

rection of Christ. We will enumerate a number of these naturalistic theories. Later on in our study we will see how these views fit in with the evidence presented by the New Testament.

The theory of fraud is the earliest. This view is based upon the statements of Matthew 28:11-15. The chief priests caused the rumor to be spread that the disciples had stolen the body of Christ, and pretended that He had risen. This story persisted among the Jews and is referred to by the great Christian apologist, Justin Martyr, in his Dialogue with Trypho (c. cviii) around A.D. 150. In this passage the Jew speaks of "one Jesus, a Galilean deceiver, whom we crucified; but His disciples stole Him by night from the tomb, where He was laid when unfastened from the cross, and now deceive men by asserting that He has risen from the dead and ascended into heaven." About two hundred years ago this view was revived by the German rationalist Reimarus (1694-1768). He is known chiefly as the author of the Wolfenbüttel Fragments. This is the title of the work consisting of extracts from Reimarus' Apologie published after his death by the German critic, Lessing (1729-1781). The standpoint of Reimarus was that of the English deists. He investigated the evidence for the miracles recorded in the Bible. As a result of his study from the position of pure naturalistic deism, Reimarus denied miracles and held that natural religion was the absolute contradiction of revealed religion. The publication of the Wolfenbüttel Fragments created great excitement among orthodox theologians. Such a work called forth many replies, in which Lessing was bitterly condemned for having published writings so dangerous in their tendency. In his treatment of the resurrection Reimarus says, "The disciples of Jesus purloined the body of Jesus before it had been buried twenty-four hours, played at the burial-place the comedy of the