

troubles the mind and stirs up opposition.... The Christian religion is certain that death in itself and as such (not 'the end') has no proper meaning, and justifies the protest against it. But it also recognizes death as a real thing and acknowledges all its harshness.... Death has its origin not in an inner necessity of human existence, but in sin, the sin of all men, which is also the sin of each individual.... But Christianity knows something further. In the chapter of Romans, Paul says: 'For if by one man's offense death reigned through one; much more, they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift, and of justice, shall [even now] reign in life through one, [that is] Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offence of one, unto all men to condemnation [and to death]; so also by the justice of one, unto all men to justification of life' (Rom. 5:17-19). When Christ died something happened to death.... The word resurrection is as strange to modern feeling as the idea that death is not necessary. We still use it as an inheritance from the age of faith, but in a different sense. In contemporary language, it signifies the return of life in spring after the torpor of winter, or some new accession of energy in a man after a period of stagnation.... There is nothing of this in the resurrection of Christ, and through him of redeemed mankind.... It means that Christ, after his death, raised himself up by the sovereign power of the living God to a new and truly human life.... It means that his body, after it had died, lived on in a higher way; that he saw by the power of the Holy Spirit, penetrated and transformed his body; that he entered upon eternal glory in the fullness of his divine and human nature. This doctrine is not a legendary apotheosis, not a later, mythical structure put on a purely human life, but is found everywhere in the original sources. Christ's resurrection is as essential a part of the Gospel, throughout, as his redeeming

death. The fact that he rose is as much a fact as that he lived at all. Paul leaves us in no doubt: 'and if Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain.... If Christ be not risen [and through him we ourselves]... if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable' (Rom. 1:4; I cor. 15:14-19). Without the resurrection of Christ there is no Christianity. Without the resurrection Christianity would become something apt to make anyone capable of serious and profound reasoning 'of all men the most miserable.' With Christ's death and resurrection something happened to death. It ceased to be the mere executing of God's justice.... Christ's death has given it a new character, which does not change its form but does alter its meaning and restore it to what it should have been for the first man—the passage into a new, eternally human life."

References: Zsolt Aradi, *The Book of Miracles*, (New York, Longmans Green & Co., 1956), pp. 143-148.

Romano Guardini, *The Last Things* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1954).

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Jesus' Greatest Miracle

Jesus' greatest miracle was, and is, His resurrection. On this fact, Christianity stands or falls. The multiplication of bread and fish, the calming of the storm, the cure of the paralytic and the many sick and disease, the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the exorcism of the possessed, and the raising to life the widow's son and Jairus' daughter and Lazarus,—are all acts of love accompanying the teaching of the new message of salvation, the greatest act of love to be performed by God, is near. The resurrection as an act is the supreme fulfillment and the greatest miracle. God, who became man, at the same time humbled Himself and was destroyed as a man. For a Christian the resurrection of Christ means that Christ is living among us still. The whole Christian doctrine would not be possible or understandable without the resurrection of Christ and without His living presence. Union with Christ who is God is the supreme end of every Christian. The miracle is the greatest reality of history. Thus, it is understandable that the resurrection of Christ was so carefully described by the Evangelists and by all of them from different angles. There are six documentary descriptions in the New Testament of the resurrection, chronologically in the following places: (1) I Cor. 15; (2) Matt. 28; (3) Mark 16:1-8; (4) Luke 24; (5) Mark 16:9-20; and finally (6) John 20 and 21. Its history can be retold, based upon the above documentation, in the following way.

Mary Magdalene, accompanied by other women (who later on go another way), left her house before the end of the night between Saturday and Sunday. Alone she walked to the tomb while the women went to provide herbs and perfume oils. When Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb, she found it open and

without guards. And because she did not find the body of her divine Master inside, she thought that the body had been stolen and she ran to notify Peter, the Chief of the Apostles. When she left the tomb, the other women arrived. They entered and were greatly shocked because the body of Christ was not there. At this moment, an angel appeared and informed them that Christ was risen. The women were terrified, and ran away. No one believed what was told them, and because of this, their speech was blocked. Later, however, they talked. St. Mark informs us about their silence, but St. Luke about what they said.

According to all probability, Peter and John then proceeded to the sepulcher, and after they examined it, they concluded that the Lord had risen. After Peter and John had left, Mary Magdalene again went to the tomb and encountered Jesus before the entrance. She heard his voice. He talked to her and through her sent a message for the Apostles.

The Gospel narrative makes it clear that the guards were present when the tombstone that closed the entrance removed itself. Cleophas, and one of his associates, saw and heard the risen Lord. Peter and James were favored by an apparition.

The day was not yet ended and Christ had already given to all the Apostles (save one who was absent) and other disciples undeniable proof of his redemption.

And during the subsequent forty days there were many other manifestations of Christ, all reported by the Evangelists. One of the most important among them is that describing his appearance before 500 witnesses. This proves that the Evangelists did not invent anything. Another extremely important apparition was that of the miraculous catch of fish, the net remaining intact despite the fact that it pulled 153 fish to shore. This alone proves that the Apostles were not victims of an illusion.

The resurrection of Christ is not, of course, conceivable by the human mind; it has to be accepted as part of our faith in the living God. Although the authenticity of the Bible narrative and other sources is beyond question, efforts have always been made to destroy or weaken the belief in the fact of the resurrection. The argument asserting that fraud was used to deceive the people is out of date and is no longer used by the adversaries of Christianity. Another explanation maintains that the Apostles were in such a state of excitement that they had visions of Christ and “imagined” that he was risen. The truth about the state of the Apostles is quite otherwise. After what had happened the Apostles did not expect Christ would come to life. They did not want to believe the first reports about the resurrection. The Bible, moreover, relates several instances when Christ appeared and showed Himself to many people. He appeared to the Apostles, eating and drinking with them. And he also let Himself be touched—by Thomas the Apostle. If Christ’s resurrection had only been a vision, it could not have had the effect on the Apostles that it had. A vision disappears; and although it leaves a deep impression upon the soul, it is still not a material reality. The Apostles enjoyed the return of Christ in their midst, and His resurrection made them in turn rise from their depression and begin a heroic, dynamic apostolate.

From the first century on, the resurrection was the central, focal point of Christian faith. Patristic literature gives ample evidence of its influence upon the first Christians.

Clement of Rome, in a letter dated around A.D. 92 or 101, wrote that the resurrection of Christ presents a continuous hope for our resurrection in the future.

Ignatius of Antioch (died c. 105-110) in several of his letters always returns to this greatest fact of Christianity. “Christ is risen from

the dead, really and truly. He was risen by the Father and one day we will be risen too.” In another letter, he says: “Jesus Christ possessed a human body after His resurrection; he told the Apostles, touch me, feel me, and you will see that I am not a bodiless spirit...” St. Polycarp of Smyrna (died 155) declared that “the solid root of Christian faith is that...Jesus Christ was resurrected by God after He died for our sins.” St. Justin Martyr wrote around 455: “When Christ was crucified all His disciples abandoned and denied Him. Later, when He was risen from death and had shown himself to them, and taught them to read the prophecies which had predicted these facts, they believed.”

Origin asked how anyone could doubt the fact of crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, “since He was crucified before the very eyes of all Judea and His body was removed from the cross in the presence of so many witnesses...” How is it possible to imagine that the Apostles, who had abandoned Him after the crucifixion, suddenly became courageous, enthusiastic to the point of expounding His doctrine despite the greatest dangers and at a time when people were not well disposed to listen? It is inconceivable that the Apostles invented the resurrection. Such a collective lie could not have been maintained for so long a time by so many people.

St. Augustine’s point is the most important for the Christian: “The heathens, too, believe that Christ died; the belief, the faith in his resurrection makes the Christian Christian... It is faith in this resurrection that justifies us” (*Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, XXIX).

Why is resurrection so important for the Christian? Romano Guardini, the German theologian, gives the answer:

“Death came into the world through sin. This is the answer Christianity makes to the question of death. It is a bold answer, which

