

The Resurrection of Jesus as a Historical Claim: A Theological-Legal Analysis of the Evidence and a Critical Examination of the Christian Faith

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Apologetic and Theological Study

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Abstract:

The resurrection of Jesus remains one of the most debated events in Christian theology, with various objections questioning its historical credibility and evidential basis. This study examines the historical evidence for Jesus' resurrection through an interdisciplinary theological-juridical approach by employing the principles of the law of evidence as an analytical framework. Using a qualitative research design based on historical, theological, and documentary analysis, the study evaluates biblical eyewitness testimony, the witness of the Apostolic Fathers, and relevant non-Christian historical sources within the categories of direct, circumstantial, testimonial, and documentary evidence. The findings demonstrate that these sources collectively satisfy the principles of evidential consistency, corroboration, and plurality required in the law of evidence. Conversely, the major objections to the resurrection fail to provide sufficient evidential support to invalidate the historical testimony. This study argues that the resurrection of Jesus can be understood not only as the foundation of Christian faith but also as a historically grounded event supported by coherent and cumulative evidence. The study contributes a novel interdisciplinary framework by integrating theological inquiry, historical investigation, and legal evidentiary analysis into contemporary Christian apologetics.

Keywords:

Jesus' resurrection; law of evidence; historical evidence; Christian apologetics; theological-juridical analysis

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INTRODUCTION

To this day, the resurrection of Jesus remains one of the most discussed and debated topics in the academic world. For researchers and historians, the question that arises is whether the resurrection of Jesus was truly a historical event or merely a belief that developed within the early Christian community. This debate has given rise to various perspectives. Some scholars argue that the Resurrection of Jesus is supported by a number of historical facts, such as the empty tomb, the testimonies of the disciples, and the transformation in the lives of Jesus' followers, who were previously afraid but later became bold in proclaiming the Gospel. Conversely, others assess that the disciples' experiences are better understood as spiritual experiences, visions, or theological interpretations of Jesus' death (Hurtado, 2013). Academic discussions also address other equally important questions, such as whether Jesus' tomb was truly empty, how to understand Jesus' appearances after His death, and to what extent historical methods can investigate supernatural events. Therefore, the resurrection of Jesus remains a relevant academic issue open to further research. The lack of consensus among scholars indicates that this topic still offers ample room for further study, whether from historical, biblical, or theological perspectives. Indeed, amidst these differing viewpoints, the resurrection of Jesus continues to be one of the most important and fascinating themes in academic research on Christianity.

For Christians, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the core of the Christian faith and holds profound significance for believers. For Christians, the resurrection is not merely a fictional religious narrative but serves as the foundational basis that gives meaning to the Christian faith. Indeed, the Bible affirms that without the resurrection, the faith of Christ's followers would be meaningless. Therefore, discussions about the resurrection of Jesus are always closely tied to questions of faith and truth. From the first century to the modern era, the resurrection of Jesus has often been debated as a matter of faith or belief alone, while others have sought to assess whether the resurrection actually occurred historically (Astika, 2012). This difference in perspective raises the important question: Is the resurrection of Jesus merely a matter of faith constructed by Christians, or can it also be understood as a historical fact?

Many people doubt the Christian faith, particularly regarding the resurrection of Jesus, due to the differing perspectives between faith and history. Some view the resurrection solely as a Christian belief. They see it not as a fact, but merely as a baseless conviction. Additionally, some doubt the accounts in the Bible because they were written by Jesus' own followers and are therefore considered less objective. In today's world, people also tend to demand clearer evidence that can be empirically tested. This has led many to increasingly question whether Jesus' resurrection actually took place or not. To better understand this issue, a theological, formal-legal, and historical approach is needed so that Jesus' resurrection can be analyzed as an event that truly occurred or merely a hallucination (Ralte & Kumar, 2022). From an apologetic perspective, this approach aims to rationally explain and defend the Christian faith. By combining these three approaches, the discussion becomes more balanced and comprehensive in addressing logical fallacies.

Various attacks on the resurrection of Jesus by some non-Christian polemicists rely on fallacious arguments, misinterpreting the resurrection of Jesus in a baseless manner. Insan Mokoginta, for example, asserts that the resurrection and ascension of Jesus are a hollow

illusion fabricated by Christians (Islam, 2015). The same view is expressed by *Dan Bekker*, a convert who claims to have served as a pastor for nineteen years. According to him, he sees many contradictions in the Bible regarding the divinity of Jesus, and one of the claims he deems impossible is that of Jesus' resurrection. Other critics assert that Jesus' resurrection was merely an illusion created by the disciples who were disheartened by the death of Jesus Christ. His disciples experienced cognitive dissonance, which explains how Jesus' disciples responded to His death on the cross. Their despair stemmed from a devastating blow to the hope they had held—that Jesus was the promised Messiah—so Jesus' death created a psychological conflict between that belief and the reality that Jesus had died on the cross. Therefore, to resolve this tension, Jesus' disciples reconstructed the story as if Jesus had truly risen (Bart D. Ehrman, 2014, pp. 183–206). Wallace, D. B. "The Gospel According to Bart: A Review Article of **Misquoting Jesus** by Bart Ehrman" critically discusses and evaluates Bart Ehrman's views on textual variations in the New Testament. This article explains Ehrman's claim that the existence of numerous manuscript variations affects the reliability of the Bible. This article asserts that although textual differences exist due to the copying process, the central message of the Gospel remains consistent and trustworthy (Wallace, 2006). In this context, the theory of the rules of evidence can serve as a methodological framework, one that has not been widely utilized in apologetics, to uncover the truth and refute claims based on *logical fallacies*. In legal practice, past events are reconstructed through the evaluation of testimony, circumstantial evidence, and the drawing of conclusions based on existing facts (Ronald J. Allen & Alex Stein, 2005, pp. 55–60).

This study aims to address erroneous arguments regarding the Christian faith using existing historical evidence and legally substantiated proof, thereby providing an apologetic framework to help those who question or doubt the fact of Jesus' resurrection. To ensure a systematic discussion, this study is divided into several sections. This study combines history, theology, law, and logic to analyze the resurrection of Jesus in an integrated manner, and employs legal principles of proof to evaluate the claim rationally and expose logical fallacies in the rejection of Jesus' resurrection. Some examples of research that distinguish this study from previous studies include a paper by Wibowo, in which he emphasizes the importance of 1 Corinthians 15:1–11 for the Christian understanding of Jesus' resurrection through a biblical and contextual approach (Wibowo & Salurante, 2020). However, that study focused more on a theological dialogue with Bultmann's thought and the local Rambu Solo tradition, and thus did not examine the evidential value of the testimonies of the witnesses to the resurrection as recorded by Paul. Consequently, there remains a research gap regarding how the resurrection testimony in 1 Corinthians 15:1–11 can be analyzed through the perspective of the theory of the law of evidence (Wibowo & Salurante, 2020), which is why this topic, distinct from other studies, expands the academic discourse on the resurrection of Jesus by examining the testimonies of the resurrection witnesses through the lens of the law of evidence and offering an interdisciplinary approach that integrates biblical studies, history, and legal studies.

There is also research by Tunggaldinata that discusses the resurrection of Jesus as a point of continuity between the Christ of faith and the historical Jesus, positioning the radical transformation of the disciples as the primary evidence for the historicity of the resurrection (Tunggaldinata, 2002). However, this research remains limited to historical and theological

arguments without testing the evidential value of the presented facts. Consequently, there remains a research gap regarding how the disciples' testimonies and the transformations in their lives can be analyzed through the lens of the theory of evidence. As a development of previous research, this study examines the facts of Jesus' resurrection based on the principles of the theory of evidence and offers a new interdisciplinary perspective on understanding the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus, the main difference lies in the fact that this study not only explains or compares from theological and historical perspectives but also systematically examines and defends the claim of the resurrection through the lens of law and logic, thereby providing a new, more comprehensive, and argumentative contribution to the field of Christian apologetics.

METHODS

This research method employs a qualitative approach through a literature review using primary sources, the Bible, as well as secondary sources such as history books, journals, and theological writings to analyze the resurrection of Christ from theological, legal, historical, apologetic, and Christian faith perspectives. Data collection was conducted using triangulation (a combination of methods); data analysis was inductive; and the research results emphasize meaning over generalization. The research subjects were scientific and presented as they are, without manipulation by the researchers (Sugiyono, 2020, p. 9). Afifudin and Beni Ahmad Saebani assert that qualitative methods are used to obtain in-depth data—data that contains meaning, truth, and certainty—and to uncover the value behind the apparent data (Afifuddin, M.M. & Dr. Beni Achmad Saebani, 2018, p. 59).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Doubts and Rejection of Jesus' Resurrection

Doubts and rejection of the Christian faith in Jesus Christ have existed since the early days of Christianity and have continued to evolve over time. Attacks and accusations against the Christian Scriptures have also been consistently voiced by non-Christians; this is logical given their uncertainty regarding the Christian belief in Jesus Christ as the savior of humanity. David Robert Org and Robert B. Coote argue that, in fact, each Gospel has distinct differences in its narrative style, perspective, and theological emphasis, and that these differences were intentionally crafted by their authors; therefore, there is no need to force them into a single, uniform narrative, but rather to enrich our understanding of the faith and demonstrate that the truth of the Gospels is not a collective fabrication by the authors (David Robert Org & Robert B. Coote, 2007, p. 14). Many arguments rejecting Jesus' resurrection are built on *logical fallacies* that actually weaken the strength of those arguments. Therefore, analyzing these errors in reasoning is essential to correcting misunderstandings about the Christian faith. One example is the assumption that it was not Jesus who physically rose, but only a spirit or a phantom. This view is difficult to defend logically, because if only a spirit appeared while Jesus' body remained in the tomb, then the disciples would not have had sufficient evidence to believe that the resurrection actually took place (Kalis Stevanus, 2020, p. 234).

Since the First Gospel of the New Testament was written by Mark between A.D. 55 and 65 (Bruce Wilkinson, 2017, p. 393), followed by Matthew, Luke, and John, the disciples recounted various attempts to obscure the news of Jesus' resurrection; the tomb guards were bribed to spread the story that His body had been stolen (Matt. 28:12–13). Rejection of the concept of the resurrection had emerged within first-century Judaism through the Sadducee sect. The Pharisees accepted the hope of a resurrection at the end of the age, whereas the Sadducees rejected the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead entirely (N. T. Wright, 2003, pp. 129–132). In Gnostic tradition, *Docetism* teaches that Jesus only appeared to have a human body; in reality, it was not Jesus who was crucified but perhaps Simon of Cyrene, so that his suffering, death, and resurrection are not understood as genuine physical events. They argued that Christ freed himself (more accurately, fled) from a shameful death (Jonar Situmorang, 2020, p. 102). The *Ebionite* view regards Jesus primarily as a righteous man chosen by God, not as the incarnate Word of God. Therefore, they do not understand Jesus' resurrection as a divine event affirming His divine nature, but rather as an act of God glorifying a faithful prophet or messenger (Paulus Daun, 2002, pp. 69–71).

Some skeptics reject Jesus' resurrection because they consider the event unprovable by modern scientific methods, such as laboratory experiments. They argue that anything that cannot be directly tested cannot be considered true. However, this line of reasoning is flawed because not all truths must be proven through scientific experiments, especially regarding events that occurred in the past. Anderson presents a theory proposed by Venturini about two centuries ago that Christ was indeed nailed to the cross; He suffered greatly from shock, lost a great deal of blood, and endured immense pain. He fainted but did not actually die; this is based on the fact that medical science at that time was not yet very advanced, so the apostles assumed that He was dead (Josh McDowell, 2021, p. 359). The same view was expressed by Ernest F. Kevan (1903–1965). A British Baptist theologian and scholar commented on the swoon theory, which posits that what restored Jesus's consciousness was the spices anointed on His body, which had the effect of reviving Him (Josh McDowell, 2004, p. 359).

Researchers disagree with this view when examined from a biblical perspective. John, one of Jesus' apostles who was near Him during the crucifixion, testified that to ensure Jesus was dead, one of the Roman soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and "blood and water flowed out" (cf. John 19:34). Therefore, the swoon theory, which asserts that Jesus did not actually die, but merely fainted on the cross—fails to adequately explain His resurrection, both historically and logically. This theory is difficult to defend because it fails to adequately explain Jesus' physical condition after the grueling crucifixion, including His suffering, blood loss, and the Roman crucifixion procedure, which was specifically designed to ensure death. Furthermore, if Jesus merely fainted, it is hard to understand how He could have risen and then convinced His disciples that He had conquered death. The New Testament recounts various doubts and accusations regarding Jesus' resurrection. One example is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, when the Roman guards reported that Jesus' tomb was empty. The chief priests and elders then bribed the soldiers to claim that Jesus' disciples had stolen His body while they were asleep (Matt. 28:11–15). This demonstrates that from the very beginning, there were efforts to deny the resurrection, even though the event itself remains central to the Christian faith.

For the Roman soldiers, admitting that they had failed to guard the tomb could have resulted in severe punishment. Therefore, having accepted bribes and assurances of protection from the Jewish leaders, they had an incentive to spread that story. Meanwhile, the Jewish leaders (the high priests and elders) had felt threatened by Jesus' influence from the very beginning. If His resurrection were acknowledged, then His claims to be the Messiah and Lord would be validated. This would undermine their authority in the eyes of the Jewish people. In Roman military discipline during the *Roman Empire*, such negligence was often punishable by death, as it was considered a threat to national security or the mission entrusted to the soldier. One well-known form of punishment was *fustuarium*, which involved execution by being beaten to death by fellow soldiers as a form of severe military discipline (Adrian Goldsworthy, 2003, pp. 101–102).

Such skepticism, as described above, is understandable given their lack of understanding of the Christian faith. Even in the Gospel of John, there is an account of Thomas's doubt, in which he declared he would believe only if he saw for himself and touched the nail marks and the wound in Jesus's side; however, Jesus Himself addressed this doubt by appearing directly to Thomas and asking him to act on his intention. Mambraku explains that Thomas rationally refused to believe what the other disciples said, yet it was precisely Thomas's doubt that led Jesus to admonish him; at the same time, the Lord Jesus' words strengthened Thomas's capacity for faith and that of all Christians throughout the ages (Mambraku, 2023).

From these various perspectives, it can be seen that skepticism regarding Jesus' resurrection often stems from a limited viewpoint that fails to consider all the available evidence. The arguments against the resurrection are not strong enough to counter the evidence upheld by Christians. Therefore, a broader understanding and a more objective assessment are necessary to avoid relying solely on narrow assumptions. On the other hand, Christians continue to uphold their faith tradition, specifically believing in the truth of Jesus' resurrection, which is supported by strong and objective historical evidence and testimonies.

The Disciples' Testimony Regarding Christ's Resurrection

Jesus Himself declared that He had authority over His life; His death and resurrection were not events that occurred without His will. Jesus explicitly stated, "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again" (John 10:18). This statement by Jesus proves that He truly died and raised Himself on the third day, as evidenced by the testimonies of the disciples and apostles. Matthew's account of Christ's resurrection begins when Mary Magdalene and the other Mary found the tomb empty and heard the angel's announcement that Jesus had risen (Matt. 28:1, 6). Jesus then appeared to them and sent them to share the news of His resurrection with the disciples. Jesus later appeared in Galilee and gave the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18–19). Likewise, Mark provides testimony of Christ's resurrection by highlighting the empty tomb. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome came to anoint Jesus' body, but found that the stone had been rolled away. Mark testifies that Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, two disciples on the road, and the eleven disciples, then gave them the Great Commission to preach the Gospel to the whole world (16:9–20).

Luke emphasizes that the women found the empty tomb and heard the angel's message that Jesus had risen (24:1–12); Jesus appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus (24:13–35), and then to the disciples in Jerusalem as proof that He was truly alive (24:36–49). This account concludes with His ascension into heaven, which affirms the resurrection as the foundation of the Gospel message for all nations (24:50–53). Likewise, in Peter's confession regarding Jesus' resurrection, Peter declares that God raised Jesus and that the apostles are His witnesses, and that death could not hold Him, in accordance with David's prophecy (Acts 2:24, 2:232). The Apostle Paul also offers a testimony of his faith in the resurrection of Christ, which constitutes an early and systematic theological formulation. Paul testifies that Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to Cephas, and then to the twelve disciples. After that, He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once; subsequently, He appeared to James, and then to all the apostles (1 Cor. 15:3–8).

Furthermore, the tradition regarding the empty tomb is a crucial element in the historical reconstruction of the resurrection. The narrative of the women discovering Jesus' tomb empty, as recorded in the canonical Gospels, indicates the existence of an early, independent tradition that is difficult to explain without assuming an extraordinary event. From a legal perspective, this can be understood as a form of circumstantial evidence that strengthens the main claim through indirect yet relevant factual indications (N. T. Wright, 2003). Professor James Hastings remarked regarding the shroud found in the empty tomb of Jesus Christ: "As far back as the time of Chrysostom (4th century AD), people began to note that myrrh is a spice that adheres so tightly to the body that the shroud would not be easily removed" (Josh McDowell, 2021).

Based on the testimonies of the apostles and disciples of Jesus, who unequivocally witnessed and saw for themselves all the events surrounding Christ's resurrection—it follows that, by law, this is insufficient because they were able to describe in detail what they saw, felt, and experienced firsthand as eyewitnesses to Jesus' resurrection, and they remained with Jesus for forty days before He ascended to the throne of His Kingdom.

The Testimony of the Church Fathers Regarding the Resurrection

In order to discover and strengthen the hypothesis regarding accurate historical evidence of Jesus' death through eyewitness accounts, it is necessary to examine the testimonies of the Church Fathers. Why are their testimonies important? Because they were eyewitnesses who heard and wrote down what they knew. Clement of Rome (35–99 CE) affirmed that Christ's resurrection serves as a guarantee of the resurrection of believers and the foundation for perseverance in faith amid suffering. He viewed Christ's resurrection as a historical reality, stating that Jesus demonstrated His resurrection as the firstborn from among the dead (Michael W. Holmes, 2007, p. 79). There is also a testimony from Ignatius of Antioch (35–107 CE). Ignatius said, "For I know and believe that He was in the flesh even after the resurrection." And when He came to Peter and those with him, He said to them, "Touch Me and see that I am not a spirit without a body." And immediately they touched Him and believed, for they were intimately united with His flesh and blood. Likewise, Polycarp of Smyrna (c. 69–155 CE) affirmed that the God who raised Christ will also raise believers, provided they live in obedience

to His will. He emphasized a life of following God's command to love what is good, to shun evil such as greed, lies, and slander, and not to repay evil with evil (Michael W. Holmes, 2007).

Justin Martyr (100–165 CE) defended the resurrection of Christ before the non-Christian world as a historical event that fulfilled Old Testament prophecies. He rejected the accusation that Jesus' body had been stolen and affirmed that the apostles were trustworthy witnesses. Justin stated that the doctrine of the Word as the firstborn of God, conceived without sexual union, as well as that of Jesus Christ, who was crucified, died, rose, and ascended to heaven, was not foreign when compared to already established beliefs (Philip Schaff, 2002, p. 260). Irenaeus of Lyon (130–202 CE) systematically developed the theology of the resurrection by emphasizing the concept of recapitulation, in which Christ restores all of creation through His death and resurrection. He also opposed Gnosticism, which denied the bodily resurrection. Irenaeus explained that Christ truly experienced death like any ordinary human being, descending into the realm of the dead and remaining there until the third day. After that, He rose bodily, even showing the scars of the crucifixion to His disciples, and then ascended to the Father (Philip Schaff, 2002).

Considering the time when the Church Fathers wrote, they lived not too long after the events of Jesus' resurrection, so they were still close to the sources. While they were not eyewitnesses themselves, they received and believed the testimonies of the apostles, which were later written down and passed down through church tradition. Based on these teachings, they understood, developed, and defended the faith regarding Jesus' resurrection. Their testimony was based on trust in eyewitnesses, not on their own personal experiences. The testimonies of the Church Fathers mentioned above are sufficient to represent the many other testimonies—besides those of the disciples and apostles—regarding Jesus' resurrection.

Non-Christian Testimonies Regarding Jesus' Suffering

Some secular figures—even those from atheist circles—have also written and expressed opinions about Jesus. Although they did not explicitly write about Jesus' resurrection, some of them described Jesus' suffering and the process of his death. Thallus was an ancient historian from around the 1st century CE, likely from the Eastern Mediterranean region (possibly Samaria or the Eastern Roman Empire). He is known as one of the earliest historians to write after the time of Jesus. His work is one of the earliest writings to mention events related to Jesus' crucifixion. His work is no longer available, but it was cited by *Julius Africanus*. Thallus attempted to explain the darkness that occurred during Jesus' crucifixion, which is described in the Gospels as a solar eclipse. This is significant because he indirectly acknowledges the occurrence of darkness when Jesus died on the cross, even though he offered a natural, rather than a supernatural, explanation. There is also Phlegon, a 2nd-century Greek historian, who recorded a great darkness and an earthquake during the reign of Emperor Tiberius. Although he did not mention Jesus by name, his account—quoted by Origen and Eusebius—was often understood by early Christian writers to relate to the crucifixion of Jesus. Therefore, his writing is considered to be of significant value as evidence from a non-Christian source regarding the occurrence of extraordinary events during that period (Josh McDowell, 2021).

Similarly, Flavius Josephus (37–100 CE), a Jewish historian, refers to Jesus in his work **Antiquities of the Jews** as a historical figure who was crucified on the orders of Pontius Pilate. In a section known as the **Testimonium Flavianum**, there is a statement that Jesus' followers remained faithful and claimed that He rose from the dead on the third day. Although there is debate regarding Christian interpolations in this text, the majority of scholars agree that the core of the testimony is authentic (Josh McDowell, 2021). Tacitus (56–120 CE) recorded that Christ was put to death during the reign of Emperor Tiberius at the hands of Pilate. He also noted that the Christian movement continued to grow after Jesus' death. Although Tacitus held a negative view of Christians, his testimony reinforces the fact of the crucifixion and the continuity of the faith among Christ's followers, which is implicitly linked to the belief in the resurrection (Tacitus, 1942, pp. 283–285).

An account by Suetonius (69–122 CE) mentions unrest among the Jews in Rome triggered by Chrestus. Although the reference is brief and indirect, many scholars associate it with Christ and the early conflicts surrounding the preaching about Him. This indicates that the Christian movement had already spread widely and was having a social impact from the very beginning (Suetonius, 1957, pp. 192–193). Although non-Christian figures such as Flavius Josephus, Tacitus, Phlegon, and Suetonius did not acknowledge the resurrection of Jesus as part of their faith, they nevertheless recorded several important facts. They acknowledge that Jesus was a real historical figure, crucified by the Roman government, and that His followers believed He had risen. Therefore, this testimony from external sources serves as strong historical evidence that Jesus' resurrection is not merely a story fabricated later, but an early belief that can be academically traced.

Analysis of the Resurrection of Jesus from the Perspective of the Law of Evidence

In light of the various objections to Jesus' resurrection, in accordance with Article 163 of the HIR, researchers bear the burden of proof to demonstrate the truth of the Christian faith based on legal facts through the means of witness testimony and accurate historical evidence of the resurrection (RIB HIR: Revised Indonesian Regulations, 2014, p. 121). R. Subekti explains that one of the most critical issues in the law of evidence is the allocation of the burden of proof; this must be done fairly and without bias, as any bias would lead to (R. Subekti, S.H., 1985, p. 15). Therefore, in this section, the researcher seeks to supplement and strengthen the evidence regarding Jesus' resurrection by applying the theoretical framework of the law of evidence through a legal analysis of the key elements of the various pieces of evidence for Jesus' resurrection that have been outlined in the previous subsections.

According to Eddy O.S. Hiarij, in English two terms are both frequently translated as "evidence" in Indonesian, yet they have distinct meanings: "evidence" and "proof." "Evidence" refers to information that serves as the basis for and reinforces the belief that some or all of the facts are true. Meanwhile, the result of the process of evaluating and drawing conclusions from that "evidence" is: In research on the resurrection of Jesus, we can see that "evidence" and "proof" are interrelated. For example, the testimonies of the disciples, the accounts in the Gospels, the empty tomb, and the transformed lives of Jesus' followers are evidence—that is,

things that support the truth of the resurrection. But none of these alone constitutes a conclusion. Proof occurs when all this evidence is carefully considered, analyzed, and organized, leading to the conviction that Jesus truly rose from the dead. Thus, research involves not only gathering evidence but also understanding and drawing conclusions from that evidence so that it becomes truly convincing. According to the Rules of Evidence, in establishing the truth of a matter, it must be supported by at least two admissible pieces of evidence. This consists of at least one witness combined with an expert witness, a document, or a piece of evidence, provided that these two pieces of evidence reinforce one another and do not contradict each other; alternatively, the combination of the two pieces of evidence may consist of the testimonies of two witnesses whose accounts are consistent and mutually reinforcing (Syaiful Bakhri, S.H., 2018, p. 40).

William R. Bell, as cited by Eddy O.S. Hiariej, divides evidence into seven categories: Direct Evidence, Circumstantial Evidence, Substitute Evidence, Testimonial Evidence, Real Evidence, Demonstrative Evidence, and Documentary Evidence. (Eddy O.S. Hiariej, 2012). Of the seven theories presented by William, the researcher utilized several relevant theories that could be applied to prove the facts revealed in this study. Circumstantial evidence, or indirect evidence, is evidence that does not directly prove a fact but can point to or indicate that an event actually occurred (Eddy O.S. Hiariej, 2023, p. 54). In the discussion of the subsection on the Disciples' Testimony Regarding Christ's Resurrection, it is established that after Jesus rose from the dead, they were still together with Him; in fact, the apostle Paul explicitly states that, in addition to the disciples and apostles, Jesus appeared to more than five hundred people (1 Cor. 15:6). When the Apostle Paul wrote his testimony, he explicitly stated that most of the witnesses were still alive. Thus, the theory of direct evidence is highly accurate and can be convincingly proven.

The theory of circumstantial evidence is highly relevant to several findings in this study, such as the testimonies of the Church Fathers discussed in the preceding subsection. Although some of the Church Fathers' testimonies were not based on firsthand observation, they lived and interacted with Jesus' disciples and apostles; thus, such testimonies meet the criteria for evidence and constitute accurate proof. For example, Polycarp was a disciple of the Apostle John, an eyewitness to Jesus' death and resurrection; thus, his testimony meets the elements of valid evidence. Putri, I. K., in her research, highlights Constitutional Court Decision No. 65/PUU-VIII/2010, which explains that the probative value of testimony from witnesses who did not see, hear, or know the events directly is strong because the testimonies of one witness are interrelated with those of others and are relevant to other forms of evidence (Putri, 2020). Next is testimonial evidence, or witness testimony. This type of evidence is divided into three categories: 1) testimony regarding facts; 2) opinion testimony; and 3) expert testimony (Eddy O.S. Hiariej, 2023). The relevance of testimonial evidence, as demonstrated in this study from the perspective of the law of evidence, lies in testimony derived from individuals who directly experienced or observed a fact. In the event of Jesus' resurrection, this category is evident in the testimony of witnesses who claimed to have seen the risen Jesus (1 Cor. 15:5–8), spoken with Him (John 20:19–29), ate with Him (Luke 24:41–43), and even touched His body (John 20:27). Therefore, the testimonies of the apostles and other witnesses can be regarded as factual accounts of the fact that Jesus, who had been crucified and died, later appeared to them alive. Although they were not eyewitnesses to the actual process of Jesus' resurrection, their

testimonies attest to the reality of His existence after the resurrection had taken place. *Opinion testimony* is evident in the conclusions drawn by the apostles and the Church Fathers, and is even indirectly acknowledged by non-Christian sources, that Jesus truly rose from the dead. This conclusion did not arise from speculation, but from facts they received, witnessed, and passed down, thus demonstrating that the belief in Jesus' resurrection is built upon testimony that possesses evidential value and is academically verifiable. Expert opinions come not only from modern scholars but also from the testimonies of non-Christian historians and writers such as Thallus, Phlegon, Flavius Josephus, Tacitus, and Suetonius. Although they were not followers of Christ and did not directly acknowledge Jesus' resurrection, their writings confirm key facts, such as Jesus' crucifixion, the extraordinary events surrounding His death, and the existence of followers who believed from the very beginning that Jesus had risen. Therefore, the testimonies of these experts and non-Christian sources hold significant evidential value in supporting the historical analysis of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (The Criminal Code (KUHP) and the Criminal Procedure Code (KUHAP) and Their Amendments, 2026, p. 270). Documentary evidence, which refers to evidence in law, takes various forms, such as writings, letters, photographs, recordings, and other documents. Generally, the types used in court proceedings include witness testimony, expert testimony, documents, and physical evidence. In Indonesian law, letters are considered documents (Eddy O.S. Hiariej, 2023).

The testimonies of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, and Paul were written in detail and through a process of research; furthermore, these letters are used and trusted by millions of Christians worldwide, and they constitute written documents that satisfy the elements of the theory of documentary evidence. Furthermore, the writings of the Church Fathers and the opinions of non-Christian philosophers, most of which remain documented to this day, confirm that the historical accuracy of Jesus' resurrection is true and legally proven. In line with this theory, Article 164 of the HIR regulates the means of evidence, namely documents, witnesses, confessions, presumptions, and oaths (RIB HIR: Revised Indonesian Regulations, 2014). Similarly, Article 164 of the HIR and Article 1867 of the BW (Civil Code) state that proof by writing is established through authentic documents as well as handwritten documents (R. Subekti, 1978, p. 419).

Article 236 of the 2025 Criminal Procedure Code stipulates that proving a material fact requires two witnesses, as a single witness is not sufficient to establish the truth of a case (Criminal Procedure Code 2025, with commentary, 2025, p. 125). In the theory of evidence law, this principle is known as "one witness is no witness" (Unus Testis Nullus Testis), meaning that if a case relies on only one witness without being supported by other evidence, the judge may conclude that the evidence is inaccurate and lacks the weight required to prove the case, and thus lacks probative value. That is why two witnesses and other forms of evidence are required (Mrs. Retnowulan Sutantio, S.H., and Iskandar Oeripkartawinata, 1989, p. 67).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the resurrection of Jesus Christ can be understood not only as a doctrine of faith but also as a historical event supported by a body of evidence possessing *evidential* value. The testimonies of the apostles as factual witnesses, the tradition of the Church Fathers as indirect evidence, and accounts from non-Christian sources form an interrelated and

mutually reinforcing body of evidence. Based on the principles of the law of evidence, this evidence fulfills the elements of plurality of evidence, relevance, and consistency; thus, the belief in Jesus' resurrection is not based on assumptions or myths but is rooted in facts that can be traced and academically substantiated.

The novelty of this research lies in the use of the theory of the law of evidence as an evaluative framework in the study of Christian apologetics. Unlike previous studies, which generally discuss Jesus' resurrection from theological, historical, or philosophical perspectives, this study classifies the evidence for the resurrection into legal categories—such as direct evidence, circumstantial evidence, testimonial evidence, and documentary evidence—to systematically assess the strength of the evidence. Thus, this study offers a new interdisciplinary approach that brings together theology, history, and legal science and opens the door for the development of Christian apologetics that is not only confessional in nature but also employs rational and accountable *evidential evaluation* standards within academic discourse.

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