

Modernism Resurrected: Benedict XVI on the Resurrection

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NOTE: This article first appeared in the April 2011 edition of the Most Holy Trinity Seminary Newsletter, which is sent out free of charge to all seminary benefactors who contribute \$75 or more annually.

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AS I PROMISED in last month's seminary newsletter, I will address Benedict XVI's new book, *Jesus of Nazareth*. There are so many errors to analyze, however, that I will not be able to treat all of them in this article.

I apologize in advance for the burden of many and sometimes lengthy quotations from Ratzinger. He is extremely difficult to understand. Just like all the Modernists, he is seldom clear about what he is saying. For this reason, it is necessary to carefully analyze it. Modernists are also skillful in the art of stating a heresy in a subtle manner, so as to escape censure, and to entice the reader into the heresy without his knowing it. This book is loaded with such luring statements.

I quote Ratzinger for our readers, however, lest anyone say that I am putting words into his mouth, or that my criticisms are based merely on an unfavorable interpretation of him. I provide the texts, therefore, so that the reader can decide if my interpretation and criticism are well founded or not.

Principal Error: A Denial of the Resurrection

The principal error, indeed heresy, of this book is his denial of the Resurrection of Christ.

Now someone might say that I am going too far in this accusation, since Ratzinger professes belief in the Resurrection of Christ. I respond that Ratzinger believes *something* about the Resurrection of Christ, but that he does not believe in **the Catholic dogma** of the Resurrection. For in order that we qualify as Catholics, it is necessary that we accept the dogmas of the Catholic Church according to *the same sense* in which the Church has always understood them.

Saint Pius X explicitly declared this to be so. He prescribed that all those who were to receive the subdiaconate, in preparation to receive the priesthood, swear the *Anti-modernistic Oath*¹ of which this is an excerpt:

1. Ratzinger had to take this oath. Those who fail to observe it are guilty of perjury.

“I accept with sincere belief the doctrine of the faith as handed down to us from the Apostles by the orthodox Fathers, always in the **same sense and with the same interpretation. And I reject absolutely the heretical doctrine of the evolution of dogma**, as passing from one meaning to another and different from the sense in which the Church originally held it.”

Ratzinger’s Ideas on Christ’s Resurrection

The question here is: Does Ratzinger profess belief in the Resurrection *in the sense that the Church originally held it?* We shall see.

Let us first examine the teaching of the Church in the sense in which she originally held it. *The Catechism of the Council of Trent* says, referring to the article of the Apostles’ Creed concerning the Resurrection:

“The meaning of the article is this: Christ the Lord expired on the cross, on Friday at the ninth hour, and was buried on the evening of the same day by His disciples, who with the permission of the governor, Pilate, laid the body of the Lord, taken down from the cross, in a new tomb, situated in a garden near at hand. Early in the morning of the third day after His death, that is, on Sunday, **His soul was reunited to His body**, and thus He who was dead during those three days arose, and returned again to life, from which He had departed when dying.”

1. Not Just a Miracle of a Resuscitated Corpse. Now what does Ratzinger say? On page 243 he states:

“Now it must be acknowledged that if in Jesus’ Resurrection we were dealing simply with the miracle of a resuscitated corpse, it would ultimately be of no concern to us. For it would be no more important than the resuscitation of a clinically dead person through the art of doctors.”

Is Ratzinger crazy? Does he know of any doctors who have resuscitated a body which was tortured, crucified, stabbed in the heart, utterly drained of blood and placed dead in a tomb for forty hours? If he does, could he please provide their telephone numbers? How does he expect a thinking person to take this statement seriously?

Ratzinger continues:

“The miracle of a resuscitated corpse would indicate that Jesus’ Resurrection was equivalent to the raising of the son of the widow of Nain (Lk 7: 11-17), the daughter of Jairus (Mk 5: 22-24, 35-43 and parallel passages), and Lazarus (Jn 11: 1-44). After a more or less short period,

these individuals returned to their former lives, and then at a later point they died definitively.”

Does the reader see with what craftiness Ratzinger denies the physical resurrection of Christ’s body? He ties a physical resurrection to the necessity of dying again, as if it were impossible that Christ could physically rise from the dead, and at the same time have immortality.

Ratzinger somehow finds it impossible that Christ’s corpse be resuscitated by the power of the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, to whom It was hypostatically united even in death, in such a way that it would never be subject to death again. What prevents God from giving immortality to our flesh? Did not Adam and Eve have immortality before the Fall? Does not Our Lady’s body have immortality? If Ratzinger is saying this about Our Lord’s body, I can only imagine what he would say about Our Lady’s Assumption into heaven.

2. An Evolutionary Leap. So what happened on Easter Sunday? Ratzinger:

“Therefore the Resurrection of Jesus is not an isolated event that we could set aside as something limited to the past, but constitutes an “evolutionary leap” (to draw an analogy, albeit one that is easily misunderstood).” (page 244) A little later he continues: “The Resurrection accounts certainly speak of something outside of our world of experience. They speak of something new, something unprecedented — a new dimension of reality that is revealed.”

Ratzinger develops this theme of “new manner of human existence” in the pages that follow. Is he merely referring to the fact that Our Lord’s risen body had certain supernatural qualities? If so, then what he is saying is completely orthodox. This does not seem to be the case however, since according to the Catholic dogma, Our Lord’s body, despite these qualities, is still a natural human body vivified by a natural human soul.

3. The Mere Appearance of a Resuscitated Corpse. We see Ratzinger’s departure from Catholic doctrine when he speaks about Our Lord’s appearances after the Resurrection. On page 263 he asks:

“How are we to picture to ourselves the appearances of the Risen One, who had not returned to normal human life, but had passed over into a new manner of human existence?”

Ratzinger reduces one of these appearances to *light*. He says that Christ’s apparition to Saint Paul was merely light:

“The Risen Lord, whose essence is light, speaks as a man with Paul in Paul’s own language.” (page 265)

He says, however, that the other appearances of Christ are

different in nature from that to Saint Paul.

“His presence is entirely physical, yet he is not bound by physical laws, by the laws of space and time.”

By “physical,” does Ratzinger mean a resuscitated corpse, body and soul?

No, he means a mere *appearance* of such a thing. On page 267, he says that

“A help toward understanding the mysterious appearances of the risen Jesus can, I think, be provided by the theophanies of the Old Testament.”

What are the theophanies of the Old Testament? They are the appearances of God and of angels to certain persons in the Old Testament. God appeared to Abraham (Genesis XVIII: 1-33), an angel appears to Josue (Josue V: 13-15), to Gideon (Judges VI: 11-24), and to Samson (Judges XIII).

Catholic theologians say that in all of these cases, and in others of the Old Testament, these appearances were done by *angels who obviously were not truly men*, as they appeared to be, but through some unknown physical event or process, managed to *look* like men.²

4. Mythological Language. After citing these theophanies, Ratzinger says:

“The mythological language expresses, on the one hand, the Lord’s closeness, as he reveals himself in human form, and, on the other hand, his otherness, as he stands outside the laws of material existence.” (page 267-268)

Mythological? Is Sacred Scripture mythological? Mythological means “fairy tales.” This sentence of Ratzinger is very revealing, for if we are to consider the work of angels appearing as men as something mythological, then what shall we say of a God made man who rises from the dead and appears to His disciples? How does such an extraordinary event escape the realm of the mythological?

Ratzinger assures us, however, that these “mythological theophanies” of the Old Testament are merely an analogy, a comparison. The difference, he says, is that

“the encounters with the risen Lord are not just interior events or mystical experiences — they are real encounters with the living one who is now embodied in a new way and remains embodied.”

5. Jesus “does not come from the realm of the dead.”

But our fundamental question is always: Was the physical body of Jesus in the tomb resuscitated by the infusion of his physical

2. Cornelius à Lapide, the famous Jesuit commentator of the seventeenth century, speculated that this was accomplished through the condensation of air, which is an interesting theory.

soul, by the power of God? For this is the Catholic doctrine.

Ratzinger says:

“Jesus, however, does not come from the realm of the dead, which he has definitively left behind: on the contrary, he comes from the realm of pure life, from God...”

He does not come from the realm of the dead? Does not the creed say that He rose *from the dead*? Did He not visit the dead when He descended into hell, also an article of our creed?

Ratzinger’s Denial of the Catholic Sense of the Dogma.

It is easy to see that Ratzinger does not believe the Catholic dogma.

There is nothing difficult about the Catholic dogma to him who has faith in the divinity of Christ: that the Second Person of the Trinity infused again into the dead body of Christ the soul which had been infused in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

But Ratzinger squirms and writhes with this explanation, this dogma. He is constantly trying to substitute something, in extremely obscure and obtuse language, that preserves a “resurrection” without a resuscitated corpse.

1. St. Luke’s “Contradictions.” So despite his assurance that Christ is “embodied” (page 268), he again shows his revulsion for the Catholic dogma by reacting to St. Luke’s account of our risen Lord’s eating a fish (Luke XXIV: 42):

“Most exegetes [Scripture scholars] take the view that Luke is exaggerating here in his apologetic zeal, that a statement of this kind seems to draw Jesus back to the empirical physicality that had been transcended by the Resurrection. Thus Luke ends up contradicting his own narrative, in which Jesus appears suddenly in the midst of the disciples in a physicality that is no longer subject to the laws of space and time.” (page 269)

This last statement is extremely revealing of Ratzinger’s faithlessness.

- In the first place he accuses Saint Luke of exaggeration and of contradicting himself, thereby denying the fact that Sacred Scripture can contain no error, because it is inspired by the Holy Ghost, and is the word of God.

- Secondly, he reveals his interior disgust for any thought of Christ’s having a true physical, human body, albeit glorified. Eating a fish is just too “physical” for Ratzinger. Did it ever occur to him, as it has occurred to Catholic commentators, that He ate the fish *precisely in order to prove* His physicality, the very fact that He had a true human body?

2. “New Dimension” of Human Existence. On page 274, Ratzinger summarizes:

“...we could regard the Resurrection as something akin to a radical ‘evolutionary leap’, in which a new dimension of life emerges, a new dimension of human existence.”

Hence he compares it to a gorilla’s evolutionary leap into manhood, which is perfectly ridiculous. When the Council of Nicea composed the creed which we recite at Mass, did the Council Fathers in 325 A.D. have in mind, when they said that Christ rose from the dead, that He was taking an evolutionary leap as the gorillas supposedly did when they became human beings? Are we supposed to believe such a crazy thing?

3. An Essentially Different Christ after the Resurrection. Ratzinger continues:

“Essential, then, is the fact that Jesus’ Resurrection was not just about some deceased individual coming back to life at a certain point, but that an ontological leap occurred, one that touches being as such, opening up a dimension that affects us all, creating for all of us a new space of life, a new space of being in union with God.” (page 274)

An ontological leap that affects being as such? These are strong words, for they mean that Christ’s Resurrection made Him something essentially different from what He was before His Resurrection. But He was truly man before His Resurrection. According to Ratzinger, he has taken a leap into being something new, something different.

This is an evil, heretical doctrine which destroys the true Resurrection of Christ. For if He is something different from what He was before, if He does not have the same body, blood, and soul which He had before His death, then He is not true man, and He did not truly rise.

One wonders just what kind of “thing” Ratzinger’s risen Christ is. If He does not have the very same body which He had before He died, then what kind of “embodiment” does He have? What is it? In other words, is the Sacred Heart of Jesus a truly human heart, the same that was pierced by the lance?

4. Not the “Same Kind of Historical Event.” Ratzinger confirms my analysis when he says on page 275:

“In this sense, it follows that the Resurrection is not the same kind of historical event as the birth or crucifixion of Jesus. It is something new, a new type of event.”

The birth and crucifixion of Jesus, however, were verifiable, physical, historical events which took place in a determined place and at a determined time. Ratzinger excludes the Resurrection of Christ from events such as these.

In *Introduction to Christianity*,³ written when he was still a

3. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004. (Originally written in 1968)

radical theologian sporting a suit and tie, Ratzinger more explicitly excludes the Resurrection of Christ as a historical fact:

“Given the foregoing considerations, it goes without saying that the life of him who has risen from the dead is not once again *bios*, the bio-logical form of our mortal life within history; it is *zoe*, new different, definitive life; life that has stepped beyond the mortal realm of *bios* and history.”

For those who may not understand what he is saying here, let me explain. Ratzinger distinguishes between *bios*, which is one Greek word for life, and *zoe*, another Greek word for life. For him, *bios* refers to life as we know it here, subject to corruption; *zoe* for him is a definitive, immortal life, not subject to corruption. His error does not consist in a distinction of two different ways of living, but in contending that Our Lord’s Resurrection is something which is *outside of history*, i.e., something of the purely spiritual and supernatural order which is not verifiable by ordinary sense experiences.

In other words, the Resurrection is not a historical fact.

In response to Ratzinger, I cite Saint Pius X, who condemned this statement in his Motu Proprio *Lamentabili* of 1907:

“The resurrection of the Savior is not properly a fact of the historical order, but a fact of the purely supernatural order, neither demonstrated nor demonstrable, and which the Christian conscience gradually derived from other sources.” (no. 36)

“Faith in the resurrection of Christ was from the beginning not so much of the fact of the resurrection itself, as of the immortal life of Christ with God.” (no. 37)

How Ratzinger’s Denial of the Resurrection Affects Other Dogmas.

Ratzinger’s inability to think of Christ’s Resurrection as a reunion of His body and soul, which is the Catholic dogma, has an effect on what he thinks about the Holy Eucharist and upon the general resurrection from the dead.

1. Transubstantiation. Repeatedly Ratzinger has made the statement, regarding the Eucharist, that “Christ is in the bread.” This is a heretical statement, because there is no bread according to Catholic dogma. The whole substance of the bread is changed into the whole substance of the Body of Christ.

But given Ratzinger’s idea about the resurrected Christ, it is easy to see how he cannot believe in transubstantiation, since what rose from the dead is not the same thing as Christ’s body and blood at the Last Supper. It took an evolutionary leap into a new dimension. (I wish *Ratzinger* would take an evolutionary leap into a new dimension...)

2. General Resurrection from the Dead. Likewise Ratz-

inger denies the dogma of the general resurrection from the dead. In *Introduction to Christianity*, he says:

“It now becomes clear that the real heart of faith in the resurrection does not consist at all in the idea of the restoration of bodies.” (page 349)

Referring to the biblical pronouncements concerning the general resurrection, he says:

“Their essential content is not the conception of a restoration of bodies to souls after a long interval...” (page 353)

“This resurrection [of the body] would also imply — or so it seems at any rate — a new heaven and a new earth; it would require immortal bodies needing no sustenance and a completely different condition of matter. But is this not all completely absurd, quite contrary to our understanding of matter and its modes of behavior, and therefore hopelessly mythological?” (page 348)

Really? St. Peter did not find the idea of a new heaven and earth “completely absurd,” as Ratzinger does, for he says in his Second Epistle:

“Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of the Lord, by which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with the burning heat? But we look for new heavens and a new earth according to his promises, in which justice dwelleth.” (III: 12-13)

What is the teaching of the Catholic Church? It does not find the resurrection of the body to be “hopelessly mythological.” The Second Council of Lyons, held in 1274, teaches:

“The same most holy Roman Church firmly believes and firmly declares that on the day of judgement all men will be brought together with their bodies before the tribunal of Christ to render an account of their own deeds.”

This is solemn magisterium. The denial of it would be heresy. You do the logic.

3. The Teaching of Saint Paul. Saint Paul intimately links the reality of our own resurrection with that of the Resurrection of Christ:

“Now if Christ be preached, that he arose again from the dead, how do some among you say, that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen again. And if Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God: because we have given testimony against God, that he hath raised up Christ; whom he hath not raised

up, if the dead rise not again. For if the dead rise not again, neither is Christ risen again. And if Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins.” (I Cor. XV: 12-17)

Saint Paul’s argument is: If there is no general resurrection from the dead, then Christ did not rise. But if Christ did not rise, then there is no reason for our faith. But if our faith is in vain, then we are still in our sins. Furthermore our preaching is vain, and we are false witnesses of God because we have given testimony against God.

So who is the false witness here? St. Paul and the Catholic Church, which teaches the true doctrine of the Resurrection, i.e., the restoration of His soul to His dead body, or Ratzinger, who teaches that Christ’s Resurrection is an evolutionary leap into a new dimension, and who denies the restoration of our bodies after death? Whose preaching is vain? That of St. Paul and the Catholic Church, or Ratzinger’s? With whom do we side? With Saint Peter and Saint Paul and the solemn teaching of the Catholic Church? Or with Ratzinger?

4. The Separated Soul after Death. To further understand Ratzinger's mind about both the Resurrection of Christ and the general resurrection from the dead, we must understand that he does not believe in the soul separated from the body: On page 351 of *Introduction to Christianity* he states:

“...the idea of the *anima separata* (the “separated soul” of Scholastic theology) has in the last analysis become obsolete.”

Notice how he consigns a dogma of faith, namely the immortality of the soul separated from the body, to a mere concoction of “scholastic theology” which is “obsolete.”

Is it therefore obsolete to pray for the souls in Purgatory, or to pray to the saints in heaven not yet reunited to their bodies?

We see, therefore, that Ratzinger cannot even *conceive* of the Catholic dogma of Christ’s human soul being reunited to His body at the Resurrection. For him, there is no separated soul of Christ.

Shall we say that Our Blessed Lady was using obsolete scholastic theology when she said: *My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior?*”

A Review of Ratzinger's Ideas on the Resurrection

Let us stop briefly to review the points which Ratzinger makes concerning the Resurrection. Unlike Catholic theologians, who are perfectly clear in their presentations, Modernists present a hodgepodge of gobbledygook which, in my opinion, is purposely obscure, both for the sake of hiding heresy, and for the sake of appearing scholarly by using large, manufactured, and foreign words which they never define.

Here is what he has said concerning the Resurrection of

Christ:

- It is not the resuscitation of a corpse.
- It is an evolutionary leap into a new dimension of human existence.
- It is not a historical event like the birth of Christ or His crucifixion.
- It is outside of space and time, i.e., it did not happen in a specific place and at a specific time, and is something which cannot be sensed by the senses.⁴
- Our Lord's eating of the fish was an exaggeration of St. Luke, in which he contradicts himself.
- The appearance of Christ to St. Paul was "light."
- The appearances of Christ to the other disciples are "real encounters with the living one who is now embodied in a new way."
- The witnesses to the Resurrection of Christ "experienced a real encounter, coming to them from outside, with something entirely new and unforeseen, namely the self-revelation and verbal communication of the risen Christ." (p. 275)

What Is Wrong with the Traditional Explanation?

St. Pius X remarked in his encyclical *Pascendi* that the Modernists approach Sacred Scripture as if no one has ever scrutinized these books before them, and as if no one ever gave an adequate interpretation of them.⁵

The traditional teaching concerning Christ's Resurrection is so perfectly clear: His soul was reunited to His body in the tomb. He rose by His own power, and He had a glorified body. Furthermore, being God, He was able to do many things that even an ordinary glorified body could not do. For example, his penetration of walls was by divine power, and not in virtue of the glorified body.

Is there mystery in the Resurrection? Of course. We do not understand everything about the glorified body. The mind illumined by faith is perfectly satisfied, however, by what the Church has always taught. The Catholic understands by faith, and even by common sense, that God knows more about nuclear physics and chemistry than modern man does, and that God knows the

4. "The Resurrection accounts certainly speak of something outside of our world of experience." (page 246-247)

5. "To hear them talk about their works on the Sacred Books, in which they have been able to discover so much that is defective, one would imagine that before them nobody ever even glanced through the pages of Scripture, whereas the truth is that a whole multitude of Doctors, infinitely superior to them in genius, in erudition, in sanctity, have sifted the Sacred Books in every way, and so far from finding imperfections in them, have thanked God more and more the deeper they have gone into them, for His divine bounty in having vouchsafed to speak thus to men. Unfortunately, these great Doctors did not enjoy the same aids to study that are possessed by the Modernists for their guide and rule, - a philosophy borrowed from the negation of God, and a criterion which consists of themselves." — *Pascendi*, no. 34.

capabilities of matter much more than we. Indeed His knowledge is infinite, since He is the Creator of these things.

But the Modernist is at heart a non-believer. He is a rationalist. He wants to transform the Church into something which will be acceptable to rationalists, agreeable to all of the Voltaires of this world.

So Ratzinger has abandoned the notion of Christ's soul's return to His body and revivifying of His corpse. He has replaced it with an evolutionary leap into a new dimension of human existence, thereby marrying Catholic theology to the false, absurd, and already outmoded and passé Darwinism. Evolutionism is a moldy and smelly leftover in a nineteenth century icebox (whose ice has long since melted) which Ratzinger has placed in the microwave and has served up to us in the form of his Resurrection theology.

Ratzinger rejects scholastic philosophy⁶ — that of St. Thomas Aquinas — and has explained the Resurrection in the blurry, imprecise, undefined and ethereal world of modern philosophy, which is concerned only with “experience.” So the Resurrection is an “experience,” and “encounter from without.”

Like all Modernists, Ratzinger has always been obsessed with making Catholicism palatable to “modern man.” For this reason, in his early years as a Modernist scholar, he mocked the idea of making visits to the Blessed Sacrament. He says in his work entitled *Die Sacramentale Begründung der Christlichen Existenz* (1966):

“Eucharistic devotion such as is noted in the silent visit by the devout in church must not be thought of as a conversation with God. This would assume that God was present there locally and in a confined way. To justify such an assertion shows a lack of understanding of the Christological mysteries of the very concept of God. This is repugnant to the serious thinking of the man who knows about the omnipresence of God. **To go to church on the ground that one can visit God who is present there is a senseless act which modern man rightfully rejects.**”

Likewise the traditional explanation of the resuscitated body of Christ is something modern man, supposedly, cannot bear.

The Destruction of Christ's Principal Miracle.

All theologians teach that Christ's resurrection from the dead is the greatest of all His miracles. Indeed, if He had performed no other, the Resurrection would have been sufficient to prove His

6. “For scholastic philosophy and theology they [the Modernists] have only ridicule and contempt. Whether it is ignorance or fear, or both, that inspires this conduct in them, certain it is that the passion for novelty is always united in them with hatred of scholasticism, and there is no surer sign that a man is on the way to Modernism than when he begins to show his dislike for this system.” — St. Pius X in *Pascendi*, no. 42.

divinity and the truth of His religion. Conversely, if He had not risen from the dead, the religion which he preached would lack the divine guarantee, for death would have been victorious over Him. He would not be the true Savior of mankind.

Consequently what is central to the Church's apologetical argument — the defense of her credibility as the single true religion of God — is the Resurrection of Christ. In order that it be a valid argument for the non-believer, it is necessary that Christ's Resurrection be a historical and verifiable fact, and not a "faith experience."

Ratzinger's rejection of the resuscitated corpse, and his descriptions of the risen body of Christ as belonging to "another dimension," an "ontological leap," etc., place the Resurrection outside of the reach of space and time (his own words), and consequently of normal human history itself.

The well known eminent theologian and ardent anti-Modernist Father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange O.P., writing nearly a hundred years ago, said this:

"Among the modernists, *E. Le Roy* [an ardent disciple of Henri Bergson, a famous evolutionist] proposed a similar theory, for he denied the 'reanimation of the corpse' as impossible, and taught that Christ rose in a certain sense, inasmuch as He did not cease to act after His death, and to the extent that His soul in another life retained a certain virtual matter."

This description sounds remarkably close to what Ratzinger says.

THUS OUR analysis of Ratzinger's destruction of Christ's principal miracle, the Resurrection.

There is much more in Benedict XVI's *Jesus of Nazareth* to discuss, notably what he says about the Jews' responsibility for the death of Christ, the Church's obligation to convert the Jews, and the inerrancy of Sacred Scripture. These we will address in future newsletters.

Most Holy Trinity Seminary Newsletter
April 2011