

RUMINATIONS OF A FORMER HEATHEN

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Resurrection

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The biggest drawback of life is death. Death is just horrible. Why be alive at all? Why be born? If you are going to die at some point after birth, what's the sense in being born, why be born at all? A short life full of trouble and then death? Give me a break. Even the so-called "purpose driven life" seems meaningless. You live your life with purpose, so what? You still have to die. The only hope we have is that the resurrection of Christ was a real event, something that really happened. The whole big deal is that Jesus really came back from the dead. Because if he did, then everything he said is true, eternal life awaits, there is another world, our lives are not just a taste of something that will soon fade away. The best purpose in life becomes spreading the Good News. Unlike any other purpose, this purpose has eternal consequence.

When Jesus gave himself up to death, he entered Satan's trap, he entered into Satan's grip. That grip had been insurmountable until then; the grip of death had always been the ultimate trap. Nobody, on his own, had ever escaped before. Our adversary, the accuser of the brethren, figured that Jesus would not escape either and this is proven by the fact that he did not try to stop the death of Jesus but instead instigated it and facilitated it. If our adversary had really thought Jesus would come back from the dead, he would have worked very hard to prevent his death. Because the death of Jesus is the atonement for sin, he is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. His death would have created the way out of damnation; he would have made the way of escape, he would have plucked the keys to the locks from Satan's grip. That would not have been to Satan's enjoyment, and yet, that is precisely what happened. Jesus ripped the keys away from Satan and came out of that realm with a bunch of people in tow. Jesus is God and Jesus coming back from the dead would, and did, take the power away from the accuser and from everybody else. His resurrection proves that he was the Lamb of the Atonement. The power of Satan, which is death, became disputable. Death became no longer the inevitable end. We can take refuge in Jesus, and there is not a thing our enemy can do about it. When Jesus came back from the dead the clergy of that day lost, the Romans lost and, most important of all, our adversary lost. Everybody lost, except God and those who hang on to him for dear life. Were people saved before Jesus? Oh, yes, absolutely. But

salvation has always been by a blood sacrifice. From the covering of animal skins God made for Adam and Eve (some animal had to be killed), through Abel and his offering of a lamb, through Noah loading more clean than unclean animals in the ark (the clean animals were for sacrifice), through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, until the time God put it in writing and it fell to Moses to codify, there has never been a time when the price for sin was not death and there has never been a time when there was not a blood sacrifice to atone for sin. God has given us a way out from the beginning of time. The life of the flesh is in the blood and without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. Were people saved before Jesus? Oh, sure, they didn't know him as we know him today, but they trusted God to provide them with a saviour, a rescuer from death.

At one point it appears that Satan might have had a misgiving or two regarding Jesus. Nobody can say he was totally slack. He tried in the person of Peter to dissuade Jesus from going to the cross. The effort was rather feeble, his murderous lust to kill Jesus was much more intense, and that he implanted in Judas.

The resurrection of Jesus is not the only account in the Bible of someone who became alive after he had been dead. Both Elijah and Elisha resurrected someone who had been dead. Jesus resurrected Lazarus. In the cases of both Elijah and Elisha God gave them, temporarily, the power of life, they applied it and transmitted it to those whom they brought back to life. The case of Jesus is different because his power of life was not temporary. He had, has, the power of life in himself. Of course to believe that, one would have to believe that what the Bible says is true. If you believe the Bible you take what it says at face value, if that's what it says, that's what it is. If you don't believe the Bible, it's all fables, stories many times retold and what it says is not what it is.

But, in the history of the whole world, no one has ever come back from the dead on his own. The resurrection of someone who was dead, dead-dead, morto, finito, kaput to the point of stinking, has never been observed.

I tell you, it's hard to make me shut up when I start on this. I have looked at this thing backwards and forwards. In a recent letter I mentioned that, once in a while, during meditation, you would get a jolt, a sudden sensation that you are really talking to God. But how do you get to that level of belief? That you are really talking to God? Where is the firm footing to stand on? It can't just be a sensation, something you pick up with your

senses. Senses are not reliable enough, there has to be some objective information, something solid that reason can grab. Where is the handle, the thing I can hang on to that won't break? Where is that point where I can say, if this thing is true, then, all those other things are also true? There has to be something solid, something rational, something more than just saying: "The Bible says..." I can give you lots of Bible verses that testify of God and the resurrection of Christ. But, is it possible to make someone believe in God by quoting Bible verses? Maybe, but as a former heathen myself I can tell you that you would not have caught me with that. I was a mocker, I sat on the seat of the scornful. Oh, how I despised him! I thought I knew important things.

What is there, then, outside of the Bible that presents a real problem to those who do not believe that the Bible is the word of God? The resurrection of Christ is this problem. I have read, I have listened, I have watched. I have read history books, I have listened to the despisers of Christ, I have watched many television programs dealing with the Bible and events in it. From the Creation, to the miracles during the Exodus, everything can be debunked (or so they think). Everything in the Torah is allegorical, embellished stories that gave meaning to things people could not explain. They were ignorant people who could not explain how the world came into being so they invented an eternally existing being. They called this imaginary being God, and that's who created everything that there is. Now we are much more knowledgeable and we know that there is no God and everything came out of nothing. The pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire during the Exodus from Egypt, were what was visible of a distant volcano. In the day you would see the smoke of the volcano, at night you would see the light of lava eruption. And so it goes, everything is yea, yea, yea, that's what those people believed or that is the way they portrayed it. But it wasn't like that, it was like this. As far as the heathen is concerned, the miracles described did not happen. Everything can be explained, they say. If there is anything favourable to be said about the Torah of the Bible, it would be that the commandments given there are the height of human ethics. Nowhere is to be found such knowledge of human nature that would see the necessity of warning against certain behaviours harmful to society, such as murder, theft, lying, coveting your neighbours stuff, etc. Many of the heathen acknowledge that the teachings of the Bible are really

good, yet, how could the Bible be so ethical if the events described therein are lies? Because it is one thing to say that the Israelites crossed the Red Sea at the marshy area north of the Red Sea, and quite another to say that there was a wall of water on the right and a wall of water on the left. If they crossed in the marshy area, there was not a wall of water on the right and a wall of water on the left. And that very crucial moment of the crossing of the Red Sea that is referred to over and over in the Old Testament, right after it happened, and tens, and hundreds, even thousands of years later (in the case of Steven before he was stoned) as a real event, is a lie, and every time it is repeated, it is another lie.

Whatever, as we say in California. Nevertheless, there is something very curious about one particular event. That event is the resurrection of Christ. There is a strange silence coming from that period of history. Heathen historians, and many Christian theologians, don't talk much about the resurrection. They talk about Christ, his deeds, his wonderful teachings, his death at the hands of the Romans. The general conclusion is that, on account of his teachings, Jesus was a revolutionary and the Romans felt compelled to kill him. A wonderful man unjustly killed, blah, blah, blah. Then they jump forward to the time of Constantine who declared Christianity legal and the flourishing of the religion. From the death of Jesus at the hand of the Romans, the heathen jump to the time when Christianity became legal, more than three hundred years later. But there is this weird silence about the resurrection. The resurrection is not acknowledged, but at the same time, it is not challenged. The church is not much better. They talk about "the power of the resurrection," but that power many times translates into how to make more money, or how to get rid of a particular habit. It's almost like there is no seriousness to the significance of the resurrection of Christ. The reason the heathen want to see Christ as the victim of a political struggle that threatened the Romans, is that otherwise they would have to examine the motives of those who accused Jesus of malfeasance. The reason the clergy had for wanting to kill Jesus is that Jesus claimed to be God. They wanted to kill him for blasphemy so ,since they did not have the power to put him to death, they threatened Pilate with telling Caesar that Pilate was accepting the presence of someone whom the people called King. Pilate was threatened with lack of allegiance to Caesar. Pilate could not understand why the Jews wanted to kill him. What hath he done? (More to Come).