

## THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

The Church in its wisdom has taught throughout the ages that there is no conflict between the truths of the Faith and the natural created world that we live in. Faith and Reason are like two wings on a bird that enables a bird to soar. Faith alone or reason alone is like trying to fly with one wing, it results in a debilitating limitation to attain the higher truths that God desires us to know and discover.

The Church teaches that we can come to know three substantial facts of reality that are attainable by reason alone; the existence of God, the immortality of the soul and the freedom of the will (our moral accountability for our actions). The immortality of the soul is the highest truth discovered by reason, because if we no longer exist after physical death, then the existence of God doesn't matter nor would our moral accountability for our earthly actions matter.

The contemporary culture that we live in is preoccupied with earthly wisdom, which includes physics, chemistry, biology, economics and politics. All of these things are good, but have a temporal and finite reality. The higher truth is that human beings have a spiritual soul that survives physical death and living an earthly life of virtue based on spiritual principles is true wisdom.

The great Greek thinkers in antiquity, the first scientists, understood the relationship between cause and effect. True science then is certain knowledge based on proper causes and principles. No police detective would be doing his job if he walked upon a crime scene, saw a corpse with a gun beside it and proclaimed that the gun killed the person, case closed. The gun might be an instrumental cause but not the ultimate cause of the crime. True science and true knowledge seeks ultimate causes, not proximate causes.

The perplexing problem that the Greek philosophers struggled with was "the one and the many". How can you stand in the middle of a forest amongst the many trees, yet have one concept "tree" in your mind? The natural world is a world of particular material things like trees that are constantly changing whereas the idea "tree" that we possess as knowledge in our mind is a universal concept that is abstract and unchanging. How does the natural world that is material, particular and changing correspond to our knowledge of the natural world which is abstract, universal and unchanging?

It seems that there is something, some principle that human beings possess, that can spiritualize (dematerialize) things in the natural world and possess these same things by means of concepts and signs. These concepts and signs are the foundational principles by which we use to communicate knowledge to others by means of language both written and spoken.

So if we possess knowledge that is spiritualized, like mathematics ( $2+2 = 4$ ), knowledge that is abstract, universal and unchanging, then something inside of us that we possess must also be spiritual and able to exist irrespective of our physical body. Think about it, if your knowledge that  $2 + 2 = 4$  was located in the brain and the brain is a material organ constantly changing, then  $2 + 2$  would be 4.5 in the morning and 3.8 in the evening. You would not be able to know the truth, because the truth doesn't change. We don't think with the brain, we think with the intellect which along with free will are faculties or powers possessed by a spiritual soul.

It is interesting to watch the contemporary atheists and sophists of the day write books and give speeches denying the existence of God and the spiritual world. They are actually using spiritual realities such as language, signs and concepts to deny that spiritual realities do in fact exist. There is a radical difference between intelligence and wisdom. You can be highly educated and be a fool. You can be educated into imbecility and a large number of people in our society are highly educated fools and are spiritually blind. Sad to say that these enlightened people hold positions of authority in society. They manifest their errors in the media, television, entertainment, they teach in schools, legislate and adjudicate the laws of our country. The inmates are running the asylum.

### Near Death Experiences and Life after Death

In 1982, a Gallup survey indicated that approximately eight million adults in the United States had had a near-death experience. The people sampled reported having some of the following ten characteristics:

Out-of-body experience	Life review
Accurate visual perception (while out of body)	Being in another world
Accurate auditory perception (while out of body)	Encountering other beings
Feelings of peace and painlessness	Tunnel experience
Light phenomena (encounter with loving white light)	Precognition

In the case of a near death experience, when a person undergoes clinical death (flat EEG, an absence of electrical activity in the cerebral cortex), that person will have an out of body experience and leave their physical body (frequently through a tunnel), emerging outside the physical body, and frequently looking down upon it. This transphysical component is completely intact without the physical body, and it is self-conscious and capable of seeing and hearing (without the biological organs associated with those functions). This transphysical component retains all its memories and appears to have acute recall and memory functions (without use of the brain). It is aware of its self-identity and its distinction from others.

It is not limited to physical laws (such as gravity), or the restrictions imposed by physical mass (such as walls or roofs). It can be called into a spiritual or heavenly domain in which it can encounter spiritual beings like itself (in human form) as well as wholly transcendent beings greater than itself (such as a loving white light). It can communicate with these beings without the use of voice and sounds.

Interesting to note that studies have been done on blind people, some of whom have been blind from birth, who have had near-death experiences and have claimed to be able to see during their NDE. The bodily limitations and imperfections (blindness) that we experience on earth do not apply in the transphysical world.

*(The Soul's Upward Yearning: Clues to Our Transcendent Nature from Experience and Reason by Fr. Robert Spitzer)*

### **The Resurrection of the Body**

Jesus spent his three year ministry proclaiming the Kingdom of God that exists in its fullness in Heaven. So his ministry concentrated on the spiritual reality of the human soul and salvation. After physical death, the soul separates from the body and becomes a disembodied spirit, not what God intended it to be from the beginning when God created everything from nothing.

Because of sin, death entered the world and so if Jesus was to overcome the original Sin of Adam, He would need to manifest this by overturning the consequence of sin, the separation of the soul and the body (death), hence the Resurrection.

- The resurrected Christ is not a ghost. A ghost is a spirit without a body, the resurrected Christ has a real body.
- The Resurrection is also not a resuscitation, like the resuscitation of Lazarus. The body Lazarus came out of his tomb with was the same old body with which he had gone into his tomb. He had his graveclothes on (Jn. 11:44) Jesus' graveclothes were neatly laid aside and folded in his tomb (Jn. 20:6-7). Lazarus had to die again.
- Resurrection is also not reincarnation. Reincarnation, like resuscitation, (supposedly) only gives you another mortal body in which you experience another death. Christ's resurrection body was immortal, to die no more.
- Resurrection is also distinct from Enlightenment, or Nirvana, the kind of thing a Hindu or Buddhist would hope for at death: a loss of personal individuality and a reabsorption into the One, the All. The risen Jesus is a distinct, individual person with a body.
- Resurrection is also distinct from translation or assumption into heaven. Assumption is a Jewish notion; it happened to Enoch and Elijah, and perhaps to Moses. Catholics believe it happened to Mary. But Jesus was not brought from earth to heaven by Resurrection but from the realm of the dead back to the earth.
- Resurrection is also distinct from a vision. Whether a vision is sent by God, by your own unconscious or by evil spirits, a vision remains purely spiritual and subjective: it is in your psyche. But Jesus' resurrection body was seen in public by many at the same time. He was touched. He ate.

Following is a list of possibilities concerning the Resurrection:

**Jesus Didn't Die .....He wasn't dead but only wounded (Swoon Theory)**

Jesus could not have survived crucifixion. Roman procedures were very careful to eliminate that possibility. Roman law even laid the death penalty on any soldier who let a capital prisoner escape in any way, including by bungling a crucifixion.

**Jesus Died ..... Jesus didn't Rise ..... The apostles were deceivers (Conspiracy Theory)**

Why couldn't the disciples have made up the whole story? There could be no possible motive for such a lie. Lies are told for some selfish advantage. What advantage did the "conspirators" derive from their "lie"? They were hated, scorned, persecuted, excommunicated, imprisoned, tortured, exiled, crucified, boiled alive, roasted, beheaded and fed to lions – hardly a catalog of benefits for telling a lie.

**Jesus Died ..... Jesus didn't Rise ..... The apostles were deceived (Hallucination Theory)**

There were too many witnesses. Hallucinations are private, individual, and subjective. Christ appeared to Mary Magdalen, to the disciples, to the two disciples at Emmaus, to the fisherman on the shore, to James (his cousin) and even to 500 people at once. Hallucinations usually last a few seconds or minutes, rarely hours. Did this hallucination last for forty days?

**Jesus Died ..... Jesus didn't Rise ..... The apostles were myth makers (Myth Theory)**

The style of the Gospels is radically and clearly different from the style of all myths. There are no overblown, spectacular, childishly exaggerated events. Nothing is arbitrary. Everything fits in. Psychological depth is at a maximum. In a myth it is at a minimum.

Furthermore, the Gospels report that the first witnesses of the Resurrection were women. In first century Judaism, women had low social status and no legal right to serve as witnesses. If the empty tomb were an invented legend, its inventors surely would not have had it discovered by women, whose testimony was considered worthless. If, on the other hand, the writers were simply reporting what they saw, they would have to tell the truth, however socially and legally inconvenient.

**Jesus Died ..... Jesus Rose from the Dead.....Christianity**

Interesting to note that Islam believes that Jesus did not die (was not crucified) but was taken up to heaven and Judaism believes he was crucified and died, but didn't rise, the apostles stole the body and made up the story of the resurrection. Islam denies the death of Jesus, Judaism denies the resurrection and Christianity affirms both.

*(Handbook of Catholic Apologetics by Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli)*