

# THE LOS ANGELES UNIVERSITY CATHEDRAL

Dr. Gene Scott, Pastor/Teacher

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## THE RESURRECTION

by Dr. w. euGENE SCOTT (Ph.D., Stanford University)

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I lost my faith, in college. I lost it because of a subtle psychological pressure. It was all right to believe in Jesus as a good and wise teacher, and elevate Him on an equal plane with Mohammed, who founded the Islamic faith, with Gautama Buddha, who was a prince of India and founded Buddhism, with Confucius of China (more of a political philosopher, really) whose sayings affect so much of that portion of the world—in short, with any respectable founder of a religion.

I could put Jesus in that category and dispense with him as a “good and wise teacher,” and be accepted—get my intellectual wings—but to hold to the belief that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, super-natural... Parenthetically, I might say there is a current hour-long advertisement for tape sales, no matter how slick they



Dr. Gene Scott

disguise it, telling you the origin of all religions.

And it's really “intelligent” because it starts in Egypt, and they never go to Sumer where the religions started that flowed to Egypt (and they never got to Babylon), and there is no one with any sense that denies the influence of Egypt on both the Hebrews and the Greeks. Cyrus Gordon settled that.

But some portly little guy sits there, and some suave, slick-coifed tamed TV evangelist-looking guy sits there, and they tell you how all religions started, and then they make an oblique reference to the 16 crucified saviors—which can't be found in the implication of the analogy drawn.

And forever you have this ecumenical approach to religion—the religion of no religion—because all religions have “the same root.” That subtly comes at you as though you are not intelligent until you release this “primitive” attitude toward Christ as the supernatural, divine Son of God and accept Him as but another expression and another founder in the stream of common religiousness, as a “good and wise teacher.”

The papers recently had some new guy writing about Jesus as a dumb peasant with social revolutionary ideas, but it is speculation drawn upon analogous peasant societies rather than documented fact.

The only problem with the intellectual substitute for a faith in Christ, namely a “good and wise teacher,” is

that **He can't be either one unless He is both.**

To be good, you have to tell what's true. You can be insane, you can be a nut, and honestly believe something that's dead wrong, and be good—but not wise. To be wise, you've got to be right; to be good, you've got to be honest, and their Jesus could be good but not wise, wise but not good, but not both. Why?

In any source that you have for Jesus in history, if you are going to call Him good and wise, you are going to go to His sayings and you are going to go to His actions. I don't care whether you go to the Gospels, for that is where most of the opponents go as they hunt and peck and pull certain verses out, and highlight them in red on television.

You can go behind the Gospels. There is a hypothetical “Q” document. One of the early church fathers said that Matthew wrote down the sayings of Christ as he travelled with Him, not in Greek but in his native language, Aramaic. We know his Gospel was written most likely at Antioch and written in Greek. This “Sayings of Jesus,” written in Aramaic, may have been the common source that those who can read Greek, and see the change in style, recognize as the source used by all three of the Synoptic Gospel writers, Matthew, Mark and Luke.

We know that Mark was written first, because we can see in the

change of style when Matthew and Luke copy Mark, but there is a common source behind all three of them called the hypothetical "Q" document. I don't care if you go to the ancient songs, the earliest fragments—wherever you encounter Jesus doing something or saying something—attached to every one of those records will be a saying by Christ or a projection of a self-image that He has of Himself that precludes calling Him "good and wise" because you will find the following in every source:

### 1. He thought He was perfect.

It doesn't matter whether He was, He **thought** He was. Carlyle says the greatest of all sins is to be conscious of none. There's nothing as despicable as a person who thinks he's never made a mistake. That conscious, self-righteous, perfectionist image is not something we respond to, because the wisdom of mankind combines in the knowledge that nobody's perfect.

Now the issue is not whether He was; we just don't make saints of people who **think** they're perfect. The record of people used by God goes throughout the whole Old Testament—"I am not worthy of the least of Thy mercies—Who am I that I should lead forth the children of Israel?—I am but a child. I cannot speak."

Always the criterion of acceptance by God and acceptance by man is that conscious attitude of imperfection. Holy men are aware of the distance they are from God. There was only one man in the whole kingdom who saw God; in the year King Josiah died, Isaiah was the only man who saw God sitting on a throne on high and lifted up—that means he was above everybody. His first words were: "'Woe is me; I am undone.'"

We just don't make saints of people who think they're perfect—but Jesus thought He was. Everywhere you meet Him, He projects that. He judges other people: "whitened sepulchers;" "strain out a gnat and swallow a camel." He looks

at the most righteous people of the day and puts them down. The reason that no man ought to judge, and anyone who is a judge should have this sensitive conscience, is that it's hard to judge your fellow man because we know way down deep we have the same kinds of faults.

But Jesus never had any sense of imperfection. He changed the Law, saying, "You have heard it said unto you, but behold I say," and then, self-righteously with a consciousness of moral perfection, says, "Think not that I have come to destroy the Law. I am come to fulfill it."

There is one possible exception to that, when the rich young ruler came to Him and said, "Good Master." He stopped him and said, "Why callest thou me good?" Those that want to talk about Jesus not thinking He was perfect point to that verse; they miss the rest of it, because Jesus said to him, "Wait a minute. Don't come and call me good rabbi, good teacher. If you are going to call me good, also recognize that only God can be good, so don't tap the appellation on to me without recognizing that I am also God."

He had that sense of moral perfection; no sense of a moral inadequacy is ever exhibited anywhere in His behavior. He had all authority: "You build on what I say, you build on a rock. You build on anything else, you build on sand. All authority in heaven and earth is given unto me."

Again to point to the other illustration used, He said concerning the law (generations of approval had been placed on it): "You have heard it said unto you, but behold I say..." He pronounced judgement without a flicker.

Now, we don't make saints of people like that. We ask the criteria, "On what do you base this authority?" He based it on Himself: "Behold, I say unto you..."

### 2. Center of the Religious Universe.

He went further and put Himself at the center of the religious universe. Jesus didn't come preaching a doctrine or a truth apart from Him-

self. He said, "I'm the way. I'm the truth. I'm the life. By me if any man enter in... I am the door of the sheepfold. He that hateth not father, mother, wife, children, brother, sister, yea, and his own life also, taketh up his cross and come after me, cannot be My disciple." He made your relationship with Him, putting Him the center of the religious universe, the determinative of all religious benefits.

### 3. He would die, a ransom.

He said something's wrong with the whole world that could only be set right by Him dying, a ransom in the context where they knew exactly what a ransom was. The ransom was what you paid to restore a lost inheritance, to deliver someone destined to death because of their error. It was the price paid to redeem from the consequences of falling short, doing something wrong, losing an inheritance—and the ransom restored you to that which had been lost. He said the whole world was lost, and He came to die and pay the price of ransom, to redeem them.

### 4. He would raise again.

He said He would raise again (there was more than that, but I'm choosing very selectively just a few), that when He died, He would raise from the dead.

Now, if Dr. Craig Lampe (and my admiration for him has been made clear), if he walked up to the podium at the Cathedral and picked up the microphone and said "All authority in heaven and earth is given unto me," I would think, maybe he means he's going to quote, "that into my hands has been delivered this word of God to preach with authority." So I would check that one off, that maybe this is a different Lampe.

And if then he went on and said, "Here I am Father. I have done all you sent me to do. There are no flaws in me, no imperfections. The law doesn't bother me, I have fulfilled it," and started projecting a perfection like Jesus did, I'd start backing up and start looking with sympathy toward Mrs. Lampe. And if

he went on, "Your eternal destiny is dependent upon putting me in the center of your life and making me your master," by then I would have been interrupting. I don't think he would have gotten to what I didn't include here, that he would have me think that he was a denizen of eternity.

And he would stand up here and say, not in spiritual terms but expecting to be believed, "Before Abraham was I was. You know, that guy that came out of Ur; I was there. I saw Satan when he was cast out before Adam was ever born." And then he'd talk about heaven with a familiarity with which we talk about our homes. If I tell you the couch in my home is beige, and you say, "How do you know?," I'm going to think you're crazy.

There is a certain frame of reference of familiarity with your home; that's the frame of reference Jesus projects when He talks about eternity. Matter-of-factly, He says, "I'm going back. I'm going to prepare a mansion for you. And after a while, I'll come back and get you and take you there."

You put people in a nut house that talk like that! And then if Dr. Lampe would say that he was somehow a ransom, I'd lay hands on him, and I'm quite sure his wife would, too.

We don't stop to realize that this is the only kind of Christ who walked around on the stage of history and is the only one you can find. You don't find other religious founders doing this.

Buddha never thought he was perfect; he struggled with the essence of *tanya*, which was their meaning for that corrupt desire that produces sin. He sought the way of the sensual release; he sought the way of the aesthetic yogi, and neither one worked. He came to the eight-fold path that brought him into a trance-like state where he lost conscious identity with this life, called *nirvana*. And when he came out of that state, he offered those who followed him the

eight-fold path, and all he would say is, "It worked for me. Try it; it will work for you."

He never thought all authority was seated in him. Instead, he told his disciples (and it's part of their tri-part basket of scriptures) that he wasn't worthy to lead them. All he left them was the way that worked for him. No assumption of authority seated in him. He never thought he was the center of the religious universe. The way worked. Same with all the others.

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*Jesus can't just be a  
"good and wise teacher"  
unless He was both.  
Given what He said  
about Himself, He  
couldn't be good unless  
He believed all of it, and  
He couldn't be wise  
unless it was all true!*

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Mohammed never thought he was perfect. He was God's—Allah's—prophet. He had visions of eternity that impressed the desert man, but he never claimed to have been there. He never died a ransom for anybody. He had a criteria for authority: God revealed it to him in a vision. Jesus never pointed to a vision like the prophet who would say, "The Lord said..." He said, "I say..."

Confucius did a logical analysis of society, and he pointed to that external analysis as his authority.

None of the other leaders made themselves the center of the religious universe, seated authority on themselves, had a consciousness of perfection about themselves, claimed an identity with authority before and after their temporary stay here on earth. None of these traits attached to the others. That's why you can respect them as founders.

With Jesus, you've got what C. S. Lewis called the "startling alternate." Either He thought these things were true, but was too stupid to know it's impossible for a man to make these claims, and thus He could not be wise, or He was wise in knowing these things weren't true, but was capable of duping His followers because of self-serving motives into believing that about Him, and that makes Him not good. The conclusion is, that those who say He was a "good and wise teacher" reveal they have never really taken the time to encounter the only Christ that ever walked the stage of history.

C. S. Lewis says you have "the startling alternate." You must either view Christ as one who considered Himself of the order of a poached egg, or you take Him for what He says He is, and if He is God, then He is perfect, and authority **does** rest in Him, and He is the center of the religious universe, and He **did** have the qualities necessary to die as a ransom for the whole world. He **did** have a knowledge of eternity, and He **will** raise again.

You can't put Jesus in the "good and wise" bland teacher package and forget about Him. He is either a nut or a fake, or **He is what He claimed to be.**

Well, when I came to that cross-road, I decided I would settle it for myself. The issue revolves around this fact of history. Jesus said, to some who wanted a sign, "I'll give you one." There's only one guaranteed sign on which faith can be built. God has apparently gone beyond this guarantee, but the only sign that God guaranteed to vindicate His truth was the sign of Jonah, interpreted by Jesus to be the death and resurrection of Christ.

At one point in the vast flow of history, a **FACT** emerges. God deigned to move into this tent of human flesh, fulfill the law that it might become incarnate, chose then to die in our place as the price of redemption, namely the fulfilled law that He might raise again and adopt

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us into a family with His new life without the burden of the law, that was but a school teacher to teach us our need of God's delivering power.

That He moved onto the stage of history is the claim of Christianity, and He vindicated Himself with a FACT that can be analyzed.

Now it is a FACT there is no such thing as historic certainty. I did my undergraduate major in history. Historic certainty means every conceivable piece of evidence is there. That which you can conceive as possible evidence must be there to have historic certainty. The moment an event is past, and no more, you have lost the eye-witness ability to see it.

Cameras help, as the Rodney King case shows, but there is an element gone, so all historic certainty by definition is relative. All you can hope for is psychological certainty, where exposure to the relevant facts of history that are available produces a reaction psychologically, and that reaction is impossible not to have.

Any smart attorney knows that in a courtroom, there isn't an attorney that says something and the judge rebukes him, that the attorney knows before he said it that he shouldn't have said it; he wants the jury to hear it. And the judge bawls out the attorney, and he says, "Yes, your honor," and plays his little meek

role. He knows exactly what he is doing. And then the judge pontificaly looks over at the jury and says, "Discard that from your consideration." Okay, BANG! That's about the only way you can discard it; it's in there. And you see and hear and feel, and whatever else the evidence, you have a reaction.

### God vindicated His Son.

Paul comes to Mars Hill; the philosophers are gathered there trying to consider all the gods, so worried they will miss one that they have a monument to the Unknown God. He seizes on that as a lever to talk about Christ. He says, "I'll tell you who the Unknown God is," and

preaches Christ, whom he said God ordained by the resurrection. Paul said if there is no resurrection, our faith is vain, and we are found false witnesses of God, as we have testified of Him that He raised up the Christ.

The first message of the church was the one Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, "This Jesus whom ye know..." And he named the fact that they knew Him crucified; that they also knew. Then he testified of that which they didn't know, "This Jesus hath God raised up of whom we all are witnesses," and he introduced that vindicating fact. Paul says in one of his speeches, "He was seen and He was seen," and he catalogues the witnesses and comes to the cluster he says to above five hundred brothers at once.

In those days, you could assemble eyewitnesses; not today. But like any other historic fact, from who wrote Shakespeare to Julius Caesar's existence, you can look for the FACT of history on which Christianity is based, namely:

**Jesus came out of the tomb.**

And I will say, to set the frame, that if Craig Lampe or Ed Masry or anybody else came in to the Cathedral making the claims Jesus made about themselves, I would offer the suggestion that they should submit to psychoanalysis and go to a hospital—unless I could see a twinkle in their eyes, that they were putting me on—because no mortal man can make these claims.

But if in the claims they said, "Slay me and in three days I'll come out of the tomb and sail off into the blue," and three days later they came out of the tomb and sailed off into the blue, I'd take another look at Dr. Lampe and I'd take another look at Ed. And I don't need anything else as a basis for my faith; I don't need all the fancy philosophic trinitarian doctrines.

If I can find on the stage of history the One whose words I can spend my life researching, who was perfect, the center of all authority,

the center of the religious universe, and all of these things, including having redeemed me, raised and prepared mansions in eternity, that's all the God I need. I could start right there.

**THE ISSUE IS: DID HE COME OUT OF THE TOMB?**

You won't settle that by thinking about it; you research it. Now, to research anything you have to get a foundation in facts. Most people are fuzzy-minded; they argue a resurrection didn't occur because it can't occur, and anybody who says it did must be lying. Any other fact, you research it.

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*Most people are fuzzy-minded; they argue the resurrection didn't occur because it can't occur, and anybody who says it did must be lying. Ask them a few questions, and you'll find they haven't spent 15 hours in their whole lives researching the most important event in history.*

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If you're going to ask, "Did Scott preach this message within an hour on April 19, 1992?" you've got to assume that I was here and preached at all. You've got to assume that the Cathedral exists. You've got to assume that April 19th came and went. We don't discuss that; we take certain things for granted. But before you start arguing whether I preached an hour (or more), let's at least agree that I preached. You don't have to agree whether it was good or bad, but that I was here and my mouth moved and said things. That's known as the frame of reference—what's taken for granted.

And if someone says "Wow, I don't believe you were there!," then

to hell with debating clocks. It's much easier to prove I was here—maybe not all there—but there, than to prove how long I preached, because you don't yet know when I started. Was it the preliminary remarks? Was it the first mark on the board? That's more debatable, but to prove whether I was here at all or not, that's a little easier.

You need to approach the resurrection the same way. There are certain facts that have to be assumed before you discuss the resurrection. One is, did Jesus live at all? Why are we talking about whether He raised if we don't believe He lived? There was a time that was debated; not much anymore. For purposes of today and any meaningful discussion of the resurrection, you've got to at least assume:

**Fact 1. That Jesus lived.**

If you don't believe that... Do you agree that it's probably easier to prove that He lived somewhere sometime than that He died and rose again? Do you agree with that? So give me the easier task.

"Well, I'm not sure He lived, so don't give me that resurrection bit." I have more time to do other things than that. Don't get into any argument about the resurrection with somebody who doesn't believe Jesus lived. That's easy to prove; until that's crossed, don't get to the next one:

**Fact 2. That He was crucified.**

At the instigation of certain Jewish leaders—not all the Jews; they weren't to blame for that; His disciples were Jews—just certain Jewish leaders, at the hands of the Romans. The Romans carried out the execution; Jewish leaders instigated it. Unless you believe that, there's no sense going to the resurrection. The crucifixion's much easier to prove than the resurrection.

**3. That He was considered dead.**

Notice I say *considered* dead, because a lot of people believe He recovered from the grave—resuscitated. He was considered dead: pierced with a sword, taken down

from the cross, taken to a grave. Of course, Holy Blood, Holy Grail comes up with a concoction that He practiced this, and had people take Him to the grave knowing He was going to come out. He practiced on Lazarus first (so goes the theory) but of course Lazarus was stinking before He started practicing, but it's a real nice theory. Some of the theories stretch the brain more than just accepting the resurrection, but at least He was considered dead.

**Fact 4. He was buried in a known, accessible tomb.**

By accessible, I mean you could get to the tomb; you couldn't get in because of the rock and guards, but a known, accessible tomb.

**Fact 5. He was then preached raised.**

I'm at this point not saying He raised, but He was **preached** raised, the tomb was empty, and He ascended. It's important to remember that the whole preachment included: empty tomb; raised from the dead; and ascending into heaven. That's the total message.

Now, if you don't believe that He was preached, I'm doing it today. But He was preached early on; if you don't believe that, that's easier to prove than the resurrection.

**Fact 6. The Jewish leaders were interested in disproving His resurrection.**

Common sense will tell you the Jewish leaders who instigated the crucifixion had more interest in disproving the resurrection than someone 2,000 years removed, considering it intellectually with a lot of skepticism mixed in, because the Jewish leaders' reputations and bread and butter and lives were at stake.

If they instigated His crucifixion, accusing Him of trying to set up a kingdom and accusing Him of blasphemy, and all of a sudden it's true that He raised from the dead, they are going to be looking for new jobs. So common sense says they had more psychological interest in disproving the theory, and would put themselves out a little more than

most people on an Easter Sunday would.

**Fact 7. The disciples were persecuted.**

They were horribly persecuted because of this preaching, starting with those Jewish leaders who first persecuted them—first they called them liars, said they stole it away. The whole Book of Acts tells of the persecution for preaching the resurrection.

Later, centuries later, Christians in general became a target for the evils in the Roman Empire and became scapegoats, and were just punished for other reasons, but every record agrees that the earliest persecutions could have stopped immediately if they would have quit preaching this resurrection message, and the ascension and the miracles attaching to Jesus. That's why they were persecuted, because the Jewish leaders had their reputations at stake. Thus,

**Fact 8. The tomb was empty.**

All this leads to the fact, common sense says, if the Jewish leaders who instigated the crucifixion, having the extra interest because their livelihood was at stake, and if He was buried in a known, accessible tomb, they would have gone immediately to that tomb and discovered the body. Therefore, it is axiomatic that the tomb was empty.

The tomb was meaningless for centuries; many centuries went by. The tomb was lost to history because **there was no body in it**. Then, when the relic period began to grow, people got interested in His tomb, that had had no interest because there was no body in it, and tried to find it.

And the whole church world still fights today over the classical site of the ancient historic churches, and Gordon's tomb that most of the Protestants identify with, just off from the bus station below the escarpment of a rock called "Golgotha" that has an Arab cemetery on top. The fight is because the tomb was lost to history; there was no body in it.

Now, these facts are easier to demonstrate than the resurrection, but unless these facts are accepted, you can't deal with all the theories about the resurrection. For example, the preaching has been so effective that all through the centuries people have come up with theories to explain it. Now, the reason that I do this every Easter is I try to demonstrate that you don't have to park your brains at the door of the church when you come in.

*"Faith cometh by hearing, hearing by the word of God."* You don't just make people believe, but if you expose yourself to evidence, something happens inside and there will be a psychological reaction. My quarrel with people who deny the resurrection and live a life style that pays no attention to it, is that I can ask them 15 questions and find they haven't spent 15 hours of their life looking at it.

If this is true, this is the center of the universe. If this is true, this is the central fact of history. You have to be a fool among all fools of mankind to not think it's worth at least 30 hours of study in your whole life. But there are many intelligent people in the world who have looked and come away convinced. That's why I am doing this. But the preachments are so sincere in their nature. All kinds of theories have been broached, but the theories won't fly if you assume these eight facts.

**Theory 1. The disciples stole the body.**

**Theory 2. The Jewish leaders stole it.**

**Theory 3. The Roman leaders stole it.**

**Theory 4. The women went to the wrong tomb.**

You know, it was dark and they got lost like women walkers—they didn't have women drivers, but women walkers. They went to the wrong tomb, and they believed He rose, and I mean, my God, the screaming and crying out of the garden, "We went and He wasn't there!" They went to the wrong

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tomb; they went to an empty one waiting for somebody else.

**Theory 5. It was all hallucinations.**

Glorified day dreams. They were sincere; they believed that this happened because they had all these hallucinations.

**Theory 6. Resuscitation theory.**

He was crucified and He was considered dead, and He was buried in a known tomb, but He wasn’t dead, and in the coolness of the tomb He revived and came out wrapped in the grave clothes and, thank God, the guards were asleep, and He pushed that rock out of the way—and here comes Frankenstein!

**Theory 7. The disciples lied.**

They made the whole thing up. They’d bet on the wrong horse and they just couldn’t live with it so they made up this whole story and it took them seven weeks to figure it out, and then they told it.

**Theory 8. It’s all true.**

They are telling exactly what they experienced and what they saw. Now, just as you got the “startling alternate” when you consider the only Jesus in history, that He’s either a madman, a nut, a faker, or He’s what He said He was, and that requires a

definition of divinity, you have a “startling alternate” here.

All these theories—not all of them, but most of them—sound good in isolation. The first theory (the disciples stole the body)—the Jewish leaders themselves concocted, but when you take these facts for granted, you are again forced to a “startling alternate.”

I hate—I’ve always hated it when I was doing my degree in history—I hate a self-righteous objective historian: “I’m objective; I take no opinion.” There’s no such thing as a knowledgeable person that doesn’t have an opinion. Knowledge forces an opinion; no exposure to facts keeps you neutral. Knowledge forces an opinion, and when you study the facts, there are only two options:

**OPTION 1: The disciples lied.**

They stole the body (Theory 1), then they obviously lied (Theory 7).

The Jewish leaders stole the body (Theory 2)? These facts preclude that: they were more concerned than anyone to disprove the preachment, so why would they make the tomb empty? And if they had, they would have said, “Wait a minute; we took His body from the tomb.” They couldn’t even think of that story; they

told the one about the disciples, but even if it were tenable, they didn’t just preach an empty tomb and the resurrection.

They preached a seeming Jesus with Whom they partook; they preached the ascension with equal vigor. So even if the Jewish leaders’ stealing the body would explain the empty tomb, they’re still telling the add-ons of the encounters with the resurrected body and the ascension, so they’re still making up a lot of the story—they lied.

Roman leaders took the body (Theory 3)? With the controversies in Jerusalem, with the contacts the Jewish leaders had with the Romans, enabling them to get the crucifixion done, do you not think they would have exposed that fact, that the official Roman government took the body? But even if that explains the empty tomb, it does not alleviate the disciples’ responsibility for preaching a resurrected body that they had encounters with, and the ascension, so they’re still lying.

The women went to the wrong tomb (Theory 4)? It was a known accessible tomb. The Jewish leaders’ interest would have taken them to the known tomb, and all they had to

do to explain the wrong tomb theory was go to the tomb where the body is — and they would have done it.

Hallucinations (Theory 5)? Well, the empty tomb blasts that. If it had been just hallucinations, there would have been a body in the tomb. You have to couple it with spiring the body away. So, they're still lying. Even the Holy Blood, Holy Grail theory requires that they be liars to conspire and carry this out.

Resuscitation (Theory 6)? Well, that Frankenstein coming out of the tomb doesn't quite measure up to the good Jesus that was preached. It might explain the empty tomb, but it doesn't explain the kind of Jesus that they had preached, doesn't explain the ascension—they still made the rest of it up.

So no matter how you look at it, if you assume the eight facts which are much easier to demonstrate than the resurrection, there are only two options, two conclusions, because it boils down to the veracity of the witnesses. That's why I have no respect for those who deny the resurrection and have not read the classic, Sherlock's Trial of the Witnesses. He postulated a courtroom scene where all the witnesses were gathered and subjected to the kind of evidence of an English court.

You are faced with a "startling alternate": either these disciples made the story up to save face and the whole thing is a lie, or:

**OPTION 2: They're telling what they truly experienced as honest men.**

And when we come to that point, the entire Christian faith revolves around: were these disciples who were the witnesses honest men telling what they saw, or conspirators who concocted a lie to save face, and there are four reasons why I cannot believe they were lying:

**Reason 1. Cataclysmic change for the better on the part of the witnesses.**

Everybody agrees Peter was unstable, and with a group he could not be counted on to stand. He fled in

fear and he denied his Lord, he was always in trouble because of his instability. After the resurrection, he is the man that preaches to a mocking mob, he fulfills his destiny to become the Rock, he dies with courage requesting that he be turned upside down because he is not worthy to die in the position of his Master—a cataclysmic change that can be identified to a point in history, and that point in history is where they began to tell this story of the resurrection.

John? He was one of the brothers called "Sons of Thunder." He wanted to call fire down from heaven on everyone that opposed him. He and his brother used their mother to seek the best seat in the kingdom. After they began to tell this story, every scholar agrees John was a changed man. Instead of a "Son of Thunder," he's almost wimpish in his never-failing expression of love. He is known as the "Apostle of Love"—a total cataclysmic change.

Thomas is consistently a doubter; from start to finish, he's a doubter. He's a realist; he questions everything. When Jesus is going to go through Samaria and faces death, and tells His disciples about it, Thomas then says, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." That's courage, but he thought Jesus would actually die; that's a humanistic view.

When Jesus is discussing going away, building mansions in heaven, says, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know," all the rest of them are surely shouting about the mansions. Thomas is listening to every word. He says "We don't know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Now that's a consistent thumb-nail sketch of a personality trait.

Who is it that's doubting when the resurrection comes? Same guy. "I won't believe 'til I touch Him, put my hands in the marks of death." The moment arrives. Jesus is there and says to Thomas, "Behold my hands and my side." He says, "It is more blessed to believe without

seeing." That is an axiomatic truth, but He did not condemn Thomas. He just stated that fact, and then He offered to submit to the test, which is what we are doing today. He said, "Behold my hands and my side." And Thomas cried, "My Lord and my God."

It is significant that in the most philosophic area of the world, where the Vedanta philosophies have produced Buddhism and the Eastern religions that flow out of it, it is Thomas that pierces the Himalayas to die a martyr near Madras, India, to be the herald of faith in the most challenging philosophic area of the world at that time, and never again does he waver an instant in faith—a total change from a consistent doubter to an unwavering "faither."

Now, you can say, a crisis will change people, but a lie will seldom change people for the better; they'll get worse. These men are cataclysmically changed for the better; I don't think that telling a lie would do that.

There are indirect evidences of truth. Mark wrote to Gentiles; you can count it in Mark's Gospel, he has Christ referring to Himself as "Son of Man" more often than any other Gospel. Count it yourself.

Now if he was a liar, knew he was lying, trying to perpetrate a fraud, why would he have Jesus refer to Himself with a phrase that suggests humanity when his purpose is to try to represent Jesus as the Son of God? If he's a liar, he'd just have Jesus refer to Himself as the Son of God. But ironically, as God's little hidden evidences of honesty, in Mark's Gospel, written to Gentiles, designed to prove that Jesus was the Son of God, he had Jesus refer to Himself as the Son of Man more than any other Gospel.

Now, Jesus **did** refer to Himself as the "Son of Man" because Jesus was preaching to a Hebrew audience that read the Book of Enoch and read the Book of Daniel where the Son of Man was a messianic picture of coming in clouds of glory to set up



His kingdom. So it's quite proper for Jesus to refer to Himself as the Son of Man in a messiah mentality, but if you are writing to Gentiles who don't know anything about the Old Testament, and trying to perpetrate a lie that Jesus is the Son of God, unless you're just basically honest and telling the truth, you wouldn't have Jesus say "Son of Man" as often. Why not change what He said to serve your purpose? **Inherent honesty.** I could give you a dozen of those, but that is what historians call indirect evidence of honesty.

#### **Reason 2. Internal consistencies.**

The fact that the disciples waited seven weeks is used by those who say they were lying as the time needed for them to cook up the lie. If they are smart enough to tell a lie of this nature, my judgement is, they would have figured that out. They waited seven weeks because Jesus told them to wait. That's the action of honest men, even though waiting that long hurts their story—if they were going to make up a lie.

#### **Reason 3. Price paid.**

You don't pay the price these men paid to tell a lie. All of them, save John, died a martyr's death: Bartholemew flayed to death with a whip in Armenia; Thomas pierced with a Brahmin sword; Peter crucified upside down, St. Andrew crucified on St. Andrew's cross (from which it gets its name); Luke hanged by idolatrous priests, Mark dragged to death in the streets of Alexandria. These men paid beyond human belief for their "lie."

#### **Reason 4. They died alone.**

St. Thomas Aquinas' great—greatest, I think—proof of the veracity of the disciples and the resurrection is that they died alone. Now, as I do every year when I finish this message, I can conceive of a group of men trying to save face, telling a story, having bet on the wrong man, crushed by His failure (as they would view it), trying to resurrect Him with a lie.

I can conceive of them staying together and group pressure holding

together the consistencies of their lie, because they don't want to be the first one to break faith and rat on the others and collapse the whole thing.

Let's assume that Dr. Badillo and Ed and Louis (one of our horse trainers) concocted this story. You don't have television, you don't have satellite, you don't have FAX, you don't have telephone, and as long as you three stay together under great pressure, you don't want to be the one, Ed, to let Louis and Dr. Badillo down.

But now separate you. You, Ed, be Bartholemew in Armenia, and you, Dr. Badillo, be Thomas over in India. And Louis, you be Peter in Rome. You have lost contact with each other. You can't pick up a phone and call anybody; nobody knows where you are, and since you know you are telling a lie and you know you don't really expect the generations forever to believe it, and you are being literally flayed to death—that is, skinned with a whip, your skin peeled off of you—all you've got to do to get out is say, "It's all a lie," and "Forgive me, I'm leaving town."

Ed wouldn't know it; Louis wouldn't know it. You could see them next time, playing poker together and saying, "Boy, I really tore them up there in Armenia. I told the story, and nobody could forget it the way I told it." They wouldn't know you lied. You, you're going to be pierced with a sword in India; you are never going to see these people again. All you have to do to get out of the pressure is say, "It's a lie."

You, you're off in Rome; you're a little more exposed, but with your life at stake, all you have to say is, "Sorry. Maybe I dreamed it," and wiggle out and head to France. As Thomas Aquinas said, it is psychologically inconceivable that these men, separated, each one paying the supreme price for their story and each one dying alone, that some one of the group wouldn't break away from his fellows and say, "Hey, it wasn't true!"

To die alone. And not one shred of evidence surviving 2,000 years of hard-looking critics, you will never find one record anywhere on the face of this earth where any one of these men ever wavered unto their terrible death in telling this story. Therefore, I came to the conclusion there's no way these men were lying. They were telling what they thought and experienced and saw as true.

I remember doing this with my professor at Stanford, and he said to me, "Gene, I am convinced. These men believed what they were telling. Therefore, some one of these other eight facts must be wrong." Well, if you're honest and you say that, I've got you, because those other eight are a lot easier to demonstrate. What is the alternative?

#### **IT'S TRUE, AND HE CAME OUT OF THAT GRAVE.**

Well, if that is true, then what? All the rest of this is true, and I have a starting point for a faith in a God eternal. And I then have crossed over that threshold where I can now comprehend what Christianity is, for if I can believe that Jesus Christ came through those grave clothes, through that rock, through that door, and sailed off in the blue, then molecular displacement is nothing to Him—He can do it without creating an explosion. It is true that all things consist in Him, and He can control them.

Therefore, it's not difficult at all to believe that that same substance of God, placed in Mary, came forth as Jesus of Nazareth through the Holy Spirit. God says He places that same God-substance in us when we trust Him. That is the true born-again experience—a generator of life, a regeneration, a new creation that penetrates my cell structure and is placed in me as a gift from God when I connect by trusting His word.

That's the genesis of all Christianity, properly seen, that Christ is in us the hope of glory. I don't have to become some mystic or far-out freak to understand what Christianity is. I can now spend my life pursuing His words, including the authority He

attaches to the Old Testament, and the promises that are written therein.

And each time I grab hold of those and act on my belief, and sustain the action in confidence, that faith connection keeps in me a life substance the same as that that raised up Christ from the dead, as capable of changing my nature as radioactive material, invisible though it may be, can change your cell structure as you hold it.

God puts a life in us capable of regenerating, and that's why spirituality is the expressions of the spirit, and why spirituality is called the fruit of the spirit.

It is that new life growing out through us which can only be maintained by faith in His word, but it was founded and based upon the solid rock of the provable quality of "He raised from the dead," and it gives me faith to believe that He will

do the other thing He said, which is come again. □

*On April 19, 1992, Dr. Scott finally achieved his long-time goal of preaching this message (a bedrock of his ministry) in the course of one hour—in fact, he beat that goal by seven minutes.*

## Dr. Gene Scott Presents: The Church in the City

There's no law of God that says you've got to be in church on Sundays. I don't preach that, and I don't teach that. But we as a church, God's people, have made a stand in the heart of Downtown Los Angeles. We chose to restore our magnificent Los Angeles University Cathedral, which was recently featured on television as the outstanding example of the rebirth of Broadway, and we chose to do this to provide the only major Protestant presence in the heart of the City of the Angels. Among the bastions of commerce, our Cathedral is an attempt to put God back among those who are held captive by greed, amorality, fear, among the familiar urban problems of crime, homelessness, poverty and drugs.

From the roof of our Cathedral, those cherished, historic "JESUS SAVES" signs shine a light of hope and truth out there for the taking, a reminder of the Word that is preached inside every Sunday. Who can tell how many people down to the end of their rope have seen those signs and found the courage to go on?

No, you don't **have to** go to church every Sunday. You can get just as much out of the teaching staying home. I've always said, I want you there for my sake, not yours—to reduce it down to personal terms.

However, I ask that you stand with me in the heart of the city, to make a testimonial before God and man that this church is here to stay, that God's Word is preached here in the center of commerce and law, banking and industry, that faith can prevail, and that men and women and children who are among those chosen by God before the worlds were formed have recognized His claim on our lives and stand together despite the odds, despite having to leave our safe suburban enclaves to gather here in the heart of this great city.

And as God has given this ministry the awesome ability and massive responsibility of reaching the world with His message, over satellite and radio from several continents, so that the teaching can be received on every square inch of this globe, it is incumbent upon each of us to accept that calling, and to make the symbolic but necessary act of being present in the Cathedral on Sundays. **WE** are the "Church in the City;" the Cathedral is but the place where we come to affirm that, and to learn and worship together while the whole world tunes in. Be there next Sunday!

Dr. Gene Scott

*The Los Angeles University Cathedral is located at 933 South Broadway in the heart of Downtown Los Angeles, between 9th Street and Olympic Boulevard. Take the 9th Street off-ramps from the Harbor (110) Freeway. Children less than 12 years of age will be taken on field trips under adult supervision in air-conditioned buses to one of the many great museums within a short radius of the Cathedral. Before and after the service, you can tour the Dr. Gene Scott Collection of the English Bible, with treasures comparable to or surpassing any public institution in the world. **Reservations** are required; these too are a statement of faith and commitment. You may make them by calling 1-800-338-3030 toll-free from anywhere in the USA.*

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**Excerpt from a recent letter to Dr. Scott:**

Dear Dr. Scott,

Every time you refer in your broadcasts to Lex Miller, it takes me back to the time in 1955 when he invited me to join him in the department he had recently started at Stanford. Lex and I had been graduate students together at Union Seminary, where we both studied under Reinhold Niebuhr. In fact, we each contributed a book to the "Christian Faith Series" which Niebuhr edited in 1954 and 55. If I had not decided instead to come to Trinity College in Hartford and start a religion department here, I might have become your teacher at Stanford!

Since retiring some years ago, I have intended to write you a fan letter, particularly in regard to the resurrection. Though I too was subject to the same indoctrination as Lex, my own further study of the Bible and of history, like yours, eventually convinced me that the resurrection is indeed the center of the new testament proclamation, and that without it there would be no Christianity. Your sermons and lectures on the subject are so carefully reasoned and so explosive that I have sent to Dolores Press for tapes of them...

Yours sincerely,

**E. La B. Cherbonnier**  
(Professor Emeritus)

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