

## QUESTION 54

### The Characteristics of the Risen Christ

Next we have to consider the characteristics of the risen Christ (*de qualitate Christ resurgentis*). And on this topic there are four questions: (1) Did Christ have a real body after the resurrection? (2) Was His body glorified (*gloriosum*)? (3) Did Christ rise with a complete body (*cum corporis integritate*)? (4) What about the scars that appeared on His body?

#### Article 1

##### Did Christ have a real body after His resurrection?

It seems that Christ did not have a real body after His resurrection (*Christus post resurrectionem non habuerit verum corpus*):

**Objection 1:** A real body cannot exist together with another body in the same place at the same time. But after the resurrection Christ's body existed together with another body in the same place at the same time; for Jesus came in to His disciples, "the doors being closed," as John 20:26 reports. Therefore, it seems that after the resurrection Christ did not have a real body.

**Objection 2:** A real body does not vanish from the sight of onlookers—unless, perhaps, it disintegrates. But as Luke 24:31 reports, Christ's body "vanished from the sight" of the disciples who were looking at Him. Therefore, it seems that after the resurrection Christ did not have a real body.

**Objection 3:** Each body has a determinate outward appearance (*determinata forma*). But Christ appeared to the disciples "in a different form (*in alia effigie*)," as is clear from Mark 16:12. Therefore, it seems that after the resurrection Christ did not have a real human body.

**But contrary to this:** Luke 24:37 reports that when Christ appeared to His disciples, "they were disturbed and startled and thought that they were seeing a ghost (*spiritum*)"—as if He had an imaginary body and not a real body. To remove their fears, He said a little later (Luke 24:39), "Touch and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." Therefore, He had a real body and not an imaginary body.

**I respond:** As Damascene says in *De Fide Orthodoxa* 4, "It is what has fallen that is said to rise again." But Christ's body fell by dying, i.e., insofar as its soul, which was its formal completion, was separated from it. Hence, in order for Christ's resurrection to be real, it was necessary for that same body of Christ to be united again to the same soul. And since the reality of the nature of the body comes from the form, it follows that after the resurrection Christ's body both (a) was a real body and (b) belonged to the same nature that it previously belonged to.

By contrast, if His body had been imaginary, then the resurrection would have been [only] apparent and not real.

**Reply to objection 1:** After the resurrection Christ's body—not by a miracle but because of the "condition of glory" (*ex conditione gloriae*), as some put it—went into the disciples when the doors were closed, existing along with another body in the same place. Now the question of whether a glorified body is able to do this because it is endowed with a certain property will be discussed below (*Supplement*, q. 83, a. 2) when we deal with the general resurrection.

For now, however, as regards what suffices for the issue at hand, one should reply that it was not because of the nature of the body, but rather because of the power of the divine nature united to it, that the body in question went into the disciples when the doors were closed, even though it was a real body. Hence, in an Easter sermon Augustine explains that some argue as follows: "If it was a body—if what rose from the sepulcher was what hung on the cross—how was it able to enter through the closed doors?" And he replies: "If you understand how, then it is not a miracle. Where reason falls short, there is the

edifice of faith.” And in *Super Ioannem* he says, “Closed doors posed no obstacle to the weight of a body in which the divine nature existed; for of course He could enter in by doors that were not open, given that, when He was born, His mother’s virginity remained inviolate.” And Gregory says the same thing in a homily from the octave of Easter.

**Reply to objection 2:** As has been explained (q. 53, a. 3), Christ rose to an immortal life of glory. But as the Apostle says in 1 Corinthians 15:44, a glorified body has the disposition of being “spiritual,” i.e., subject to the spirit. Now in order for a body to be completely subject to the spirit, it is required that the body’s every action be subject to the spirit’s will. But as is clear from the Philosopher in *De Anima* 2, a thing’s being seen occurs by the action of something visible on the eye. And so if anyone has a glorified body, then it is within his power to be seen when he wants to be and not to be seen when he does not want to be.

Still, Christ had this power not only because of the condition of His glorified body, but also because of the power of His divinity, through which it can also be brought about that even a non-glorified body is miraculously unseen—just as it was miraculously bestowed upon St. Bartholomew that “he was seen if he wished to be and not seen if he did not wish to be.” Therefore, it is said that Christ vanished from the sight of the disciples not because he was corrupted or resolved into certain invisible pieces, but because He ceased by His own will to be seen by them, either while remaining present or even while departing through the gift of agility.

**Reply to objection 3:** As Severianus says in an Easter sermon, “No one thinks that at His resurrection Christ had altered the appearance of His face (*sui vultus effigiem commutasse*).” This should be understood as having to do with the features of His members, since, given that Christ’s body had been conceived through the Holy Spirit, there was nothing disordered or deformed in it which would have had to be set right at His resurrection. Yet in His resurrection He received the glory of brightness (*gloriam claritatis*). Hence, Severianus adds in the same place, “However, His semblance is changed when it goes from being mortal to immortal, with the result that it acquired a glory of countenance without losing the substance of its countenance.”

Yet He did not appear to His disciples with a glorified countenance. Instead, just as His body’s being seen or not being seen was within His own power, so it was within His power to determine that what was fashioned by His visage in the eyes of those who saw Him took either a glorified or a non-glorified form, or a partly glorified and partly non-glorified form, or any form whatsoever. Yet a small difference is all that is needed for an individual to seem to appear with an unfamiliar visage.

## Article 2

### Did Christ’s body rise again as glorified?

It seems that Christ’s body did not rise again as glorified (*corpus Christi non resurrexit gloriosum*):

**Objection 1:** Glorified bodies shine forth—this according to Matthew 13:43 (“Then the just will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father”). But bodies that shine forth are seen with the character of light and not with the character of color. Therefore, since Christ’s body was seen under the species of *color*, just as it had been seen before [the resurrection], it seems that it was not glorified.

**Objection 2:** A glorified body is incorruptible. But Christ’s body does not seem to have been incorruptible. For it was able to be touched, just as He Himself said in Luke 24:39 (“Touch and see”); and in a certain homily Gregory says, “What is touched must be corrupted, and what is not corrupted cannot be touched.” Therefore, it is not the case that Christ’s body was glorified.

**Objection 3:** As is clear from 1 Corinthians 15:44., a glorified body is not an animal body, but a spiritual body. But after the resurrection Christ's body seems to have been an animal body, since, as we read in Luke 24:41ff. and in John 21:9ff., He ate and drank with His disciples. Therefore, it seems that Christ's body was not glorified.

**But contrary to this:** In Philippians 3:21 the Apostle says, "[Christ] will refashion the body of our lowliness, conforming it to the body of His glory."

**I respond:** Christ's body was glorified in the resurrection. There are three reasons why this is apparent:

First of all, because, as 1 Corinthians 15:12ff. establishes, Christ's resurrection was the exemplar and cause of our resurrection. Now in the [general] resurrection the saints will have glorified bodies, just as it says in the same place ("What is sown in dishonor will rise in glory"). Hence, since the cause is more powerful than what is caused, and since the exemplar is more powerful than what exemplifies it, it is all the more the case that the body of the risen Christ was glorious.

Second, because through the humility of Christ's passion He merited the glory of the resurrection. Hence, He Himself said, "Now my soul is troubled" (John 12:27), which pertains to His passion, and later He adds, "Father, glorify my name!" (John 12:28), in which He asks for the glory of the resurrection.

Third, because, as was established above (q. 34, a. 4), from the beginning of His conception Christ's soul was glorified by the complete enjoyment of the divine nature. However, as was explained above (q. 14, a. 1 and q. 45, a. 2), in the dispensation of things it happened that the glory of His soul did not overflow into His body, in order that He might fulfill the mystery of our salvation in His passion. And so once this mystery of the passion and death of Christ had been completed, Christ's soul immediately dispersed its own glory into the body, which had been once again taken up in the resurrection. And so that body was made glorious.

**Reply to objection 1:** Everything that is received in an individual is received in it according to the mode of the recipient. Therefore, as Augustine explains in *Epistola ad Dioscurum*, since the glory of the soul flowed into the body, the brilliance or brightness (*fulgor seu claritas*) of the glorified body was in keeping with the color that was natural to that human body—in the same way that a pane of glass colored in diverse ways receives splendor from the sun's illumination according to the mode of its color.

Moreover, in the same way that, as has been explained (a. 1, ad 2), it is within a glorified man's power to determine whether or not his body is seen, so, too, it is within his power to determine whether or not his body's brightness (*claritas*) is seen. Hence, he can be seen in his own color without any brightness. And this is the way in which Christ appeared to His disciples after His resurrection.

**Reply to objection 2:** A body is said to be touchable not only by reason of its resistance, but also by reason of its density. Now *heavy* and *light*, *hot* and *cold*, and other contraries of this sort, which are principles of corruption belonging to elemental bodies, follow upon rarity and density. Hence, a body that is touchable by human touch is naturally corruptible. On the other hand, if there is a body—for instance, a celestial body—that resists touch and is not disposed by the qualities just mentioned, which are the proper objects of human touch, then such a body cannot be called touchable.

Now Christ's body after the resurrection was really composed of the [four] elements, having within itself touchable qualities in accord with what the nature of a human body requires, and so it was by nature touchable. And if it had possessed nothing over and beyond the nature of a human body, then it would also have been corruptible. However, it *did* have something else that rendered it incorruptible—not, to be sure, as some claim, the nature of a celestial body, which we will inquire more about below (*Supplement*, q. 82, a. 1), but instead the glory that overflowed from the beatified soul. For as Augustine says in *Epistola ad Dioscurum*, "God made the soul with such a powerful nature that from

its fullest beatitude a plenitude of healthiness, i.e., a vigor of incorruption, overflows into the body.” And so as Gregory says in the place cited in the objection, “Christ’s body after the resurrection is shown to be of the same nature, but of a different glory.”

**Reply to objection 3:** As Augustine explains in *De Civitate Dei* 13, “After the resurrection our savior, now in spiritual but nonetheless real flesh, consumed food and drink with His disciples—not out of a need for nourishment, but by the power by which He was able to do this.” For as Bede says in *Super Lucam*, “The thirsty earth absorbs water in a way different from that by which the sun’s hot ray absorbs it—the former because of its need, the latter because of its power.” Thus, after the resurrection Christ ate “not as one needing food, but in order to thereby add to the nature of His risen body (*ut eo modo naturam corporis resurgentis adstrueret*).” And because of this it does not follow that His body was an animal body, which has a need for food.

### Article 3

#### Did Christ rise with a complete body?

It seems that Christ did not rise with a complete body (*corpus Christi non resurrexerit integrum*):

**Objection 1:** Flesh and blood belong to a complete human body (*de integritate humani corporis caro et sanguis*). But Christ does not seem to have had them; for 1 Corinthians 15:50 says, “Flesh and blood will not possess the kingdom of God,” and Christ rose in the glory of the kingdom of God. Therefore, it seems that He did not have flesh and blood.

**Objection 2:** Blood is one of the four humors. Therefore, if Christ had blood, then by parity of reasoning He had the other humors, by which corruption is caused in the bodies of animals. So, then, it would follow that Christ’s body was corruptible—which is false. Therefore, He did not have flesh and blood.

**Objection 3:** Christ’s body, which rose again, ascended into heaven. But samples of His blood are kept in certain churches as relics. Therefore, Christ did not rise with a body complete in all its parts.

**But contrary to this:** In Luke 24:39, after the resurrection, our Lord, speaking with His disciples, says, “A ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”

**I respond:** As was explained above (a. 2), Christ’s body in the resurrection was of the same nature, but of a different glory. Hence, whatever pertains to the nature of a human body was there as a whole in the body of the risen Christ. Now it is clear that flesh and bones and blood and other things of this sort pertain to the nature of a human body. And so all of these existed in the body of the risen Christ. And they existed there fully (*integraliter*), without any diminution; for otherwise there would not have been a complete resurrection if not everything that had fallen through death had been restored (*si non fuisset redintegratum quidquid per mortem ceciderat*). Hence, our Lord Himself reassures His faithful ones in Matthew 10:30 when He says, “Even the hairs of your head are numbered.” And in Luke 21:18 He says, “Not a hair of your head shall perish.”

Now to claim that Christ’s body did not have flesh and bones and the other parts natural to a human being involves the error of Eutyches, bishop of the city of Constantinople, who claimed “that (a) our body in the glory of the resurrection will be untouchable and more subtle than wind and air, and that (b) our Lord, after the hearts of the disciples who touched Him had been strengthened, brought back to some sort of subtlety everything that could be touched in Him” (Gregory, *Moralia* 14). In the same place Gregory disproves this claim by appeal to the fact that Christ’s body did not change after the resurrection—this according to Romans 6:9 (“Christ, having risen from the dead, now dies no more”).

This is why the very individual who had made these claim retracted them when he was dying. For if it is unfitting for Christ to have received a body of some other nature at His conception—e.g., a celestial body, as Valentinus claimed—then it is all the more unfitting that at His resurrection He should have taken up a body of some other nature. For in the resurrection He took up again the very same body for His immortal life that He had received at His conception for His mortal life.

**Reply to objection 1:** In the cited passage ‘flesh and blood’ is being taken not for the *nature* of flesh and blood, but either (a) for the *sin* of flesh and blood, as Gregory claims in *Moralia* 14, or (b) for the *corruption* of flesh and blood, in the sense that Augustine explains in *Ad Consentium De Resurrectione Carnis*, “There will be no corruption or mortality there of flesh and blood.”

Therefore, flesh according to its substance *does* possess the kingdom of God—this according to what was said [in Luke 24:39] (“A ghost does not have flesh and bone, as you see I have”). But if ‘flesh’ is understood in terms of its corruption, it will not possess the kingdom of God. Hence, it is immediately added, in the words of the Apostle, “Neither shall corruption possess incorruption” (1 Corinthians 15:50).

**Reply to objection 2:** As Augustine says in the same book, “Perhaps, seizing upon the mention of the blood, a more irksome critic will press us and say, ‘If there was blood in [in the body of the risen Christ], then why not pituite, [that is, phlegm], and why not yellow bile, [that is, cholera], and why not black bile, [that is, melancholy], the four humors by which the body is tempered, as medical teaching testifies?’ But whatever anyone might add, let him be wary of adding corruption, lest he corrupt the health and purity of his own faith. For as regards the visible and tractable nature of bodies, God’s power is able to take away whatever qualities it wants while others remain, with the result that decline, [i.e., corruption], is absent while form is present; movement is present while weariness is absent; the power to eat is present, while the need to be hungry is absent.”

**Reply to objection 3:** Since all of the blood that flowed from Christ’s body belonged to His real human nature, it rose in Christ’s body. And the argument is the same for all the little particles that belonged to His real and complete human nature.

As for the blood samples that are kept in certain churches as relics, they did not flow from Christ’s side but are claimed to have flowed miraculously from a certain statue of Christ that was struck.

#### Article 4

##### Was it fitting for Christ’s body to rise with scars?

It seems that it was not fitting for Christ’s body to rise with scars (*corpus Christi cum cicatricibus resurgere non debuerit*):

**Objection 1:** 1 Corinthians 15:52 says, “The dead shall rise incorruptible (*incorrupti*).” But scars and wounds involve a sort of corruption and defectiveness (*ad quandam corruptionem pertinent et defectum*). Therefore, it was not fitting for Christ, who was the author of the resurrection, to rise with scars.

**Objection 2:** As has been explained (a. 3), Christ’s body rose as a complete body. But open wounds (*aperturae vulnerum*) are contrary to a body’s integrity, since the body has discontinuities because of them. Therefore, it does not seem to have been fitting for the open wounds to remain in Christ’s body—even if certain traces of them did remain that were sufficient for the gaze to which Thomas gave his credence when it was said to him, “Because you have seen me, Thomas, you have believed.”

**Objection 3:** In *De Fide Orthodoxa* 4 Damascene says, “After the resurrection certain things were,

to be sure, said truly of Christ—yet not truly according to nature, but instead truly according to a dispensation aimed at certifying that the body that had risen was the very body that had suffered, e.g., what was said concerning the scars.” But once the cause ceases, the effect ceases. Therefore, it seems that once the disciples had been assured about the resurrection, [the body] no longer had the scars. But it was not compatible with the immutability of glory for the body to take on something which would not remain in it forever. Therefore, it seems that it was not fitting for Him to take up again in the resurrection a body with scars.

**But contrary to this:** In John 20:27 our Lord says to Thomas, “Bring your finger here, and see my hands, and bring here your hand and put it into my side ...”.

**I respond:** It was fitting for Christ’s soul to take up His body with scars in the resurrection:

First of all, for the sake of the glory of Christ Himself. For in *Super Lucam* Bede explains that He preserved the scars not because He lacked the power to heal them, but “in order that He might carry around the triumph of His victory forever.” Hence, in *De Civitate Dei* 12 Augustine likewise says, “Perhaps in that kingdom we will see on the bodies of the martyrs the traces of the wounds that they suffered for the name of Christ. For in their case there will be dignity in the scars and no deformity. And a certain sort of beauty—in the body, but of virtue and not of the body—will shine through in them.”

Second, in order to strengthen the hearts of His disciples “in their belief in His resurrection” (Bede).

Third, “in order that when He pleads for us with the Father, He might always show what sort of death He suffered for man” (Bede).

Fourth, “in order that He might convince those who have been redeemed in His blood how mercifully they have been helped, by showing them the traces of that same death” (Bede).

Lastly, “in order that on judgment day He might make known [to the damned] how with what justice they are being condemned” (Bede). Hence, in *De Symbolo* Augustine says, “Christ knew why He had preserved the scars in His body. For just as He showed them to Thomas, who would not believe unless he touched and saw them, so, too, He is going to show His wounds to His enemies, in order that, convicting them, the Truth might say, “Behold the man whom you crucified. Look at the wounds that you inflicted. Recognize the side that you pierced. For it was opened by you and for your sake, and yet you have not wanted to enter.”

**Reply to objection 1:** The scars that have remained in Christ’s body do not involve corruption or defectiveness, but instead make for a greater increase of glory, insofar as they are traces of virtue. And in those places with wounds there will appear a special sort of beauty.

**Reply to objection 2:** Even though the openings of the wounds involve a certain break in continuity, all of this is compensated for by a greater beauty of glory, with the result that the body is more complete and no less a whole.

Now Thomas not only saw the wounds but also touched them, because, as Pope Leo puts it, “As regards his own faith it was sufficient for him to have seen what he saw. But it was on our behalf that he touched what he saw.”

**Reply to objection 3:** Christ wanted the scars of His wounds to remain in His body not only in order to certify the faith of His disciples, but also for other reasons, and it is apparent from these reasons that the scars will always remain on His body.

For as Augustine asserts in *Ad Consentium de Resurrectione Carnis*, “I believe our Lord’s body in heaven to be as it was when He ascended into heaven.” And in *Moralia* 14 Gregory says, “If—contrary to Paul’s correct teaching—anything could have been changed in Christ’s body after the resurrection, then after the resurrection our Lord returned to death. But what fool would presume to make this claim, except someone who denies a real resurrection of the flesh?”

Hence, it is clear that the scars that Christ exhibited in His body after the resurrection were never removed from that body afterwards.