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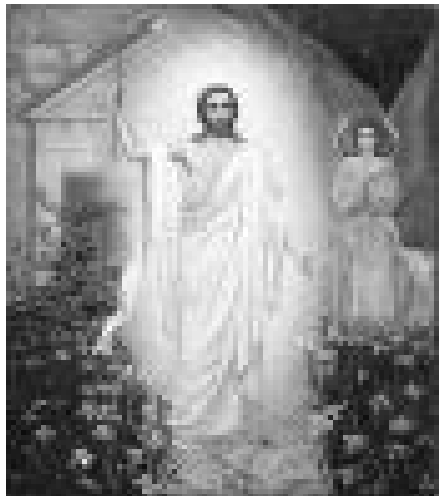
CHICAGO, IL.

APRIL, 2012



The Importance and Nature of the Resurrection

Christians universally agree that the resurrection of Jesus is central to their faith. Popular apologist Josh McDowell wrote, "The resurrection of Jesus Christ and Christianity stand or fall together" (1982, p. 179). Terry Miethe, a Christian professor of philosophy at Oxford, has maintained that " 'Did Jesus rise from the dead?' is the most important question regarding the claims of the Christian faith?" (p. xi, emphasis in original). In-



deed, one cannot be a Christian unless one believes that God raised Jesus from the dead. For Paul, the earliest of the New Testament writers, the resurrection was central to his message. In a passage that is arguably the most important passage in the entire New Testament concerning the resurrection, he wrote,

"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.... If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile" (1 Cor. 15:14-17).

However, while Christians may agree on the importance of the resurrection, they do not agree on the meaning of the resurrection. For example, was the resurrection an event in space and time? Could it have been captured on videotape? Was it bodily in nature? Must it be a bodily, physical resurrection in order to retain its importance? The Christian community is divided. By briefly considering the debate within the Christian community over the nature of the resurrection, we will be able to put into proper perspective the twentieth-century debate between skeptics and Christians over the resurrection.

Resurrection vs. Resuscitation

However, before I discuss the alternative interpretations of the resurrection, I want to make it very clear that resurrection does not mean resuscitation, the reanimation of a corpse that will die again someday. As Marcus Borg wrote (p. 15),

Whatever happened at Easter, it was not resuscitation. Easter does not mean that Jesus resumed his previous life as a finite person. Rather,

(Continued p. 16)

CHRIST IS RISEN - TRULLY RISEN



Mariyana Spyropoulos, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District with Vice President Joe Biden at the White House, Washington D.C. in honor of Greek Independence Day on Thursday, March 22.



On Monday, March 26 at the National Hellenic Museum the Greeks of Chicago celebrated their National Holiday, the 215th of March. Pictured above from L to R. our Metropolitan, Counsel General Ioanna Efthimiadou, John Kalamos, Chairman and Peter Parthenis Vice-Chairman of the Board of Trustees.



The Annual American Hellenic Athletic Foundation golf outing at Gold Canyon Golf Resort, Phoenix, Arizona, turned out to be an international meeting of Hellenic golf players from all over the world. Pictured above players from Greece and South Africa.

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10. To install Americanism in the Greek-American community.



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Ο Γιώργος Κοσμάς Πρόεδρος της Πανκαλαβρυτινής Ενώσεως επίσημος προσκεκλημένος στο χορό των Καλαβρυτινών.

SEASON'S GREETINGS FROM

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AND THE STAFF OF
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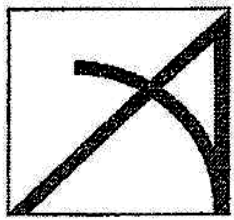


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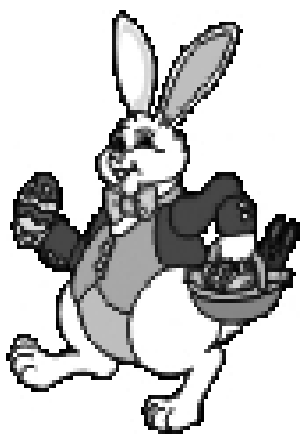


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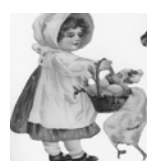
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The Importance and Nature of the Resurrection

(From p. 1)

resurrection means that he entered another kind and level of existence, "raised to the right hand of God."

It is important to note that while there are other individuals in the Bible who "came back to life," so to speak, there is



a fundamental difference between their experiences and that of Jesus. With the exception of Enoch and Elijah (who were translated), the rest of those people died again. In contrast, Jesus was raised from the dead, never to die again. The New Testament makes a clear distinction between Jesus' pre-resurrection body and his post-resurrection body. Jesus' pre-resurrection body was ordinary: fully human and therefore completely mortal. However, after the resurrection, his body was transformed and made immortal.

If resurrection does not mean resuscitation, then what does it mean? Two types of answers are possible. The first view, which I shall refer to as non-material resurrection, is the belief that Jesus' corpse need not come back to life in order for the resurrection to be significant. The second and opposing view, material resurrection, is the doctrine that the resurrection body must be a material body, if the resurrection is to have any meaning whatsoever. Let us consider each understanding of the resurrection in turn.

Non-Material Resurrection

I must confess that, prior to investigating the resurrection for myself, I had not considered the possibility that one could deny the material nature of Jesus' resurrection yet still be a Christian. However, since beginning my investigation, I have become acquainted with several scholars (Küng, Rahner, Borg, et al) who deny (or at least do not feel they must affirm) the material nature of Jesus' resurrection, but claim to be Christians. A careful description and consideration of their views is therefore in order.

THE NON-MATERIAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE RESURRECTION

Not in History (Not in Space and Time) A Different Body An Immaterial Body Does Not Depend on the Empty Tomb Not in the Flesh .

First, non-materialists emphasize that the resurrection was not a historical event. As Borg writes, "Speaking as a Christian, I regard these stories not as straightforward events that you could capture on video" (Ibid., p. 49.). The Jesuit Karl Rahner once wrote, "it is obvious that the resurrection of Jesus neither can be nor intends to be a 'historical' event" (p. 277). Hans Küng makes essentially the same point, but in greater detail (p. 349-350):

Since according to New Testament faith the raising is an act of God within God's dimensions, it can not be a historical event in the strict sense: it is not an event which can be verified by historical science with the aid of historical methods. For the raising of Jesus is not a miracle violating the laws of nature, verifiable within the present world, not a supernatural intervention which can be located and dated in space and time. There was nothing to photograph or record.... But neither the raising itself nor the person raised can be apprehended, objectified, by historical methods. In this respect the question

would demand too much of historical science - which, like the sciences of chemistry, biology, psychology, sociology or theology, never sees more than one aspect of the complex reality - since, on the basis of its own premises, it deliberately excludes the very reality which alone comes into question for a resurrection as also for creation and consummation: the reality of God.

This is a very significant passage, because if Küng is correct, then much of the debate between skeptics and Christians is irrelevant to the Easter message. If the Easter event did not occur in space and time, then historical questions about the empty tomb and Jesus' appearances after his death are at best peripheral issues.

I should make it clear however, that when Küng says that the resurrection is not a "historical event," he does not mean in any way that the resurrection is not real. For example, I think that Küng, Rahner, Borg, et al would agree that the early Christians' experiences of the risen Lord are events in space and time. For these Christians, though, the question, "so what happened to Jesus' body after his death?" is ultimately not that important.

The second important feature of non-materialists is that they do not think Jesus' resurrected body is the same body. Küng (p. 351) argues that there is "no continuity of the body: questions of natural science, like that of the persistence of molecules, do not arise." Likewise, they do not necessarily consider the resurrection body a material body. Rahner once said, "We miss the meaning of 'resurrection' in general and also of the resurrection of Jesus to begin with if our original preconception is the notion of a resuscitation of a physical, material body" (p. 266). And Borg writes, "Resurrection could, but



need not mean that the corpse had been affected; a corpse coming to life is not the point" (p. 15, emphasis added). This distinction is also significant because it is hardly ever even considered by skeptics who argue about the resurrection. Both sides tacitly assume that resurrection involves a material body, which is interesting when scholars like Borg claim that "the point" does not depend on the the raising of a corpse. (Of course, materialists would respond that "the point" may depend on the raising of a corpse.) But more about that later.

If the resurrection body need not be material, then what do non-materialists make of the empty tomb? They clearly do not regard it as necessary for Easter faith. For example, the Late Revd Dr. David Walker wrote that, "The corporality of the resurrection does not require the tomb to be empty" (p.173). Rahner says, "An empty tomb as such and by itself can never testify to the meaning and to the existence of a resurrection" (p. 267). Küng argues that if the empty tomb story is true, "faith in the risen Christ would not be made any easier and for some people today it would even become more difficult" (p. 365). Conversely, if the empty tomb story is unhistorical, that in no way would discredit the resurrection. As Walker

states (Ibid.), "It is quite possible to affirm unambiguously that Christ rose from the dead while either denying the historicity of the empty tomb or being agnostic about the precise connection between it and Jesus' rising."

Walker outlines at least two ways in which the Easter tomb story is theologically significant, even if it is not historical. First, he says, "belief in the empty tomb reinforces significance of Easter for a holistic view of human salvation" (Ibid.). Every aspect of human nature is redeemed by Jesus in the resurrection. Second, "belief in the empty tomb reinforces the significance of Easter for a cosmic view of salvation" (p. 366). According to this view, then, the empty tomb story is significant because it affirms the risen Christ as "the supreme instance of natural order as God intends it to be" (Ibid.)

Material Resurrection

However, there is another group of Christians who claim that Jesus' resurrection body was - and had to be - a material body. According to leading inerrantist Norman L. Geisler, "The logic is clear: If Jesus rose bodily from the dead in the same body in which He died, and if this body was a physical, material body, then it follows that the resurrection body was a

physical, material body" (p. 27). (Of course, the physical body might have been transformed in some way, but nevertheless, according to this view, it was still a physical body.) This view, it seems, is the belief held by virtually all of Christian apologists who are in dialogue with the skeptical community.

Conclusion

My goal here has not been to take sides and say that one understanding of the resurrection is right and the other is wrong; rather, my purpose is simply to acknowledge that such differences exist. I think this is important to understand when talking about the resurrection debate between skeptics and Christians, so that we can place the debate in its proper perspective. As we shall see, the debate has almost exclusively assumed that the material view of the resurrection is a proper understanding of what the issues are, without even acknowledging the non-material position. But before we can examine the arguments advanced by both sides, we need also to consider one other crucial issue: the problem of miracles. In the next chapter, I will consider the whole question of whether miracles are possible and, if so, what would constitute reasonable for them. SOURCE: SECULAR WEB

The Necessity of our Lord's Resurrection

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is significant because of its necessity. There are several reasons why the resurrection was necessary, and we shall consider some of them below.

(1) The resurrection of Christ was necessary to prove that Jesus Christ was who He claimed to be. Our Lord had clearly claimed to be the son of God, which was the reason why the religious leaders conspired to kill Him (cf. John 19:7). The resurrection was God's proof that the Lord Jesus was Who He claimed to be: the Son of God:

Who was declared with power to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 1:4).

(2) The resurrection of Christ was necessary to prove that Jesus Christ had accomplished what He had promised. The death of our Lord alone would not have sufficed, since it is by our identification with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection that we are saved.

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life (Rom. 5:9-10).

In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, that great resurrection chapter of the New Testament, Paul argues that apart from Christ's resurrection, we would have no hope:

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. . . . For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins (1 Cor. 15:13-14; 16-17).

In his message at Pentecost, Peter taught that the resurrection of Christ by the Father (through the Holy Spirit) was God's vindication of His Son, His message, and His work:

"This Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its powers. . . .

This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. . . . Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ--this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:23-24, 32-33, 36).

(3) The resurrection was a necessary in order to fulfill biblical prophecy. In Acts chapter 2 Peter argued that the resurrection was biblically necessary, citing David's words in Psalm 16:10:

"Because Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades, Nor allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay" (Acts 2:27; cf. 13:33).

Peter argued from Psalm 16 that David could not have referred to himself, but rather to his Son, Messiah, whom God would raise from the dead. The Old Testament Scriptures were understood by the apostles to foretell the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection of Christ was thus a biblical necessity.

(4) The resurrection of Christ was also a logical necessity. In his message in the second chapter of Acts, Peter also contended that the resurrection of Christ, the Messiah, was a logical as well as a biblical necessity.

"And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power" (Acts 2:24).

Peter argued here that it is impossible for God to remain in the grave and to decay, as men do. By virtue of being God, Christ could not have been left in that tomb, dead.

(5) The resurrection of Christ is vital because it is a necessary element of a saving faith. In both the Old and the New Testaments, a saving faith was a faith in a God's who could and would raise men from the dead. A careful study of the 11th chapter of Hebrews will indicate that the faith of Old Testament saints was a resurrection faith.2

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Sts. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church, annual retreat



Sts. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church in Palos Hills, Illinois hosted its annual retreat on March 24, 2012. Our guest speaker was the inspirational Sara Elisabet Oftedal, Co-Founder and House Mother/Director of the Martha and Mary House, an Orthodox Christian Maternity Home for pregnant women in crisis who choose life over death for their unborn child.

The attendees were held captive while listening to Sara's story. A humble, pious woman, who spoke openly and honestly of her journey to Orthodoxy. A journey that began as a rebellious teen rejecting Christianity, embracing Atheism and Humanism, and eventually coming full circle back to Christianity. She celebrated her new found faith worshipping within various denominations before ultimately finding Orthodoxy in 1995. A devout woman, who at the age of seventy-nine is ready to embark on yet another challenge – the convent....to become an Orthodox nun.

In addition to being blessed by listening to Sara's story, our guests were given the opportunity to "pray and play with clay". Sara, an accomplished sculptress, experienced her first epiphany while sculpting clay at a free art class in Norway. She has since tried to share that experience with her audiences hoping they too experience a connection with God. Although the age and gender at the Retreat varied greatly, everyone, including 80 year old women sculpted from the heart. We saw beautiful crosses, birds, bibles, statues, and even a sculpture of St. Matthew holding the Good Book come to fruition out of clay. It was truly an unexpected and and remarkable ending to a wonderful Lenten Retreat.



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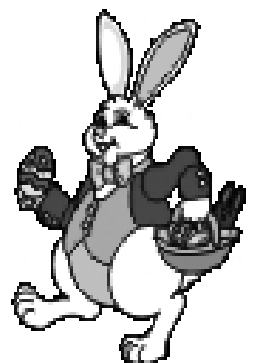
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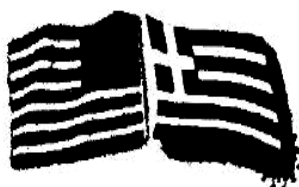
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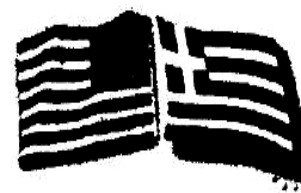


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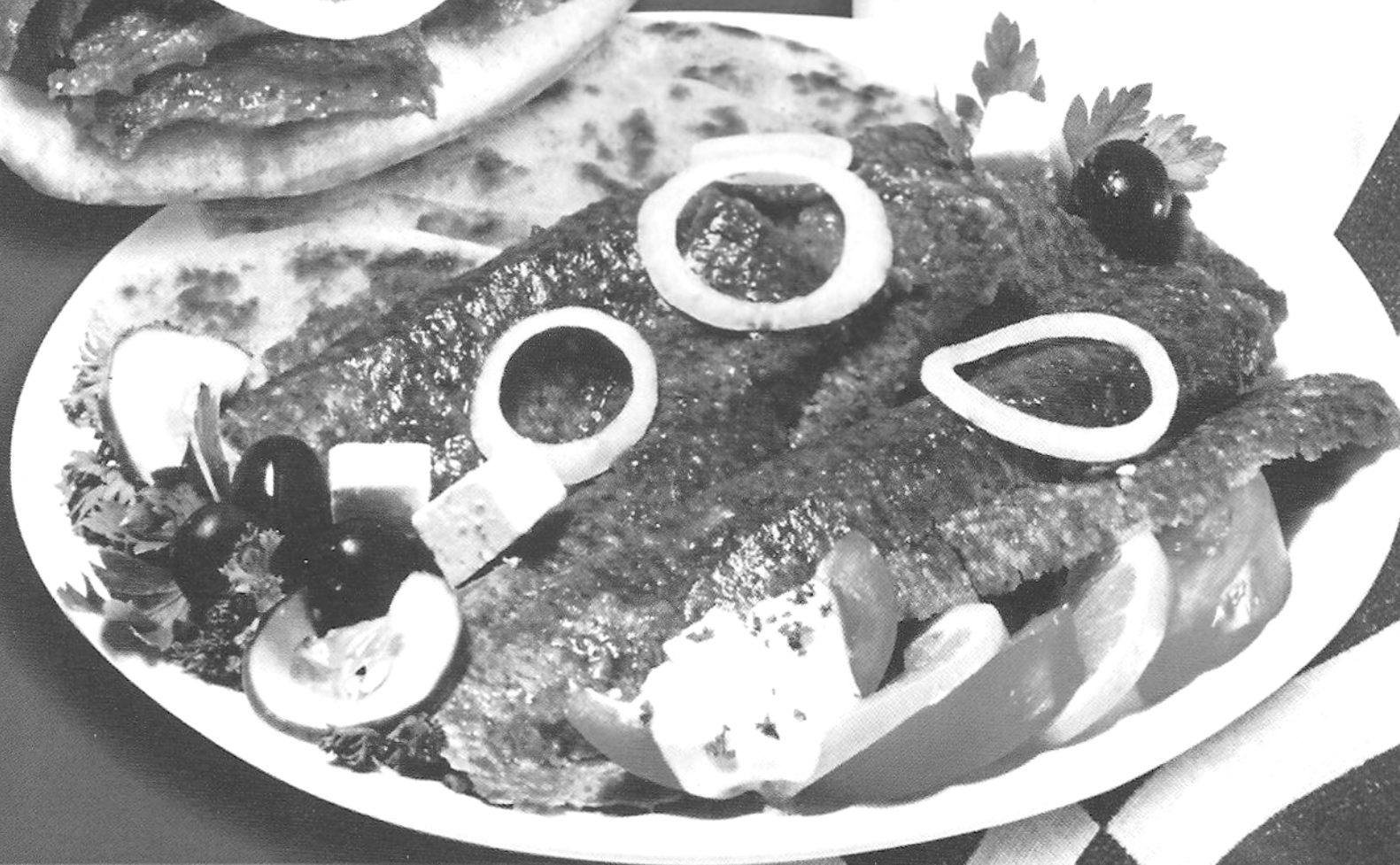


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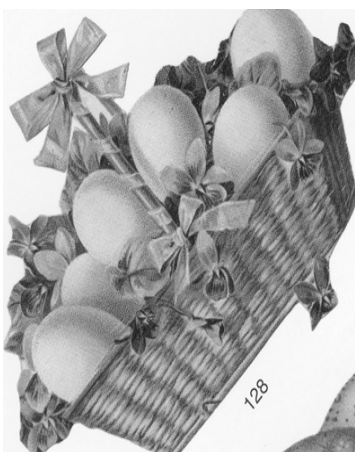
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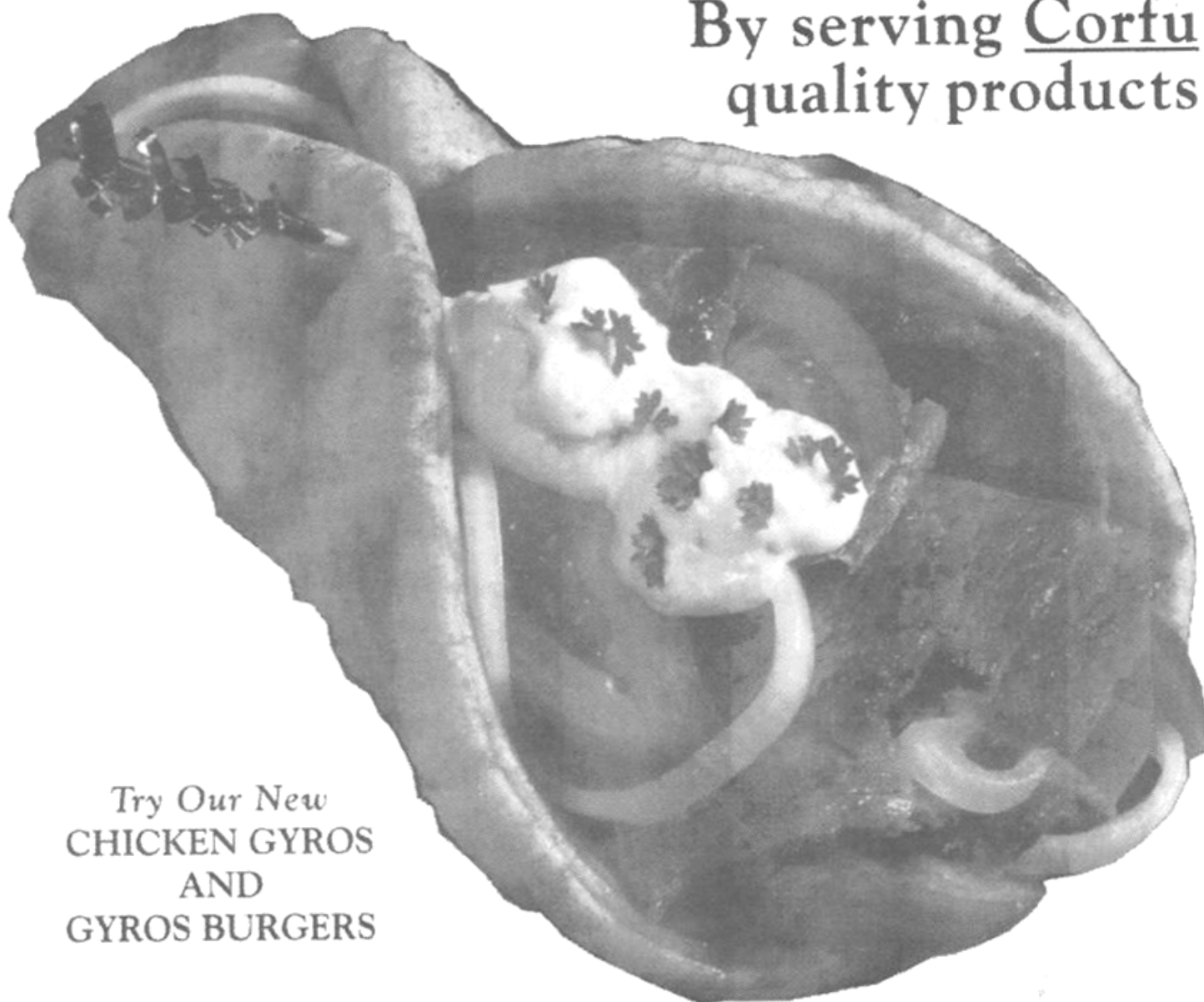
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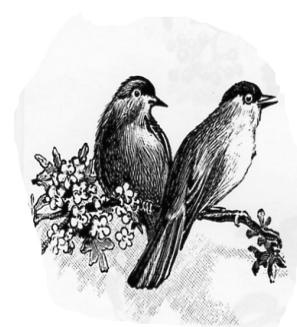
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