

A DISSERTATION ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE FLESH¹

1743

(INTRODUCTION)

The most important of all questions, and also perhaps the least studied one, is the Resurrection. In every religious system, people gloss over the essential points under dispute, and instead split hairs on the minutiae. The big questions of the Existence of God, the immortality of the human soul, are among those which people only undertake in order to satisfy curiosity if all our Existence is limited to this life; for experience show that happiness and misery are equally, and without distinction, the lot of those whom we call both just and perverse in this world. I think I can trace the origin of the dogma of the Resurrection to the disputes over the nature of true happiness. Without any doubt, true happiness should consist in being perfectly happy. But the perfectly happy man has not yet existed. But how can anyone made like us be happy? One has only to cast a glance at the human species to be sure, after the calculation of one's desires and the obstacles preventing their satisfaction, that it's absolutely impossible for a man to be perfectly happy on Earth. This consideration led the ancient Philosophers to invent various systems of perfect happiness, each of which negated the others, and all of which are falsified by practice. The most reasonable of all these systems, the one furthest from falsehood, without however reaching the truth, is the one which makes the supreme happiness consist in Virtue. People are happy, no doubt, by practicing virtue; but in many circumstances this happiness is only a chimera, a relative enjoyment, based only on the opinion of others. Can a virtuous man, subjected to the whims of an ingenious tyrant who uses every means to keep him alive under torture, be called happy? No. The only happiness he enjoys resides in the opinion of those who know him, and who know that he doesn't deserve to be tortured like that; but the pain caused by these torments is no less real for all that: and true pains like these can't be part of true happiness. Socrates, who closely compared the value of all the ancient systems and who

¹ The original text attributes the work to "the Author of the *Vulgar Errors*"; i.e. Thomas Browne (1605-82).

recognized their vanity, seemed, by ordering the sacrifice of a rooster to Asclepius when he was about to die from the poison, to make truth, or perfect happiness, consist in no longer existing. Nothing could flatter the vanity of a great man better than to establish the beliefs of his contemporaries. Plato thought himself worthy of determining for them that which, up until his day, had not yet been established. He posited the principle that man is necessarily made for happiness, but that, since he isn't happy in this world, he will be happy in another one. This is Plato's conclusion: this is also how all, or nearly all, men think. I would be eager to learn where the certainty comes from, that anyone is made for perfect happiness. However it may be with this perfect happiness, each of the Philosophers have defined it differently; that is, without touching on the truth: and even divine Plato, while claiming that man would be assured of possessing it by reuniting with God, was never able to provide any notion about how such a union occurred. But however it occurs, it must always be through some sort of resurrection, for we all die in the end.

Various sects since Plato's time have adopted his opinion on the Resurrection, and the Christians, among others, have made it one of the first articles of their Religion. This dogma, like all the rest, has been presented as a fact, setting aside the objections to which it was exposed. We will cover some of these objections, and they are such that, if the Partisans of the dogma of the resurrection have no new proofs to offer, their hypothesis will be destroyed from top to bottom. For we will show:

1. That the Theological Proofs of this dogma deserve no attention.
2. That the resurrections which are spoken of, to establish the possibility of the general Resurrection, are not of such a nature as to form a body a proofs.
3. And finally, that even if we accept miracles, the Resurrection is impossible.

I'm not writing for those who begin by persuading themselves of the truth of an opinion, before assuring themselves of its reality: the arguments go over the heads of those who proceed that way in pursuit of the truth.

FIRST PART: AN EXAMINATION OF THE THEOLOGICAL PROOFS OF THE RESURRECTION

Although the Proofs which are called Theological aren't of such a nature as to convince those who differ on the principles from which they are taken, and although they have no authority with respect to anyone who rejects the truth of the Holy Scriptures, we will use them here. Without this precaution, our enemies would accuse us of having neglected a species of proofs which they regard as indestructible, and they might use them effectively against those whose lack of free time or capacity keeps them from any thorough study of the subject. To see the Doctors arguing according to their own conventional principles, it's tempting to think that they signed their conventions in the name of, and as it were armed with the powers of all mankind. But however our Fathers may have accepted supposed principles, we still have a right to contradict them; for when one can, one always abdicates error and embraces the truth. Let us pass, then, to the analysis of these proofs.

The first which presents itself to me is the one found in the Gospel of St. John. In this mystical text, which, for good reasons, is considered as having been written much later than the man whose name it bears, Jesus Christ expresses himself in these terms:

Verily, I say that he who hears my word, and believes in Him who sent me, has eternal life, and will not fall into condemnation; but he has passed from death to life... The hour is coming, and has now come, that the dead will hear the voice of the son of God, and those who have hearkened, will live... marvel not: for the hour comes when all those who are in Sepulchers will hear his voice; and those who have done good will go to the resurrection of life, but those who have done evil to the resurrection of damnation².

It was a common opinion, among the first Christians, that the end of the world was near. This supposition was necessary for the growth of a sect which preached absolute renunciation. Jesus Christ was powerless to add anything to the faculties of those who were determined to follow him, all of whom were poor people: however, he needed a way to win their loyalty: he

² John 5:24

was, therefore, led to make them hope for happiness of the next life, since he couldn't give them happiness in this one. That's the goal to which Jesus Christ related all that is said of his Kingdom, of its closeness; the promises he makes to his twelve Apostles to establish them as Judges over the twelve Tribes of Israel, etc.

To this general reflection, let's add the particular analysis of the words we've just quoted. Just as a system fails in the absence of proofs; likewise, the proofs are weakened and ultimately melt away when, being shared, they are made to depend on certain conditions, on certain facts which should be proved, but aren't. This is the case in which Jesus Christ now finds himself. He declares that those who believe in God, after hearing him, will have eternal life, will pass from death to life; and when this new doctrine surprises his admirers, he adds: "marvel not at this; for the hour comes, and is now come, when the dead will hear the voice of the son of God...all those who are in sepulchers will hear His voice". The truth of the doctrine of the resurrection, as preached by Jesus, depended, then, on this proof according to which now (i.e., then) all the dead, all those who were in the grave, should hear his voice. It was a fact set forth, but in need of proof; which Jesus didn't offer. Still, he affirms in the same chapter that "just as his Father resurrects the dead, even so he, His son, vivifies whoever he wants to". And that was the moment (or there never was one), to give a non-equivocal proof of the truth of the dogma of the resurrection by resurrecting everyone who died in Jerusalem from the Flood onwards, if this place was indeed inhabited.

It might be objected that St. John's history is either untrue or that it has been subject to alteration; for no Evangelist relates this conversation between Jesus and the Jews. St. John claims that it was held on the occasion of the miracle done by the Messiah on the sick man healed at the pool; but his three co-historians say nothing about it; and if he's mistaken on the circumstance, might he not err as to the fact? He had such an unfaithful memory that the terms, which are so essential in passages which serve as the basis for dogma, escape him. He says that Jesus, at the place cited, uttered this phrase: "and those who have done good will go to the resurrection of life, and those who have done ill to the resurrection of damnation". St. Matthew reports this phrase and the authors of the Harmony point to it.

But 1) It happened in different circumstances; according to Matthew, it had to do with alms, and it was after his simile of the 10 virgins and the talents, and only the day before his Passion, that he has Jesus say this: "Those (who haven't given alms) will go into eternal torment; but the just

will go into eternal life". It could be said that the two passages of St. John and St. Matthew, if they confirm each other with respect to punishments and rewards, completely disagree as to the resurrection. It even seems, according to St. Matthew, that the Judgment is suffered immediately after death, or at least that bodies will be preserved until the advent of the son of God. Among the proofs of the resurrection is that which is reported in St. Luke³, and which, according to him, happened at the crucifixion of Jesus. One of the brigands tortured with him insulted him; while the other, already more of a Christian than many Christians of today, said to Jesus Christ: "Lord, have pity on me when you come into your kingdom". Jesus, seeing the faith of this Criminal, says to him: "Verily, I assure you that you will drink today of the fruit of the vine in my kingdom." This proof, coming from the Gospel, is ruined by the Gospel itself. St. Matthew⁴ assures us that those who passed by and who were present insulted the Christ, saying: "He trusted in God; let Him now deliver him if He finds him agreeable." ...and adds: "this was also said by the brigands who were crucified with him." This direct falsification of St. Matthew against St. Luke, helps us appreciate exactly how far we should trust the writings concerning the life of Jesus.

If we had only the demonstration of the falsehood of St. Luke's story in St. Matthew, we would at least have grounds to regard it as uncertain, since we find nothing relating to it in the three other Evangelists.

Besides, Jesus Christ, who was to spend three days in the tomb, and who wasn't meant to rise to Heaven until many weeks later, couldn't properly have claimed: "today you will drink of the fruit of the vine in my kingdom with me." The Doctors confess that in this circumstance Jesus was speaking figuratively; but dogmas can't be grounded in figurative passages. With such a distinction between the figurative and the literal, the Protestants could easily defeat the Real Presence.

Finally, to convert this passage from St. Luke into a proof, one would have to have observed that the cadaver of this Brigand, first hung and then broken, was absent from the place where it had been placed, when looked for the next day; and it seems astonishing that those who fabricated the history of the resurrection of Jesus Christ should have failed to ornament this fine

³ Luke ch. 29

⁴ Matthew ch. 27

event in the episode of the resurrection of this thief; for it's meaningless to announce a miracle and then fail to prove that it was carried out.

I don't find it useful to dwell on the theological proofs for the resurrection; this is why I pass over many minor, tortured passages in the Gospel which seem to deal with it, and analyze a single proof of this kind.

The Sadducees, a species of free-thinkers among the Jews⁵, asked Jesus which of the seven women married in turn by the same man would be his on the day of the resurrection? To this question Jesus, who responds affirmatively as to the resurrection, destroys it at the same time. "Behold," he tells the Sadducees, "you are mistaken, knowing neither the Scriptures nor the power of God; for in the resurrection they are neither married nor given in marriage: but they will be like the angels of God in Heaven." If by Scripture the Pentateuch is meant, the Sadducees wouldn't be mistaken; it was Jesus who was wrong; for Moses never mentioned a resurrection. If the Scripture refers not only to Moses but to all the Prophets, all the authors who were gathered to form what is called the Bible, the Thesis changes. As long as the Hebrews lived under Moses, as long as they only had his writings for their guide, there was no question among them except about temporal punishments and rewards; later, as they changed masters, they changed their opinions. But among all those they had, we see nowhere that the Resurrection was regarded among this people as a capital point, nor that those who did believe in it regarded those who rejected it as schismatics. Besides, Jesus Christ would have done better, instead of criticizing the Sadducees by claiming that they denied the resurrection because they were ignorant of the Scriptures, to show them which passages demonstrated this resurrection. True, he does point them to a passage from Exodus which says: "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob" and he concludes thus: "For God is not the God of the dead, but of the living".

It might be good to go back a little, to show the falseness of this application. God, while speaking to the Patriarchs, had always forbidden them to worship any other God but Him. In His various successive appearances, He takes pains to avoid any misgivings that might arise on these occasions by notifying Isaac that He is the God of Abraham, and Jacob, that He is the God of Abraham and Isaac; which only means that He is the same God whom Abraham

⁵ Matt. 22, Luke 20, Mark 12.

and Jacob worshipped. When Moses took the reins of the Judaic government, all the ancient laws were annihilated. There remained no trace of the ancient religious Policy except the confused memory of God and of His promises to Abraham, & Moses, who, knowing the obstinacy of this people for the God of its fathers, never presented it with laws emanating from any other Power. Hence these constant repetitions in all the chapters of the Pentateuch, of the quality of Him whose Lieutenant he dubs himself, and by whose orders he thinks he acts: "I am the Lord, the God of your Fathers, the Eternal One, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." And it's plain that this doesn't define God's relation to the living or the dead, but Moses is simply having Him declare that there was no danger in following His laws, since He was the same God to whom the Patriarchs had been subject.

To lend a shadow of accuracy to the conclusion Jesus is drawing from the passage in Exodus, one would have to begin by supposing that all the Jews who died from the Creation until the time of Jesus had passed to a new life; for this passage says "I am the God of your Fathers, the God of Abraham and of Jacob and of Isaac." But Jesus concludes from this that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living: therefore, I will similarly conclude, all the Fathers of the Jews, who existed at the moment when God the son was speaking, were not dead, but living.

Jesus Christ was seriously confused while arguing with the Sadducees: he was out of his mind. He told them that at the resurrection we will be like the Angels: therefore, that the Angels will then be like men. But after the resurrection men drink of the fruit of the wine in Heaven: it's Jesus himself who assures us, then, that the angels will also drink thereof. And if people drink in paradise, why should they not marry as well? Is one of these acts more material than the other?

This application which Jesus Christ makes of a passage in Exodus seemed so weak to the defenders of Christianity that they turned to the Old Testament to find some support in it for the dogma of the resurrection. Their harvest in these fallow fields could never be abundant, and here is all they've been able to gather.

1) In the works attributed to Moses, they claim that the hurried efforts of Abraham to find a place suitable for his wife Sarah's burial, prove the belief of this patriarch in the resurrection. What an offhand way of drawing such an important conclusion! Wouldn't it be more natural to conclude, from the efforts of the ancients in burying their dead, that in fact they didn't presume their passage to a new life? They embalmed them to prolong, as far as they could, their substantial

duration; they formed the tombs precisely for fear that they might be robbed, or that carnivorous animals might devour them; finally, they mourned their deaths; and it can't have been any hope in a resurrection that tore out their tears: this hope should have produced a completely different effect in them. The Doctors who are partisans of the Resurrection find yet another fine proof of the truth of this dogma in Jacob. This Patriarch desires to be inhumed in the tomb which Abraham, his ancestor, had acquired from the sons of Heth: where he was also buried, where Sarah, Isaac, and Rebekah rested, and where he himself had deposited the body of Leah: this, cry our opponents, is the most complete proof of the knowledge of the ancient Patriarchs of the resurrection. What a proof! To the completely natural and general desire of being united to that which one cherishes, to the religious prejudice which makes us feel disgusted at the idea of being buried among people of a different belief from ours, joined in Jacob to the idea of ownership of the land of Canaan: to have property, and yet to be inhumed among Strangers, couldn't be Jacob's preference. He asks to be placed in his family's tomb, and in this attachment shown by him, he is also prescribing a similar one for his children, and thus encouraging them to pursue the conquest of the Promised Land.

2) I condense into a single heading the proofs taken from the rest of the Bible. One comes from Job who says that "when his body is gnawed, still his flesh will see God" (Job, ch. 19). This is what was in question in the place cited. Job complains to his friends Sophar and Eliphaz of the fact that everyone had abandoned him, after his illness; and as his two friends seem to have abandoned him amid his troubles like the rest, he criticizes their indifference, and makes them feel that, sick as he is, he might yet return, God willing, to his original fortune, for, he adds, I know well that my savior remains standing after every man on Earth, and that he will support me when all men have forsaken me. Moreover, the Book of Job, which is not considered by all scholars of all parties as anything more than a Spiritual Novel, has no weight in the present dispute.

The second comes from a Song or canticle of Isaiah⁶ which, he says, will be sung after the victory which his elect nation must win over its enemies. The Prophet, having depicted the Peoples opposed to Judah in utter degradation, assures that they cannot escape their losses, since they're dead, they will live no longer, but that the dead of Judah will live; that is, that the enslaved People will regain its vigor. He even clearly clarifies his meaning by adding that these

⁶ Ch. 26

dead returned to life will be like him. They will resurrect, he says; as if they were my body. It is so clear that it's about captivity, from which the people, as it were buried under dust, must soon depart, which the Prophet ends by having God say; "Go, my people, enter into your chambers, and hide again, as if for a moment, until the wrath passes by."

The third of these proofs is found in the psalms of David⁷, and is conceived in these terms: "For you will not leave my soul in the Tomb, and will not allow your beloved to see corruption."

Many similar figurative expressions are found in David: in the place in question, David complains of the pains he feels in the kidneys: the result, surely, of his self-indulgence; but he consoles himself with the assurance that God, having never abandoned him in his troubles, will never allow corruption to overcome him, for, he says, He is my adviser by night, and He informs me on the path of life: that is, that the evils he experienced taught him to be wiser than before.

It is quite an indifferent matter, besides, whether some Individual Jews knew of the opinion of the resurrection: it is sufficient for our Thesis that Moses was unaware of this dogma. He alone, the friend and confidant of God and the lawgiver of his people, was within his rights to lay down the principles of the religious legislation in his Country and to establish the beliefs of his people. Indeed, when the Jews believed in some of their prophets, it was always relative to the fulfillment of events, but never in relation to worship and its paraphernalia. It's even clear that, when the fulfillment of certain prophetic promises failed to come about, this slowness was imputed to this People who had neglected certain points of the law of Moses or who had dared to insert novelties into it. It was impossible for the Jews to act otherwise; for if they had wished to add to their religious code all the Writings of the Prophets and of all those who presented themselves as Inspired Men, their Religion would have lost its form, and would have become a monster of contradictions. This is exactly what happened to the Christian Religion, which increased the volume of its code by a thousand ancient dreams whose only merit was their having served a temporary interest at some point. Nevertheless, this momentary utility which was sought in such and such a book, earned it the title of canonical, even though it openly contradicted others previously decorated with the same name. Hence, the same code has served both the Defenders and the enemies of a single system; and this is how we can oppose the passages of Isaiah, or David, which are claimed to be favorable to the system of the

⁷ Ps. 16

Resurrection, with other passages destructive of this opinion: such as these, taken from Ecclesiastes: "I've known the same accident which happens to all, to the madman and to the Sage... For there will be no memory of the Sage, any more than of the madman eternally... as the Sage dies, so dies the madman... there is, then, no good for man, but to eat and drink; and for his soul to find joy in the fruit of his fields... I've recognized that nothing was better than to rejoice... What happens to the children of men and to Beasts is all one, as one dies, the other dies also: all have the same spirit, and man has no more than the Beast... Everything goes to the same place, all is dust, and all returns to dust. And who knows if the spirit of man rises up on high, and that of the Beasts descends below. There is therefore nothing better for man than to rejoice, for this is his lot: for who will bring him back to see what will be after he is gone?" After these passages, which are quite clear and require no commentary, Solomon adds that he has examined everything, and that, all things well considered, he ended up praising the dead more than the living; and that, given the predominance of evil in the world, he even gives preference to him who has never existed; for, he continues, he has neither seen nor known anything except man, vain in his knowledge, moving painfully in the dark. If we take Solomon at his word, it would be vain for him to live even a thousand years and be the wisest of all: he would still end the same way as a stillborn baby. Such is the fatality, says this great King, that the Just often perishes in his Justice, and the wicked enjoys the long days of his malice. Ultimately this writer, after recommending that his reader not try to be too just or too wise, concedes that God blesses those who fear Him and shortens the days of the wicked; but he says nowhere that there is any future life to hope for. He concludes, amid all that has occurred under the Sun, "that the same thing comes to all; that all will die; that there is only happiness for those who live; that a living dog is better than a dead Lion (Lion meaning man)" since "it all ends in the tomb."

While our opponents carefully search the Old Testament for evidence that the Jews believed in the resurrection, we might, more easily find and collect from the same book sufficient materials to compose a complete treatise of materialism; and this without any harm to the meaning of the text.

Such is the nature of the Books from which the Theological proofs come, that they can provide arms for the most inimical parties, and I will mention here, in passing, that this mixture of mutually destructive opinions and principles is, perhaps, the clearest proof that they were made by human hands.

But the authenticity of these books has no influence on our purpose here. We will only look into them for historical proofs, the way one would look in the writings of any other nation. If these Books came from the hand of God, as some nations think, the proofs they offer should be clear, luminous, and they must be able to convince reasonable men. If they were made by men, they might bring divine things into the mind of those who read them, not so much the luminous clarity which comes only with that which is divine; but they should contain, at very least, the same degree of certainty as we might find in Tacitus or Livy, Thucydides or Xenophon.

SECOND PART: AN EXAMINATION OF THE PARTICULAR RESURRECTIONS WHICH ARE PRESENTED AS PROOF OF THE GENERAL RESURRECTION AND ITS POSSIBILITY

It seems strange that a People among whom resurrections had occurred should have failed to make a dogma of the opinion of a return from death to Life. And yet this is what happened with the Jewish people, who were less superstitious here than the Christians. We can't be too amazed at the confidence with which the latter base the possibility of the general resurrection on the particular resurrections performed among the Jews. These resurrections are not numerous; they are limited to two; and we'll see that the Jews were not wrong in failing to regard them as facts on which religious dogma could be established.

The first is performed by Elijah, and related in these terms in the 17th chapter of Kings, Third book: "It came to pass that the son of the woman, mistress of the house, became ill, and the illness was grave, so much that he fainted, and she (the widow of Zarephath) said to Elijah⁸: "what is there between me and you, man of God? Have you come to me to remind me of my anxieties, and kill my son?" He responds: Give me your son. He then took him from her arms; and, taking him to the room in which he was staying, laid him on his bed: then he cried to the Lord, saying: Lord my God, have you also afflicted this widow, with whom I am staying, by killing her son? And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and told him: O Lord, my God, I pray that the soul of this child return to him. Then the Lord God granted the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child returned to him, and he lived."

This circumstance: *and he stretched himself upon the child three times*, gives to this story a fabulous air, which all the Commentaries can do nothing to dissipate. It isn't evident that the Divinity would, before taking action, wait for particular movements, in a certain number of repetitions, from some agent: if God wished to use Elijah to resurrect the Son of the Widow of Zarephath, if He wished to grant this testimony of the virtue of His prophet, it would have sufficed for the latter to call on his God for assistance, to pray to him, in order to obtain his wish;

⁸ (Translator): 1 Kings 17:18

whatever he did beyond this, such as taking the child into his room, the gesture of extending himself over him three times, is all superfluity, reeking of Romanticism, or perhaps the cabalistic art, which is more false, more decried in our days, among the wise, than the stories of Bluebeard or Donkeyskin (*Peau d'âne*).

One cannot be too cautious about the whole story of Elijah and his miracles. Nothing is less certain, even, than his very existence, as the learned Mr. Boulanger says in his Dissertation on this Prophet. This supposed man of God left no writings behind, and what we know about him is based only on the testimony of the author of the Books of the Kings, which seems to only mention him episodically, without informing us about his origins, his age, or any details about his life, with the exception of two or three things, each of which is more fabulous than the last one. The author of the Books of Kings lacks the support of any contemporary with respect to Elijah, and he is the only one in the crowd of Hebrew writers who even mentions this figure; for we can't count among the rank of supporters, what Solomon says of Elijah, since his only basis on the subject is the author of the Kings.

But without dwelling on the existence of Elijah, it seems sufficient, to destroy the proof that our opponents claim to draw of the resurrection performed by him in favor of the general resurrection, to observe, 1) That the author who reports this circumstance was later than Elijah; 2) That his testimony is not confirmed by that of any other historian. 3) That, in his own book, Elijah appears suddenly in the 3rd book and then vanishes in the fourth. 4) That, in the end, the Jews, i.e., the most credulous and superstitious people that ever existed, drew no conclusion from this particular resurrection in favor of a general resurrection; and that we would outdo even this idiotic people if we concluded, from the story of Elijah, that all men will be resurrected.

The Jewish historians share the least details with respect to everything with a miraculous air, since miracle was the soul of this nation, as fable is that of the Poem. But how likely does it seem that the same historians would pass so lightly over a fact like a resurrection? If this miracle really did take place, the Hebrew chroniclers wouldn't have left us ignorant whose son Elijah was, whose father he was, whether he was married, his age, his whole biography; they would have informed us about the name of the widow of Zarephath, that of her son, his age, his disease, the time of his death, that of his resurrection. These were all necessary details. We don't have them; and I therefore conclude that the story is false.

Moreover, if we grant the veracity of this story as recounted in the history of the Kings, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the son of the Widow of Zarephath had fainted; that Elijah, who recognized his condition, realized that he only needed to restore energy to the Child's benumbed spirits, which he succeeded in doing by stretching out on him, thereby transmitting his body heat to him, and restore movement to the liquids circulating in his veins. Indeed, Elijah begs the Lord to restore the child's soul to him; but we have already noted that, in the idiom of the Hebrews the word soul refers to the blood. We can better understand the miracle in question from this point of view than from the one offered by our opponents; and this explanation is more consistent with the text.

If the Partisans of the resurrection want to insist on this proof, I would ask them a simple question. Where did the author of the Books of the Kings get this story from? Elijah was shut up in his room: there are no witnesses of what occurred. Was it from him or the widow that this circumstance of stretching himself three times on the child came to be known? If from him, then we should have been informed of this: and again, what is it really worth, since it's attested by only one writer? If it came from the widow, she couldn't have spoken as an eyewitness; for Elijah did what he did secretly; and anything she might have said about it could only have been whatever the prophet told her. And in this case, it would again be on the word of Elijah alone that this incredible fact would have to be accepted. It very much seems that the story of Elijah had no other basis than a childish and uncertain tradition which the chronicler of Israel's Kings accepted, since it contained a miracle. At least, this is the idea we get from the various passages on the prophet's life which have been preserved for us. Elijah has hardly come on the scene when he is fed by crows; later an angel takes over his nourishment, cooking him a cake on hot coals; finally, this prophet, in the 4th book of Kings, is taken away on a chariot of fire, drawn by fiery horses and transported by this fine team to God knows where. All these facts, worthier of Ariosto than a Sacred Writer, show clearly enough, I think, what we should think of the personality to whom they are attributed.

The second proof of the possibility of the general resurrection is taken from the particular resurrection performed by Elisha, a Farmer who chanced to become a Prophet, indeed a great Prophet; since, if we believe the Bible, he asked God, and obtained from him, the double of the virtue of Elijah.

Even though he was granted this significant favor, we never see Elisha surpassing, even by half, his master Elijah, at least in his prophecies; but we must confess that he outdoes him in the art of imposing on the credulous.

The miracle adduced here as a proof is reported in the fourth chapter of the 4th book of Kings. A Shunammite woman, whose name the author did not deign to share with us, despite the importance of this information; a Shunammite woman, I say, had the habit of giving refreshment to Elisha whenever he passed her way; she later conceived so much respect for the prophet that she had her husband set aside a small room where he could retire comfortably when he came to visit them: we don't know the reason for this respect; but I will observe in passing that the Shunammite woman was young, and her husband was old. However that may be, Elisha came to Shunem and occupied his new lodging, furnished, as the Bible (which spares no detail, when the details are meaningless), with a bed, a table, and a chandelier. One day the prophet, who apparently didn't talk to his hosts when he entered, decided to summon his servant, and sent him to ask the Shunammite to come speak with him. The prophet was more grateful than usual on this particular day, and he wanted to show his gratitude to his young hostess. The Shunammite, summoned by Gehazi (which is the name of Elisha's servant), arrives. "What do you want me to do for you today," he asks her, "to thank you for all your troubles on my behalf? If you have any business at the court, I could speak to the king on your behalf." Elisha spoke as if he had the King's ear; he may have had that delusion. The Shunammite, who probably saw more zeal than power in him, thanked him, and told him she was happy with her lot. Elisha insists on a reward: "What, finally, would you have me do? I am at your command." The young woman persisted in her refusal, because Elisha suggested nothing that caught her attention.

Gehazi, who apparently communicated more with his hosts than his master did, or who was simply a better judge of people, immediately guessed the wishes of the Shunammite. "She has no son," he told Elisha, "and her husband is old"... Nothing more need be said. Remember that", he told his master. The Shunammite returned. Elisha promised her that she would embrace a son: she doubted, because she knew who her husband was; she was reassured; she conceived, and in due time gave birth to a son: how that happened isn't hard to figure out, despite the pains taken by the text to point out that the Shunammite was standing in the prophet's room. This text, which is so precise, should also have taught us how she behaved with respect to Gehazi, who was so well informed about her wishes, which would have excluded any suspicion; for Jewish women were no more chaste than ours are.

However this child was made, it doesn't matter; all we need to know is that he came into the world, that he grew up, to the point he was able to go by himself to see his father who was away reaping the harvest. One day – and this is all the Bible gives us by way of dates – this child says to his father in the fields: “Oh, my head! My head!” His father got a servant to carry him, and sent him to the child's mother. She took him on her knees and held him there until noon, when he expired.

The time indicated by the Bible betrays what was wrong with the child. He hadn't gone to the fields in the morning with his father; he certainly only went there during the morning, that is, after breakfast and around eight or nine o'clock: a time where one might well suffer heat-stroke. This is so clearly the case that the child is even represented in the text as suddenly struck by a pain in the head, an overwhelming pain, which takes away all knowledge and strength so that the Father has to put him on a servant's back: this is a normal effect of heat stroke. The text also teaches us that he was reported as dead, not as ill; for it doesn't say that his mother put him to bed, but that she had held him on her knees until midday, when he expired; that is, that his mother, knowing nothing about his condition, noticed that he seemed to have stopped breathing at noon.

Such is the state of the dead child whom Elisha resurrected. The Shunammite woman, seeing her child dead, or thinking him dead, suddenly runs to Mount Carmel, where Elisha was staying; she meets him: but the latter, not regarding the situation as entailing any danger, is content to send his servant Gehazi to the child, after giving him instructions. Gehazi, who was better at making babies than performing miracles, followed all his master's instructions in vain: he neither greeted nor returned greetings from anyone; he put Elisha's rod on the child's face; all without success. Meanwhile, Elisha returned at the Shunammite insistence, walking with her in the direction of the supposedly dead child. They arrive, and the child is lying in bed: the prophet enters and shuts himself up with the child, gets on the bed, lies on him so that his mouth was on the child's mouth, his eyes on the eyes of the latter; his hands on his hands, & then got off the bed, walked back and forth a few times in the room, then went back to the bed where he returned to his first position. Then the child sneezes seven times and opens his eyes; and Elisha takes him back to his mother. This sneezing shows yet another proof of the kind of illness the child had: it was a heat-stroke, which had suspended the movement of the liquids [in his body]: Elisha might have known how to cure heat-stroke and put his secret knowledge into

practice. When motion was restored to the liquids, the child sneezed: this is only natural, and couldn't be otherwise.

But if we can fully explain the miracle by which Elisha performed this resurrection, we still don't know how he shrunk himself enough so that when his mouth was on the child's, his eyes would meet its eyes. This miracle is far greater than the first, which involves destroying parts of substance, the reduction of a man's face to the precise form of a child's. Besides, it seems that God found this resurrection useful, that the heat of the prophet's eyes should pass into those of the child, that of his mouth into that of the dead child's mouth, etc., which is absurd. And how insane are all these miracle-workers, shutting themselves up, working in secret? Why always avoid the occasion to have witnesses of their actions? What proof can there really reside in facts which have no witnesses aside from their authors? Why are these miracles also usually done for the benefit women? Elijah resurrects a widow's son; here Elisha restores life to a child with a father; but this father doesn't even show up: he stays at work while the miracle is performed. This indifference on his part again confirms our suspicion that this child wasn't his.

If it's a miracle to recall to life people who are thought dead, not on the same day, like Elijah and his disciple, but after two or three days, how many miracles does the history of medicine not offer us, and that of surgery in particular? Similar wonders are no less well attested in these stories too; here, people who were restored to life are named, along with those of their parents, and we're informed about the locations, the dates, the particulars of the illnesses, and the witnesses of the cures. But facts like these are transmitted without any gravity, since those who share them are content to consider them as effects of the art and the application of certain natural things, without any intention of being regarded as Prophets or saints; pretensions which, in our time, would bring scorn on a savant, would make him a laughing-stock.

Since we're on the subject of Elisha, I want to share something that's said about him in the 13th chapter of the 4th book of Kings⁹:

Elisha therefore died and was buried. The next year, Moabite bands came into the land. It occurred that, as a man was being buried, those who carried him saw these bands coming (they were elderly people) and were afraid; they cast the man into Elisha's tomb: when the man was

⁹ (Translator): 2 Kings 13:20-21.

rolled there, the moment he touched the bones of Elisha, he was reanimated and rose up on his feet.

When the text informs us that Elisha was buried, all the Hebrew Chronicles would tell us that it's impossible for a body that's been rolled into a sepulcher to touch the bones of someone who had been previously inhumed there. The burial of as great a figure as Elisha must have been such that his body should not only have been rolled in a shroud, but also placed in a small space cut out inside the tomb, which was sealed with a stone so that nothing could get in. It also seems unlikely that the cavern where the tomb was excavated would have been left open: such devastated caverns would have been the dwellings of every carnivorous animal, and the bodies cast in them would have been devoured immediately. To make tombs that way would have been a crime among the Jews, who were so zealous about tombs. And we can even be sure that Elisha's body wouldn't still be in its tomb a year later, unless it had been sealed. What might have actually happened in this fable is that the dead man, who was cast haphazardly into the cavern, was seen standing a few moments later: he might even have been untouched: since the region was full of warriors, the voracious beasts might have stayed away. It's incredible that the Bible would say so little about such a great miracle: it doesn't give us this man's name, it doesn't tell us how long he lived after his resurrection: it points to no witnesses of the event: and these words, "rose up on his feet", added to this phrase: "he was reanimated" denote only the fact that his entire resurrection consists in his being found upright after being tossed into the cavern.

Solomon, who, we must expect, was educated in the lore of his nation, in the praise he gives to various prophets, never mentions this fact: and the author of Ecclesiasticus, in chapter 48, is content to say that Elisha's body prophesied in the tomb, ...and that his works were marvelous after his death. This writer doesn't omit a fact of Hezekiah such as when he opened the stone with a hammer and made fountains; why couldn't he discuss the resurrection performed by touching the bones of Elisha? It's quite a different miracle to open a spring. But, as Jesus the son of Sirach wrote, after the captivity and in a more enlightened age, he was content to say in general that Elisha performed miracles after death, without going into the details, for fear of contradiction, or giving cause for mockery. To the extent that as we approach our own times, we find fewer and fewer miracles. The more ancient prophets, like Elijah and Elisha, performed resurrections, but they only gave vague prophecies; their successors gave up on resurrections because people would have brought them truly dead people to heal; which would have been problematic; but they added more combinations in their prophecies. It's been centuries since the

Princes had Prophets at their courts; just as some rulers have madmen and monkeys: it wasn't hard for court Prophets to predict political events.

The uncertainty of the facts in the Old Testament forces our opponents over to the New one. In the latter, it is true, the facts are found attested several times by more than one witness; and this multiplicity of voices lends a certain weight to the facts attested in it. But we'll see that the individual resurrections performed by Jesus Christ are incapable of constituting proof of the general resurrection, either because they lack proof in their own cases, or because the condition of the people recalled to life by the Christ has nothing to do with, and can't be compared with, that of the first inhabitants of the universe, who, in the opinion we're combatting here, must be resurrected.

These resurrections add up to four: 1st) that of the daughter of Jairus; 2nd) that of the son of the widow of Nain; 3rd) that of Lazarus; and, finally, the resurrection of Jesus Christ himself. Let's briefly explore the proofs of these four miracles; and we'll find that not even one of them is properly proved.

Among these miracles, the one with the most witnesses is the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus. St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke all report it¹⁰; but, unfortunately, in very different ways; not only is it apparent that they didn't conspire to get their story straight, but they even weren't well informed about it.

Saint Matthew says that an unnamed Gentleman came to Jesus and told him that his daughter was dead; begging him to come lay hands on her, and she would live again.

Mark and Luke tell it differently: they claim that this gentleman was a leader, or a powerful man at the Synagogue, that he was named Jairus, and that he didn't wait for his daughter's death to fetch Jesus, and he puts these words in his mouth: "My little daughter is about to meet her end, I beg you to come and place your hands on her, so that she may be delivered and live." Mark and Luke were also with Jesus when Jairus came to him; and how likely does it seem that they would speak so differently about him? St. Matthew wrote first; Luke and Mark were aware of his writing about this event. But they didn't follow his text: this was certainly for good reasons: they

¹⁰ Matt. C. 9, Mark 5, Luke 8

knew he'd made a mistake. Still, we ought to be informed whether Matthew, an eyewitness just like them of the event, had any reply to them; and this lack of a reply in Matthew means we can't say for sure whether it's him or Mark and Luke who are lying. We can read in the latter pair a feature that seems convincing against Matthew: both agree that Jairus wasn't aware that his daughter was dead when he invited Jesus to come and deliver her, to use Saint Matthew's term; and that it was Jairus' servants who came to notify him of this event, and urge him to stop tormenting Jesus, since there was no longer any cure to be had. The intervention of Jairus' servants, which runs contrary the text of Matthew, agrees fully with the supplicating terms of the chief of the synagogue. This chief initially speaks of his daughter as only sick, or even possessed; "I beg you to come... so that she may be delivered, and live." But, as I've just said, the question is whether it was Matthew or Luke who lied.

We are similarly denied any information about the girl's condition; for the three Evangelists agree in having Jesus Christ say that she isn't dead, but only asleep. Jesus Christ, the very-Truth, says that this girl is not dead: the Christians draw the conclusion that she was no longer alive. This is drawing the most repugnant conclusion possible from a [first] principle. It is far more natural to think, like the miracle's author, that the daughter of Jairus was only ill, not dead.

St. Matthew says that as soon as Jesus heard the head of the Synagogue, he rose and followed him along with his disciples; Mark assures us that the only witnesses he wanted for his actions were Peter, James, and John the brother of James, and that he forbade the rest of his disciples to come with him.

A highly interesting circumstance relating to this miracle is the way Jesus performed it. If we are to believe Mark and Luke, Jesus did nothing to restore this child to herself except to take her by the hand, in the presence of three disciples, Jairus, and his wife. Matthew, who suppresses these witnesses, says only that Jesus went to the girl, and took her hand in his own, which might lead to some suspicion about the conduct of Jesus; for the daughter of Jairus was already grown, and was twelve years old. It is, therefore, a fair assumption that Mark and Luke included these witnesses to prevent any suspicion which might be sparked by Matthew's version; but that Matthew, who wrote first, reported it as he knew it.

As for what Jesus himself says, that the daughter of Jairus is not dead, but only sleeping, St. Mark relates a circumstance which also proves that the girl had only suffered an accident, and

that her supposed death was not the result of a lengthy illness. "Immediately", he says, "the girl rose and walked; for she was twelve years old". If this girl rose up and walked immediately, then she must not have been lying undressed in her bed; otherwise, there would have been something indecent in the event. If she had been lying or set on a bed fully clothed, we should conclude that she wouldn't have been indisposed for more than the one day; for the daughter of a chief of the Synagogue had women to undress her.

One might therefore say, with respect to this resurrection, either that the fact is false, since one Evangelist doesn't mention it, and since the three others who do report it say different things about it; or the daughter of Jairus was not dead, as Jesus maintains, and she'd only fainted by some kind of blackout which is normal enough for girls of that age, especially in a hot land like Asia, where women are temperamentally precocious; and that the Christ, shut up alone with her as St. Matthew says, used the quickest and most effective cure, which everyone knows; but that all women and eunuchs, who were mourning by her side, were unable to provide for her.

The second resurrection which is used as a proof is that of the son of the Widow of Nain; St. Luke is the only one who relates this miracle, and he places it between the times which were not passed over by St. Matthew, but who nevertheless says nothing of Nain, his widow, or his son; and who even has Jesus busy with other things during the exact time St. Luke has him performing this miracle. The return from death to life is the greatest of all miracles: but the original historian of our hero saw fit to omit a fact of this nature, if he did in fact find it in his biography. And this is exactly what St. Matthew did.

When an extraordinary man appears, many authors of various nations will write his story, and it's not surprising to find different facts in these histories, shared by some and passed over by others; this is because the Writers didn't witness what they report, they only work on the basis of memoirs, and often much later than the protagonists' lifetime. Thus, it might easily be the case that one mentions one fact, another a different one, according to the various tales they know. This should not be the case with the history of Jesus Christ, however. His twelve apostles, who never left his side, should have been equally well-informed about his actions. His history is written by four of these twelve men who witnessed his miracles; the same basic facts should be found in their four histories. Some minutiae might have been omitted by Matthew's memory; but those who wrote after him should have been content to copy him on the basic story, and only

add certain lesser circumstances which were missing in the first author, but which they remembered.

On the basis of this invariable critical principle, I say that when Luke writes something like the resurrection of the son of the widow of Nain, and John shares the even greater miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus, and both give us no guarantee of these facts but only their own testimony, these men are not credible. Saint Matthew, the witness of the miracles of Jesus, and the first author of his Biography, doesn't say that he resurrected the son of the widow of Nain: therefore, Jesus didn't resurrect him. Similarly, Matthew, Mark, and Luke don't mention the resurrection of Lazarus: therefore, this fact is contested by St. John. And if, contrary to this principle, we were to accept that John told the truth about Lazarus, it would follow that Matthew departed from the truth by concealing this important fact; for he couldn't have been unaware of it. He was always with Jesus, no less often than John.

Saint Luke comes to the support of Matthew, against St. John's tale. Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles: this work came later than the gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark, and also later than his own: therefore, he wouldn't have failed to report in this later work the resurrection of Lazarus, which was forgotten by Matthew and Mark, and also by himself, if he had believed it to be an incontrovertible fact.

It has been claimed that three of the Evangelists had only reported one resurrection each, because a single miracle of this sort was sufficient to prove the divinity of the mission of Jesus Christ. If the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke had this intention in mind, they should have said so. The first could have informed us that he omitted equally important facts for such a reason: the second might have said that he transmitted a fact of a similar nature as the one reported by his predecessor, as further proof of the Christ's power, and so on with the third; and none of these historians should have failed to explain that they had selected among the facts and neglected many in order to avoid prolixity. This precaution was indeed used by the rascal who wrote, under the name of St. John, the fourth of the extant Gospels more than sixty years after the death of Christ; but this splendid phrase which ends his gospel: "and many other miracles, which would fill the whole world if they were all written down," which in more modest terms would have agreed with the first Evangelist, is moved to the end of the New Testament. None of the three resurrections reported in the Gospel as being performed by Jesus Christ can be used to support the idea of the general resurrection. 1) The daughter of Jairus was not dead,

as Jesus Christ himself says; and even if it were shown that she had all the symptoms of death, which is not the case, these symptoms were too recent. Fainting doesn't really last longer than a quarter of an hour; and this, at most, is how long it took Jesus to travel from where he had been to Jairus' house. And this girl's condition has nothing in common with that of cadavers dead six or seven thousand years. 2) The resurrection of the son of the Widow of Nain is only attested by St. Luke, who provides no details about it. This miracle smacks of impossibility, for the Evangelist says that he rose from his *bier*: but a man wrapped up and tied from head to toe, whose arms are bound by ropes as well as his legs, could never get up on his feet right away. St. Luke adds that he also spoke. In this case, he should tell us what he said; this would have been an important detail. No doubt, he gave thanks to the Christ, this would have been worth the trouble. In miracles like these, no detail is too trivial. Therefore, assembling all the circumstances. St. Luke, far from certifying such a miraculous event, only mentions it in passing and is content to inform us that the witnesses were afraid. How can we believe that a boy, already at the age of reason and grateful to Jesus for such a great blessing, wouldn't have been one of the first Christians; that the mother of this young man, her only son, and consequently very dear to him, would have failed to embrace the doctrine of the man-God who answered her tears with this great favor, without begging: that the assistants, that those who carried the corpse, all of whom should have been certain of the truth of this miracle, didn't convert at once; and if all that did actually happen, how is it conceivable that the Evangelist didn't mention it?

3. The resurrection of Lazarus reported in St. John, chapter 11, provides somewhat better details as to the circumstances. This is how the Greek text explains it. "There was a sick man, called Lazarus, from Bethany, the village of Mary and Martha her sister." First, we must agree that these three people were quite young, or that they were married, and in this case hadn't stayed together, despite the insinuation of the text. With the Jews, a brother and two sisters of the age of reason and who remained unmarried would have scandalized the whole nation. Since the evangelist doesn't tell us that Lazarus, Mary, and Martha were married, we must suppose that they were still quite young; however, this youth is quite discordant with the 5th verse, which says that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister and Lazarus." Let us return to the text: "Yet Mary was the same who anointed the Lord with perfumes and washed his feet with her hair; whose brother was ill." 2nd. As the author of the Gospel according to St. John only wrote long after Jesus Christ, and in a place remote from its setting, he spoke with less concern for the truth than he would have if he were afraid of being contradicted. This whole verse is false, along with its counterpart in the 12th chapter. "Then Mary took a pound of perfume, of fine

precious spikenard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and washed them with her hair.” etc. The Evangelists wrote in Greek: this language has its present, past, and future tenses: but how could John have been able to say, prior to the death and resurrection, and also during the illness of Lazarus, that “Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume” when Mary only did this six days before Passover at a supper, at which Lazarus and those who had been witnesses of his resurrection were present with Jesus? This passage in John is contradicted by Matthew and Mark¹¹, who assure us that this meal was only two, not six days before the Passover; that Jesus Christ was perfumed by a woman; which doesn’t indicate Martha, a girl whose Hebrew name is the word for virgin, as well as young women in general; these two Evangelists maintain that it was the crown or the head of Jesus, and not his feet, that were perfumed; John says it was his feet: how can these be harmonized? The latter adds that Mary washed Jesus’ feet with her hair; Matthew and Mark don’t mention any use by Mary of her own hair. Indeed, it would have been ridiculous to wash Jesus’ face with her hair. This idea of the Gospel of John comes from the custom of the Romans of washing their hands with hair from their slaves or concubines, and this does no honor to the Redeemer. Finally, with these words from the 12th chapter of John: “And they gave him a supper there, and Martha served”, it is clear that this supper was given at Lazarus’s house; for otherwise his sister wouldn’t have been the one serving: nevertheless, Mark and Matthew, in the place cited, attest to us that Jesus was dining with Simon the leper that day, and they say nothing about Lazarus being present. Now for another thought on this passage.

It seems quite likely that this woman, that this Mary who anoints the Christ in Bethany, is the same as the woman of ill repute who anointed the feet of Jesus, at table with a Pharisee; for all the circumstances of the first event are present in the second (Luke 7). One of her names was Mary; that of Magdalene which is found added at the end of the Gospel of Saint John, might designate her quality and condition. This Mary was like Salome, one of those women whom Jesus loved, as St. John puts it. Another proof that Mary the sister of Lazarus and Martha, according to John, is the same as the courtesan who anointed the feet of Jesus at the home of a Pharisee, is found in the 11th chapt. of this same John; and Mary was the one who anointed the Lord, etc. That it was the latter [Mary] who did the anointing is so clear that no dispute could obscure it. Nor is it any longer surprising that she lived like a girl, i.e., unmarried: which we found troubling only a moment ago. I have gone a little off course while speaking of this

¹¹ Matthew 26; Mark 14.

contradiction; but I'll be forgiven in favor of the discovery to which we're led by this dispute. I return to St. John:

His sisters (of Lazarus), therefore sent to him (to Jesus), saying: Lord, behold, he whom you love is sick. Jesus, having heard this, said: 'This illness is not unto death, but for the glory of God; so that the son of God might be glorified thereby.' For Jesus loved Martha, and his sister, and Lazarus. So, therefore, when he had heard that he was sick, he stayed for two days in the same place.

The place where Jesus was is not stated here; but the previous chapter informs us that it was the same part of the Jordan where John had baptized. "And after that he told his disciples: let us go straightway to Judea. They responded to him: master, the Jews sought to stone you before, and now you are going back there." Jesus did not insist on this voyage, and still speaking to his disciples, he told them: "Lazarus, our friend, is asleep; but I will go and wake him up." At which his disciples responded: "if he sleeps, he will be healed."

3rd. Even the thickest prejudice can't resist the clarity of these passages. Here we find preparations being made for a false miracle. The advice given by the sisters of Lazarus; this joke of Jesus': *this illness is not unto death*; this delay of two days in a place close to Bethany: all this betrays connivance. It's indisputable that the place where Jesus was, wasn't all that close to the house of Lazarus, since when Jesus proclaims to his disciples that he's asleep, this news doesn't surprise them: therefore, they therefore accept that he could easily have received him.

Lazarus was a frequent companion of Jesus and his disciples: from this fact, how likely does it seem that Christ delayed by two days going to him whom he calls *our friend*? One might say that Jesus Christ, wishing to use Lazarus to show his own power, deliberately delayed leaving for two days without going to see him; but the disciples, who were unaware of his plan, but knowing about Lazarus's illness, couldn't have avoided going see him, or at least suggesting it to their master. The way Jesus shows so little eagerness to go to Judea supports our view. Why use such deception? Jesus then declares to his disciples that Lazarus is dead, and that he is overjoyed by this fact: what a thing to witness; but using such words in public would have unmasked the imposture: instead, Jesus cries and pretends to be upset in the presence of those who had come to console the two sisters.

Jesus Christ, in St. John, plays the role of a stupid rascal. He knows without being told that Lazarus is dead; he arrives at Bethany and asks Martha where she has placed him. This question is at odds with the spirit of prophecy.

Jesus, now informed of the place where Lazarus lies, shivered immediately, says the text. What relationship do these fears, this shivering, have with the joy he had felt at his death? And also with the power of resurrection that he knows he has?

Jesus is near Bethany when he learns of Lazarus' illness; he stays there for two days, doing nothing. Strictly speaking, it's at the end of these two days that Jesus tells his disciples that Lazarus is dead. He's hardly said the word before Thomas tells the disciples: "Let's go too, and die with him." The text immediately adds in the next verse: "Jesus therefore went and found that he had already been four days in the tomb." In the Bible, numbers count for nothing; two and four are synonymous.

But let's not dwell any longer on a fact which is falsified simply by sharing it. Let's move on to the Resurrection of Christ himself. If we believe St. Paul, it's vain for Christians to make any effort to be good if Jesus was not resurrected. All the happiness men can expect depends, according to this apostle, on the resurrection of the son of man; he also adds that he believes this miracle because it's in his interest to believe it, and because he would be the most miserable of all men if he didn't believe it. It's easy to imagine that a man who had betrayed the Synagogue had no other choice but to accept the new doctrine; for, as a Jew, he wouldn't be allowed into the mysteries of the Gentiles, who abhorred the Hebrews. But for those of us who don't have the same reasons to believe as St. Paul, I think we have a right to examine the proofs of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The principle asserted by this apostle, who doesn't hesitate to say that he forgets everything to believe, and to know nothing but Jesus crucified, isn't always a sound one. Such dismissal of all analysis can only be allowed with facts after they've been demonstrated; the resurrection of Jesus hasn't been demonstrated: therefore it can be examined.

The first part of this examination will discuss the stories written by the Evangelists about the resurrection of the Christ; the second part is about the behavior of Jesus after his resurrection. Then we will respond to a few of our opponents' arguments.

1) Saint Matthew says that on Sunday morning Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb; that a great earthquake coincided with their arrival, which was caused by the descent of the angel of the Lord, who came to remove the stone, to roll it away, and who then sat on top of it. That this angel had either eyes or a face like lightning, and clothes that were white like snow. That the guards were so awestruck by the spectacle that they fell down as if dead; but that this angel told the two women: do not fear, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. He has resurrected as he told you he would. Come and see the place where the Lord was placed, and you will soon go and tell his disciples that he is resurrected. He has gone ahead of you to Galilee, you will see him there, etc.

St. Mark maintains that the women were three in number, and that they found the stone removed from the tomb's opening; he doesn't mention the earthquake, the descent of the angel, or the eyes like lightning; he only says that the women saw a young man dressed in white who was seated to the right, within the monument: none of these facts can be reconciled with what St. Matthew says.

St. Luke assures us that the women who had come from Galilee with Jesus, among whom was one called Joanna, having reached the Tomb... could no longer find Jesus; but that they did see two men dressed in shining garments. They were both angels, but they gave them no commission to go and inform the disciples. It was, according to St. Luke, on their own initiative that they told the apostles of this miracle, and at first they thought the women were dreaming.

That if we follow St. John's text, we find even weaker testimonies of this resurrection. Mary Magdalene, according to this Evangelist, goes to the tomb, as it was already nighttime, and sees that the stone which had sealed it was gone; this alone is enough for her: she runs to Peter and John and proclaims the resurrection to them. It's only after having returned from Jerusalem with these two apostles that she crouches and sees two angels in the tomb, whom Peter and John, who had gone in ahead of her, hadn't noticed.

The contradictions between these four stories are so obvious that there can be no argument on the subject. So let's move along to the second part of our analysis.

2nd. After Jesus Christ had suffered his ordeal and was considered dead by all who witnessed his crucifixion; and after human salvation became the reward for faith in his resurrection, he really ought to have manifested this resurrection to everyone. But, the reply will come, did he indeed have to show himself to the hardened Jews? Didn't he show them more goodwill than they deserved? These men with stones for hearts, who weren't moved by the greatest of miracles, would also have rejected that of the resurrection of Jesus. I observe, to begin with, that the infinite goodwill of a God must be inexhaustible. Moreover, if the Christ had to die for the salvation of men, then someone would be required to carry out this act of Deicide. And to deprive the Jews of the only thing that might win their faith, due to the judgment they pronounced against Jesus, would punish them for a crime they were forced to commit, unless some other nation might have done it for them; which would amount to the same thing. But let's suppose that Jesus had good reasons, as we must believe, to hide from the Jews who had persecuted him, and that these Jews were reprobate from the moment they had committed their crime; Jesus isn't justified in this supposition. The Gentiles found themselves subrogated to the rights of the Hebrews; he needed to show himself to the Gentiles; for example, he should have shown himself at Rome. All arguments would have ended; human blood would have been spared. Did Jesus Christ not know that interested parties can't act as witnesses; that a streetwalker like Magdalene would be lacking in credibility as a witness to his resurrection?

All things considered, the testimonies of the resurrection of Jesus are based on the word of three, two, or even a single woman: the apostles speak according to them only. It's true that the gospel tells us that Jesus appeared to his disciples; but the only eyewitnesses of these apparitions are men of the sect and can therefore be dismissed. Even Thomas doubted it. He was made to hear reason afterwards; but how can we be sure that he didn't believe, like St. Paul, only because he had a vested interest in believing?

It's time now to respond to a few of our opponents' arguments. Compelled by the evidence, they say, we agree that the proofs for the resurrection which were administered at the beginning are weak; but the growth of the religion, based on the same resurrection, is an authentic proof. Show us the growth of Christianity prior to the protection accorded to it by the Constantines and their Christian successors, and we'll accept this proof, which at bottom has nothing to do with the truth of Religion; for experience teaches us that error can progress like the truth, and even faster than it.

Another proof of the truth of the Resurrection of the Christ, our opponents continue, relates to the precautions which were taken at his death. These precautions consist in the Guards who were set at the tomb, and at the seal which was set on it. But, 1st) Matthew is the only one who mentions this fact, and he might be wrong about it: his three colleagues betray this in more than one place. 2nd) The precaution was only taken on Saturday, the day after the burial of Jesus, and there would have been time to steal his body. 3rd) It wasn't Pilate who sealed the tomb, but the Jews, and it isn't mentioned whether they had gone there previously. Finally, the Jews didn't have soldiers of their own in the times of Christ's death; and it's a mistake when Matthew puts these words into Pilate's mouth: you have your guards; go, and guard as you intend. The seduction of these same guards by the Jews is also a fact which only Matthew reports: and how likely is it that a fact like this would have been omitted by the three other Evangelists?

It is, therefore, impossible to conclude in favor of the possibility of the general resurrection from the particular resurrections, since the latter lack the evidence it would take to be well-established, or, even if we accept them, they can't be compared with the miracle that our opponents say must come at the end of time.

To leave nothing to be desired on a point which was much debated in the first centuries of Christianity, we hope to prove in the third part of this Dissertation that the final, or general Resurrection is impossible, even granting the miracle of God's omnipotence. This omnipotence is the fort into which our opponents retreat when they have lost the battle and lack any further arguments. Let's follow them into this final retrenchment.

THIRD PART: THE RESURRECTION IS IMPOSSIBLE, EVEN GRANTING THE MIRACLE OF OMNIPOTENCE

God can do anything: this expression is always on the tongue of the Partisans of the Divinity, but, while common, it is no truer for all that. We adopt such trivial phrases without examining them, the way proverbs are adopted, without worrying about whether they're right or not. The unfortunate Vanini is a proof of this. He wasn't an atheist; but the God he believed in wasn't like that of the nations of Europe: and still, he couldn't help crying out at the aspect of the ordeal he faced: "Ah! My God!" He learned this expression from his wet-nurse or his schoolmaster; and nearly all men are senile, i.e., they return to childhood at the approach of death.

To be certain that God can't do everything, we only have to think for a moment about the quality of substances. God can never square a circle. With respect to this circle, He has no power other than what I have; that is, to destroy it and make a square. The essence of a circle is roundness: destroy this roundness, reshape it, and it's no longer a circle; it's something else: I add that, whatever philosophers may say, God cannot make something be and not be at the same time; for what is not has no form, and that which is has one. In this supposition, a thing would both have and not have a form at the same time, which is absurd.

It's on such incontestable principles that we speak of the resurrection. Let's first define what our opponents understand by resurrecting. It means to pass from the state of death to that of Life, it means to regain one's body, the body one had when death came, along with all the properties by which it constituted a Body: it is, ultimately, to exist under a form, through a sort of recomposition, instead of existing, when dead, under various forms by the decomposition of our totality, our absolute form. The first difficulty is in the very definition. Bodies are only resurrected for judgment, to receive their due punishments or rewards, relative to their deeds. On this point I ask why my body, the body I've had for a hundred years, which for so long since hasn't sinned, which must no longer retain a single one of the sinful particles which constituted my body some twenty, thirty, or forty years ago, is the one which enjoys the reward, or endures the penalties of good or bad deeds? It would seem to be in God's justice to reward or punish the body which deserved these various treatments, and it would be within His omnipotence to judge, punish and

reward the precise matter which, in my life, actually sinned or earned a reward. Our enemies, who are so apt to invoke this omnipotence, remain unaware of this superior justice. I don't sin between 70 and 100. But I did sin between 20 and 70 years; it's an injustice to punish the *me* of a hundred years, who is no longer the same, at least mostly, for the *me* at twenty years of age; this is because if the *me* between childhood and 70 years of age, did no sin; but the *me* between 70 to 100 years was a lecher, it would be this latter *me* who would fairly suffer the punishment, and not the first. All the advantage, then, is on the side of the first *me*, who is ordinarily the sinner; he might indulge in every kind of disorder, given the likely human lifespan; it surely wouldn't be punished; and this system, properly meditated in physical terms, might corrupt many. This same system must cast the latter *me* into despair, since, whatever might be alledged, it must be disheartening to stand bail for someone who can't be reached and whose debts must be paid in full.

But if it's the first or the later *me* who is resurrected, it amounts to the same thing, and our opponents' hypothesis is still impossible. In this hypothesis, all men, without a single exception, must be resurrected, and this is saying a lot.

A man died a thousand years ago; worms have eaten his substance; chickens have eaten these worms, other men have eaten these chickens. I will grant that omnipotence can restore to these men the substance which was added to theirs by the eating of these chickens; and that which these Chickens had acquired, by the eating of these worms; and finally to these worms the substance which is joined to theirs by eating this cadaver; but then, these last men would no longer have any substance; and if, to form *Wholes*, they finally regain all the substance they have shared with others, if the latter are also to regain theirs from their own successors, there will always be a void at the end of the chain: and again, all along the chain there will be many incomplete substances, many men who will have taken more from their predecessors than they transmit to their successors: which is problematic and confusing.

Men have ploughed for many centuries in plains where countless battles happened in antiquity. These plains have nourished many generations of men, along with animals which have also served as food for these men. Many of these were born, raised, and died in these places where they were nourished by these plains: their substance, their very selves, were therefore a composite of the particular substances which these plains produced; these substances also had their origin, and especially their growth, in the fertilization of these plains: these fertilizers were,

at least for a time, the very substance of the warriors who fell on these plains and were buried there: therefore, the substance of the dwellers of this plain is the same, at least partially, as the warriors buried in this plain.

Now, suppose that a single one of these warriors provided nourishment for twenty men for twenty years, that these twenty men died at the end of this period: at the day of the resurrection, these twenty men must give back to this warrior what he gave them: let's assume that this amounts to a twentieth of each of them; you now have twenty incomplete substances to complete a single one; it's no more than $19/30$ of their substance.

If, later on, one of these twenty buried men happens (which is possible) to have communicated to a successor two twentieths of his substance; when this successor restores it to the first dead man, the *Whole* of the latter will be composed of $21/20$ ths, which will form a more-than-complete substance.

It might well come about that the parts of such a man would, by this geometrical principle, be multiplied by fermentation, and his parts having become part of other men's substances, say, by a third or a fourth, and when these restore all the parts taken from him at the resurrection, it may well be that this man will be more substantial than twenty others combined, that he would be massive, while others would be incomplete.

According to this principle, it matters little, as we can see, whether it's the first, the middle, or the last man who resurrects. It's always Peter giving to John the parts of substance he took from him at the moment of death; for John must resurrect with all the portions of the substance he had when he died, and which Peter borrowed from him. If, then, the rare situation came about that the complete head of Peter were made of portions of substance exhaled from John, then Peter would have to resurrect without his head, unless a new creation, which is not posited by anyone, and which even contradicts the hypothesis we're combatting, were to occur.

Let's go further, and prove that the general Resurrection leads to the total destruction of many Beings.

Several hundred men have been buried in a field. A farmer buys a plot of land, marries, and has a son; this son, raised here, eats only what grows in this field: there are already many men

buried there; but there are also portions of his parents: so he doesn't owe everything to them only. The daughter of a servant is raised with him and lives on the same food: both of them grow, marry, and then James is born. Clearly this James, who forms the third generation, is made from a seed which was produced by the food grown in the field in question, and which received all its substantial material from this field. He dies, and on the day of the resurrection, he will necessarily have to return to several hundred men what he took from them. But after James has returned what his authors gave him, and then, from what is left, returns all he owes to the field which nourished him, he'll find himself reduced to nothing. For it has been demonstrated that our individual body is made first from our Parents' liquids or seeds; that we gradually lose these initial conditions of our Being and acquire new qualities produced in us by what we eat, and so on successively. Such that, at the end of a certain period, it's impossible to say exactly when, we're no longer the same. There is a proof of this truth in the bodies of certain Arabs who can handle venomous snakes without being harmed. These animals, which are so dangerous to us, can't hurt them, this is because they routinely eat vipers: by this consumption of their substance, they come to have a lot in common with that of the viper; and since this homogeneity excludes any antipathy of natures, the viper, who recognizes either itself or something like itself in these men, it doesn't want to hurt them.

But then, if vipers will be resurrected, these Arabs, having in a way become vipers too, especially if they've eaten a lot of this reptile, enough to be of one and the same substance with them; and then having to restore what they got from them, they must be absolutely stripped of all their substance, and consequently unable to be resurrected. Likewise, then, man, whose substance, at the moment of death, would be composed entirely of portions of substance borrowed from other individuals of his species who died before him, and being forced to restore it, will be reduced to nothing.

All these cases are metaphysical, and consequently possible; they can be conceived of. It's considerations like these that led the Sadducees to deny the resurrection, and members of other sects to maintain that only souls would be resurrected: which is an equally insane opinion as the one we're combatting, since, if the soul is material, then its resurrection is open to the same difficulties as that of our bodies; and if it is a spiritual substance, it is immortal by nature.

Another proof of the falsehood of the dogma of the resurrection is its futility. If God has plans for our bodies after their death, why not simply preserve them? Doesn't He allow them to be

dissolved, only to have the pleasure of performing a miracle which is of no benefit to men, since it will only come at the end of the world? Beings who have lost what we call life dissolve by a law of nature, which can only produce generation by putrefaction. No terms could be closer than these in nature: putrefaction, generation; generation, putrefaction. A being has hardly come to life when it produces other Beings through the consumption of a part of its substance. It begins to decompose; the form it loses is passed on to other Beings, who will lose and pass it on in turn. This is the eternal play of nature. Without life nothing would die; and without death nothing would live. And the contemplation of these material means by which nature maintains the reproduction of all species, may be the most striking proof of the falsehood of all that is said about the resurrection. Matter, to the extent that it forms individuals, cannot be eternal; because these forms, these individuals, depend on the play of certain springs which, themselves also material, cannot remain eternally. So that, if, despite its impossibility, God did resurrect everyone in the state in which they were at the moment of their death, this miracle would be absolutely futile: all these re-composed bodies would soon return to a complete dissolution as before. This impossibility of making matter eternal is what led the Chiliasts, a species of heretics who came soon after St. Paul, to imagine that resurrected bodies would only last for a thousand years, after which the reign of Christ would end¹².

While considering God as the author of nature, it's possible to conceive that he can give to the bodies of certain individuals, to men for example, more solidity, and consequently a longer duration, than to those of certain other Beings; but I deny that he can give them an eternal duration. The Essence of matter is to be divisible, and consequently subject to dissolution; and the dissolution of animate bodies is what we call their death. God could not change the essence of matter, for to change its essence would be to change the thing itself. If God changed the essence of matter, matter would no longer be itself; it would be something else. Thus, a circle changed into a square is no longer a circle, but a square. God can't, therefore, make our corporeal matter, which is mortal by essence, immortal. To do this it would have to be annihilated, just as we must destroy a circle to make it into a square. But then, since it won't be itself any longer, it would hardly matter what happens to the substance with which it is replaced.

God can only affect our souls. But I've demonstrated elsewhere the impossibility of supposing such substances in us. Moreover, just as our Bodies have no sense of the state where our souls

¹² Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*, article *Millennarians*

were before they animated us, since they had no formal existence, which is the only one related to the faculty of sensation, similarly, when these bodies lose their form and the qualities attached to this form, since they have no more feelings, the fate of the substance which has animated them will no longer affect them in any way. The parts of these bodies will return to the general mass; and whether they stay there or return and enter into the composition of other Beings, they will always enjoy the repose attached to non-animation, which is the essence of every particle of matter, considered in isolation: for work and pain are not the lot of the material particles, but only of the forms.