way.

Once several factors are noted, there is no major problem in fitting the various appearances together.

First, because Paul is defending the resurrection, he provides an official list that includes only men (women at that time were not allowed to give testimony in court).

Second, it is understandable that Christ's appearance to Paul would not be listed in the Gospels, since their narration ends by the time of Christ's ascension and Paul saw Christ many years later ( Acts 9:3f .; 1 Cor. 15:7 ).

Third, since Paul's point is to provide proof of the resurrection it was fitting that he singled out the appearance to the five hundred witnesses, most of whom were still alive when he wrote (ca. A.D . 55).

Fourth, the rest of the appearances, such as those to James ( 1 Cor. 15:7 ) and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus ( Luke 24:13f .) fit in as supplementary information that does not contradict the other appearances.

Fifth, even the difficulty in discerning the exact order of events of the first appearances to the women is not insurmountable. The following order of events appears to account for all the data consistently:

1. “Mary Magdalene” visited Jesus’ tomb early Sunday morning “while it was still dark” ( John 20:1 ). (It is possible that someone else was with her, since she refers to “we” [ John 20:2 ].)
2. Seeing that the stone had been rolled away ( John 20:1 ), she ran back to Peter and John in Jerusalem and said, “We do not know where they have laid him” (v. 2 ).
3. Peter and John ran to the tomb and saw the empty graveclothes ( John 20:3–9 ) and then “the disciples” (Peter and John) “returned to their homes” (v. 11 ).
4. Mary Magdalene had followed Peter and John to the tomb. After Peter and John left, Mary Magdalene, lingering at the tomb, saw two angels “where the body of Jesus had lain” ( John 20:12 ). Then Jesus appeared to her ( Mark 16:9 ) and told her to return to the disciples ( John 20:14–17 ).
5. As Mary Magdalene was leaving, the “other women” arrived at the tomb with spices to anoint the body of Jesus ( Mark 16:1 ). By this time, it “began to dawn” ( Matt. 28:1 ). The group including the “other Mary” ( Matt. 28:1 ), the mother of James ( Luke 24:10 ), Salome ( Mark 16:1 ), and Johanna ( Luke 24:1 , 10 ) also saw that the stone had been rolled away ( Matt. 28:2 ; Mark 16:4 ; Luke 24:2 ; John 20:1 ). Entering the tomb, they saw “two men” ( Luke 24:4 ), one of whom spoke to them ( Mark 16:5 ) and told them to return to Galilee, where they would see Jesus ( Matt. 28:5–7 ; Mark 16:5–7 ). These two young “men” were actually angels ( John 20:12 ).
6. As Mary Magdalene and the women left to go tell the disciples, Jesus appeared to them and told them to go to Galilee to his “brethren” ( Matt. 28:9–10 ). Meanwhile, the “eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them” ( Matt. 28:16 ; Mark 16:7 ).
7. Mary Magdalene with the “other women” ( Luke 24:10 ) returned that evening to the eleven ( Luke 24:9 ) and “all the rest” (v. 11 ) now reassembled in Galilee behind closed doors “for fear of the Jews” ( John 20:19 ). Mary Magdalene told them she had seen the Lord (v. 18 ). But the disciples did not believe her ( Mark 16:11 ). Neither did they believe the story of the other women ( Luke 24:11 ).
8. Upon hearing this news, Peter got up and ran again to the tomb. Seeing the empty graveclothes ( Luke 24:12 ), he marveled. There are noticeable differences between this visit and his first one. Here Peter is alone, whereas John was with him the first time (

John 20:3–8 ). Here, Peter is definitely impressed; the first time, only John “saw and believed” ( John 20:8 ).

**Conflict in Independent Testimony.** The fact that various accounts do not fit together with perfect ease is to be expected of independent authentic testimony. Indeed, were the accounts perfectly harmonious on the surface, we would have to suspect collusion. But the fact that the many events and general order are clear is exactly what we should expect of a credible account (verified by great legal minds who have scrutinized the Gospel accounts and pronounced them so). Simon Greenleaf , the famous Harvard lawyer who wrote a textbook on legal evidence, was converted to Christianity based on his careful examination of the Gospel witnesses from a legal perspective. He concluded that “Copies which had been as universally received and acted upon as the Four Gospels, would have been received in evidence in any court of justice, without the slightest hesitation” (Greenleaf, 9–10).

**Positive Evidence for Authenticity.** There is overwhelming positive evidence that the Gospel records are authentic. There are a greater number of manuscripts for the New Testament than for any other book from the ancient world ( *see* NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS ). Indeed, even taking the criteria for credibility of the great skeptic, David Hume, the New Testament passes with flying colors ( *see* NEW TESTAMENT WITNESSES, TESTS FOR CREDIBILITY OF ). There is no reason, then, to reject the authenticity of the New Testament accounts based on their alleged disorder. Given the fact that there are five major accounts of Jesus’ postresurrection appearances ( Matt. 28 ; Mark 16 ; Luke 24 ; John 20–21 ; Acts 9 ; 1 Cor. 15 ) filled with eyewitness accounts, there is no reasonable doubt about the reality of his resurrection.

#### **Sources**

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**Resurrection Claims in Non-Christian Religions.** Some critics of Christ’s resurrection point to claims that many non-Christian leaders also rose from the dead. If true, the resurrection of Jesus would not be a unique confirmation of his claim to deity ( *see* CHRIST, DEITY OF ). In particular, Robert Price claims that the many post-death phenomena found in other religions rival Christian claims about Christ (Price, 2–3, 14–25). If so, then the resurrection of Christ cannot be used to support the truth of Christianity over other religions ( *see* PLURALISM, RELIGIOUS ; WORLD RELIGIONS AND CHRISTIANITY ).

**Apollonius of Tyana.** Apollonius of Tyana (d. A.D. 98) is said to rival Christ's claim to be the son of God, and his biographer Philostratus is supposed to have reported post-death appearances. Actually, stories about Apollonius fit more under the apotheosis category than as resurrection accounts. In an apotheosis legend, a human is deified.

These claims are questionable (see Habermas, "Resurrection Claims"). The biography ends with the death of Apollonius. There is nothing about any resurrection. The after-death record comes from what Philostratus called "stories." They are later legends that were appended to the biography after it was written. The biography is the primary source for his life, along with one other minor one. There is no other confirmation.

The source for Philostratus's stories is said to be "Damis," which many scholars think was a nonexistent person used as a literary device. There is no other evidence. Damis's credibility is not helped by the fact that his birth place is given as Nineveh, a city that had not existed for 300 years. The writing style also was a popular literary form of the day called "romance" or "romance fiction." It is not to be taken literally or historically. The plot unfolds through contrived situations, it involves exotic animals and formal descriptions of works of art; it has lengthy speeches, and it has frequent historical inaccuracies. More about these is given in the article Apollonius of Tyana.

It is also notable that Philostratus was commissioned to compose this biography by Julia Domna, the wife of the emperor Septimus, 120 years after Apollonius's death. Since the author's patroness was to become a high priestess of Hellenistic polytheism, there may have been an anti-Christian polemic agenda in adding a resurrection-like ending. Those writing about Jesus clearly had a very different set of motives. They wanted to show that he was the long-awaited Messiah, the Savior of the world ( John 20:31 ).

The one reported "resurrection" appearance that Philostratus adds in the appendix was a vision to a sleeping man in the year 273, nearly two centuries after his death. The story also was given that Apollonius might not have actually died, but instead been deified. This is in the context of Greek polytheism. Greeks and Romans did not believe in a resurrection in the same physical body. They followed a reincarnation model. The philosophers mocked the apostle Paul when he proclaimed a bodily resurrection on Mar's Hill ( Acts 17:19 , 32 ). For the Greeks who believed in immortality, salvation involved deliverance from their body, not resurrection in their body.

**Sabbatai Sevi.** Sabbatai Sevi was a seventeenth-century Jewish teacher who claimed to be the Messiah and was heralded by a contemporary named Nathan. It was reported many years later that, after Sevi's death in 1676, his brother found his tomb empty but full of light (see Scholem).

Actually, there were two conjectures about Sevi. Many of his followers refused to believe he had really died, so they refused to believe he had risen from the dead. Whatever happened to him, no one ever reported seeing him again. His disappearance, like that of Apollonius, has characteristics of an apotheosis legend. Such legends lack historical support. The story of Sabbatai Sevi itself lacks any kind of evidence. If the story of Jesus grew from such fragmentary

reports it would be rejected by any credible scholar. The role of Nathan is conflicting. One letter reported that Nathan taught that Sevi had never died. Another source reported that Nathan had died one month before Sevi, and that they had never actually met one another (Habermas, "Resurrection Claims," 175).

**Rabbi Judah.** Rabbi Judah was a major figure in Judaism and was involved in the completion of the *Mishnah* in about 200. According to the *Talmud* , after Rabbi Judah died, "he used to come home again at twilight every Sabbath Eve." Allegedly, when a neighbor approached the rabbi's door to greet him they were turned away by his maid. When the rabbi heard of this he stopped coming, so as not to upstage other good persons who returned to their homes after their deaths ( *Talmud* , 3.12.103a).

While the rabbi died in 220, the first reference to his appearances came in the fifth century ("Resurrection Claims," 173). This gap is too large to support credibility. No reputable scholar would accept the claims about Jesus if they came from one witness two centuries after he died. In addition, the testimony is too scant. There is only one witness to the event—the maid. Nor is there any attempt to provide substantiation. The only possible confirmatory testimony was the neighbor, who was turned away.

The immediate cessation of the appearances after others inquired about him casts suspicion on whether he had appeared at all. The reason given for his failure to return seems disingenuous. No evidence of an empty tomb or a physical appearance were ever presented. At best there seemed to be only one person with a vested interest who had some kind of subjective experience regarding a person she no doubt missed very much. If it happened at all, this event seems more a candidate for a psychological than a supernatural explanation.

**Kabir.** Kabir was a fifteenth-century religious leader who combined facets of the Muslim and Hindu religions. After his death in 1518, his followers were divided over whether to cremate his body, which Hindus favor but Muslims oppose. Kabir himself is said to have appeared to stop the controversy. When he directed them to draw back the cloth placed over his body, they found only flowers underneath. His Hindu followers burned half of the flowers, and the Muslims buried the other half.

Little or nothing is extant from contemporaries of Kabir. Some of his teachings may have been written down about fifty years after his death, but these contain nothing about a resurrection (Archer, 50–53).

There is evidence of a growing set of legends that grew up among his followers. These include a miraculous birth, miracles performed during his life, and appearances to his disciples after his death. As Habermas notes, "It was found that this is a very natural and expected process in the formation of Indian legend" ("Resurrection Claims," 174).

Since resurrection of the same physical body is contrary to Hindu belief in soul transmigration to another body, it is unlikely that his Hindu followers, dedicated as they were to Hindu practices, would have come to believe that their leader was raised bodily from the dead.

The scant evidence suggests a contrived plan to pacify both sets of followers and keep the movement together. It looks like a clever plot to satisfy both religious burial practices without offending either.

**Conclusion.** There is no real comparison between these stories and the accounts of Christ's resurrection. The non-Christian resurrections set the Bible's quality of truth in sharp relief. Consider the significant differences in most, if not all, cases:

Christ's Resurrection	Non-Christian Resurrections
numerous credible witnesses	no credible eyewitnesses
numerous contemporary records	no contemporary records
abundant physical evidence	no physical evidence given
claims to deity made	some claims to deification only
other confirming miracles	no corroborating miracles

"Non-Christian resurrection claims have not been proven by evidence," notes Habermas. "Any of several naturalistic hypotheses is certainly possible and, in some cases, one or more can specifically be postulated as a probable cause. . . . Simply to report a miracle is not sufficient to establish it, especially if that miracle is going to be used to support a religious system" (ibid., 177).

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**Resurrection, Evidence for.** The bodily resurrection of Christ is the crowning proof that Jesus was who he claimed to be, God manifested in human flesh ( *see* CHRIST, DEITY OF ). Indeed, the resurrection of Christ in flesh is of such importance to the Christian faith that the New Testament insists that no one can be saved without it ( Rom. 10:9 ; 1 Cor. 15:1–7 ).

**Direct Evidence.** Some have opted for a spiritual or immaterial resurrection body ( *see* RESURRECTION, PHYSICAL NATURE OF ), but the New Testament is emphatic that Jesus rose in the same physical body of flesh and bones in which he died. The evidence for this consists in the New Testament testimony of numerous appearances of Christ to his disciples for a period of forty days, in the same physical, nail-scarred body in which he died, now immortal.

Of course, the evidence for the resurrection of Christ depends on the fact of his death. For arguments that Jesus actually died physically on the cross, see the article CHRIST, DEATH OF ; SWOON THEORY . It remains here only to show that the same body that permanently vacated his tomb was seen alive after that time. The evidence for this is found in his twelve appearances, the first eleven of which cover the immediate forty days after his crucifixion ( *see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR ).

**Appearances. To Mary Magdalene ( John 20:10–18 ).** It is an unmistakable sign of the authenticity of the record that, in a male dominated culture, Jesus first appeared to a woman. In the first-century Jewish culture, a writer inventing a resurrection account would never have taken this approach. A woman's testimony was not even accepted in court. Anyone faking the record would have Jesus appear first to one or more of his twelve disciples, probably a prominent one such as Peter. Instead, Jesus' first postresurrection appearance was to Mary Magdalene. During this appearance there were unmistakable proofs of the visibility, materiality, and identity of the resurrection body.

She *saw* Christ with her natural eyes. The text says, "she turned around and saw Jesus standing there" (vs. 14 ). The word "saw" ( *theoreo* ) is a normal word for seeing with the naked eye. It is used elsewhere in the New Testament for seeing human beings in their physical bodies ( Mark 3:11 ; 5:15 ; Acts 3:16 ) and even for seeing Jesus in his prerescurrection body ( Matt. 27:55 ; John 6:19 ).

Mary *heard* Jesus. "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" (vs. 15 ). Then again, she heard Jesus say "Mary" and she recognized his voice (vs. 16 ). Of course, hearing alone is not a sufficient evidence of materiality. God is immaterial, and yet his voice was heard in John 12:28 . Nevertheless, physical hearing connected with physical seeing *is* significant supportive evidence of the material nature of what was seen and heard. Mary's familiarity with Jesus' voice is evidence of the identity of the resurrected Christ.

Mary *touched* Christ's resurrection body. Jesus replied, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father" (vs. 17 ). The word "hold" ( *aptomai* ) is a normal word for physical touching of a material body. It too is used of physical touching of other human bodies ( Matt. 8:3 ; 9:29 ) and of Christ's pre-resurrection body ( Mark 6:56 ; Luke 6:19 ). The context indicates that Mary was grasping on to him so as not to lose him again. In a parallel experience the women "clasped his feet" ( Matt. 28:9 ).

Mary “went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.” So she ran to Peter and announced that the body was gone (vs. 2).

The parallel account in Matthew informs us that the angels said to her, “Come and see the place where he lay” (Matt. 28:6). Both texts imply that she saw that the tomb was empty. Later, Peter and John also went into the tomb. John “bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there” and Peter “went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the *burial cloth* that had been around Jesus’ head” (vss. 5–7). But seeing the same physical body that once laid there is proof of the numerical identity of the pre- and postresurrection body.

In this one account Jesus was seen, heard, and touched. In addition, Mary witnessed both the empty tomb and Jesus’ grave clothes. All the evidence for an unmistakable identity of the same visible, physical body that was raised immortal are present in this first appearance.

*To the Women (Matt. 28:1–10)*. Jesus not only appeared to Mary Magdalene but also to the other women with her (Matt. 28:1–10), including Mary the mother of James and Salome (Mark 16:1). During this appearance there were four evidences presented that Jesus rose in the same tangible, physical body in which he was crucified.

First, the women *saw* Jesus. They were told by the angel at the empty tomb, “He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.” And as they hurried away from the tomb, “suddenly Jesus met them. ‘Greetings,’ he said” (vs. 9). So they received visual confirmation of his physical resurrection.

Second, the women *clasped his feet* and worshiped him. That is, they not only saw his physical body but they felt it as well. Since spiritual entities cannot be sensed with any of the five senses, the fact that the women actually handled Jesus’ physical body is a convincing proof of the tangible, physical nature of the resurrection body.

Third, the women also *heard* Jesus speak. After giving greetings (vs. 9), Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me” (vs. 10). Thus the women saw, touched, and heard Jesus with their physical senses, a three-fold confirmation of the physical nature of his body.

Fourth, the women *saw the empty tomb* where that body had lain. The angel said to them at the tomb, “He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay” (vs. 6). The “he” who had been dead is now alive, demonstrated by the fact that the same body that once lay there is now alive forevermore. So in both the case of Mary Magdalene and the other women, all four evidences of the visible, physical resurrection of the numerically identical body were present. They saw the empty tomb where his physical body once lay and they saw, heard and touched that same body after it came out of the tomb.

*To Peter (1 Cor. 15:5 ; cf. John 20:3–9)*. First Corinthians 15:5 declares that Jesus “was seen of Cephas (Peter).” There is no narration of this event, but the text says he was *seen* (Gk. *ōphthē*) and implies that he was *heard* as well. Certainly Peter was not speechless. Jesus definitely spoke with Peter in a later appearance when he asked Peter to feed his sheep (John

21:15, 16, 17). Mark confirms that Peter (and the disciples) would “see him, just as he told you” (Mark 16:7). Peter, of course saw the *empty tomb* and the *grave clothes* just before this appearance (John 20:6–7). So Peter experienced at least three evidences of the physical resurrection; he saw and heard Jesus, and he observed the empty tomb and grave clothes. These are definite pieces of evidence that the body that rose is the same, visible, tangible, material body he had before the resurrection.

*On the Emmaus Road (Mark 16:12 ; Luke 24:13–35)*. During this appearance three evidences of the physical resurrection were presented. They not only saw and heard Jesus but they also ate with Jesus. Combined they provide clear proof of the tangible, physical nature of the resurrection body.

There were two disciples, one of which was named Cleopas (vs. 18). As they were walking toward Emmaus, “Jesus himself came up and walked along with them” (vs. 16). At first they did not recognize who he was; they nevertheless clearly *saw* him. When they finally realized who it was, the text says “he disappeared out of their *sight*” (vs. 31). Jesus’ resurrection body was as visible as any other material object.

They *heard* Jesus with their physical ears (vss. 17, 19, 25–26). In fact, Jesus carried on a lengthy conversation with them. For “beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (vs. 27). Of course, they were not the only ones Jesus taught after the resurrection. Luke informs us elsewhere that “he appeared to them [the apostles] over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). During these times he “gave many convincing proofs that he was alive” (vs. 3).

They *ate* with him. Luke says, “when he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them” (vs. 30).

Although the text does not say specifically that Jesus also ate, it is implied by being “at table with them.” And later in the chapter it is explicitly stated that he ate with the ten apostles (vs. 43). In two other places Luke states that Jesus did eat with the disciples (Acts 1:4 ; 10:41). So on this appearance of Christ the eyewitnesses saw him, heard him, and ate with him over a considerable period of time one evening. It is difficult to image how Jesus could have done any thing more to demonstrate the physical nature of the resurrection body.

*To the Ten (Luke 24:36–49 ; John 20:19–23)*. When Jesus appeared to ten disciples, Thomas being absent, he was seen, heard, touched, and they saw him eat fish. Thus four major evidences of the visible, physical nature of the resurrection body were present on this occasion.

“While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’” In fact, Jesus carried on a conversation with them also about how “everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms” (vs. 44). So Jesus was obviously *heard* by the disciples.

The disciples also *saw* Jesus on this occasion. In fact, they thought at first that he was a “spirit” (vs. 37). But Jesus “*showed* them his hands and his feet.” So they clearly saw him as

well as heard him. In the parallel account, John records that “the disciples were overjoyed when they *saw* the Lord” ( John 20:20 ; cf. vs. 25 ).

It may be inferred from the fact that they were at first unconvinced of his tangible materiality when Jesus presented his wounds to them that they *touched* him as well. In fact, Jesus clearly said to them, “Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have” (vs. 39 ). Jesus’ use of “I” and “me” in connection with his physical resurrection body expresses his claim that he is numerically identical with his preresurrection body. Jesus also “*showed them his hands and feet* . ” confirming to his disciples that his resurrection body was the very same nail-scarred body of flesh and bones that was crucified.

On this occasion Jesus *ate* physical food to convince the disciples that he was resurrected in a literal, physical body. “They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence” (vs. 43 ). What makes this passage such a powerful proof is that Jesus offered his ability to eat physical food as a proof of the material nature of his body of flesh and bones. Jesus literally exhausted the ways in which he could prove the corporeal, material nature of his resurrection body. Thus, if Jesus’ resurrection body was not the same material body of flesh and bones in which he died, he was being deceptive.

*To the Eleven ( John 20:24–31 )*. Thomas was not present when Jesus appeared to his disciples ( John 20:24 ). Even after his fellow apostles reported who they had seen, Jesus, Thomas refused to believe unless he could see and touch Christ for himself. A week later his wish was granted: “A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’ ” ( John 20:26 ). When Jesus appeared to Thomas he saw, heard, and touched the resurrected Lord.

Thomas *saw* the Lord. Jesus was clearly visible to Thomas who later said to him, “you have *seen* me” (vs. 29 ).

Thomas also *heard* the Lord say, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe” (vs. 27 ). To this unquestionably convincing display of physical evidence Thomas replied, “My Lord and my God!” (vs. 28 ).

It can be inferred that Thomas also *touched* the Lord. Certainly this is what Thomas said he wanted to do (vs. 25 ). And Jesus told him to (vs. 27 ). Although the text only says Thomas saw and believed (vs. 29 ), it is natural to infer that he also touched Jesus. Jesus was touched on at least two other occasions ( John 20:9 , 17 ). So it may very well be that Thomas also touched him on this occasion also. At any rate, Thomas certainly encountered a visible, physical resurrection body with his natural senses. Whether Thomas touched Christ, he certainly *saw his crucifixion wounds* ( John 20:27–29 ). The fact that Jesus still had these physical wounds from his crucifixion is an unmistakable proof that he was resurrected in the material body in which he was crucified. This was the second time that Jesus exhibited his wounds. It is difficult to imagine that he could have offered greater proof that the resurrection body is the same body of flesh that was crucified and now glorified.

*To the Seven Disciples ( John 21 )*. John records Jesus’ appearance to the seven disciples who went fishing in Galilee. During this appearance the disciples saw Jesus, heard him, and ate breakfast with him.

The Bible says that “Jesus *appeared* again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias” ( John 21:1 ). Early in the morning they saw him standing on the shore (vs. 4 ). After he talked and ate with them, the text says, “this is now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead” (vs. 14 ).

The disciples also *heard* Jesus speak (vss. 5 , 6 , 10 , 12 ). Jesus carried on an extended conversation with Peter in which he was asked three times whether he loved Jesus (vss. 15 , 16 , 17 ). Since Peter had denied Jesus three times, not only did Peter hear Jesus speak but Jesus’ words no doubt rang in his ears. Jesus also told Peter how he would die (vss. 18 , 19 ).

Jesus apparently also *ate* with the disciples during this appearance. He asked them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?” (vs. 5 ). After telling them where to catch some (vs. 6 ), Jesus told them to “Bring some of the fish you have just caught” (vs. 10 ). Then he said to the disciples, “Come and have breakfast” (vs. 12 ). As they did, “Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish” (vs. 14 ). Although the text does not explicitly state that Jesus ate, nevertheless, as host of the meal it would have been noteworthy had he not. It is safe to say that, in addition to seeing and hearing Jesus, the disciples shared a physical meal with him.

*To Commission Apostles ( Matt. 28:16–20 ; Mark 16:14–18 )*. The next appearance of Christ was at the Great Commission ( Matt. 28:16–20 ). As Jesus commissioned them to disciple all nations, he was both seen and clearly heard by all the apostles.

The text says that the disciples went to Galilee where Jesus had told them to go (vs. 16 ). And “when they *saw* him, they worshiped him” (vs. 17 ). Mark adds that they were eating ( Mark 16:14 ), although this version is in the questionably authentic final section of Mark. However, it was not simply what they saw but what they heard that left a lasting impression.

Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” ( Matt. 28:19 ). The fact that this small band shortly became the world’s greatest missionary society is ample testimony for how powerfully what the apostles *heard* Jesus speak impressed them.

*To Five Hundred ( 1 Cor. 15:6 )*. There is no narration of this appearance. It is simply noted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:6 where he says: After that, he *appeared* to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still alive.

Since Jesus was *seen* on this occasion and since he left such a lasting impression on them, it can be assumed that they *heard* him speak. Why else would Paul imply their readiness to testify on behalf of the resurrection, saying in essence, “If you do not believe me, just go and ask them?”

Despite its brevity, this one verse is a powerful testimony to the bodily resurrection of Christ. It has the ring of truth about it. Paul is writing in 55 or 56, only twenty-two or twenty-three years after the resurrection (33). Most of these eye witnesses were still alive. And Paul challenges his reader to check out what he is saying with this multitude of witness who saw and probably heard Christ after his resurrection.

*To James ( 1 Cor. 15:7 ).* Jesus’ brothers were unbelievers before his resurrection. The Gospel of John informs us that “even his own brothers did not believe in him” ( John 7:5 ). But after his resurrection at least James and Jude, the half-brothers of Jesus, became believers (cf. Mark 6:3 ). However, the Scriptures say explicitly that Jesus “ *appeared* to James” ( 1 Cor. 15:7 ). No doubt Jesus also *spoke* to James. At least as a result of his experience James became a pillar of the early church and played a prominent part in the first church council ( Acts 15:13 ).

James also wrote one of the books of the New Testament in which he spoke of “the crown of life” ( James 1:12 ) and of the “Lord’s coming” ( 5:8 ) which was made possible only through the resurrection of Christ ( 2 Tim 1:10 ). So whatever James saw or heard during this resurrection appearance of Christ not only converted him but made him into a prominent figure in the apostolic church.

*At the Ascension ( Acts 1:4–8 ).* Jesus’ last appearance before his ascension was again to all the apostles. During this time they saw him, heard him, and ate with him. These three lines of evidence are the final confirmation of the literal, material nature of his resurrection body.

Jesus was *seen* by his apostles on this occasion. Luke says, “after his suffering, he *showed* himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive” ( Acts 1:3 ). He adds, Jesus “ *appeared* to them over a period of forty days.”

They also *heard* Jesus, since on this occasion he “ *spoke* about the kingdom of God” ( Acts 1:3 ). And during this specific appearance Jesus commanded them: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have *heard* me speak about” (vs. 4 ). So it was not only a familiar voice but a familiar teaching that confirmed that this was the Jesus who had taught them before the crucifixion.

Luke also says in this passage that Jesus *ate* with the disciples, as he had done on many occasions. For this last appearance before the ascension was “on one occasion, while he was eating with them” ( Acts 1:4 ). This is the fourth recorded instance of Jesus eating after the resurrection. It was apparently something he did rather often, since even the short summary of his ministry by Peter in Acts 10 declares that the apostles “ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead” (vs. 41 ). Surely, both the intimate fellowship and the physical ability to eat food was more than sufficient proof that Jesus was appearing in the same tangible, physical body he possessed before his resurrection.

*To Paul ( Acts 9:1–9 ; 1 Cor. 15:8 ).* Jesus’ last appearance was to Paul (see 1 Cor. 15:8 ). It is important to note that this appearance was no vision that occurred only within the mind of Paul. Rather, it was an objective, external event observable to all who were within visual distance.

- Paul called this an “appearance” (Gk. *ōphthē*), the same word used of Christ’s literal appearances to the other apostles ( 1 Cor. 15:5–7 ). Indeed, Paul calls it the “last” appearance of Christ to the apostles.
- Seeing the resurrected Christ was a condition for being an apostle ( Acts 1:22 ). Yet Paul claimed to be an apostle, saying, “Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” ( 1 Cor. 9:1 ).
- Visions are not accompanied by physical manifestations, such as light and a voice.

The resurrection experiences, including Paul’s, are never called “visions” ( *optasia* ) anywhere in the Gospels or Epistles. During the appearance to Paul, Jesus was both seen and heard. The Gospels do speak of a “vision” of angels ( Luke 24:23 ), and Acts refers to Paul’s “heavenly vision” ( Acts 26:19 ) which may be a reference to the vision(s) he and Ananias received later ( Acts 9:11–12 ; cf. 22:8 ; 26:19 ). As for the actual appearance to Paul, Christ was both seen and heard with the physical senses of those present. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul said Jesus “ *appeared* to me also” (vs. 8 ). In the detailed account of it in Acts 26 , Paul said “I *saw* a light from heaven” (vs. 13 ). That Paul is referring to a physical light is clear from the fact that it was so bright that it blinded the physical eyes ( Acts 22:6 , 8 ). Paul not only saw the light but he saw Jesus.

Paul also *heard* the voice of Jesus speaking distinctly to him “in Aramaic” ( Acts 26:14 ). The physical voice Paul heard said, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” ( Acts 9:4 ). Paul carried on a conversation with Jesus (vss. 5–6 ) and was obedient to the command to go into the city of Damascus ( 9:6 ). Paul’s miraculous conversion, his tireless efforts for Christ, and his strong emphasis on the physical resurrection of Christ ( Rom. 4:25 ; 10:9 ; 1 Corinthians 15 ) all show what an indelible impression the physical resurrection made upon him ( *see* RESURRECTION, PHYSICAL NATURE OF ).

Not only did Paul see the light and hear the voice but those who were with him did as well ( Acts 22:8 ). This shows that the experience was not private to Paul. It was not purely subjective but had an objective referent. It happened “out there” in the real physical world, not merely in the world of his private spiritual experience. Anyone who had been there could also have seen and heard the physical manifestation.

*A Summary of the Direct Evidence.* The witness evidence for the physical resurrection of Christ is massive. Compared to the evidence for other events from the ancient world, it is overwhelming:

	Saw	Heard	Touched	Other Evidence
1. Mary Magdalene John 20:10–18	×	×	×	empty tomb
2. Mary /women Matt.	×	×	×	empty tomb

28:1–10				
3. Peter 1 Cor. 15:5	×	×		empty tomb, clothes
4. Two disciples Luke 24:13–35	×	×		* ate with him
5. Ten disciples Luke 24:36–49 ; John 20:19–23	×	×	** X	saw wounds ate food
6. Eleven disciples John 20:24–31	×	×	** X	saw wounds
7. Seven disciples John 21	×	×		* ate food
8. All disciples — commissioning Matt. 28:16–20 ; Mark 16:14–18	×	×		
9. 500 brethren 1 Cor. 15:6	×	×		
10. James 1 Cor. 15:7	×	×		
11. All apostles —Ascension Acts 1:4–8	×	×		ate food
12. Paul Acts 9:1–9 ; 1 Cor. 15:8	×	×		

During the first eleven appearances alone Jesus appeared to more than 500 people over a forty-day period of time ( Acts 1:3 ). On all twelve occasions Jesus was seen and probably heard. Four times he offered himself to be touched. He was definitely touched twice. Jesus revealed his crucifixion scars on two occasions. In four testimonies the empty tomb was seen, and twice the empty grave clothes were viewed. On another four occasions almost certainly Jesus ate food. The

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\* Implied  
\*\* Offered himself to be touched  
\*\* Offered himself to be touched  
\* Implied

sum total of this evidence is overwhelming confirmation that Jesus arose and lived in the same visible, tangible, physical body of flesh and bones he had possessed before his resurrection body.

**Indirect Evidence.** In addition to all the direct evidence for the bodily resurrection of Christ, there are lines of corroboration. These include the immediate transformation of the men who became the apostles, the reaction of those who rejected Christ, the existence of the early church, and the immediate, amazingly rapid spread of Christianity.

*The Transformed Disciples.* After Jesus’ death his apostles were scared, scattered, and skeptical. Only one, John, was at the crucifixion ( John 19:26–27 ). The rest fled ( Matt. 27:58 ). They also were skeptical. Mary, the first one to whom Jesus appeared, doubted, thinking she had seen a gar dener ( John 20:15 ). The disciples doubted the reports of the women ( Luke 24:11 ). Some doubted until they saw Christ for themselves ( John 20:25 ). One would not even believe when all the other apostles told them Christ had appeared to them. Two disciples on the road to Emmaus even doubted as they talked with Jesus, thinking he was a stranger ( Luke 24:18 ).

A few weeks these very same men and women who had huddled in secret ( John 20:19 ) were fearlessly and openly proclaiming the resurrection of Christ—even before the Sanhedrin that was responsible for Christ’s death ( Acts 4–5 ). The only thing that can account for this immediate and miraculous change is that they were absolutely convinced they had encountered the bodily resurrected Christ.

*The Theme of Apostolic Preaching.* Of all the wonderful things Jesus taught the disciples about love ( Matt. 22:36–37 ), non-retaliation ( Matthew 5 ), and the kingdom of God ( cf. Matthew 13 ), the dominant theme of apostolic preaching was none of these themes. Above all else, they proclaimed the resurrection of Christ. It was the subject of Peter’s first sermon at Pentecost ( Acts 2:22–40 ) and his next sermon at the temple ( Acts 3:14 , 26 ). It was the content of his message before the Sanhedrin ( Acts 4:10 ). Indeed, everywhere and “with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” ( Acts 4:33 ; cf. 4:2 ). Being a witness to the resurrection was a condition for being an apostle ( Acts 1:22 ; cf. 1 Cor. 9:1 ). The best explanation of why this theme was their immediate preoccupation within weeks of his death was that they had, as the Gospels tell us, repeatedly encountered him alive in the days after his crucifixion.

*The Reaction of Those Who Rejected Christ.* The reaction of the Jewish authorities is also testimony to the fact of Christ’s resurrection. They did not produce the body, nor even organize a search. Instead, they bribed the soldiers who had guarded the tomb to lie ( Matt. 28:11–15 ), and they fought the disciples who testified they had seen the body alive. The fact that they resisted , rather than refused, the disciples’ claims speaks for the reality of the resurrection.

*The Existence of the Early Church.* Another indirect proof of the resurrection is the very existence of the early church. There are good reasons why the church should not have been born:

The first church consisted largely of Jews who believed there was only one God ( Deut. 6:4 ), and yet they proclaimed that Jesus was God ( see CHRIST, DEITY OF ). They prayed to Jesus ( Acts 7:59 ), baptized in his name ( Acts 2:38 ), claimed he was exalted to God’s right hand ( Acts



2:33 ; 7:55 ), and called him Lord and Christ ( 2:34–36 ), the very title which earned Jesus the charge of blasphemy from the Jewish High Priest at his trial ( Matt. 26:63–65 ).

The first Christians had insufficient time to establish themselves before they were persecuted, beaten, threatened with death, and even martyred ( Acts 7:57–60 ). Yet they not only maintained their belief but quickly grew in number. If what they testified to was not real, they had every reason and opportunity to give it up. But they did not. Only a real encounter with the resurrected Christ can adequately account for their existence as a Jewish sect that came to be known as Christians ( Acts 11:26 ).

*The Growth of Christianity.* By contrast to other religions, like Islam which grew slowly at first, Christianity experienced an immediate and rapid growth. Three thousand were saved the very first day ( Acts 2:41 ). Many others were added to their ranks daily ( Acts 2:47 ). Within days 2000 more became believers ( Acts 4:4 ). The “number of the disciples was multiplying” so rapidly that deacons had to be appointed to care for the widows ( Acts 6:1 ). Surely nothing other than the bodily resurrection of Christ and his sending of the Holy Spirit ( Acts 1:8 ) can sufficiently account for this immediate and amazing growth.

*Summary of the Evidence.* Evidence for the resurrection of Christ is compelling. There are more documents, more eyewitnesses, and more corroborative evidence than for any other historical event of ancient history. The secondary, supplementary evidence is convincing; when combined with the direct evidence, it presents a towering case for the physical resurrection of Christ. In legal terminology, it is “beyond all reasonable doubt.”

**Objections to the Resurrection.** Many objections have been leveled against the physical resurrection of Christ. Some claim that this would qualify as a miracle, and miracles are not believable ( see MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST ). Others claim that the documents and witnesses recording these events were not reliable ( see NEW TESTAMENT DOCUMENTS, RELIABILITY OF ; NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF ). Still others have devised alternative theories opposing the resurrection ( see CHRIST’S DEATH, SUBSTITUTION LEGEND ; RESURRECTION, ALTERNATE THEORIES ). But those who try to get around the resurrection walk against the gale-force winds of the full evidence. The facts are that Jesus of Nazareth really died ( see CHRIST, DEATH OF ) and actually came back from the dead in the same physical body.

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**Resurrection, Objections to.** Among standard objections raised against the physical resurrection of Christ, some aver that miracles in general, including the resurrection miracle, are not credible ( see MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST ). These are specifically answered in the article Miracles, Arguments Against. Others insist that we cannot know the true happenings surrounding the death and resurrection of Christ because the New Testament documents are flawed. Regarding this uncertainty, see ACTS, HISTORICITY OF ; ARCHAEOLOGY, NEW TESTAMENT ; BIBLE CRITICISM ; JESUS SEMINAR ; NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS and NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF .

In the late twentieth century, two other objections have arisen. One is that the Gospel sequences of events cannot be harmonized. A second theory that has gained some following even in evangelical New Testament scholarship argues that the resurrection body of Christ was a spiritual, not a physical, body. Murray Harris was at the forefront of this view until he quietly modified his view. However, a number of other New Testament scholars, including George Ladd, held the same view. Because several facets of this view need to be considered, objections to the resurrection will be answered here, and the overall consideration of the resurrection body—Christ’s and ours—is discussed at some length in RESURRECTION, PHYSICAL NATURE OF .

**Harmony of the Accounts.** It is often objected by critics that the resurrection record is self-contradictory. The order of events appears to differ among the accounts. For example, the Gospels list Mary of Magdala as the first to see Jesus after the resurrection (cf. Matt. 28:1f .), whereas 1 Corinthians 15:5 lists Peter as the first to see the resurrected Christ. Likewise, Matthew ( 28:2 ) lists “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary” as first at the tomb, whereas John ( 20:1 ) names only Mary Magdalene.

Closer scrutiny reveals that the descriptions are saying the same things from different perspectives; they do harmonize when closely compared.

There is a discernible overall order of postresurrection events in the New Testament accounts. The other events fit around this overall schema ( see RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR ):

	Matt	Mark	Luke	John	Acts	1 Cor.
1. Mary Magdalene			×			×
2. Mary /women	×	×				
3. Peter			×			×
4. Two disciples		×	×			
5. Ten			×	×		

disciples				
6. Eleven disciples		×		
7. Seven disciples			×	
8. Commission of apostles	×		×	×
9. 500 brethren				×
10. James				×
11. Ascension	×			
12. Paul			×	×

Earliest and most reliable manuscripts do not have Mark 16:9–20 .

Peter saw the empty tomb; he did not immediately encounter Christ.

Other scholars (cf. Wenham, 139) reverse numbers 3 and 4 (but see Luke 24:34 ), and some combine 8 and 9. These differences are of no consequence in reconciling the events ( *see* RESURRECTION OF CHRIST ).

Some factors help in understanding why some writers approached the subject as they did:

- Paul in 1 Corinthians is summarizing the defense of the resurrection from a legal and official viewpoint, not giving a blow-by-blow account. Therefore, he presents an official list of witnesses, which would never have included women in a Greco-Roman setting like Corinth. A woman’s testimony was not allowed in court.
- Christ’s appearance to Paul was not listed in the Gospels, since Paul saw Christ years after the ascension ( Acts 9 ; cf. 1 Cor. 15:7 ).
- As an apologist, Paul would highlight the impressive appearance to the 500 witnesses, most of whom were still alive when he wrote 1 Corinthians (ca. 55).
- Other appearances, as to James ( 1 Cor. 15:7 ) and on the road to Emmaus ( Luke 24:13–34 ), fit as supplementary information. They do not come up in the harmonizing debate.

*The Women’s Story.* Even the confusing events of the first morning involving the women are not too difficult to sort out ( *see* RESURRECTION OF CHRIST ).

*Conflict in Independent Testimony.* The fact that various accounts do not fit together with perfect ease should be expected of authentic testimony from independent witnesses. Were the accounts perfectly harmonious on the surface, there would be suspicion of collusion. That the events and order are described from differing perspectives that depend on personal involvement of the participants and some confusion of detail at an intense and bewildering moment is exactly what one would expect of credible accounts. Indeed, many legal minds, trained in sleuthing out false witnesses, have scrutinized the Gospel accounts and pronounced them credible. Simon Greenleaf, the Harvard law professor who wrote the standard study of legal evidence, counted his own conversion to Christianity from his careful examination of the Gospel witnesses. He concluded that “copies which had been as universally received and acted upon as the Four Gospels, would have been received in evidence in any court of justice, without the slightest hesitation” (Greenleaf, 9–10).

*The Essentially Physical Nature of the Resurrection Body.* Several passages are used by critics to argue that Jesus’ resurrection body was not continuously and essentially physical (Harris, *From Grave to Glory* , 373). However, none state that Jesus’ body was ever nonphysical.

*Paul and the “Spiritual Body.”* Proponents of the view that the postresurrection body is immaterial cite 1 Corinthians 15:44 . Paul refers to the resurrection body as a “spiritual body,” in contrast to the preresurrection “natural body” ( 1 Cor. 15:44 ). But a study of the context does not support this conclusion.

A “spiritual” body denotes an immortal one, not an immaterial one. A “spiritual” body is one dominated by the spirit, not one devoid of matter. The Greek word *pneumatikos* (translated “spiritual” here) means a body directed by the spirit, as opposed to one under the dominion of the flesh. It is not ruled by flesh that perishes but by the spirit that endures (vss. 50–58 ) So “spiritual body” here does not mean immaterial and invisible but immortal and imperishable.

“Spiritual” also denotes a supernatural body, not a nonphysical one. The resurrection body Paul refers to is supernatural. The series of contrasts used by Paul in this passage reveals that the resurrection body was a supernatural body. Notice the parallels:

<b>Preresurrection Body— Earthly</b>	<b>Postresurrection Body—Heavenly</b>
perishable (vs. 42 )	imperishable
weak (vs. 43 )	powerful
mortal (vs. 53 )	immortal
natural (vs. 44 )	[supernatural]

The complete context indicates that “spiritual” ( *pneumatikos* ) could be translated “supernatural” in contrast to “natural.” This is made clear by the parallels of perishable and imperishable, corruptible and incorruptible. In fact, *pneumatikos* is translated “supernatural” in 1 Corinthians 10:4 when it speaks of the “supernatural rock that followed them in the wilderness” (

RSV ). The *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* explains, “That which belongs to the supernatural order of being is described as *pneumatikos*: accordingly, the resurrection body is a *sōma pneumatikos* [supernatural body].”

“Spiritual” refers to physical objects. A study of Paul’s use of the same word in other passages reveals that it does not refer to something that is purely immaterial. First, Paul spoke of the “spiritual rock” that followed Israel in the wilderness, from which they got “spiritual drink” ( 1 Cor. 10:4 ). But the Old Testament story ( Exodus 17 ; Numbers 20 ) reveals that it was a physical rock from which they got literal water to drink. But the actual water they drank from that material rock was produced supernaturally. Hence, the Revised Standard Version properly translates it as follows: “All ate the same supernatural food and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ” ( 1 Cor. 10:3–4 ).

That is to say, the supernatural Christ was the source of these supernatural manifestations of natural food and water. But just because the physical provisions came from a spiritual (i.e., supernatural) source did not make them immaterial. When Jesus supernaturally made bread for the 5000 ( John 6 ), he made literal bread. However, this literal, material bread could have been called “spiritual” bread because of its supernatural source. In the same way, the literal manna given to Israel is called “spiritual food” ( 1 Cor. 10:4 ).

Further, when Paul spoke about a “spiritual man” ( 1 Cor. 2:15 ) he obviously did not mean an invisible, immaterial man with no corporeal body. He was speaking of a flesh-and-blood human being whose life was lived by the supernatural power of God. He was referring to a literal person whose life had spiritual direction. A spiritual man or woman is one who is “taught by the Spirit” and who “accepts the things that come from the Spirit of God” ( 1 Cor. 2:13–14 ). The resurrection body can be called a “spiritual body” in much the same way we speak of the Bible as a “spiritual book.” Regardless of the spiritual source and power, both the resurrection body and the Bible are material objects.

*The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* says that *spiritual* is used “in contrast to the *merely* material or to those activities, and attitudes that derive from the flesh and draw their significance from the *merely* physical, human and worldly” (Brown, 3.707). So “spiritual” does not mean something purely immaterial or intangible. The spiritual man, like the spiritual rock and spiritual food, was a physical being that received spiritual or supernatural help.

*Christ’s Ability to Appear*. It is argued that the resurrection body was essentially invisible and, therefore, not an object observable in our history. The New Testament says that it could “appear” (Harris, *Raised Immortal*, 46–47). Therefore, it must have been invisible before it appeared (see Luke 24:34 ; Acts 9:17 ; 13:31 ; 26:16 ; 1 Cor. 15:5–8 ). Each of these times it says, “he appeared” or “he let himself be seen” (in the Greek’s aorist passive). Grammatically, the action rests on the one who appears, not on the one who sees him appear. This, it is argued, implies that Jesus took the initiative to make himself visible at his resurrection appearances.

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rsv Revised Standard Version

However, Christ’s resurrection body could be seen with the eye. Appearance accounts use the word *horaō* (“to see”). Although this word is sometimes used of seeing invisible realities (cf. Luke 1:22 ; 24:23 ), it often means to see by the eye. The usual word meaning “vision” is *orama*, not *horaō* (see Matt. 17:9 ; Acts 9:10 ; 16:9 ). In the New Testament a vision usually, if not always, refers to something that is essentially invisible, such as, God or angels. For example, John uses *horaō* of seeing Jesus in his earthly body before the resurrection ( 6:36 ; 14:9 ; 19:35 ) and also of seeing him in his resurrection body ( 20:18 , 25 , 29 ). Since the same word for *body* ( *sōma* ) is used of Jesus before and after the resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 15:44 ; Phil. 3:21 ), and since the same word for its appearing ( *horaō* ) is used of both, there is no reason to believe the resurrection body is not the same physical body now immortal.

Even the phrase “he let himself be seen” (aorist passive, *ōphthē*), simply means that Jesus took the initiative to disclose himself, not that he was essentially invisible until he did so. The same form (“He/they appeared”) is used in the Greek Old Testament ( 2 Chron. 25:21 ), in the Apocrypha ( 1 Macc. 4:6 ), and in the New Testament ( Acts 7:26 ) of human beings appearing in physical bodies (Hatch, 2.105–7). In further references *ōphthē* is used of ocular vision.

In its passive form *ōphthē* means “to initiate an appearance for public view, to move from a place where one is not seen to a place where one is seen.” It does not mean that what is by nature invisible becomes visible. When the expression “he let himself be seen” ( *ōphthē* ) is used of God or angels (cf. Luke 1:11 ; Acts 7:2 ), who are invisible realities, then *in that context* it refers to an invisible entity becoming visible. But since the same expression is used of other humans with physical bodies and since Christ is said to have had a body ( *sōma* ), there is no reason to take the expression to refer to anything but a literal, physical body, unless the context demands otherwise. To say otherwise contradicts the emphatic declaration of John that the body of Jesus, even after the resurrection (when John wrote) was continuously physical ( 1 John 4:2 ; 2 John 7 ).

The same event that is described by “he appeared” or “let himself be seen” (aorist passive), such as the appearance of Christ to Paul ( 1 Cor. 15:8 ), is also found in the active mood. Paul wrote of this experience in the same book, “Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” ( 1 Cor. 9:1 ). But if the resurrection body can be seen by the eye, then it is not invisible until it makes itself visible by some kind of “materialization.”

Christ’s “appearances” were natural. The word “appeared” ( *ōphthē* ) refers to a natural event. Arndt and Gingrich’s *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* points out that the word is used “of persons who appear in a natural way.” *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* notes that appearances “occur in a reality which can be perceived by the natural senses.” In his *Linguistic Key to the New Testament*, Fritz Rienecker notes that *appeared* means “He could be seen by human eyes, the appearances were not just visions” (Rienecker, 439).

This is not to neglect texts which at least may be interpreted to suggest a miraculous appearance or disappearance. Christ was God and did work miracles. So a distinction must be drawn between Christ’s essential resurrection body and the power of Christ as God incarnate. That Jesus could be seen was not a miracle, but the way in which he appeared was miraculous. The texts are simply ambiguous about what these sudden appearances involved, and some believe Jesus came and went quickly in a normal human manner. But there is a strong suggestion

that he appeared *suddenly*. And the texts also speak of sudden disappearances. Luke writes of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, “Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight” ( Luke 24:31 ; cf. Luke 24:51 ; Acts 1:9 ). This would indicate an act of power, a sign of his identity.

The text nowhere states that Jesus became nonphysical when the disciples could no longer see him. Just because he was out of their sight does not mean he was out of his physical body. God has the power to miraculously transport persons in their preresurrection physical bodies from one place to another. Although the precise meaning of the text is unclear, it would seem that this happened to Philip the evangelist when he was “caught up by the spirit” to journey to a city miles away ( Acts 8 ).

The writers may stress Christ’s self-initiated “appearances” precisely because of their apologetic value as signs. The appearances proved that he had conquered death ( Acts 13:30–31 ; 17:31 ; Rom. 1:4 ; cf. John 10:18 ; Rev. 1:18 ). The translation, “He let himself be seen,” is a perfectly fitting expression of self-initiated triumph. Christ was sovereign over death and in his resurrection appearances.

The reason for the stress on the many appearances of Christ is not because the resurrection body was essentially invisible and immaterial, but rather it was material and immortal. Without an empty tomb and repeated appearances of the same body that was once buried in it raised immortal, there would be no proof of the resurrection. So it is not surprising at all that the Bible strongly stresses the many appearances of Christ. They are the real proof of the physical resurrection.

*Resurrection Appearances as “Visions.”* The contention that resurrection appearances are called “visions” is also used to support the nonphysical view of the resurrection body. Luke records that women at the tomb “had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive” ( Luke 24:23 ). But visions are always of invisible, unseen realities, not of physical, material objects. The miracle is that these spiritual realities can be seen. Hence, it is argued that a spiritual body is angel-like and, therefore, cannot be seen. Some point to the fact that those who were with Paul during his Damascus road experience did not see Christ (Pannenberg, 93). Hence, the experience of the resurrected Christ is called a vision. But this reasoning is flawed.

Luke 24:23 does not say that seeing the resurrected Christ was a vision; it refers only to the vision of seeing angels at the tomb. The Gospels never refer to a resurrection appearance of Christ as a vision, nor does Paul in his list in 1 Corinthians 15. The only possible reference to a resurrection appearance as a vision is in Acts 26:19 where Paul says: “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.” But even if this is a reference to the Damascus appearance of Christ, it is merely an overlap in usage of the words. For Paul clearly calls this event an “appearance” ( 1 Cor. 15:8 ) in which he saw Jesus and was given apostolic credentials ( 1 Cor. 9:1 ; cf. Acts 1:22 ).

It is possible that even in Acts 26:19 the word “vision” refers to the subsequent revelation to Ananias, through whom God gave Paul’s commission to minister to the Gentiles ( Acts 9:10–19 ). Paul says nothing about seeing the Lord, as he does when referring to his Damascus experience

(cf. Acts 22:8 ; 26:15 ). When having a “vision” ( *optasia* ), Paul clearly designates it as such ( 2 Cor. 12:1 ), in distinction from a real appearance.

Most significant, however, is that when Paul referred to the vision he was not relaying the content of the experience on the road but what he learned later. Paul did not receive his specific missionary mandate immediately ( Acts 9:1–9 ). Rather, he was told “to go into the city, and you will be told what you must do” ( vs. 5 ). It was there in the city through a “vision” ( vs. 10 ) to Ananias that Paul was given his missionary mandate “to carry my [Christ’s] name before the Gentiles” ( 9:15 ). Paul may have had a supplementary vision to that of Ananias while “praying in the house of Judas on Strait Street in Damascus” ( Acts 9:11 , 12 ). It was here that he was told specifically that Ananias would lay hands on him ( vs. 12 ). So when Paul said “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision” in Acts 26:19 , it was probably to the mandate through Ananias’s vision that he refers.

The word *vision* ( *optasia* ) is never used of a resurrection appearance anywhere else in the New Testament. It is always used of a purely visionary experience ( Luke 1:22 ; 24:23 ; 2 Cor. 12:1 ). Whatever the case, the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* correctly notes that the New Testament distinguishes visions from the Damascus experience.

Appearances differ from visions. The postresurrection encounters with Christ are usually described as literal “appearances” ( 1 Cor. 15:5–8 ), and never as visions. The difference between a mere vision and a physical appearance is significant. Visions are of invisible, spiritual realities, such as God and angels. Appearances are of physical objects that can be seen with the naked eye. Visions have no physical manifestations associated with them; appearances do.

People sometimes “see” or “hear” things in visions ( Luke 1:11–20 ; Acts 10:9–16 ) but not with their physical eyes. When someone truly saw or had physical contact with angels ( Gen. 18:8 ; 32:24 ; Dan. 8:18 ), it was not a vision but an appearance of the angel in the physical world. During these appearances the angels assumed a visible form, then returned to their normal invisible state. However, the resurrection appearances of Christ were experiences of seeing Christ in his continued visible, physical form with the natural eye.

The contention that Paul’s experience must have been a vision because those with him did not see Christ also is unfounded. Paul’s companions on the way to Damascus did not see or understand everything, but they did share in the sound and light phenomena. The Bible says, “they heard the sound” ( Acts 9:7 ) and “saw the light” ( Acts 22:9 ). They heard, but did not understand, the meaning of what was said. That they “did not see anyone” ( Acts 9:7 ) is not surprising. Paul was physically blinded by the brightness of the light ( Acts 9:8–9 ). Apparently only Paul looked straight into the blaze of divine glory. Hence, only he actually saw Christ, and only he was literally stricken blind by it (cf. Acts 22:11 ; 26:13 ). But it was, nonetheless, an experience of a real physical reality, for those who were with Paul also saw and heard it with their natural eyes and ears.

*Appearances Only for Believers.* It is argued that Jesus’ sovereignty over his appearances indicates that he was essentially invisible, making himself visible only when he wished to do so.

In this connection they note that Jesus did not appear to unbelievers, supposedly indicating that he was not naturally visible.

But Scripture never says Jesus did not appear to unbelievers. He appeared to his unbelieving brother ( 1 Cor. 15:7 ; James), and Matthew 28:17 indicates that not all believed who saw him. He appeared to the most hostile unbeliever of all, Saul of Tarsus ( Acts 9 ). As far as his resurrection is concerned, even his disciples were at first unbelievers. When Mary Magdalene and others reported that Jesus was resurrected “they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense” ( Luke 24:11 ). Later Jesus had to chide the two disciples on the road to Emmaus about disbelief in his resurrection, foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken!” ( Luke 24:17 ). Even after Jesus had appeared to the women, to Peter, to the two disciples and to the ten apostles, still Thomas said, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it” ( John 20:25 ).

Selectivity does not prove invisibility. The fact that Jesus was selective about those he wanted to see him does not indicate that he was essentially invisible. Jesus was also in control of those who wanted to lay hands on him before the resurrection. On one occasion an unbelieving crowd tried to take Jesus and “throw him down a cliff. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way” ( Luke 4:30 ; cf. John 8:59 ; 10:39 ).

Jesus was also selective about those for whom he performed miracles. He refused to perform miracles in his own home area “because of their lack of faith” ( Matt. 13:58 ). Jesus even disappointed Herod, who had hoped to see him perform a miracle ( Luke 23:8 ). The truth is that Jesus refused “to cast pearls before swine” ( Matt. 7:6 ). In submission to the Father’s will ( John 5:30 ) he was sovereign over his activity both before and after his resurrection. But this in no way proves that he was essentially invisible and immaterial either before or after his resurrection.

*Passing Through Closed Doors.* It is inferred by some that, since the resurrected Christ could appear in a room with closed doors ( John 20:19 , 26 ), his body must have been essentially immaterial. Others suggest that he dematerialized on this occasion. But these conclusions are not warranted.

The text does not actually say Jesus passed through a closed door. It simply says that “when the disciples were together with closed doors for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them” ( John 20:19 ). The text does not say how he got into the room. Since the text does not explicitly say how Jesus got in behind closed doors, any suggestion is only speculation. We do know that angels used their special powers to unlock prison doors to release Peter ( Acts 12:10 ). The supernatural Christ certainly possessed this power. Although physical, the resurrection body is by its very nature a supernatural body. Hence, it should be expected that it can do supernatural things like appearing in a room with closed doors.

If he chose to do so, Jesus could have performed this same feat before his resurrection with his physical body. As the Son of God, his miraculous powers were just as great before the resurrection. Even before his resurrection Jesus performed miracles with his physical body that

transcended natural laws, such as walking on water ( John 6:16–20 ). But walking on water did not prove that his preresurrection body was not physical or even that it could dematerialize.

According to modern physics it is not impossible for a material object to pass through a door. It is only statistically improbable. Physical objects are mostly empty space. All that is necessary for one physical object to pass through another is for the right alignment of the particles in the two physical objects. This is no problem for the One who created the body to begin with.

*The Decaying Physical Body.* Another argument given in favor of an immaterial resurrection body is that a physical resurrection body would imply “a crassly materialistic view of resurrection according to which the scattered fragments of decomposed corpses were to be reassembled” (Harris, *Raised Immortal* , 126).

It is unnecessary to the orthodox view to believe that the same particles will be restored in the resurrection body. Even common sense dictates that a body can be the same physical body without having the same physical particles. The observable fact that bodies eat food and give off waste products, as well as get fatter and skinnier, is sufficient evidence of this. Certainly, we do not say a body is not material or not the same body because someone loses ten pounds—or even fifty.

If necessary it would be no problem for an omnipotent God to bring all of the exact particles of one’s body together again at the resurrection. Certainly he who created every particle in the universe could reconstitute the relatively few particles in a human body. The God who created the world out of *nothing* is surely able to fashion a resurrection body out of *something* . But, as already noted, this is not necessary, for the resurrection body does not need the same particles in order to be the same body.

In the light of modern science it is unnecessary to believe that God will reconstitute the exact particles one had from the preresurrection body. For the physical body remains physical and retains its genetic identity, even though the exact physical molecules in it change every seven years or so. The resurrection body can be just as material as our present bodies and still have new molecules in it.

Unlike our bodies, Jesus’ body did not become corrupted while in the tomb. Quoting the psalmist, Peter said emphatically of Jesus, “he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body decay” ( Acts 2:31 ). Paul adds by contrast that the prophet could not have spoken about David since “his body decayed” ( Acts 13:36 ). So in Jesus’ case most (if not all) of the material particles in his preresurrection body were in his resurrection body. Some say there may have been some dissolution involved in Jesus’ body, since death itself involves some breaking down of organic molecules. Then again, this may apply only to mortal humans. In any event there was no *eventual* dissolution, since his resurrection reversed the process of decay (Schep, 139).

*The Body Destroyed.* Paul said, “ ‘Food for the stomach and the stomach for food’—but God will destroy them both” ( 1 Cor. 6:13 ). From this text some have argued that “the resurrection body will not have the anatomy or physiology of the earthly body” (Harris, *Raised Immortal* , 124). However, this inference is unjustified.

Study of the context here reveals that when Paul says God will destroy both food and the stomach he is referring to the *process* of death, not to the *nature* of the resurrection body. For he refers to the process of death by which “God will destroy them both” (vs. 13).

As already noted, while the resurrection body may not have the necessity to eat, it does have the ability to eat. Eating in heaven will be a joy without being a need. Jesus ate at least four times in his resurrection body ( Luke 24:30 , 42 ; John 21:12 ; Acts 1:4 ). Hence, his resurrected body was capable of assimilating physical food. To argue that there will be no resurrection body because the stomach will be “destroyed” is tantamount to claiming that the rest of the body—head, arms, legs, and torso—will not be resurrected because death will also turn them into dust.

“*Flesh and Blood*” and the Kingdom. Paul said “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” ( 1 Cor. 15:50 ). As early as the second century Irenaeus noted that this passage was used by heretics in support of their “very great error” (Irenaeus, 30.13), that the resurrection body will not be a body of physical flesh.

The very next phrase omitted from 1 Corinthians 15:50 shows clearly that Paul is speaking not of flesh as such but of corruptible flesh, for he adds, “nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.” So Paul is not affirming that the resurrection body will not have flesh; rather it will not have *perishable* flesh.

In order to convince the frightened disciples he was not an immaterial spirit ( Luke 24:37 ), Jesus emphatically told them that his resurrection body had flesh. He declared: “Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have” ( Luke 24:39 ).

Peter said that Jesus’ resurrection body is the same body of flesh, now immortal, that went into the tomb and never saw corruption ( Acts 2:31 ). Paul reaffirmed this truth in Acts 13:35 . And John implies that it is against Christ to deny that he remains “in the *flesh*” even after his resurrection ( 1 John 4:2 ; 2 John 7 ).

This conclusion cannot be avoided by claiming that Jesus’ resurrection body had flesh and bones but not flesh and blood. For if it had flesh and bones, then it was a literal, material body, whether or not it had blood. Flesh and bones stress the solidity of Jesus’ physical post-resurrection body. They are more obvious signs of tangibility than blood, which cannot be as easily seen or touched.

The phrase “flesh and blood” in this context apparently means *mortal* flesh and blood, that is, a mere human being. This is supported by parallel uses in the New Testament. When Jesus said to Peter, “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you” ( Matt. 16:17 ), he could not have been referring to the mere substances of the body. Obviously those could not reveal that he was the Son of God. Rather, as J. A. Schep concludes, “the only correct and natural interpretation [of 1 Cor. 15:50 ] seems to be that *man, as he now is, a frail, earth-bound, perishable creature*, cannot have a place in God’s glorious, heavenly kingdom” (Schep, 204).

Biblical scholar Joachim Jeremias observes that a misunderstanding of this text “has played a disastrous role in the New Testament theology of the last sixty years.” After careful exegesis of the passage, he concludes that the sentence “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” refers not to the resurrection, but to the changes that will take place in the living at Christ’s coming (Jeremias, 154).

*Resurrection and Resuscitation.* Jesus’ resurrection was more than the resuscitation of a physical corpse, argue those who say the resurrection was spiritual. But this is insufficient grounds to deny the physical nature of the resurrection body. Jesus’ resurrection assuredly was more than a resuscitation, but it was not less than one. Resuscitated corpses die again, but Jesus’ resurrection body was immortal. He conquered death ( 1 Cor. 15:54–55 ; Heb. 2:14 ), whereas merely resuscitated bodies will eventually be conquered by death. For example, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead ( John 11 ), but Lazarus eventually died again. Jesus was the first to be raised in an immortal body, one that will never die again ( 1 Cor. 15:20 ). However, simply because Jesus was the first to be raised in an immortal body does not mean it was an immaterial body. It was more than a reanimation of a physical corpse, but it was not less than that.

It does not follow that, because Jesus’ resurrection body could not die, therefore, it could not be seen. What is immortal is not necessarily invisible. The recreated physical universe will last forever ( Rev. 21:1–4 ), yet it will be visible. Here again, the resurrection body differs from resuscitation, not because it is immaterial but because it is immortal ( 1 Cor. 15:42 , 53 ).

Jesus’ “*Different Form.*” Harris wrote, “We cannot rule out the possibility that the visible form of Jesus had been altered in some mysterious way, delaying recognition of him.” This suggests that “the expression ‘he appeared in another form’ in the Marcan appendix ( Mark 16:12 ) encapsulates this” (Harris, *From Grave to Glory* , 56). However, this conclusion is unnecessary.

There are serious questions about the authenticity of this text. Mark 16:9–20 is not found in some of the oldest and best manuscripts. And in reconstructing the original texts from the existing manuscripts, many scholars believe that the older texts are more reliable.

Even granting its authenticity, the event of which it is a summary (cf. Luke 24:13–32 ) says simply “they were kept from recognizing him” ( Luke 24:16 ). This makes it clear that the miraculous element was not in Jesus’ body but *in the eyes of the disciples* ( Luke 24:16 , 31 ). Recognition of Jesus was kept from them until their eyes were opened. At best it is an obscure and isolated reference upon which it is unwise to base any significant doctrinal pronouncement. Whatever *another form* means, it certainly does not mean a form other than a real physical body. On this very occasion Jesus ate physical food ( Luke 24:30 ). Later in Luke 24 he said that his ability to eat was a proof that he was not an immaterial spirit (vss. 38–43).

One authority on the meaning of New Testament Greek says that *another form* simply means that, just as Jesus appeared in the form of a gardener to Mary, so here, he appeared in the form of a traveler (Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary* ).

*Raised "In the Spirit" ( 1 Pet. 3:18 ).* According to Peter, Jesus was "put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit" ( KJV ). This has been taken to prove that the resurrection body was "spirit" or immaterial. This interpretation, however, is neither necessary nor consistent with the context of this passage and the rest of Scripture.

The passage can be translated "He was put to death in the body but made alive by the [Holy] Spirit" ( NIV ). The passage is translated with this same understanding by the New King James Version and others. The parallel between death and being made alive normally refers in the New Testament to the resurrection of the body. For example, Paul declared that "Christ died and returned to life" ( Rom. 14:9 ) and "He was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power" ( 2 Cor. 13:4 ).

Even if *spirit* refers to Jesus' human spirit, not to the Holy Spirit, it cannot mean Jesus had no resurrection body. Otherwise, the reference to his "body" (flesh) before the resurrection would mean he had no human spirit then. It seems better to take *flesh* in this context as a reference to his whole condition of humiliation before the resurrection and *spirit* to refer to his unlimited power and imperishable life after the resurrection (Schep, 77).

*Like Angels in the Resurrection.* Jesus said that in the resurrection we "will be like the angels" ( Matt. 22:30 ). But angels have no physical bodies; they are spirits ( Heb. 1:14 ). Thus, it is argued, we will have no physical resurrection bodies.

This misinterprets the passage. The context is not the nature of the resurrection body but whether there will be marriage in heaven. Jesus' reply was that there will no more be human marriages than there are angelic ones. Jesus said nothing here about having immaterial bodies. He did not say they would be like angels in that humans would be immaterial but because they will be immortal (cf. Luke 20:36 ).

*A Life-Giving Spirit.* According to 1 Corinthians 15:45 Christ was made a "life-giving spirit" after his resurrection. This passage is used to prove that Jesus had no physical resurrection body.

*Life-giving spirit* does not speak of the *nature* of the resurrection body, but of the divine *origin* of the resurrection. Jesus' physical body came back to life only by the power of God (cf. Rom. 1:4 ). So Paul is speaking about its spiritual *source*, not its physical *substance* as a material body.

If *spirit* describes the nature of Christ's resurrection body, then Adam (with whom he is contrasted) must not have had a soul, since he is described as "of the dust of the earth" (vs. 47 ). But the Bible says clearly that Adam was "a living being [soul]" ( Gen. 2:7 ).

Christ's resurrection body is called a "spiritual body" (vs. 44 ). We have seen that Paul uses this terminology to describe material food and a literal rock ( 1 Cor. 10:4 ). It is called a "body" ( *sōma* ), which always means a physical body in the context of an individual human being (Gundry, 168).

The resurrection body is called "spiritual" and a "life-giving spirit" because its source is the spiritual realm, not because its substance is immaterial. Christ's supernatural resurrection body is "from heaven," as Adam's natural body was "of the earth" (vs. 47 ). But just as the one from "earth" also has an immaterial soul, so the One from "heaven" has a material body.

*What We Shall Be.* First John 3:2 has been used to argue that the resurrection body will differ from a physical body. John said, "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" ( 1 John 3:2 ).

When John speaks of not knowing what we shall be he is referring to our *status* in heaven, not the *nature* of the resurrection body. For he is contrasting it with our status now as "sons of God," claiming he does not know what higher status we may have in heaven. He does know that we shall be like Christ. Paul said the same thing in Philippians 3:21 : God will use his power to "transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body [ *sōma* ]" ( Phil. 3:21 ).

Also in 1 John the apostle affirms that Jesus now has a body of "flesh" ( *sarx* ) in heaven. "Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God" ( 1 John 4:2 ). The use of the perfect tense ("has come") indicates past action with continuing results in the present. That is, Jesus came in the past in the flesh and he is still in the flesh after the resurrection. The same is affirmed in the present tense in 2 John 7 . Jesus is in the flesh in heaven.

Indeed, Jesus will return in the same physical body in which he left ( Acts 1:10–11 ), physical scars and all ( Rev. 1:7 ).

**Confusion Regarding Christ's Body.** There are two common areas of confusion in the use of biblical material to prove that Jesus did not rise in an essentially physical body. One is that the resurrection body's *attributes* are confused with its *activities* . In none of the clear passages about the physical nature of the resurrection body is it stated that Jesus ceased to have a physical body at any point (Harris, *From Grave to Glory* , 390). None of these verses even addresses *what* the resurrection body *is*. At issue is what it can *do* . For example, it can pass through solid objects, suddenly appear, or suddenly disappear. But the fact that Jesus' body could pass through a solid object no more proves it was immaterial than his walking on water proves his feet were made of balsa wood.

A second blunder is to assume that, because some passages speak of Jesus as *unseen* by the disciples at certain times, he was therefore *invisible* during these periods. However, this is a confusion of *perception* and *reality* . It fails to distinguish *epistemology* (the study of what we know) from *metaphysics* (the study of what really is). Common sense informs us that, even if we cannot see something, it may not be invisible and immaterial. The summit of Mount McKinley is hidden in clouds most of the time, but it still is material all of the time.

**Conclusion.** The evidence for the physical resurrection is compelling, and its importance to Christianity can scarcely be overestimated.

The New Testament passes the criteria for credibility. There is every reason to accept the authenticity of the New Testament accounts, with all their supposed disorder ( *see* NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF ). Six accounts of the post resurrection appearances, Matthew 28 ; Mark 16 ; Luke 24 ; John 20–21 ; Acts, 9 ; and 1 Corinthians 15 , cover a forty-day period in which Jesus was seen alive by more than 500 persons on eleven occasions. Given that some of these witnesses saw the empty tomb and grave clothes, touched Jesus’ scars, and saw him eat, there is no reasonable doubt about the reality of his resurrection.

There is no biblical basis for believing that Jesus was not raised in the same physical body of “flesh and bones” in which he died. There is no indication in any New Testament text that our bodies or Jesus’ body will be anything less than physical in heaven. As biblical scholar Joachim Jeremias put it: “look at the transfiguration of the Lord on the mountain of transfiguration, then you will have the answer to the question how we shall imagine the event of the resurrection” (Jeremias, 157). Jesus’ material body was manifested in its glory. Similarly, his resurrection body will do the same.

All the arguments used to show that Jesus was raised in a numerically different, invisible, immaterial body are unbiblical and unconvincing. To be sure, the resurrection body was imperishable and immortal, but the contention that it was not visible and material is unfounded. At best it is a speculative inference from isolated references using questionable interpretations. Often, arguments against the material resurrection are clear misinterpretations of the text. They always run contrary to the overwhelming evidence that the resurrection body was the real physical body of “flesh and bones” Jesus said it was (in Luke 24:39 ).

Historic Christianity stands or falls on the historicity, tangibility, and materiality of the bodily resurrection of Christ ( 1 Cor. 15:12f .; Luke 24:37 ).

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**Resurrection, Physical Nature of.** Even some who acknowledge that Jesus’ body mysteriously vanished from the tomb and that he appeared in bodily form on several occasions thereafter deny the essential physical nature of the resurrection body. That is, they deny the orthodox belief that Jesus was raised in the same physical body—crucifixion scars and all—in which he died.

The resurrection of Christ loses its apologetic value unless it is a physical resurrection of the same body that died. Indeed, the apostle Paul is willing to say that Christianity is false if Christ was not raised bodily from the grave. Hence, the defense of the resurrection as a physical event involving a reanimation of the physical body of Christ that died is crucial to Christian apologetics. Denial of the physical resurrection of Christ is tantamount to a denial of the resurrection itself, since it is only the physical body, not the soul, that dies. And if that physical body does not come back to life, then there was no *bodily* resurrection.

**The Importance of a Body.** The significance of the physical resurrection of Christ is far-reaching, and the implications of its denial are fundamental to orthodox Christianity. In fact, a denial of it affects both Christian apologetics and our very salvation ( Rom. 10:9 ; 1 Cor. 15:12f .).

*Apologetic Considerations.* Why is it so important to Christ’s claim to deity that his resurrection body be the same physical body that was laid in the tomb? The answer is twofold.



*Verification of the real God.* First, this is the only way to know for sure that the resurrection occurred. The empty tomb in itself does not prove the resurrection of Christ any more than does the report that a body has turned up missing at a morgue. Neither does an empty tomb plus a series of appearances prove the resurrection. The original body could have disappeared and the appearances could be by someone else or by the same person in another body—which is reincarnation, not resurrection. But in a theistic ( *see* THEISM ) context where miracles are possible, an empty tomb plus appearances of the *same physical body* , once dead but now alive, are proof of a miraculous resurrection.

Without this physical identity connecting the pre- and postresurrection body, the apologetic value of the resurrection is destroyed. If Christ did not rise in the same physical body that was placed in the tomb, then the resurrection proves nothing of his claim to be God ( John 8:58 ; 10:30 ). The resurrection only substantiates Jesus' claim to be God if he was resurrected in the same literal body in which he was crucified.

The truth of Christianity is based squarely on the bodily resurrection of Christ. Jesus offered the resurrection as a proof of his deity throughout his ministry ( Matt. 12:38–40 ; John 2:19–22 ; 10:18 ). In one passage he presented his resurrection as the unique evidence of his identity. Jesus said to those seeking a “sign,” “None will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” ( Matt. 12:40 ).

Not only did Jesus present his resurrection as the proof of his deity, but for the apostles his resurrection appearances were “many convincing proofs” ( Acts 1:3 ). When presenting the claims of Christ they continually used the fact of Christ's bodily resurrection as the basis of their argument (cf. Acts 2:22–36 ; 4:2 , 10 ; 13:32–41 ; 17:1–4 , 22–31 ). Paul concluded that God “has given proof . . . to all men by raising him from the dead” ( Acts 17:31 ).

The physical continuity between the pre- and postresurrection body of Christ is made repeatedly in apostolic preaching. Peter's first sermon declared that the Jews “put him to death by nailing *him* to the cross. But God raised *him* from the dead . . .” ( Acts 2:23–24 ). He adds, “he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did *his body* see decay. God has raised *this Jesus* to life, and we are witnesses of the fact” (vss. 31–32 ). Paul is equally specific in making the connection between the actual body that was put in the grave and the one that was resurrected. He says, “they took him down from the tree and laid *him* in a tomb. But God raised *him* from the dead” ( Acts 13:29–31 ).

*Verification of the real event.* Second, unless Christ rose in a physical, material body the resurrection is unverifiable. There is no way to verify that he was really resurrected unless he was resurrected in the same tangible, physical body in which he died and was buried. If the resurrected body was essentially immaterial and “angel-like” (Harris, *Raised Immortal* , 53, 124, 126), then, there is no way to verify that the resurrection occurred. A manifestation in an angel-like form does not prove a bodily resurrection. At best, an angelic-like manifestation proves that there is a spirit with the power to materialize after it has departed from the body.

Even angels who are pure spirits ( Heb. 1:14 ) had the power to “materialize” ( Genesis 18 ). The angels that appeared to Abraham assumed a visible form ( Gen. 18:8 ; 19:3 ). But this was not proof that by nature they possessed physical bodies. In fact, they do not; they are spirits ( Matt. 22:30 ; Luke 24:39 ; Heb. 1:14 ). Nor were their manifestations in physical continuity with a previous earthly body, as is the case in the resurrection body of Christ. The angelic manifestations were merely temporarily assumed forms to facilitate communication with human beings. To place Jesus' appearances in this category is to reduce the resurrection to a theophany.

It not only demeans the nature of the resurrection body of Christ to call it “angel-like,” but it destroys its evidential value. For there is a real difference between an angelic manifestation and a literal physical body. Resurrection in an immaterial body is no proof that Christ conquered the death of his material body (cf. 1 Cor. 15:54–56 ). An immaterial resurrection body does not differ substantively from no resurrection body at all.

*Theological Considerations. The problem of creation.* God created a material world and pronounced it “very good” ( Gen. 1:31 ; cf. Rom. 14:14 and 1 Tim. 4:4 ). Sin disrupted the world and brought decay and death ( Gen. 2:17 ; Rom. 5:12 ). The whole of material creation was subjected to bondage because of sin ( Rom. 8:18–25 ). However, through redemption decay and death will be reversed. For “creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay” (vs. 21 ). Indeed, “the whole [material] creation has been groaning . . . as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (vss. 22–23 ). God will reverse the curse upon material creation by a material resurrection. Anything less than the resurrection of the physical body would not restore God's perfect creation as a material creation. Hence, an immaterial resurrection is contrary to God's creative purposes. Just as God will recreate the physical universe ( 2 Pet. 3:10–13 ; Rev. 21:1–4 ), even so he will reconstitute the material human body in redeeming the one that died.

Anything short of a material recreation of the world and a material reconstruction of the body would spell failure for God's creative purpose. New Testament scholar Robert Gundry notes, “Anything less than that undercuts Paul's ultimate intention that redeemed man possess physical means of concrete activity for eternal service and worship of God in a restored creation.” So “to dematerialize resurrection, by any means, is to emasculate the sovereignty of God in both creative purpose and redemptive grace” (Gundry, 182).

*The problem of salvation.* There are serious *salvation* problems with denying the physical nature of the resurrection of Christ. The New Testament teaches that belief in the bodily resurrection of Christ is a condition for salvation ( Rom. 10:9 , 10 ; 1 Thess. 4:14 ). It is part of the essence of the Gospel itself ( 1 Cor 15:1–5 ). The New Testament understanding of *body* ( *sōma* ) was of a literal, physical body. Hence, a denial of the physical resurrection of Christ undercuts the Gospel.

Further, without a physical resurrection there is no material continuity between the pre- and postresurrection body. Indeed, they would be two different bodies (Harris, *From Grave to Glory* , 54–56, 126). However, as Gundry observes, “A physical continuity is also needed. If a human spirit—a sort of third party—be the only connection between the mortal and resurrected bodies,

the relationship of the two bodies to each other is extrinsic and to that decree unimpressive as a demonstration of Christ's victory over death" (Gundry, 176).

In stronger terms Gundry concludes that "the resurrection of Christ was and the resurrection of Christians will be physical in nature" (Gundry, 182). Without a physical resurrection there is no grounds for celebrating victory over physical death.

*The problem of the incarnation.* The denial of the physical nature of the resurrection body is a serious *doctrinal* error. It is a kind of neodocetism ( *see* DOCETISM ). The docetists were a second-century unorthodox group who denied that Jesus was truly human (Cross, 413). They believed that Jesus was really God but that he only appeared to be human. They denied that he had real human flesh.

A similar doctrinal error existed in the first century. John warns against those who deny that "Jesus Christ has come in the *flesh*" ( 1 John 4:2 ; cf. 2 John 7 ). In fact, when John said "has come" (perfect participle) he implies that Christ came in the flesh and still remains (after his resurrection) in the flesh. In 1 John 4:2 the perfect participle ( *eleluthota* ) means "not only that Jesus Christ came in the fullness of time clothed with flesh, but that thus he is *still present* . . . He is a Christ who is come, who came and who abides in the flesh" (Schep, 71, 72). Commenting on the parallel passage in 2 John 7 , Greek scholar, A. T. Robertson, observes that it is the (present middle participle) construction treats the incarnation as a continuing fact. That is what docetic Gnostics ( *see* GNOSTICISM ) denied (Robertson, 6:253). Denying that Christ had a material body either before or after his resurrection is false doctrine. The current postresurrection docetism denies that the one who came in the flesh was also raised in the flesh (Harris, *From Grave to Glory* , 124–26).

Having human flesh is essential to the full humanity of Christ and is used repeatedly to describe it ( John 1:14 ; 1 Tim. 3:16 ; 1 John 4:2 ; 2 John 7 ). If this is so, then unless Christ arose immortal in the flesh, he was not fully human. This is particularly acute, since Christ's ministry for our salvation did not end at the cross. According to Hebrews, Christ "ever lives to make intercession for us" ( Heb. 7:24 ). Indeed, it is because Jesus is fully human that he is able "to sympathize with our weakness" in his high priestly ministry ( Heb. 4:15 ). Therefore, Christ's full humanity is necessary for our salvation. But according to Scripture, human *flesh* was a necessary part of his full humanity. Hence, unless Christ rose in that human flesh, then he is not fully human and cannot be effective in achieving our salvation.

*The problem of human immortality.* Further, denying the physical resurrection leaves a serious problem about Christian immortality. If Christ did not rise in the same physical body in which he was crucified, then we have no hope that we will be victorious over physical death either. It is only through the physical resurrection of Christ that the believer can triumphantly proclaim: "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" ( 1 Cor. 15:55 ). For it is only through the physical resurrection that God has "destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" ( 2 Tim. 1:10 ). As Paul told the Corinthians, "if Christ has not been raised . . . those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost" ( 1 Cor. 15:18 ).

*The problem of moral deception.* There is a serious *moral* problem of deception with denying the physical resurrection. No one can look squarely at the Gospel record of Christ's postresurrection appearances and deny that Jesus tried to convince the skeptical disciples that he had a real physical body. He said, "Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have" ( Luke 24:27 ). He ate in their presence ( vss. 41–43 ). He challenged Thomas: "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe" ( John 20:27 ; *see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR ).

Given the context of Jesus' claim and of the Jewish belief in the physical resurrection ( cf. John 11:24 ; Acts 23:8 ), there is no other reasonable impression these statements could have left on the disciples' minds than that Jesus was trying to convince them that he arose in the same physical body in which he died. If Jesus' resurrection body was only an immaterial body, then Jesus misled his disciples. If Jesus' resurrection body was not a tangible, physical body, then he was lying.

*Evidence of a Physical Resurrection.* As shown in the article Resurrection, Objections to, arguments against the resurrection are groundless. What is more, the evidences in favor of the physical nature of the resurrection are also overwhelming. While some of the following are also evidences for the historicity of the resurrection, they also verify that Jesus was not "angel-like" in his appearances. Rather he displayed a very real body—the same body in which he was crucified.

*Jesus Was Touched by Human Hands.* Jesus challenged Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side" ( John 20:27 ). Thomas responded, "My Lord and My God!" ( vs. 28 ). Likewise, when Mary clung to Jesus after his resurrection he commanded, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father" ( John 20:17 ). Matthew adds that the women clasped Jesus' feet and worshiped him ( Matt. 28:9 ). Later, when Jesus appeared to the ten disciples he said, "look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! *Touch me and see*" ( Luke 24:39 ). Jesus' resurrection body was a physical body that could be touched, including the nail and spear prints.

*Jesus' Body Had Flesh and Bones.* Perhaps the strongest evidence of the physical nature of the resurrection body is that Jesus said emphatically "Touch me and see; a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have" ( Luke 24:39 ). Then to prove his point he asked for something to eat and "They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence" ( vss. 41–42 ).

Paul correctly noted that corruptible "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" ( 1 Cor. 15:50 ), but Jesus did not have corruptible flesh; he was sinless ( 2 Cor. 5:21 ; Heb. 4:15 ). He was fleshy but not fleshly. He did not have *sinful* human flesh ( Heb. 4:15 ); nevertheless, he died and rose from the dead in actual human flesh ( *sarx* , Acts 2:31 ). John stressed Jesus' continuing incarnation in flesh, when he warned: "Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming [and remaining] in the flesh, have gone out into the world" ( 2 John 7 ). The use of the present participle in Greek means Christ remained in the flesh even while this was

written. The claim that it was physical flesh before the resurrection but non-physical flesh after is a form of Gnosticism or docetism.

*Jesus Ate Physical Food.* Another evidence Jesus offered of the physical, tangible nature of his resurrection body was the ability to eat, which he did on at least four occasions ( Luke 24:30 , 41–43 ; John 21:12–13 ; Acts 1:4 ). Acts 10:40 indicates that Jesus ate often with the disciples after his resurrection, speaking of the apostles who “ate and drank with him after he arose from the dead.”

Unlike angels, Jesus’ resurrection body was material by nature ( Luke 24:39 ). Given this context, it would have been sheer deception by Jesus to have shown his flesh and bones and offered his ability to eat physical food as proof of his physical body, if he had not been resurrected in a physical body.

*Jesus’ Body Has His Wounds.* Another unmistakable evidence of the physical nature of the resurrection body was that it possessed the physical wounds from Jesus’ crucifixion. No so-called “spiritual” or immaterial body would have physical scars ( John 20:27 ). Indeed, in this same physical body Jesus ascended into heaven where he is still seen as “a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain” ( Rev. 5:6 ). And when Christ returns, it will be “ *this same Jesus* , who has been taken away from you into heaven” ( Acts 1:11 ). These same physical scars of his crucifixion will be visible at his second coming, for John declared: “Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him” ( Rev. 1:7 ).

*Jesus’ Body Was Recognized.* The usual words for “seeing” ( *horao* , *theoreo* ) and “recognizing” ( *epiginosko* ) physical objects were used over and over again of Christ in his resurrection state ( see Matt. 28:7 , 17 ; Mark 16:7 ; Luke 24:24 ; John 20:14 ; 1 Cor. 9:1 ). Occasionally Jesus was not initially recognized by some of the disciples, some perhaps supernatural. Luke says of one occasion that “their eyes were prevented from recognizing him” ( 24:16 ) and later “their eyes were opened and they recognized him” ( vs. 31 ). However, often there were purely natural factors, such as their perplexity ( Luke 24:17–21 ), sorrow ( John 20:11–15 ), the dimness of the light ( John 20:14–15 ), the visual distance ( John 21:4 ), the suddenness of Jesus’ appearance ( Luke 24:36–37 ), the different clothes he had on ( John 19:23–24 ; 20:6–8 ), or their spiritual dullness ( Luke 24:25–26 ) and disbelief ( John 20:24–25 ). In every case the difficulty was temporary. Before the appearances were over there remained absolutely no doubts in their minds that Christ had arisen in a literal, material body.

*Jesus’ Body Could Be Seen and Heard.* Jesus’ resurrection body could not only be touched and handled, it could also be seen and heard. Matthew says that “when they saw him, they worshiped him” ( Matt. 28:17 ). The Emmaus disciples recognized him while eating together ( Luke 24:31 ), perhaps from his bodily movements ( cf. vs. 35 ). The Greek term for recognize ( *epiginosko* ) means “to know, to understand, or to recognize.” It is a normal term for recognizing a physical object ( Mark 6:33 , 54 ; Acts 3:10 ). Mary may have recognized Jesus from the tone of his voice ( John 20:15–16 ). Thomas recognized him, probably even before he touched the crucifixion scars ( John 20:27–28 ). During the forty-day period, all the disciples saw and heard him, and experienced the “convincing proofs” that he was alive ( Acts 1:3 ; cf. 4:2 , 20 ).

*Resurrection Is Out from among Dead.* Resurrection in the New Testament is often described as “from ( *ek* ) the dead” ( cf. Mark 9:9 ; Luke 24:46 ; John 2:22 ; Acts 3:15 ; Rom. 4:24 ; 1 Cor. 15:12 ). Literally, this Greek word *ek* means Jesus was resurrected “out from among” the dead bodies, that is, from the grave where corpses are buried ( Acts 13:29–30 ). These same words are used to describe Lazarus’ being raised “from the dead” ( John 12:1 ). In this case there is no doubt that he came out of the grave in the same body in which he was buried. Thus, resurrection was of a physical corpse out of a tomb or graveyard. As Gundry correctly noted, “for one who had been a Pharisee, such phraseology could carry only one meaning—physical resurrection” ( Gundry, 177 ).

*Sōma Always Means a Physical Body.* When used of an individual human being, the word *body* ( *sōma* ) always means a physical body in the New Testament. There are no exceptions to this usage in the New Testament. Paul uses *sōma* of the resurrection body of Christ ( 1 Cor. 15:42–44 ), thus indicating his belief that it was a physical body. The definitive exegetical work on *sōma* was done by Gundry ( *ibid.* ). As evidence of the physical nature of the resurrection body, he points to “Paul’s exceptionless use of *sōma* for a physical body” ( Gundry, 168 ). Thus he concludes that “the consistent and exclusive use of *sōma* for the physical body in anthropological contexts resists dematerialization of the resurrection, whether by idealism or by existentialism” ( *ibid.* ).

For those who think Paul should have used another word to express physical resurrection, Robert Gundry responds: “Paul uses *sōma* precisely because the physicality of the resurrection is central to his soteriology” ( Gundry, 169 ). This consistent use of the word *sōma* for a physical body is one more confirmation that the resurrection body of Christ was a literal, material body.

*The Tomb Was Vacated.* Joined with the appearances of the same crucified Jesus, the empty tomb provides strong support of the physical nature of the resurrection body of Christ. The angels declared, “he is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay” ( Matt. 28:6 ). Since it was a literal, material body that was placed there, and since *that same physical body* had come alive, it follows that the resurrection body was that same material body that died.

*The Grave Clothes Were Unwrapped.* When Peter entered the tomb he “saw strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus’ head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen” ( John 20:6–7 ). Certainly, if thieves had stolen it, they would not have taken time to take off and fold the head cloth. Nor if Jesus had vaporized through the grave clothes would the head cloth have been in a separate place all folded up by itself. These details reveal the truth that the material body of Jesus that had once laid there had been restored to life ( Acts 13:29–30 ). John was so convinced by this evidence of a physical resurrection that when he saw it he believed Jesus had risen, though he had not yet seen him ( John 20:8 ).

*The Body That Died Is the Same One Raised.* If the resurrection body is numerically identical to the post-resurrection body and the pre resurrection body is unquestionably material, then it follows that the resurrection body is also material. This, of course, does not mean every particle is the same. Even our pre resurrection body changes its particles continually, yet it is the same material body. It means that the resurrection body is one and the same substantial and continuous

material body, whatever accidental changes there may be in its given molecules. In addition to the empty tomb, the empty grave clothes, the seed analogy, and the crucifixion scars there are other lines of evidence that the resurrection of Christ was in the same physical body that died.

First, Jesus said in advance that the same temple, his body, would be destroyed raised again. He said “destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” ( John 2:21–22 ). The *it* manifests that the body raised is one and the same as the body destroyed by death.

Second, the same identity is implied in the strong comparison between Jesus’ death and resurrection and Jonah’s experience in the great fish ( Matt. 12:39 ; 16:4 ). He said, “ *As* Jonah was three days and three nights inside the belly of a huge fish, *so* the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” ( Matt. 12:40 ). Obviously, in both cases the same physical body that went in was the same one that came out. Thus, the inseparable identity between the pre- and postresurrection body of Jesus by Paul, the converted Pharisee, is strong confirmation that he is affirming the physical nature of the resurrection body.

Third, Paul added, “The perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality” ( 1 Cor. 15:53 ). It is noteworthy that Paul does not say that this corruptible body will be *replaced* by an incorruptible model. Rather, this physical body which is now corruptible will “clothe itself” with the additional element of incorruptibility. If a material body was buried and a spiritual or immaterial body were raised, it would not be the same body. But in this text Paul affirms the numerical identity between the pre- and postresurrection body.

Fourth, Paul’s sermon in Antioch reveals the identity between the body that was killed on the cross and the one that was raised from the dead. He said, “When they had carried out all that was written about *him* , they took *him* down from the tree and laid *him* in a tomb. But God raised *him* from the dead ” ( Acts 13:29–30 ).

Finally, the close connection between the death and resurrection points to numerical identity of *the resurrection body* . Paul considered it of first importance that “Christ died for our sins, . . . that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day” ( 1 Cor. 15:3 , 4 ). Elsewhere, Paul declares that what was “buried” was “raised from death” ( Rom 6:3–5 ; cf. Acts 2:23–24 ; 3:15 ; 4:10 ; 5:30 ; 10:39–40 ; 13:29–30 ; Col. 2:12 ). It is noteworthy that, “as an ex-Pharisee, Paul could not have used such traditional language without recognizing its intent to portray the raising of a corpse” (Gundry, 176).

In view of the evidence, there is no justification for the claim that the pre- and postresurrection body has no “material identity” and “the resurrection body will not have the anatomy or physiology of the earthly body” (Harris, *Raised Immortal* , 124, 126). And since believers will have bodies like his ( Phil. 3:21 ), it follows that theirs will also be material. Indeed, many of the above arguments can be directly applied to believers. For example, the Bible says they will rise out of “the dust of the earth” ( Dan. 12:2 ) and “come forth” from being “in the graves” ( John 5:28 , 29 ), thus indicating the material nature of their resurrected bodies.

**Conclusion.** Murray Harris claimed that the resurrection body is “spiritual” and not really a physical body of flesh and bones. He wrote: “Consequently the material ‘flesh and bones’ that

Jesus had during this encounter with his disciples were not integral to his ‘spiritual body’ but had been assumed temporarily, but none the less really, for evidential reasons, as accommodations to the understanding of his disciples” (Harris, *From Grave to Glory* , 392). But if the crucifixion scars were not in the actual “spiritual” resurrection body, but only in the one temporarily assumed for evidential reasons, then Jesus deceived his disciples when he said of this temporary body of flesh and bones “Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself!” ( Luke 24:39 ). According to Harris, this temporary body was neither the physical body in which Jesus was crucified nor his real (“spiritual”) resurrection body. If Harris’s assertion is correct, Jesus flatly deceived his disciples.

The only body that actually had the crucifixion scars in it was the physical body of flesh and bones in which Jesus died. But, according to Harris, the temporarily assumed material body in which Jesus appeared was not the same body of flesh which had the actual crucifixion scars in it. It follows, then, that the temporarily assumed physical body which Jesus showed his disciples was only a replica of the crucifixion body. If Harris is right, then Jesus flatly lied; this seems a serious objection to Harris’s view.

The Bible is very clear about the nature of the resurrection body. It is the same physical, material body of flesh and bones that dies. There are, in fact, numerous lines of evidence to support this. The evidence for the physical nature of the resurrection body is overwhelming ( *see RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR* ). And its importance to Christianity can scarcely be overestimated. Any denial of the physical bodily resurrection of Christ is a serious matter. Denials by evangelicals are even more serious, including some who use the traditional term *bodily resurrection* to affirm their view. For “bodily” resurrection has always meant that Jesus was resurrected in the same physical, material body in which he died. As the poet John Updike put it,

Make no mistake; if He rose at all

it was as His body,

if the cells’ dissolution did not reverse, the molecules

reknit, the amino acids rekindle,

the Church will fall.

That Jesus rose from the dead in the essentially same physical body of flesh and bones in which he was crucified is a linchpin of orthodox theology and apologetics. Historic Christianity stands or falls on the historicity and materiality of the bodily resurrection of Christ.

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**Revelation, General.** *General revelation* refers to God's revelation in nature as opposed to his revelation in Scripture ( *see* NATURAL THEOLOGY ). More specifically, general revelation is manifest in physical nature, human nature, and history. In each case God has disclosed something specific about himself and his relation to his creation. General revelation is important to Christian apologetics, since it is the data with which the theist constructs arguments from the existence of God ( *see* COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ; TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ). Without it there would be no basis for apologetics ( *see* CLASSICAL APOLOGETICS ).

**God's Revelation in Nature.** "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" ( Ps. 19:1 ), the psalmist wrote. "The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory" ( Ps. 97:6 ). Job added, "Ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord had done this?" ( Job 12:7–9 ).

Paul spoke of "the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. In the past, he let all nations go their own way. Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy" ( Acts 14:15–17 ). He reminded the Greek philosophers that "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else" ( Acts 17:24–25 ).

Paul instructed the Romans that even the heathen stand guilty before God, "since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse" (

Rom. 1:18–20 ). In view of this the psalmist concluded, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God' " ( Ps. 14:1 ).

God is revealed in nature in two basic ways: as *Creator* and as *Sustainer* ( *see* CREATION AND ORIGINS ; ORIGINS, SCIENCE OF ). He is both the cause of the *origin* as well as the *operation* of the universe. The first speaks of God as the originator of all things. "By him all *were created*" and "in him all things *hold together*" ( Col. 1:16–17 ); God " *made* the universe" and he also " *sustains* all things by his powerful word" ( Heb. 1:2–3 ); he " *created* all things" and by him "all things *have their being*" ( Rev. 4:11 ).

In addition to *Originator* , God is also the *Sustainer* of all things. He is active not only in the universe *coming to be* but also in its *continuing to be* . The psalmist referred to this latter function when he said of God: "He makes springs pour water into the ravines. . . . He makes grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth" ( Ps. 104:10 , 14 ).

**God's Revelation in Human Nature.** God created human beings in his image and likeness ( Gen. 1:27 ). Something about God, therefore, can be learned from studying human beings (cf. Psalm 8 ). Since humans are like God, it is wrong to murder them ( Gen. 9:6 ) and even to curse them ( James 3:9 ). The redeemed human self is "renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" ( Col. 3:10 ). Paul affirmed that God created:

From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. "For in him we live and move and have our being." As some of your own poets have said, "We are his offspring." Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill. [ Acts 17:26–29 ]

By looking at the creature we can learn something about the Creator ( *see* ANALOGY, PRINCIPLE OF ). For "Does he who implanted the ear not hear? Does he who formed the eye not see? Does he who disciplines nations not punish? Does he who teaches man lack knowledge?" ( Ps. 94:9–10 ). Even Christ in the flesh is said to be an "image" of the invisible God ( John 1:14 ; Heb. 1:3 ).

God is manifested not only in the intellectual nature of human beings, but also in their moral nature ( *see* MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF ). God's moral law is written in human hearts. For "when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, their conscience also bearing witness" ( Rom. 2:12–15 ). Since moral responsibility entails the ability to respond, man in God's image is also a free moral creature ( Gen. 1:27 ; cf. 2:16–17 ).

**God's Revelation in Human History.** History has been called "His-story." It is the footprints of God in the sands of time. Paul declared that God "determined the times set for them [the nations] and the exact places they should live" ( Acts 17:26 ). God disclosed to Daniel that "the

Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men” ( Dan. 4:17 ). God also revealed to Daniel that human history is moving toward the ultimate goal of the kingdom of God on earth ( Daniel 2 , 7 ). So a proper understanding of history informs us about the plan and purpose of God.

*God Is Revealed in Human Art.* The Bible declares that God is beautiful, and so is his creation. The psalmist wrote: “O LORD , our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” ( Ps. 8:1 ). Isaiah beheld a marvelous display of God’s beauty when he “saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple” ( Isa. 6:1 ). Scriptures encourage us to “worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” ( Ps. 29:2 ; cf. 27:4 ).

Solomon pointed out that God has made everything “beautiful in its time” ( Eccles. 3:11 ). The psalmist speaks of his city of Zion as “perfect in beauty” ( Ps. 50:2 ). What God created is good like himself ( Gen. 1:31 ; 1 Tim. 4:4 ), and the goodness of God is beautiful. So, insofar as creation reflects God, it is also beautiful. Not only is God beautiful and has made a beautiful world, but he has created beings who can appreciate beauty. Like him, they can also make beautiful things. Human beings are, as it were “sub-creators.” God endows certain humans with special creative gifts which reveal something of his marvelous nature.

*God Is Revealed in Music.* God apparently loves music, since he orchestrated the angelic choir at creation when “the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy” ( Job 38:7 ). Angels also continually chant the *tersanctus* in his presence, “Holy, holy, holy” ( Isa. 4:7 ; 6:3 ). Furthermore, angels gather around God’s throne and “in a loud voice they sing: Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain” ( Rev. 5:12 ).

Moses’ sister, Miriam, led the triumphant Israelites in singing after God delivered them through the Red Sea ( Exod. 15 ). David, the “sweet psalmist of Israel,” set up a choir for the temple and wrote many songs (psalms) to be sung in it. Paul admonished the church to “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord” ( Eph. 5:19 ).

We learn something more about God’s nature through the human voice, a God-ordained instrument of music. Even the Jewish high priest entered within the holy of holies with bells on his garment. And the psalmist commanded that God be praised with trumpet, harp, lyre, tambourine, and cymbals ( Ps. 150:3–5 ). In heaven the angels play trumpets ( Rev. 8:2 ) and others play harps ( Rev. 14:2 ). Music too is a gift and manifestation of God. Like the rest of his creation, it is a manifestation of his glory.

So even apart from God’s special revelation in Scripture, he has manifested himself in general revelation in nature.

**General and Special Revelation.** While the Bible is God’s only *written* revelation ( *see* BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR ), it is not God’s only revelation. God has more to say to us than is in the Bible. His general revelation in nature, man, history, art and music offers vast opportunities for continual exploration. The following chart summarizes this relationship:

Special Revelation	General Revelation
God as Redeemer	God as Creator
norm for church	norm for society
means of salvation	means of condemnation

*The Role of Special Revelation.* Special revelation contributes uniquely to Christian theology. The Bible alone is infallible and inerrant ( *see* BIBLE, ALLEGED ERRORS IN ). Further, the Bible is the only source of both God’s revelation as Redeemer and his plan of salvation. Thus Scripture is normative for all ( *see* REVELATION, SPECIAL ).

*The Bible alone is infallible and inerrant.* The Bible is normative for all Christian thought. It is a revelation of Christ ( Matt. 5:17 ; Luke 24:27 , 44 ; John 5:39 ; Heb. 10:7 ). The task of the Christian, then, is “to bring every thought captive to Christ” ( 2 Cor. 10:5 ) as revealed in Scripture. We must think as well as live Christocentric lives ( Gal. 2:20 ; Phil. 1:21 ).

*The Bible alone reveals God as Redeemer.* While general revelation manifests God as Creator, it does not reveal him as Redeemer. The universe speaks of God’s greatness ( Ps. 8:1 ; Isa. 40:12–17 ), but only special revelation reveals his redeeming grace ( John 1:14 ). The heavens declare the glory of God ( Ps. 19:1 ), but only Christ declared his saving grace ( Titus 2:11–13 ).

*The Bible alone has the message of salvation.* In view of God’s general revelation all are “without excuse” ( Rom. 1:20 ). For all who sin apart from the [written] law will also perish apart from the law” ( Rom. 2:12 ). General revelation is a sufficient ground for condemnation. However, it is not sufficient for salvation. One can tell how the heavens move by studying general revelation, but not how to go to heaven ( *see* HEATHEN, SALVATION OF ). For “there is no other name under heaven [except Christ’s] given to men by which men must be saved” ( Acts 4:12 ). To be saved, one must confess “Jesus is Lord” and believe that God has raised him from the dead ( Rom. 10:9 ). But they cannot call upon someone of whom they have not heard, “and how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” ( Rom. 10:14 ). Thus, preaching the Gospel in all the world is the Christian’s great commission ( Matt. 28:18–20 ).

*The Bible is the written norm.* Without the truth of Scripture there would be no Church, for “the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets” ( Eph. 2:20 ). The revealed Word of God is the norm for faith and practice. Paul said “all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, training, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” ( 2 Tim. 3:16 ). However, not all unbelievers have access to a Bible. Nonetheless, God holds them responsible to his general revelation. For “all who sin apart from the [written] law will also perish apart from the law,” since they have a law in their hearts ( Rom. 2:12 , 14 ).

*The Role of General Revelation.* While the Bible is all true, God has not revealed all truth in the Bible. Whereas the Bible is only truth, it is not the only truth. All truth is God’s truth, but all God’s truth is not in the Bible ( *see* TRUTH, NATURE OF ). General revelation, then, plays an important role in God’s plan, and as such it has several unique roles.

*General is broader than special revelation.* General revelation encompasses much more than special revelation. Most of the truths of science, history, mathematics, and the arts are not in the Bible. The bulk of truth in all these areas is found only in God's general revelation. While the Bible is everywhere scientifically accurate, it is not a textbook on science. The mandate to do science is not a redemption mandate; it is a creation mandate. Right after God created Adam he commanded him to "fill the earth and subdue it" ( Gen. 1:28 ). Likewise, there are no mathematical errors in God's inerrant Word, but then again there is very little geometry or algebra and no calculus in it either ( see SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE ). Similarly, the Bible records accurately much of the history of Israel, but has little on the history of the world, except as it bears on Israel. The same is true of every area of the arts and science. Whenever the Bible speaks in these areas, it speaks authoritatively, but God has largely left the discoveries of his truths in these areas to a study of general revelation.

*General revelation is essential to human reason.* Not even an unbeliever thinks apart from God's general revelation in human reason ( see FAITH AND REASON ). God is a rational being, and humanity is made in his image ( Gen. 1:27 ). Just as God thinks rationally, so human beings were given that capacity. Brute beasts, by contrast, are called "irrational" ( Jude 10 ). Indeed, the highest use of human reason is to love the Lord with "all our mind . . ." ( Matt. 22:37 ).

The basic laws of human reason are common to believer and unbeliever ( see LOGIC ; FIRST PRINCIPLES ). Without them no writing, thinking, or rational inferences would be possible. But nowhere are these laws of thought spelled out in the Bible. Rather, they are part of God's general revelation and the special object of philosophical thought.

*General revelation is essential to government.* God has ordained that believers live by his written law, but he has written his law in the hearts of unbelievers ( Rom. 2:12–15 ). Divine law in Scripture is the norm for Christians, but natural law is binding on all. Nowhere in Scripture does God judge the nations by either the law of Moses he gave to Israel ( Exod. 19–20 ) or by the law of Christ he enjoins on Christians. To think otherwise is the central error of theonomists. Nowhere, for example, were non-Jewish nations ever condemned in the Old Testament for not observing the Sabbath or sacrificing a lamb. Strangers and sojourners in Israel were, of course, required to respect the civil and moral laws of Israel as long as they were in the country. But this no more means the Jewish law was intended for them than that Christians are under the *Quranic* law because they must abide by it when in Muslim lands.

The law of Moses was not given to the Gentiles. Paul said clearly, "the Gentiles who have not the law" ( Rom. 2:14 ). The psalmist said "He has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel. He has done this for no other nation: they do not know his laws" ( Ps. 147:19–20 ). This is confirmed by the fact that, in spite of the many condemnations of Gentiles' sins in the Old Testament, never once were they condemned for not worshiping on the Sabbath or not making pilgrimages or bringing tithes to Jerusalem. This does not mean that there is no law of God for non-believers; they are bound by the law "written in their hearts" ( Rom. 2:2–15 ). While they have no special revelation in holy Scripture, they are responsible to general revelation in human nature.

*General revelation is essential to apologetics.* Without general revelation there would be no basis for Christian apologetics ( see CLASSICAL APOLOGETICS ). For if God had not revealed himself in nature, there would be no way to argue from the design evident in it to the existence of a Designer, known as the teleological argument for God's existence. Nor would there be any way to argue from the beginning or contingency of the world to the existence of a First Cause, known as the cosmological argument. Likewise, unless God had revealed himself in the very moral nature of human beings it would not be possible to argue to a Moral Lawgiver ( see MORAL ARGUMENT FOR GOD ). And, of course, without a God who can act in creating the world, there could be no special acts of God (miracles) in the world ( see MIRACLE ).

*Interaction Between Revelations.* Since it is the task of a systematic thinker to organize all truth about God and his relation to his creation, both general and special revelation are needed. However, since special revelation overlaps with general revelation, it is necessary to discuss the interaction between general and special revelation. God has revealed himself in his Word and in his world. His truth is found both in Scripture and in science. The problem arises when they seem to conflict. It is too simplistic to conclude that the Bible is always right and science wrong.

When dealing with conflicts between Christianity and culture we must be careful to distinguish between *God's Word*, which is infallible, and *our interpretation* of it which is not. We must further distinguish between *God's revelation* in his world, which is always true, and current *understanding* of it, which is not always correct and is likely to change. In the past, Christians have frequently given up claims to biblical truth for scientific theories that are no longer held to be so.

Two important things follow from these distinctions. First, God's revelations in his Word and his world never contradict each other. God is consistent; he never talks out of both sides of his mouth. Second, whenever there is a real conflict, it is between a human interpretation of God's Word and a human understanding of his world. Either one or both of these are wrong, but God has not erred.

*Which gets the priority?* When conflicts in understanding God's general and special revelations occur, which one gets the priority? The temptation might be to give precedent to the biblical interpretation because the Bible is infallible, but this overlooks the crucial distinction just made. The Bible is inerrant, but interpretations of it are prone to error. The history of interpretation reveals that God's infallible Word is as capable of being misunderstood as is anything else, including the arts and science.

This does not leave one at an impasse. Whenever there is a conflict between an interpretation of the Bible and a current understanding of God's general revelation, priority should generally be given to the interpretation that seems more certain. Sometimes this is our understanding of special revelation, and sometimes it is our understanding of general revelation, depending on which one is more thoroughly proven. A few examples will help illuminate the point.

Some interpreters have wrongly concluded on the basis of Biblical references to "the four corners of the earth" ( Rev. 7:1 ) that the earth is flat. However, science has proven with *certainty* that this is wrong. Therefore, in this case the certainty in interpreting God's general

revelation takes precedence over whatever uncertainty there may be in interpreting these biblical references. “Four corners” can be understood as a figure of speech.

Others have claimed that the sun moves around the earth on the basis of Bible references to “sun set” ( Josh 1:15 ) or the sun “standing still” ( Josh. 10:13 ). However, this interpretation is not necessary. It could be only the language of appearance from an observer’s point of view on the face of the earth ( *see* SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE ). Furthermore, since Copernicus there is good reason to believe that the sun does not move around the earth. Hence, we assign a higher *probability* to the heliocentric interpretation of God’s world at this point than to a geocentric interpretation of his Word.

Unfortunately some are willing to believe in a given interpretation of God’s Word, even if it involves a logical contradiction. But general revelation demands (by way of the law of noncontradiction) that opposites cannot both be true ( *see* FIRST PRINCIPLES ). Hence, we cannot believe that God is both one person and also three persons at the same time and in the same sense. Thus, both monotheism, so defined, and Trinitarianism ( *see* TRINITY ) cannot be true. We can, and do, believe that God is three Persons in one Essence. For even though this is a mystery, it is not a contradiction. Therefore, we can be *absolutely certain* that any interpretation of Scripture that involves a contradiction is false. However, there are times when an interpretation of Scripture should take precedence over even highly popular views in science.

Macroevolution is a good example ( *see* EVOLUTION, BIOLOGICAL ; EVOLUTION, CHEMICAL ). It is *virtually certain* that the Bible cannot be properly interpreted to accommodate macroevolution ( *see* Geisler ). The Bible teaches that God brought the universe into existence out of nothing ( Gen. 1:1 ), that he created every basic kind of animal and plant ( Gen. 1:21 ), and that he specially and directly created man and woman in his image ( Gen. 1:27 ). Hence, in spite of the prevailing and popular (though not highly probable) evolutionary views to the contrary, the Christian must give priority to this highly probable interpretation of Scripture over the improbable theory of macroevolution.

*Mutual Enrichment.* Often there is no serious conflict between widely accepted Bible interpretation and the general understanding of the scientific world. Rather, there is mutual enrichment. For example, a knowledge of the content of the Bible is essential for much of western Art and Literature. Further, biblical history and world history overlap significantly, so that neither should be ignorant of the other. More neglected is the connection between modern science and the biblical idea of creation. In this connection it is important to note that the biblical concept of creation helped give rise to modern science. Of course, in the study of origins there is a direct overlap and mutual enrichment of the scientific and biblical data.

*Conclusion.* The Bible is essential to both systematic thinking and to apologetics. It is the only infallible writing we have. It speaks with unerring authority on every topic it covers, whether spiritual or scientific, whether heavenly or earthly. However, the Bible is not God’s only revelation to mankind. God has spoken in his world as well as in his Word. It is the task of the Christian thinker to appropriate the information from both and to form a worldview that includes a theocentric interpretation of science, history, human beings, and the arts. However, without

God’s revelation (both general and special) as the basis, this task is as impossible as it would be to move the world with no place to put one’s fulcrum.

In theology the interaction between biblical studies and other disciplines should always be a two-way street. No one provides a monologue for the other; all engage in a continual dialogue. Although the Bible is infallible in whatever it addresses, it does not speak to every issue. And while the Bible is infallible, our interpretations of it are not. Thus, those in biblical studies must listen to as well as speak to the other disciplines so that a complete and correct systematic view can be constructed.

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#### Revelation, Progressive. *See* PROGRESSIVE REVELATION .

**Revelation, Special.** *Special revelation* ( *see* BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR ) is God’s revelation in his Word (Scripture), as opposed to God’s revelation in his world ( *see* REVELATION, GENERAL ). Special revelation may have originally been given orally or some other way (cf. Heb. 1:1 ) but has subsequently been written down and is now found only in God’s written Word, the Bible ( 2 Tim. 3:16–17 ).

God’s special revelation has been confirmed by miracles ( *see* MIRACLE ; MIRACLES, APOLOGETIC VALUE OF ; MIRACLES IN THE BIBLE ). This is how the canon of Scripture was determined ( *see* APOCRYPHA, OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT ; BIBLE, CANONICITY OF ).



**Revelational Presuppositionalism. See VAN TIL, CORNELIUS ; PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS .**

**Russell, Bertrand.** Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) was born in Ravenscroft, England, to freethinking parents who were friends of John Stuart Mill. After the death of his parents, he was reared by austere grandparents who changed from being Presbyterians to Unitarians. He began questioning the immortality of the soul by the time he was fourteen and abandoned his belief in God by eighteen (in 1890) after reading Mill's *Autobiography* .

He studied philosophy at Cambridge and later taught at its Trinity College, from which he was eventually dismissed because of his pacifistic activism (1916). He said, "when the war came I felt as if I heard the voice of God. I knew that it was my business to protest." Russell lectured in the United States several times (1896, 1927, 1929, 1931, 1938f.). He was married and divorced many times, spent six months in prison for antigovernment activity (1918) where he wrote *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* , and in 1940 he was ruled morally unfit to teach in New York. Yet Russell was eventually awarded a Nobel Prize for literature (in 1950) for championing freedom of thought.

The writings of Russell are voluminous, including everything from co-authoring the weighty *Principia Mathematica* (1910) with Alfred North Whitehead to his more popular *Why I Am Not a Christian* (based on a 1927 series of lectures). Other works include *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz* (1900), "Free Man's Worship" (1903), "The Essence of Religion" (1912), *Religion and Science* (1935), "The Existence of God Debate" with Father Copleston (1948), "What Is An Agnostic?" (a 1953 interview), and "Can Religion Cure Our Troubles?" (based on 1954 articles). His primary works on philosophy express a linguistic atomism. He was a mentor to Ludwig Wittgenstein , wrote the introduction to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* , and acknowledged Wittgenstein's influence on his own logical atomism.

**Russell's Religion.** Bertrand Russell's religious view evolved considerably over his ninety-eight-year life. For the first fourteen years of his life he was a theist ( *see* THEISM ). Between fourteen and eighteen he adopted a deistic ( *see* DEISM ) position. At eighteen he became atheistic (i.e., non-theistic). At thirty-one he embraced a kind of fatalistic Stoic naturalism expressed in "Free Man's Worship." By age forty he had a kind of experiential pantheism that Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–) might have approved (see Russell, "The Essence of Religion"). Later, he became a militantly antitheistic and anti-Christian. At age 76, he described himself as an "agnostic" ( *see* AGNOSTICISM ) in his interview with *Look* magazine (1953).

**Agnosticism and Antireligion.** Whatever one calls Russell's metaphysical wanderings, he was consistently anti-Christian and antireligious, though he did not consider himself an atheist. "My position is agnostic," he said (Russell, "The Existence of God Debate," 144). In his *Look* magazine interview he claimed that "An agnostic thinks it is impossible to know the truth in matters such as God and the future life with which Christianity and other religions are concerned." After this strong statement, he then hedges his bet, adding: , if not impossible, at least impossible at the present time" ("What Is an Agnostic?" 577).

Russell distinguishes agnosticism from atheism, claiming that "An atheist, like a Christian, holds that we *can* know whether or not there is a God; the atheist, that we can know there is not ( *see* ATHEISM ). The agnostic suspends judgment, saying that there are not sufficient grounds either for affirmation or for denial. . . . An Agnostic may hold that the existence of God, though not impossible, is very improbable" (ibid.).

From Russell's pen came a relentless attack, not only on Christianity, but on religion in general. He wrote, "I am as firmly convinced that religions do harm as I am that they are untrue" ( *Why I Am Not a Christian* , xi). The basic reason is that they are based on a belief that is generated through fear, which in essence is bad. Organized religion retards progress in the world. In particular, "I say quite deliberately that the Christian religion, as organized in its Churches, has been and still is the principal enemy of moral progress in the world" (ibid., 15).

*No Authority Accepted.* Russell claimed to reject all authority. The agnostic, he said, holds that a man should think out personal conduct, listening to the wisdom of others. "No one but a fool indulges every impulse, but what holds a desire in check is always some other desire" ("What Is an Agnostic?" 578).

He denied having "faith in reason alone," insisting that there is more than facts and reason. He saw himself guided by his thought-through purposes or ends. "The Agnostic will find his ends in his own heart and not in an external command" (ibid., 583). For example, reason can tell how to get to New York, but only the individual can come up with the reason (purpose) for going there.

Sin is not a useful notion, though some kinds of conduct are desirable and some are undesirable (ibid., 578). But he hastens to add that punishment for undesirable conduct should only be a deterrent or reformatory and not penal.

*Problems with Christianity.* The Bible is rejected with all other authority. Russell considered it legendary history on a level with Homer. Some of its moral teaching is good, but much of it is very bad (ibid., 579).

Russell doubted whether Christ ever lived. "Historically," he claimed, "it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if he did we do not know anything about him" ( *Why I Am Not a Christian* , 11). Nonetheless, he claims that "Most [which does not necessarily include himself] agnostics admire the life and moral teachings of Jesus as told in the Gospels [which he does not accept], but not necessarily more than those of certain other men. Some [not Russell] would place him on the level with Buddha. . . . Socrates and some with Abraham Lincoln" ("What Is an Agnostic?" 579). Unlike many unbelievers, Russell declared: "I do not think that Christ was the best and wisest of men" ("Can Religion Cure Our Troubles?" 2). Russell's estimation of the Jesus of the Bible was that he was unwise, unmerciful, inhumane, and cruel (see below). He presented Socrates in a better light. He wrote, "There is one very serious defect to my mind in Christ's moral character, and that is that he believed in hell. I do not myself feel that any person who is really profoundly humane can believe in everlasting punishment" ( *Why I Am Not a Christian* , 12).

*No Immortality.* Russell disbelieved in any afterlife, whether heaven or hell. Speaking of agnostics in general, he said: “An Agnostic, as such, does not take a view about survival unless he thinks that there is evidence one way or the other.” For himself, Russell adds, “I do not think there is any good reason to believe that we survive death” (“What Is an Agnostic?” 580). For “it is rational to suppose that mental life ceases when bodily life ceases” (“What I Believe,” 40). He adds, “I believe that when I die I shall rot, and that nothing of my ego will survive” (*Why I Am Not a Christian* , 43).

While somewhat uncertain about an afterlife in general, he was absolutely certain that there is no hell. For “Belief in hell is bound up with the belief that the vindictive punishment of sin is a good thing. . . . There might conceivably someday be evidence of its [heaven’s] existence through spiritualism, but most Agnostics do not think there is such evidence, and therefore do not believe in heaven” (“What Is an Agnostic?” 580–81). As to whether he fears God’s judgment, Russell responded: “Most certainly not. I also deny Zeus and Jupiter and Odin and Brahma, but these cause no qualms. . . . If there were a God, I think it is very unlikely that He would have such an uneasy vanity as to be offended by those who doubt his existence” (ibid., 581).

*Naturalistic Denial of Miracles* . As for the supernatural, Russell asserted that “Agnostics do not think there is any evidence of ‘miracles’ in the sense of happenings contrary to natural law.” Indeed, “it is possible to dispense with miracles, since Providence has decreed that the operation of natural laws shall produce the best possible results” (*Why I Am Not a Christian* , 42). He admits there are unusual events, but these are not miraculous. “We know that faith healing occurs and is in no sense miraculous.” He saw as much miraculous evidence for the Greek gods in Homer as for the Christian God in the Bible” (“What Is an Agnostic?” 581).

Along the same line, he regarded the virgin birth as a vestige of pagan mythology ( *see* MITHRAISM ; MYTHOLOGY AND THE NEW TESTAMENT ). He pointed to a virgin birth story attached to Zoroaster and the fact that Ishtar, the Babylonian goddess, is called “the holy virgin” (ibid., 579).

Russell also rejected the idea of a purpose for life. “I do not think that life in general has any purpose. It just happened. But individual human beings have purposes, and there is nothing in Agnosticism to cause them to abandon these purposes” (ibid., 582).

*Early Buddhism the Best Religion.* Asked which religions he most respected, Russell responded that he preferred Buddhism, “especially in its earliest forms, because it has had the smallest element of persecution.” He admired Confucianism and liberal Christians who reduced dogma to a minimum. But that there is actually a God behind any religion, he said the only evidence he would accept would be a voice from the sky accurately predicting all that would happen in the next twenty-four hours. However, even that would only convince him of a superhuman intelligence. He could, in fact, think of no evidence that would convince him of a God’s existence (ibid., 583–84).

*Evaluation.* Such antagonism even to the possibility of proof for God’s existence calls into question Russell’s definition of *agnosticism* . His attitude differs little from that of most atheists

who claim to know (on “very probable” grounds) that God does not exist. What is the difference? Few atheists claim to be absolutely certain that there is no God ( *see* GOD, ALLEGED DISPROOFS OF ). At one point in his *Look* interview, Russell admitted that, for all practical purposes he was “at one with the atheists” (ibid., 577). Such reluctance to admit atheism brings to mind Karl Marx ’s quip that “an agnostic is nothing but a gutless atheist.”

*Self-Defeating Agnosticism.* If Russell was an “agnostic,” he was a hard-core one, claiming it “impossible” to know if there is a God. This boils down to the statement: “I know for sure about God’s existence that you cannot know anything for sure about God’s existence.” Adding the caveat “at the present time” does not mitigate the problem. The statement is still self-defeating “at the present time.”

Russell’s evaluation of religion is shallow and faulty. His claim that all religions are based on fear is a “sociological fallacy.” That is, it uses descriptive statements as though they were prescriptive. Fear is a factor in bringing some to religion, but it is insufficient to give a genuine or enduring faith. People seek religion also for happiness, security, freedom from guilt, and other factors. Russell seemed to have a pathological fear of fear. Not all fear is bad. There is a wholesome fear that warns one of possible danger or negative consequences. The fear of failing an exam can be a helpful motivation to study. The fear of being hit by a drunk driver can make one more watchful on the road. Also, psychological reasons do not explain the origin of a belief. They help to show *why* people believe, but do not account for *what* they believe (see Woods, 23). Finally, the origin does not determine the value of a thing. Most people fear fire, but this says nothing about the value of a fire.

*The Need for God.* Though Russell did not believe, a need for God is occasionally implicit. At one of his more candid moments he wrote: “Even when one feels nearest to other people, *something in one seems obstinately to belong to God, and to refuse to enter into any earthly communion* —at least that is how I should express it if I thought there was a God. It is odd, isn’t it? I care passionately for this world and many things and people in it, and yet . . . what is it all? *There must be something more important, one feels, though I don’t believe there is*” (*Autobiography* , 125–26, emphasis added).

*Authority of Reason.* Russell claimed to reject all authority, yet he acknowledged the final authority of human reason. He denied having “faith in reason alone,” only in the sense that human purposes helped determine his actions. But one does not have faith in purposes but in some source of, and test for, truth. Reason alone suffices here. Hence, it is fair to say that Russell rejects any authority except that of human reason ( *see* RATIONALISM ). Of course, “reason is concerned with matters of fact, some observed, some inferred” (“What Is an Agnostic?” 583). So, Russell did have a final authority.

Like other agnostics and atheists, Russell had an inconsistent view of sin. He denied its validity, reducing everything to the “desirable” or “undesirable.” Yet, when it came to issues of free speech and life style he expressed unmovable moral convictions. Russell seem to have no doubt that belief in hell was really and truly “cruel,” “unmerciful,” and “inhumane.” These are moral absolutist positions. If morality is merely the “desirable” or “undesirable,” then there is no real moral grounds to say anything is cruel or wrong. To be consistent, he should have said only

that the concept of hell was contrary to his desires. He had no moral grounds to make any value judgment ( *see* MORALITY, ABSOLUTE NATURE OF ).

Further, there is a basic ambivalence in Russell's view of humanity. R. E. D. Clark observed that Russell based his code of morality on essential human goodness, then elsewhere urges that a good God could never have created such a revolting biped.

*Authority and Christianity.* Russell's dislike for all things Christian rises with the sensitivity of a Geiger counter when he approaches anything smacking of authority or a claim on his own life and freedom. He rejects the Bible along with all other authority. He likes some of its moral teachings, but those that bother him are "very bad" (ibid., 579). His attacks against Jesus, besides his basic unbelief in Jesus' existence, seem to stem from the fact that Christ in Scripture is an authority figure. Buddha, who he likes better, makes few commands and offers a personally-tailored road of wisdom. Socrates is even less directive.

*Why Russell Rejected Christ.* The militant anti-Christianity in *Why I Am Not a Christian* leaves the impression of one strongly atheistic. But he seemed more intent in setting up a straw-man argument against the Christian authoritarian personality and lifestyle. His ideal of the Christian religious person is one who does good and does not follow creeds. Christians must be more than do-gooders, however, or nothing would distinguish them from other religionists, such as Muslims. Minimally a Christian believes certain things about the existence of God, immortality, and the character and person of Christ. None of these can Russell accept. In particular, Russell came to the following positions:

*The Fallacy of the First-Cause Argument.* Russell rejected the traditional arguments for God's existence ( *see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR ), in particular the cosmological argument for a First Cause. He reasoned that if something can exist without a cause, then it could be the world, just as it could be God. He attributed belief that the world had a beginning to the poverty of human imagination.

According to Russell, the very concept of a "cause," on which the Cosmological Argument depends, had lost its vitality in current philosophy. But even granting causality, he posed this dilemma:

1. Either all things are caused or else they are not.
2. If all beings are caused, then so is God since he is a being.
3. If all things are not caused, then neither is the world since it is something.
4. So either God is caused by another (and is not the First Cause) or else the world is not caused by any God (and no God exists).
5. In either event there is no First Cause.

Logically it does not follow that, just because God can be without a cause, the world can too. God and the world are in two different categories. Since one is Creator and the other created, only the world needs a cause, not God. Also, there are good scientific and philosophical reasons for believing that the world had a beginning, something Russell brushes aside without due consideration ( *see* BIG BANG ; KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ). Hence, Russell's anti-first-cause argument fails.

Russell's question "Who caused God?" is based on a misstatement of the principle of causality ( *see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF ). Thomas Aquinas did not argue that *everything* needs a cause. Rather, *contingent or dependent* beings need a cause. For example, beings that have a beginning need a cause. For whatever comes to be needs a cause to bring it to be. But an eternal independent Being, such as God is, does not need a cause. Hence, to ask "Who made God?" is absurd. It is asking who made the unmade? It should not be difficult for Russell to understand this. He believed that the world did not need a cause; it was simply "there" ("Existence of God Debate"). But if the universe can be uncaused, so can God.

*The Argument from Natural Law.* The argument from natural law is rejected by Russell because it depends on understanding laws in a prescriptive sense (arguing that every prescription has a prescriber). But the laws of nature are only descriptive, not prescriptive. Hence, he insisted, the natural law argument fails. Further,

1. If God created law, then it was either for a reason or not for a reason.
2. It could not have been for a reason, since in that case God would be subject to it and not ultimate.
3. It could not have been for no reason, for in that case a rational God would not have done it. For God has a reason for everything.
4. Therefore, God could not have created law (i.e., there is no need for a Creator of law).

Russell is correct in pointing out that the laws of nature are only descriptive, not prescriptive. But it does not follow from this that the regular patterns and order of nature need no Orderer ( *see* TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT ; ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE ; EVOLUTION, CHEMICAL ). Indeed, many modern agnostics and atheists contemplating the anthropic principle have had serious second thoughts. For who ordered the universe by specifying from the very beginning the precise conditions that would make human possible?

Further, Russell poses a false dilemma about whether God had a reason for creating law. The reason does not have to be beyond himself, or it can be totally absent. God's reason for doing things is in himself: He is the ultimate Reason, for he is the ultimate rational Being in the universe.

*The Argument from Design.* Following David Hume and Charles Darwin, Russell rejected the concept of design in nature that leads to positing a Designer of nature. His reasoning can be put in this form:

1. Either living things are adapted to their environment because of design or because of evolution.
2. Science has demonstrated via natural selection that they are adapted to their environs because of evolution.
3. Hence, they were not designed by a Designer.

Russell's argument against design is a classic fallacy in logic. He sets up alternatives and then he selects which he wishes to deny. The inevitable result is begging the question. He also ignores evidence. He argues fallaciously that adaptation results from *either* design *or* evolution and then that it results only from evolution (affirming one alternate). The implication: It does not result from design. But in order for there to be a valid conclusion, one must deny one of the two alternates. He overlooks the possibility that adaptation might result from both design and evolution. After all, the Creator could have designed evolution as the means to accomplish his purpose ( *see* EVOLUTION ). Further, Russell assumes that the evidence for evolution is greater than that for creation. But this is not the case ( *see* EVOLUTION, BIOLOGICAL ).

*The Moral Argument.* Russell chided Immanuel Kant for his moral argument for God. He insists that one does not easily get rid of what was learned at a mother's knee, and this is where Kant learned to believe in God. This *ad hominem* argument aside, Russell posed this logical dilemma for those who argue from a moral law to a Moral Law Giver:

1. If there is a moral law, it either comes from God's fiat (will) or it does not.
2. But it cannot be from God's fiat or else he would not be essentially moral but arbitrary.
3. Neither can it not be by God's will, for in that case God would be subject to a moral standard beyond himself and would not be God (i.e., the Ultimate).
4. In either event there is no reason to posit a God as the source of moral law.

Putting Russell's *ad hominem* fallacy aside as unworthy of comment, his argument is another false dilemma. For the moral law does not have to be either arbitrary or outside of God ( *see* ESSENTIALISM, DIVINE ); it can be inside (viz., his own unchangeable moral nature). Hence, God can be ultimate without being arbitrary.

*The Argument from Remedial Justice.* Theists have sometimes argued that there must be a next life and a morally perfect God to remediate the injustice of this life. But Russell responds that whatever we find true here is probably true elsewhere. And we find that injustice rules in this life. There is no reason to believe it would not also rule in all other possible worlds.

It is not necessarily the case that what is true here is also true elsewhere. A desert in Arizona does not mean there is one in Florida or Alaska. Even if it were true that human behavior in one place is indicative of human behavior elsewhere under similar conditions, Russell's argument would fail. After all, heaven is an entirely different condition—one of perfection. If this is so,

then one would expect human behavior to be different there. Russell also overlooks the prescriptive nature of the moral law. If there is an absolutely perfect God, then he cannot allow injustice to rule forever. He must rectify it. And Russell cannot assume that no morally perfect God exists as a basis for proving that no such God exists.

*The Character of Christ.* Not only did Russell reject the arguments for God's existence and immortality, but he also denied that Christ was a person of high moral character. He believed that Jesus' character had serious moral flaws.

Russell's belief about Jesus' character has flaws of its own. First, he entirely overlooks all the positive evidence for Christ's impeccable character ( *see* CHRIST, UNIQUENESS OF ). Second, his negative arguments all fall short of being actual proofs of flaws in Christ's character..

*Jesus lacked wisdom.* A very wise man cannot be wrong about important things. Yet Jesus was wrong about one of his important teachings, namely, that he would return immediately to earth after his death ( Matt. 24:34 ). Hence, Jesus was not a very wise man. On another occasion, he manifested his lack of wisdom by cursing a fig tree for not having fruit before it was the season for bearing fruit ( Matt. 21:19 ; cf. Mark 11:14 ). No truly wise person would do such a thing.

Russell wrongly assumes that Jesus claimed he would return within the life-time of his disciples ( *Why I Am Not a Christian* , 11). The evidence is to the contrary. Jesus did not say he would return immediately but only immanently (cf. Acts 1:7). The reference to "this generation" ( Matt. 24:34 ) could refer to the Jewish nation not passing away before he returns, since the word for generation ( *genea* ) can refer to a race or nation (cf. Matt. 23:36 ). Or, it may refer to the fact that he would come before the end of the generation in the future when the events predicted in this passage begin to come to pass ( Matt. 24:33 ). Jesus explicitly said no one knew the time of his coming ( Matt. 24:36 ; Acts 1:7 ). Thus, it is contrary to his very teaching in this same passage to understand him as telling them when he would return.

As to whether it was unwise to curse the fig tree, Russell misses an important point. It was the time of year (Passover) in which early figs do appear. This is why the text says: "and seeing from afar a fig tree *having leaves* , he went to find out if it had any fruit" (vs. 13 ). He certainly would not have done this unless figs sometimes appeared, as they do, under new leaves at this time of year.

Further, if Jesus is the Creator, then simply because a finite being does not see a reason for some event does not mean that an infinite Mind has none. As it turns out, Jesus' purpose here is expressed: The fig tree illustrated Israel's fruitless rejection of the Messiah, and it would lead to disaster. Immediately following this he was accosted in the temple by the Jewish leaders ( Mark 11:15f. ) who soon thereafter called for his crucifixion.

*Jesus was not profoundly humane.* According to the Gospels, Jesus believed in hell—the eternal suffering of the lost ( Matt. 5:22 ; 10:28 ). Russell insisted that no one who is profoundly human would believe in a place like hell.

The fact that Jesus believed in hell does not make him any more inhumane than someone who believes in the Jewish holocaust. Certainly, if the holocaust happened, then is not inhumane to believe in it. Likewise, if hell is real, then one is not inhumane for believing it is real. The question is one of truth, not of humanity.

*Jesus was vindictive.* Russell believes that Jesus was vindictive toward his enemies, pronouncing woes and judgments on them (cf. Matt. 23 ). But vindictiveness toward one's enemies is a moral flaw. Therefore, Jesus' character was morally flawed.

Contrary to Russell's claim, there is no evidence that Jesus was vindictive. He retaliated against no one. He warned them of the destructive end of their life, unless they turned around. And that is a merciful thing to do. Jesus exercised one of the greatest acts of non-vindictive mercy known to many when he look at those who torturously crucified him and said, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing" ( Luke 23:34 ). Jesus explicitly taught that we should not be vindictive, insisting that: "If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." He added, "Love you enemies, bless those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" ( Matt. 5:39 , 44 ).

*Jesus lacked proper kindness.* Russell argued that any one who threatened people with eternal unforgiveness was not properly kind. Yet Jesus did this on occasion ( Matt. 5:22 ; 23:35–36 ; John 5:24–29 ; 12:48 ).

That Jesus warned people about hell does not prove he lacked proper kindness. In fact, if there is a hell—and who is in a better position to know than is the Son of God ( *see* CHRIST, DEITY OF )—then Jesus would have been unkind not to warn people about it. What would Russell think about someone who failed to warn him that there was a gaping fault in the road ahead of him in which he would perish if he did not turn around?

*Jesus promoted cruelty.* Another flaw in the character of Christ, according to Russell, was that he unnecessarily drowned a herd of pigs. Such an act is unkind to animals, unnecessarily destroying them in a lake. This reveals another flaw in Jesus' character.

There was no moral imperfection in the act of drowning a herd of pigs ( Matt. 8:32 ). As God, Jesus was sovereign over all life. He created it, and he had the right to take it ( Deut. 32:39 ; Job 1:21 ). All animals eventually die at the Creator's fiat anyway. That it happens earlier or later is irrelevant. The purpose of this herd of swine was not to give swine milk. The owners were going to take their lives anyway. Jesus did not directly kill the pigs anyway; the demons did. Jesus simply cast the demons out of the man and the demons entered the pigs and drove them over the cliff. Jesus was more concerned about saving the person, and Russell is more interested in the pigs.

**Summary.** Russell argued that there is no real basis to believe in either the existence of God or the high moral character of Christ ( *see* CHRIST, UNIQUENESS OF ). And since both of these beliefs are essential to being a Christian, he did not wish to call himself a Christian. But Russell's arguments fail to take way the Christian arguments for the existence of God and the

moral superiority of Christ. They lack both a logical and a factual basis to do the job he desired. They indicate more about what he wanted to be the case, rather than an honest search for truth.

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