

Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?

Questions and Answers
about the Life, Death, and
Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Carl E. Olson

Ignatius Press–Augustine Institute
San Francisco Greenwood Village, CO

Ignatius Press Distribution

P.O. Box 1339
Fort Collins, CO 80522
Tel: (800) 651-1531
www.ignatius.com

Augustine Institute

6160 S. Syracuse Way, Suite 310
Greenwood Village, CO 80111
Tel: (866) 767-3155
www.augustineinstitute.org

All Scripture contained herein is from the
Revised Standard Version, Second Catholic Edition
© 2000 and 2006 by the Division of Christian Education
of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the
United States of America. All rights reserved.

Cover Design: Jessica Hallman

Cover Art: *Empty Tomb*, © Kevron2001, Adobe Stock

Copyright © 2016, Ignatius Press–Augustine Institute.

ISBN: 978-1-62164-120-9

All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America

Contents

Introduction	5
1. What's the Point?	27
2. The Historical Reliability of the Gospels	45
3. What Is the Resurrection?	67
4. Accounts, Theories, and Explanations	83
5. Hallucinations and Guilty Disciples?	103
6. Contradictions and Conspiracies	115
7. Mythology or Gospel Truth?	125
8. The Apostle Paul and the Resurrection	149
9. Physical and Spiritual	161
10. Conclusion: Two Challenges and One Question	181
Bibliography	193

Introduction

From the start, the proclamation of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead has been met with a wide range of emotions and responses: fear, amazement, joy, perplexity, astonishment—and disbelief. In the succinct account at the end of the Gospel of Mark, the three women, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, who go to anoint Jesus’s body with spices were amazed to find a young man in white robes, an angel, sitting in an otherwise empty tomb. “Do not be amazed,” he told them, “you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him” (Mk 16:6). The women fled the tomb, trembling and astonished, “and they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid” (Mk 16:8).

So afraid, we read, that they said nothing to anyone. Who would believe them? Why would anyone believe them? And, sure enough, when Mary Magdalene told the grieving disciples that Jesus had appeared to her the following morning, “they would not believe it” (Mk 16:11). In the words of Luke, the account given “seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them” (Lk 24:11). “For the early Christians,” writes noted New Testament scholar Craig S. Keener, “neither the empty tomb nor the testimony of the women was adequate

evidence by itself (*cf.* Lk 24:22–24); they also depended on the testimony of the men for the public forum (*cf.* 1 Cor 15:5–8).” The disbelief of the male disciples is, by any measure, both understandable and embarrassing, and Keener states that the “criterion of embarrassment indicates that no one had apologetic reason to invent the testimony of these women.”¹

The most famous story of early disbelief, of course, is John’s account of “doubting Thomas”:

So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe.” (Jn 20:25)

There has been much commentary on this story, but the point here is simply that from the beginning—that is, from the moment that something happened in the tomb in the Garden—there has been disbelief, even among those who lived and walked with Jesus. Further, the early Christians did not apparently spend time proclaiming first and foremost the teachings and parables of Jesus, but rather focused on his rising from the dead. And, again, it’s noteworthy how often this message was not only rejected but inspired scorn, disdain, and even persecution.

Peter, in his sermon at Pentecost, stated:

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God

¹ Craig S. Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 331.

raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.” (Acts 2:22–24; cf. 2:27, 31)

This was not just part of a rather sophisticated theological argument for Jesus’s messianic identity and divine nature but was at the very center of that argument, as emphasized by the head Apostle: “This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses” (Acts 2:32). Not too many days later, Peter addressed a group of people gathered near the Temple and repeated similar words: “But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses” (Acts 3:14–15).

As we will see, *witness*—*martyria* in the Greek (from which comes the word “martyr”)—and *testimony*² are important terms for the authors of the New Testament books. This is especially true for John, who uses the word twenty-six times in his Gospel (it also appears seven times in the Synoptic Gospels and six times in the Book of Revelation). Peter, at the start of his first epistle, emphasizes the “living hope” the early Christians held on to “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet 1:3), and later situates his authority, at least in part, on being “a witness of the

² “I suggest that we need to recover the sense in which the Gospels are testimony,” writes the noted New Testament scholar Richard Bauckham. “This does not mean that they are testimony rather than history. It means that the historiography they are is testimony. . . . Trusting testimony is not an irrational act of faith that leaves critical rationality aside; it is, on the contrary, the rationally appropriate way of responding to authentic testimony. Gospels understood as testimony are the entirely appropriate means of access to the historical reality of Jesus” (*Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006], 5). Bauckham adds: “But it is also a rather neglected fact that all history, like all knowledge, relies on testimony.” This and related points will be addressed in detail later in this book.

sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed” (1 Pet 5:1). The significance of being a witness to the Resurrection is highlighted at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, as the Eleven go about choosing a replacement for Judas:

So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.
(Acts 1:21–22)

But, again, not everyone accepted the witness of the Apostles. While Luke, in Acts of the Apostles, emphasizes the growth and expansion of the early Church (*cf.* Acts 2:47, 4:4, 6:1, 7, 11:21, 16:5), he also depicts both Jews and Greeks rejecting the message preached by the Apostles precisely because of the Resurrection. The priests and the Sadducees “came upon them, annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (Acts 4:1–2). In Paul’s address to the Athenians at the Areopagus (or Mars Hill), which was a place for juridical deliberation and philosophical debate, the point of division was not the existence or nature of God or points of morality but the Christian belief in Jesus’s victory over death. Paul says,

“because he [God] has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead.”

Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; but others said, “We will hear you again about this.”
(Acts 17:31–32)

And it is Paul who put the matter in stark relief, telling the Christians in Corinth that what he preached and what they

believed was centered squarely on the Resurrection—and doing so, it seems, because of a failure of some to believe such an event was real:

Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. (1 Cor 15:11–17)

In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, in his second book on Jesus of Nazareth: “The Christian faith stands or falls with the truth of the testimony that Christ is risen from the dead.”³ The Resurrection of the Christ is, to put it simply, *the event* that divides. And today, some 2,000 years after Christ walked the earth, it divides in at least three important ways.

The Historical Jesus and the Christ of Faith

First, belief in the Resurrection is, for many people today, the line that divides Jesus the Man—sometimes called the “historical Jesus” or “historical Christ”—from Jesus Christ the God-man, the Incarnate Word, the risen Lord. “For many minds,” wrote the French theologian Jean Daniélou over fifty years ago, “the Resurrection of Christ represents the point at which they stop short. Up to the time of His Passion Christ is a historical figure. From the Resurrection onward, He

³ Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth—Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 241.

belongs to the realm of faith.”⁴ While relatively few skeptics deny outright that Jesus existed, they earn their skeptical stripes by denying that he rose from the dead.

An interesting example of this is found in the writing of the prolific scholar Bart D. Ehrman, professor at University of North Carolina and author of over two dozen books, both academic and popular, about the Bible and Jesus. Ehrman’s recent book *Did Jesus Exist?* takes on “mythicists”—those who deny that Jesus was a real, historical figure. Ehrman, in a Huffington Post essay about his book, likens such mythicists to those who deny the Holocaust, observing that this “unusually vociferous group of nay-sayers maintains that Jesus is a myth invented for nefarious (or altruistic) purposes by the early Christians who modeled their savior along the lines of pagan divine men who, it is alleged, were also born of a virgin on Dec. 25, who also did miracles, who also died as an atonement for sin and were then raised from the dead.”⁵ He notes that few of these mythicists have any training “in ancient history, religion, biblical studies or any cognate field,” and no mythicists teaches New Testament of early Christianity at “any accredited institution of higher learning in the Western world.”⁶ Why? Because belief that Jesus didn’t exist is simply “so extreme and so unconvincing to 99.99% of the real experts”⁷ that they don’t qualify for such academic posts.

⁴ Jean Daniélou, *Christ and Us* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 142.

⁵ Bart D. Ehrman, “Did Jesus Exist,” *The Huffington Post*, March 20, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bart-d-ehrman/did-jesus-exist_b_1349544.html.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

However, Ehrman admits that the mythicist movement is growing and is gaining confidence. He doesn't name names, but a leading mythicist is Richard Dawkins, famed English evolutionary biologist, leading atheist, and author of the 2006 best-selling book *The God Delusion*.⁸ In that book Dawkins took up the mythicist line with great vigor, if not a corresponding intellectual rigor, blithely dismissing what he calls the "Jesus legend."

"The nineteenth century," wrote Dawkins, "is the last time when it was possible for an educated person to admit to believing in miracles like the virgin birth without embarrassment. When pressed, many educated Christians today are too loyal to deny the virgin birth and the resurrection. But it embarrasses them because their rational minds know it is absurd, so they would much rather not be asked."⁹ Every supposedly distinctive feature of the life of Christ—including the Resurrection—is, Dawkins insists, simply stolen from already existing religions in the Mediterranean world and the Near East.

The roots of this approach—which is featured and touted on numerous websites run by skeptics, atheists, and conspiracy theorists—go back to the eighteenth century, when Charles François Dupuis (1742–1809) wrote *The Origin of All Religious Worship*, one of the first-known attempts to show that all religions, including Christianity, are essentially the same and that Jesus was the mythical creation of early Christians drawing upon various pagan myths. This gained currency in the United States in the late 1800s with the publication of

⁸ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 187.

The World's Sixteen Crucified Saviors (or *Christianity Before Christ*), written in 1875 by Kersey Graves (1813–83). Jesus, the book asserted, was not an actual person, but a creation based on earlier stories of deities or god-men saviors who had been crucified and descended to and ascended from the underworld. Graves, who was born into a Quaker family, was an atheist who employed spiritualism in order to gain insights into historical events and personages.

Ehrman, who rejected the Christianity of his youth and early adulthood to become a self-professed agnostic, points out that the sort of “alleged parallels between Jesus and the ‘pagan’ savior-gods” peddled by Graves and his disciples are simply nonsense and “in most instances reside in the modern imagination.”¹⁰ While Ehrman thinks the Gospels “are riddled with problems”—in part because of “biased authors”—he correctly notes that “historians can never dismiss sources simply because they are biased.”¹¹ There are, in fact, many sources for the life of Christ, argues Ehrman, the number of which is “pretty astounding for an ancient figure of any kind.”¹² After touching on some other reasons for the historical veracity of Jesus’s existence, Ehrman concludes: “Whether we like it or not, Jesus certainly existed.”¹³

Flash forward to Ehrman’s 2015 book *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee*,¹⁴ an extended argument that the supernatural characteristics of Jesus’s person and life were superimposed—as the subtitle

¹⁰ Bart D. Ehrman, “Did Jesus Exist?”

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (New York: HarperOne, 2015), Kindle eBook.

suggests—upon a very mortal “apocalyptic prophet who was anticipating that God was soon to intervene in human affairs to overthrow the forces of evil and set up a good kingdom here on earth.”¹⁵ This message was not unique to Jesus, says Ehrman; rather, the uniqueness of Jesus is found elsewhere: “Belief in the resurrection is what eventually led his followers to claim that Jesus was God.”¹⁶

Note that Ehrman references *belief* in the Resurrection—not the Resurrection itself. Put simply, Ehrman argues that we cannot know, from historical study, that Jesus was really raised from the dead. “I argue,” he writes, “that when it comes to miracles such as the resurrection, historical sciences simply are of no help in establishing what happened.”¹⁷ In other words, faith and historical facts have, at best, an uneasy relationship; they are “two very different ways of ‘knowing.’”¹⁸ As a historian, Ehrman insists that Jesus really did exist. And, as a historian, he further insists we cannot know if the Resurrection actually happened.¹⁹

Is Ehrman correct? Is the Resurrection completely beyond the grasp of historical fact and knowledge? Must belief in the Resurrection be left only to the realm of faith? What sort of historical evidence is “fact” and how can we tell? These and related questions will be taken up in the chapters that follow.

¹⁵ Ibid., location 1922.

¹⁶ Ibid., location 1956.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ For a detailed critique of Ehrman’s book, see *How God Became Jesus: The Real Origins of Belief in Jesus’ Divine Nature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), written by five Evangelical scholars.

Orthodoxy versus Heresy

The second line is closely related to the first, in part because it also relies on the modern distinction between the “historical Jesus” and the “Christ of faith.” It is the line between orthodox Christianity and what might be called a “new Christianity”: a spirituality that rejects traditional beliefs and historical expressions of the Christian faith while reinterpreting those beliefs and expressions in radical ways. A good example of this “new” form of Christianity is retired Episcopal bishop John Shelby Spong (b. 1931), who is the author of books such as *Living in Sin? A Bishop Rethinks Human Sexuality*, *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism: A Bishop Rethinks the Meaning of Scripture*, *Born of a Woman: A Bishop Rethinks the Birth of Jesus*, *Eternal Life: A New Vision: Beyond Religion*, *Beyond Theism*, *Beyond Heaven and Hell*, and *Resurrection: Myth or Reality? A Bishop’s Search for the Origins of Christianity*. As those titles indicate, Spong’s ambition is to rethink and remake the central doctrines of Christianity: the nature of God, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and salvation and judgment.

In his more recent book *Jesus for the Non-Religious*, Spong has a chapter called, “The Eternal Truth Inside the Myths of the Resurrection and Ascension.” Spong argues that when “we go to the details of the resurrection as found in the gospels, we are confronted with a host of assertions that are contradictory, confusing and baffling.”²⁰ The physicality of Jesus’s Resurrection, he insists, is something that was added many decades after the death of Jesus, when a “quite obviously late-developing tradition would literally overwhelm the early

²⁰ John Shelby Spong, *Jesus for the Non-Religious* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 119.

nonphysical tradition and begin to form the now common understanding of Easter.”²¹ He later states, emphatically:

The resurrection language of the gospels is literal nonsense. . . . A resuscitated Jesus does not walk out of his tomb in some physical form that can eat, drink, walk, talk, teach and expound on scriptures. This “raised” bodily person does not appear and disappear at will, walk through walls, or invite the doubters to feel his wounds. . . . All of these things are interpretive tales employed in the process of human explanation in which a life-changing inner experience was enabled to be communicated in the language of history by the use of external symbols.²²

Spong admits, even insists, that something “moving and profound” happened “at the central moment in the Christian story,” but that it is a mistake to “literalize Easter.”²³ In fact, he claims that such a literalizing error “has become the definitive heresy of traditional Protestant and Catholic Christianity.”²⁴ No one, Spong says repeatedly and in different ways, who is truly modern and enlightened can accept as literally true the central beliefs of orthodox, traditional Christianity, including the Resurrection. Spong waxes in a somewhat condescending fashion that the Resurrection, and indeed the entire “Jesus story,” is an “invitation to journey beyond human limits, beyond human boundaries, into the realm of that experience that we call God.”²⁵ He is less ambiguous in later claiming that nearly every detail of Jesus’s life as recorded in the Gospels—his conception, birth, ministry, teaching, suffering, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension—are fabricated, created

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 122–23.

²³ Ibid., 127.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

by the early Christians who used those details and events out of necessity. Now, Spong asserts, they are no longer needed; we need a completely new way of understanding Jesus. And this means interpreting the Resurrection as a spiritual event that cannot be summed up or captured by “creedal or doctrinal formulas.”²⁶

Spong repeatedly refers to “mystery” while rejecting just about every historical detail about Jesus. “I seek,” he explains, “a Jesus beyond scripture, beyond creeds, beyond doctrines, beyond dogmas and beyond religion itself.”²⁷ The mystery, then, is this: why bother? Why should anyone bother with such a Jesus? Especially when Jesus “is not an end in himself, as Christians have so mistakenly assumed,” as Spong insists, “Jesus is but a doorway into the wonder of God.”²⁸ Could it be that Christians really have been so mistaken about the Gospels and the truth about Jesus for twenty centuries? Should the Resurrection, along with other events in the life of Christ, be understood as spiritual or metaphorical events that do not reflect what really happened in the material, temporal realm? Is it accurate to say that modern and post-modern people of the twenty-first century cannot and should not be asked to believe such accounts?

Spong’s approach, while extreme to the point of not being Christian in any sense of the term, certainly appeals to a culture that increasingly embraces an individualistic “spiritual but not religious” approach to matters of faith and morality. (It should come as no surprise that Spong finds traditional Christianity to be sexist and homophobic.) It also

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 135.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 137.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

resonates among those who, for various reasons, think the Church's doctrines and creeds to be too rigid and assertive; in short, it allows people to hold on to a skeleton of familiar language while fleshing it out with their own subjective needs or emotional desires. Christianity without the Resurrection is a variation of Christianity without the Cross—a path to “enlightenment” that ends up being remarkably self-assuring and self-absorbed.

Put another way, how is Spong's mystical dismissal of the historical foundations of Christianity any different from the neo-Hindu monism for the masses peddled by the prolific New Age author Deepak Chopra?²⁹ In his 2008 best-selling book *Third Jesus: The Christ We Cannot Ignore*, the former medical doctor teaches that “what made Jesus the Son of God was the fact that he had achieved God-consciousness”³⁰ and that “Jesus intended to save the world by showing others the path to God-consciousness.”³¹ To that end, Chopra posits three versions of Jesus: two false and one true. The “first” Jesus “is historical and we know next to nothing about him.”³² Chopra employs contradictions in striving to do away with this Jesus. For example: “The first Jesus was a rabbi who wandered the shores of northern Galilee many centuries ago. This Jesus still feels close enough to touch.” And yet, while he seems so close and knowable, he is completely unknowable.

²⁹ Parts of this section are adapted from my essay “Chopra's Christ: The Mythical Creation of a New Age Panthevangelist,” *Ignatius Insight*, May 5, 2008, http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2008/colson_chopra_may08.asp.

³⁰ Deepak Chopra, *Third Jesus: The Christ We Cannot Ignore* (New York: Harmony Books, 2008), 3–4.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

³² *Ibid.*, 8.

Why? “This historical Jesus has been lost, however, swept away by history.”³³

Then, over two hundred pages later, Chopra muses, “History may blur Jesus’ biography, but it can’t put out the light.”³⁴ So, which is it: swept away or merely blurred? Chopra’s argument—using the term with deliberate looseness—is that “the first Jesus is less than consistent, as a closer reading of the gospels will show.”³⁵ He is either unaware or dismissive of the fact that Christians have long grappled with the “baffling contradictions”³⁶ personified by Jesus, and have concluded—to put it succinctly—that if we could fully understand everything about Jesus, it would strongly suggest he was not divine at all. Chopra, however, cannot be bothered by the study and writings of Christian theologians and scholars. He is far more interested in casting aside what he calls the “second” Jesus, who is “the Jesus built up over thousands of years by theologians and other scholars.”³⁷ (In fact, Chopra never quotes any reputable Christian theologian or mentions traditional Christian arguments.) This “second” Jesus, Chopra flatly states, “never existed” and “doesn’t even lay claim to the fleeting substance of the first Jesus.”³⁸ At this point Chopra provides some comic relief, saying that this supposedly non-existent Jesus created by the Church “is the Holy Ghost, the Three-in-One Christ, the source of sacraments and prayers that were unknown to the rabbi Jesus when he

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 217.

³⁵ Ibid., 8.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 9.

³⁸ Ibid.

walked the earth.”³⁹ Some questions come immediately to mind: If the historical Jesus has been “swept away by history” (just three paragraphs earlier!), how do we know what was known or unknown to him? Where does the Catholic Church teach that Jesus is the Holy Spirit? What does Chopra mean by “Three-in-One Christ”? Is he referring to the Trinity? Has he read even one basic manual of Christian theology?

The inconsistencies never let up. Chopra praises “the simplicity of Jesus’ words” and then later writes, “Anyone can devise a new interpretation of the New Testament. Unfortunately, this great text is ambiguous and confusing enough to support almost any thesis about its meaning.”⁴⁰ His open disdain for theology—from the Greek words *theos* (God) and *logia* (discourse or discussion)—seems simple enough: he doesn’t like thinking logically about God or at least the personal God of the Jews and the Christians. And when Chopra encounters an argument or position he disagrees with, he simply dismisses it: “Theology is arbitrary; it can tell any story it wants, find any hidden meaning.”⁴¹ Chopra’s own arbitrary methods and findings are apparently exempt from any such criticism.

The “third” Jesus, or Chopra’s Christ, is remarkably similar to Spong’s customized Jesus. The “third” Jesus is the Jesus who “taught his followers how to reach God-consciousness.”⁴² This Jesus was “a savior,” but “not the savior, not the one and only Son of God. Rather, Jesus embodied the highest level of enlightenment. . . . Jesus intended to save the world by

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 139.

⁴¹ Ibid., 136.

⁴² Ibid., 9.

showing others the path to God-consciousness.”⁴³ Then, having already claimed that the historical Jesus cannot be known and that the second Jesus is a nasty lie, Chopra offers an unconvincing olive branch: “Such a reading of the New Testament doesn’t diminish the first two Jesuses. Rather, they are brought into sharper focus. In place of lost history and complex history, the third Jesus offers a direct relationship that is personal and present.”⁴⁴ But if the historical Jesus cannot be known and the Jesus of doctrine and theology is a fabrication, how can they be “brought into sharper focus”?

What is notable here is that while Spong goes to great lengths to reinterpret the Resurrection, Chopra has little interest in what Christians have always understood to be the heart of the Gospels: the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. He makes the strange remark that “with the resurrection a flesh-and-blood man was transformed into completely divine substance—the Holy Spirit,”⁴⁵ and implies that the early Christians, desperate to have Jesus back with them, created the belief in the Resurrection⁴⁶—echoing what both atheists and some liberal theologians also assert. Otherwise, nothing. There is much talk of Jesus pointing man toward “the divine” and “God-consciousness,” but it is invariably ephemeral and vague. Reading Chopra trying to explain the nature of Jesus’s life, work, Death, and Resurrection is like watching a madman shooting fog with a shotgun. He claims to have hit the target every time, but the fog remains and nothing has really happened, even while the shooter’s cockiness grows with every blast.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.