

András Gromon

On the pretext of the Turin Shroud

The resurrection of Christ in the mirror of God's existence and charity

Something **must have** happened between Good Friday and Pentecost; an event so elementary as to turn the disciples' perception of Good Friday to its opposite; an event that prevented Jesus' case from breaking down and granted it a new hope. This event is called Easter, i.e. Jesus' „resurrection”.

The resurrection may have essentially taken place *in one of the following three ways*.

(1) According to *the traditional teaching of the Church*, Jesus died on the cross but three days later God raised him from his death in a glorious body belonging both to this natural world and to the transcendence, since he was capable of moving at will both in this and in the transcendental world.

(2) According to *the psychological interpretation*, Jesus died on the cross and remained dead physically, (whatever happened to him spiritually in the transcendental world is irrelevant in this respect), and he „resurrected” only in the „mind” or „soul” of his disciples, i.e. they became convinced, in any way soever, that Jesus lived (in the transcendence).

(3) According to *the apparent death theory*, Jesus did not die on the cross but fell into a deep coma, regained consciousness in the rock grave, then he encountered with his disciples in his earthly, physical reality, and having recovered gradually he met them repeatedly and he could continue teaching them.

In my opinion, *the psychological interpretation* is psychologically unsuitable to explain the fundamental changes that took place not only in the mind of the disciples, but also through the disciples and with the disciples after Easter, i.e. what we call the birth and evolution of the Church. *The apparent death theory* cannot be excluded but it is hard to confirm and undoubtedly has some vulnerable points. „Proving” *the traditional teaching of the Church*, or either of the other two, is equally impossible, and it does not pose less difficult philosophical or physical/biological questions to us. – Thus, I claim that based on our present knowledge, *philosophical, psychological, and scientific* methods **do not enable us to decide** which one of the three theories is correct. (The Turin shroud is used by some to prove that Jesus did not die on the cross, while others maintain that the shroud provides „evidence” for his death.)

Let us now approach this question in a fourth way, i.e. *theologically*, applying only three axioms: (1) We presume that God does exist, and his essence is absolute love. (2) We presume that Jesus resurrected according the traditional teaching of the Church. (3) We presume that historical facts (e.g. the crusades) are real facts.

Based on the above considerations, how could we hypothesize (*with a sound mind and a loving heart*), or with other words: **is it likely that the God of absolute love would stage an historically unprecedented intervention into the course of history, i.e. that God raises Jesus of Nazareth, his „only Son”, from the dead (in a special way and with special consequences), however,**

- **God himself** had previously delivered Jesus (for whatever reason and purpose) to the most horrific sufferings (cf. Mk 9:31 παραδίδοται [passivum divinum], Jn 3:16 τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, Acts 2:23 τοῦτον τῇ ὀρισμένη βουλῇ καὶ προγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ ἔκδοτον, Rom 8:32 ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πάντων παρέδωκεν αὐτόν, 1Jn 4:10 ἀπέστειλεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἰλασμόν);
- God keeps his unique, decisive, and glorious intervention *in utmost secrecy*, especially from his enemies, who are in the greatest need of knowing it, but at the same time he expects humble acceptance of this secret from everyone;
- God makes his intervention, which cannot be experienced or proved but only „faithfully accepted”, *the centre of history* and the ultimate and conclusive criterion of „true faith” (and perhaps also the criterion of salvation);
- God is not able and/or willing to care for the effective maintenance of *the moral message* of Jesus (whom he resurrected and *thus* „justified”!), though he sustains the belief in his *extraordinary* intervention (by fire and sword!) throughout history.
- God is not able and/or willing to secure that *the „proper course” of history* should proceed according to his original plans: he is not able and/or willing to provide *safe and effective* guidance and landmarks how to live human life humanely;
- God is not able and/or willing to ease the *infinite suffering* of humanity, the subjugation, exploitation, misery, and torturing of billions;
- God is not able and/or willing to prevent his unique intervention from becoming *a source of dreadful hatred and murder* (Judeo-Christian enmity, inquisition, religious wars, etc.)?

Everyone is free to decide whether the dichotomies inherent in the above questions can be solved, and if yes, how. Moreover, we can ask whether we should take the apparent death theory *at least as seriously* as the other two, and what is more: is the apparent death theory not the one that shows *the deepest respect* to God’s transcendence, to the freedom of man, and to the laws of the created world?

Translated from Hungarian by Dániel Bajnok