

Resurrection Argued

April 15, 2017

On the eve of Easter Day, let us remind ourselves of how reasonable it is to believe in such an extraordinary occurrence as a human being bursting out of the grave from behind a stone normally heavy enough to stop him from even dreaming of doing any such thing. Firstly, the theological "How" of the Resurrection, and then the historical "Whether" it took place.

For Catholics who by the gift of supernatural faith believe that at the Incarnation the second divine Person of the Holy Trinity, in full possession of the complete divine Nature, united to Himself a complete human nature, making two natures in one divine Person, it is not difficult to understand how the Resurrection took place. On the Cross, the divine Person truly died, not in His immortal divine Nature, but in his human nature, capable of dying like any other mortal man by the separation of his human soul from his human body. However, while these two in Jesus Christ could be separated from one another, neither was separated from the divine Person, which is why Catholics recite in their Creed that He (body and soul) "suffered and died," and that He (body) "was buried" and that He (soul) "descended into Hell (not the Hell of the damned, but the Limbo of good souls dead and waiting for Christ's redeeming death to open for them the gates of Heaven closed by Adam and Eve). Both human body and human soul of Christ remaining each of them united to the divine Person, it may not have been easy for that Person to die the atrocious death on the Cross, but it was easy for His human soul to reunite with His human body in the sepulchre so that His human nature came back to life. And no stone on earth could have been heavy enough to stop Him from flying immediately to His Mother to console her.

But must a soul then have the supernatural gift of the faith

to accept the reality of the Resurrection? Not necessarily. If an unbelieving but upright mind will consider the merely natural arguments taken from natural psychology and human history, he can easily conclude that only some event at least as sensational as the Resurrection can explain the facts as we know them (and let nobody say that the Resurrection is so thweet and thticky and nithe that nobody needth argumentth! Men need arguments! God did not put our heads on the top for nothing!).

Firstly, human psychology arguing from the Apostles. For three years they have learned to believe, trust in and love the divine Master. Then he is executed in public like a common criminal, after they all ran away in the Garden of Gethsemane. And after the Passion they are totally disheartened (cf. Jn. XX, 19). absolutely normal in the circumstances. Yet within 50 days here they are back in Jerusalem, confronting the Jews head on and converting them to believe in Jesus Christ, thousands at a time (cf. Acts II, 41; IV, 4). And within another 300 years these Apostles and their successors will have converted the Roman Empire itself. Such are the facts of history. What can have happened, less than something as sensational as the Resurrection, to explain such a psychological transformation of whipped dogs (so to speak) into world-conquerors?

Secondly, human history, arguing from the Jews. They hated Christ, and killed Him, as they have striven to destroy His Church ever since. Yet within 50 days here are his followers, commanding them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, using the Resurrection as their main argument. Would not the best way to stop them in their tracks have been to produce Christ's dead corpse? And can we doubt that, then as now, they had all money, police and power at their disposal to find any corpse at all, if only it was still there to be found? But Christianity, instead of being stopped, took off. The only explanation can be that there was no corpse to be found. The

Resurrection is true. One need not even have supernatural faith to accept it. So Peter was right – Acts II, 38 – “Do penance, and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ.”

Kyrie eleison.