

understand the historical Jesus, but they are counterfactual—conceivable in an alternative, hypothetical universe but false in ours.

So, let's now examine Alan's comment as a logical proposition:

Premise 1: A document is discovered leading to the relocation of the crucified body from the empty tomb to another location.

Premise 2: This location is explored and "remains of an appropriate type and date" are discovered.

Conclusion: Jesus was not resurrected.

Let's suppose, for the sake of argument, that both premises are true. It would not follow that the discovered remains would be those of Jesus; all that could be discovered by Carbon-14 dating, for example, would be that a young to middle aged male was buried at a time roughly corresponding to that of the Resurrection; there would be an error range overlapping by at least 20 years the presumed date. (Mathematical aside: one can show that the time error is proportional to the half-life of Carbon-14 times the error range in fractional loss of Carbon-14). So this would not of itself be convincing evidence. The controversial book *The Jesus Family Tomb* has evidence against it and for it, and again, does not provide proof that Jesus was not resurrected. If you don't believe in the resurrection, it is convincing; if you do believe in the Resurrection, it is not. As with this book, I would discount whatever evidence there was for premises 1 and 2, against the most important intellectual support for faith in the Resurrection: the spread of Christianity at a time when the civilized world was a particularly fertile field for such. Could God have put his only Son on earth at any more favorable time? And I believe the testimony in the New Testament—despite internal contradictions, there is too much there to be swept away by claims of mass hypnosis and all the other arguments that skeptics use to disprove the Resurrection. Accordingly, I take Alan's proposition as a counterfactual—conceivable in an alternative (hypothetical) universe, but not possible in ours, but I thank him for giving an occasion for reflection.

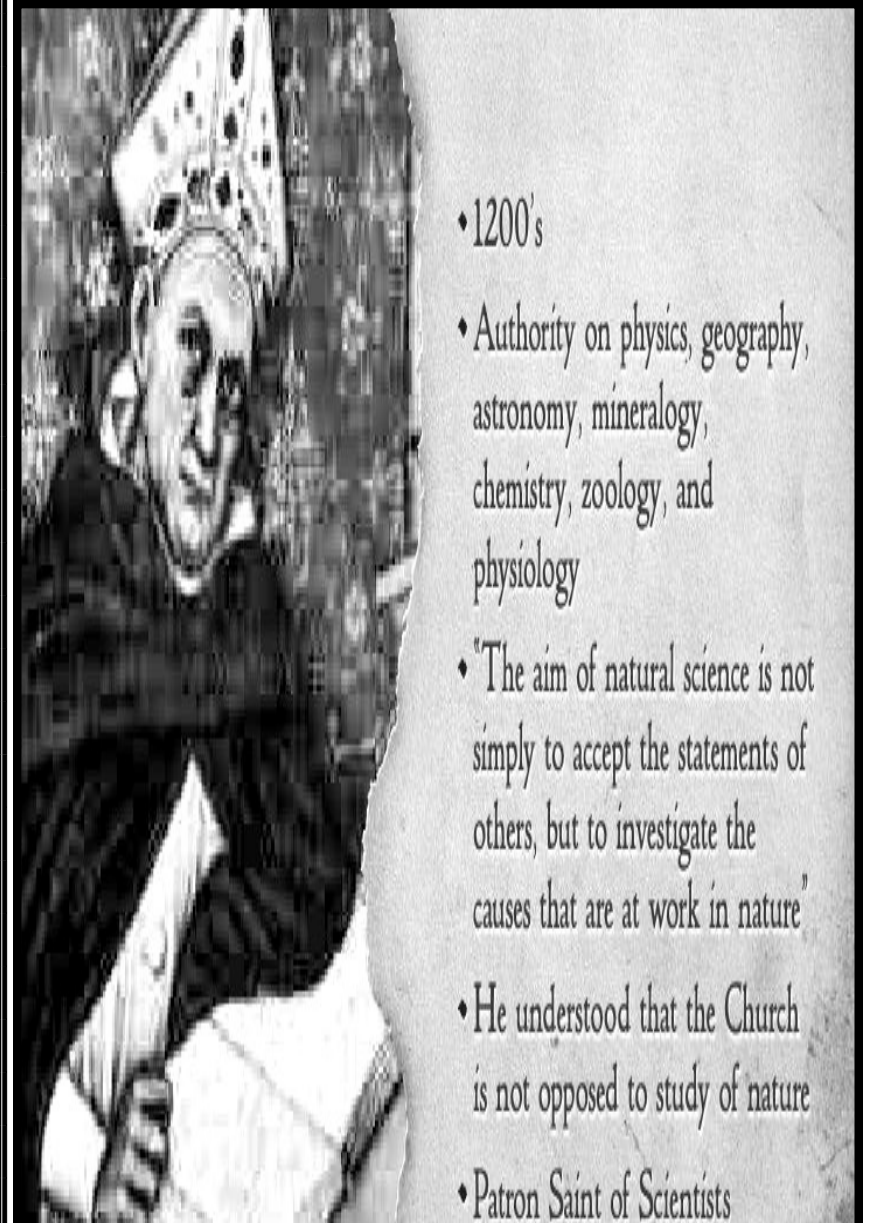
I should add that faith is built on more than intellectual conviction. I believe, with Pascal, that you can begin with rational choice to believe and eventually, faith of a deeper sort will follow, by God's grace. In my case these moments have been aided by music, Pange Lingua during a processional of the monstrance, old hymns, Bach, by quiet times at Adoration, by meditation during the Consecration and The Hours.

Finally, here's a relevant quote from St. Augustine: "Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe." St. Augustine of Hippo, Sermons 4.1.1

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Catholic Physics - Reflections of a Catholic Scientist - Part 14 Counterfactuals vs Faith



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Counterfactuals vs Faith

"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else." C.S. Lewis

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God:" St. Paul, Eph 2:8



The Empty Tomb, from petecabrerajr.com

Several weeks ago Alan commented on my post, "Top-down to Jesus", and caused me to think in depth about the intellectual component of my faith:

"Hi Bob. Am I right in interpreting this as saying that the crux of your conversion process was becoming convinced by Morison that the resurrection was a real physical event of the type claimed by the Catholic Church and that no other possibility is consistent with the existence of the documents that came to be included in the New Testament of the Christian Bible? And if that is the case, would your faith be broken (eg) by the discovery of a document reliably dated to the time of the event which describes the empty tomb as resulting from removal of the body by some interested parties who claim to have relocated it to an as yet unexplored location where on

subsequent investigation remains of the appropriate type and date are discovered?"

Before responding fully to this comment, let me say that the crux of my conversion process was not only the account of the Resurrection in Morison's "Who Moved the Stone", but the whole process that caused those in the Roman world to believe in a risen Jesus:

"What struck me even more on going from "Who Moved the Stone" to the New Testament. was that this bunch of uneducated yahoos—fishermen, tax collectors, women—had managed to out-talk the scholars of Judaism and thereby to spread the Christian faith through the Roman world. Surely they must have been inspired by encounters with the risen Jesus and the inner voice of the Holy Spirit."

The comment of the Pharisee, Rabbi Gamaliel, quoted in the New Testament, is even more relevant:

"But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: 'Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God. (emphasis added)" Acts 5:34-39.

Let me digress some more before responding directly to Alan. I'm a science-fiction devotee, particularly of alternative history—what-might-have-been stories. In one of these, "To the Promised Land" by Robert Silverberg, the Exodus failed, and so there was no Israel, Judah and no Jesus Christ. In another (the title and author of which I don't remember), Herodias sends a message to Pontius Pilate about the dream she had, and Pilate lets Jesus go free. Jesus becomes an honored prophet, but there is no Christianity and eventually the Romans adopt Judaism as a state religion with the Emperor as head. In another Constantine loses to Maxentius after crossing the Mylvian bridge, the small Christian sect withers away and Europe becomes a land of barbarians. There are a host of other science-fiction stories (involving time travel and therefore less plausible) in which Jesus is either not crucified or someone takes His place. These stories help us to