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The Historical Basis of the Christian Faith: *The Resurrection of Jesus*

Does Jesus, as He is revealed to us in history, justify the Christian religion as we have had it exhibited to us in the New Testament?

by James Denney (1856-1917)

The following article is taken from section two of Denney's book, *Jesus & The Gospel*, originally published in 1908 (Eaton & Mains, NY). James Denney was a prominent New Testament scholar and theologian of the United Free Church, Scotland. His other books include, *The Death of Christ* and *Studies In Theology*. This present essay is in the public domain, and the original pagination from the source book has been kept intact for purposes of reference. The electronic edition of this article was scanned and edited by Shane Rosenthal for *Reformation Ink*. It may be copied and distributed without restriction.

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 97

The question which has just been stated might be approached in various ways. We might begin with an investigation of the sources to which we owe our knowledge of Jesus, build up by degrees such an acquaintance with Him as could be formed in this way, and then consider what relation it bore to the place He holds in New Testament faith. A moment's reflection on what has preceded will show the insufficiency and the impropriety of this method. The primary testimony of the disciples to Jesus was their testimony to His resurrection: except as Risen and Exalted they never preached Jesus at all. It was His Resurrection and Exaltation which made Him Lord and Christ, and gave Him His place in their faith and life; and unless their testimony to this fundamental fact can be accepted, it is not worth while to carry the investigation further. Nothing that Jesus was or did, apart from the Resurrection, can justify or sustain the religious life which we see in the New Testament. Those who reject the apostolic testimony at this point may, indeed, have the highest appreciation for the memory of Jesus; they may reverence the figure preserved for us by the evangelists as the ideal of humanity, the supreme attainment of the race in the field of character; but they can have no relation to Jesus resembling that in which New Testament Christians lived and moved and had their being. The general

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 98

question, therefore, whether Jesus, as He is known to us from history, can sustain the Christian religion as it is exhibited to us in the New Testament, takes at the outset this special form: Can we accept the testimony which we have to the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus?

THE RESURRECTION

It is possible, as every one knows, to decline to raise this question. There is a dogmatic conception of history which tells us beforehand that there cannot be in history any such event as the resurrection of Jesus is represented in the New Testament to be: no possible or conceivable evidence could prove it. With such a dogma, which is part of a conception of reality in general, it is impossible to argue; for he who holds it cannot but regard it as a supreme standard by which he is bound to test every argument alleged against it. It is not for him an isolated and therefore a modifiable opinion; it is part of the structure of intelligence to which all real opinions will conform. But, though it is vain to controvert such a dogma by argument, it may be demolished by collision with facts; and it is surely the less prejudiced method to ask what it is that the New Testament witnesses assert, and what is the value of their testimony. Men's minds have varied about the structure of intelligence and about its constitutive or regulative laws, and it is one of the elementary principles of learning to recognise that reality is larger than any individual intelligence, and that the growth of intelligence depends on its recognition of this truth. It is quite conceivable that the fundamental fact on which the life of New Testament Christianity rests, is

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 99

abruptly rejected by many, under the constraint of some such dogma, while yet they have no clear idea either of, the fact itself, as the New Testament represents it, or of the evidence on which it was originally believed and has been believed by multitudes ever since. And if it is important, looking to those who deny that such an event as the resurrection of Jesus can have taken place, or is capable of proof, to present the facts bearing on the subject as simply, clearly, and fully as possible, it is no less important to do so in view of those who are so preoccupied with the spiritual significance of the resurrection that they are willing (it might seem) to ignore the fact as of comparatively little or, indeed, of no account. When Harnack, for example, distinguishes the Easter Faith from the Easter Message, he practically takes this latter position. The Easter Faith is "the conviction of the victory of the crucified over death, of the power and the righteousness of God, and of the life of Him who is the first-born among many brethren." This is the main thing, and just because it is a faith it is not really dependent on the Easter Message, which deals with the empty grave, the appearances to the disciples, and so forth. We can keep the faith without troubling about the message. "Whatever may have happened at the grave and in the appearances, one thing is certain: from this grave the indestructible faith in the conquest of death and in an eternal life has taken its origin."^[1] Sympathizing as we must with Harnack's genuinely evangelistic desire to leave nothing standing between the mind of the age and the hope of the gospel which can possibly be put away, we may nevertheless doubt whether the Easter Faith and the Easter Message are so indifferent to each other. They were not unrelated at the beginning, and if we reflect on the fact that they are generally

1. Das Wesen des Christentums, 101 f.

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 100

rejected together, it may well seem precipitate to assume that they are independent of each other now. To say that the faith produced the message -- that Jesus rose again in the souls of His disciples, in their resurgent faith and love, and that this, and this alone, gave birth to all the stories of the empty grave and the appearances of the Lord to His own -- is to pronounce a purely dogmatic judgment. What underlies it is not the historical evidence as the documents enable us to reach it, but an estimate of the situation dictated by a philosophical theory which has discounted the evidence beforehand. It is not intended here to meet dogma with dogma, but to ask what the New Testament evidence is, what it means, and what it is worth.

Much of the difficulty and embarrassment of the subject is due to the fact that the study of the evidences for the resurrection has so often begun at the wrong end. People have started with the narratives in the evangelists and become immersed in the details of these, with all the intricate and perhaps insoluble questions they raise, both literary and historical. Difficulties at this point have insensibly but inevitably become difficulties in their minds attaching to the resurrection, and affecting their whole attitude to New Testament religion. It ought to be apparent that, so far as the fact of the resurrection of Jesus is concerned, the narratives of the evangelists are quite the least important part of the evidence with which we have to deal. It is no exaggeration to say that if we do not accept the resurrection on grounds which lie outside this area, we shall not accept it on the grounds presented here. The real historical evidence for the resurrection is the fact that it was believed, preached, propagated, and produced its fruit and effect in the new phenomenon of the Christian Church, long before any of our gospels was written. This is not said

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 101

to disparage the gospels, or to depreciate what they tell, but only to put the question on its true basis. Faith in the resurrection was not only prevalent but immensely powerful before any of our New Testament books was written. Not one of them would ever have been written but for that faith. It is not this or that in the New Testament -- it is not the story of the empty tomb, or of the appearing of Jesus in Jerusalem or in Galilee -- which is the primary evidence for the resurrection; it is the New Testament itself. The life that throbs in it from beginning to end, the life that always fills us again with wonder as it beats upon us from its pages, is the life which the Risen Saviour has quickened in Christian souls. The evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is the existence of the Church in that extraordinary spiritual vitality which confronts us in the New Testament. This is its own explanation of its being. 'He,' says Peter, 'hath poured forth this which ye both see and hear' (Acts 2:33); and, apart from all minuter investigations, it is here the strength of the case for the resurrection rests. The existence of the Christian Church, the existence of the New Testament: these incomparable phenomena in human history are left without adequate or convincing explanation if the resurrection of Jesus be denied. If it be said that they can be explained, not by the resurrection itself but by faith in the resurrection, that raises the question, already alluded to, of the origin of such faith. Does it originate in the soul itself, in memories of Jesus, in spiritual convictions about what must have been the destiny of a spirit so pure? Or were there experiences of another kind, independent historical matters of fact, by which it was generated and to which it could appeal? Was it, in short, a self-begotten Easter Faith, which produced the Easter Message in the way of self-support or self-defence; or was there an independent

 THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 102

God-given Easter Message which evoked the Easter Faith? We could not ask a more vital question, and fortunately there are in the New Testament abundant materials to answer it.

The oldest testimony we have to the resurrection of Jesus, apart from that fundamental evidence just alluded to as pervading the New Testament, is contained in 1 Cor. 15. The epistle is dated by Sanday [1] in the spring of 55, and represents what Paul had taught in Corinth when he came to the city for the first time between 50 and 52; but these dates taken by themselves might only mislead. For what Paul taught in Corinth was the common Christian tradition (ver. 3 ff.); he had been taught it himself when he became a Christian, and in his turn he transmitted it to others. But Paul became a Christian not very long after the death of Christ -- according to Harnack one year after, to Ramsay three or four, to Lightfoot perhaps six or seven.[2] At a date so close to the alleged events we find that the fundamental facts of Christianity as taught in the primitive circle were these -- that Christ died for our sins; that He was buried; that He rose on the third day and remains in the state of exaltation; and that He appeared to certain persons. The mention of the burial is important in this connection as defining what is meant by the rising. We see from it that it would have conveyed no meaning to Paul or to any member of the original Christian circle to say that it was the spirit of Christ which rose into new life, or that He rose again in the faith of His devoted followers, who could not bear the thought that for Him death should end all. The rising is relative to the grave and the burial, and if we cannot speak of a bodily resurrection we should not speak of resurrection at all. In

1. Encyclopedia Biblica, 903 f.
2. See article 'Chronology' in Hastings Bible Dictionary, i. p. 424.

 THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 103

the same connection also we should notice the specification of the third day. This is perfectly definite, and it is perfectly guaranteed. The third day was the first day of the week, and every Sunday as it comes round is a new argument for the resurrection. The decisive event in the inauguration of the new religion took place on that day -- an event so decisive and so sure that it displaced even the Sabbath, and made not the last but the first day of the week that which Christians celebrated as holy to the Lord. The New Testament references to the first day of the week as the Lord's day (Acts 20:7, Rev. 1:10) are weighty arguments for the historical resurrection; that is, for a resurrection which has a place and weight among datable events. [1]

An important light is cast on Paul's conception of the resurrection of Jesus by his use, in speaking of it, of the perfect tense (Greek characters omitted) -- 'He hath been raised.' Christ rose, it signifies, and remains in the risen state. Death has no more dominion over Him. His resurrection was not like the raisings from the dead recorded in the gospels, where restoration to the old life and its duties and necessities is even made prominent, and where the final prospect of death remains. Jesus does not come back to the old life at all. As risen, He belongs already to another world, to another mode of being. The resurrection is above all things the revelation of life in this new order, a life which has won the final triumph over

1. The curious idea, which has now become a tradition among a certain class of scholars, that the date of the resurrection is due, not to anything which took place on the first day of the week, but to the prophecy of Hosea (6:2) -- 'After two days will He revive us; on the

third day He will raise us up and we shall live before Him'--ought surely to be disposed of by the consideration that there is no allusion to this text in connection with the resurrection, either in the New Testament itself, or (so far as the writer is aware) in any other quarter, earlier than the nineteenth century. Curious, however, as this idea is, it is not so entirely extraordinary as Schmiedel's suggestion (Encyclopedia Biblica, 4067) that the date of the resurrection is deduced from 2 Kings 20:5

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 104

sin and death. This was thoroughly understood by the original witnesses; the resurrection of Jesus, or the anticipated resurrection of Christians as dependent upon it, was no return to nature and to the life of the world; it was the manifestation, transcending nature, of new life from God.

In the passage with which we are dealing, indeed, Paul enters into no further particulars of any kind. He recites a list of persons to whom Jesus had appeared -- Cephas, the Twelve, more than five hundred brethren at once, James, all the apostles, himself. It is a fair inference from the mode of this enumeration that the appearances are given in their chronological order, but it is quite unwarranted to say [1] that Paul in this list guarantees not only chronological order but completeness. The list gives us no ground for saying that when Paul was in contact with the Jerusalem Church its testimony to the resurrection included no such stories of the appearing of Jesus to women as are now found in our gospels. Neither did the purpose for which Paul adduced this series of witnesses require him to do more than mention their names as those of persons who had seen the Lord. It was the fact of the resurrection which was denied at Corinth -- the resurrection of Christians, in the first instance, but by implication, as Paul believed, that of Jesus also -- and a simple assertion of the fact was what he wanted to meet the case. This is adequately given when he recites in succession a series of persons to whom the Lord had appeared. That he says nothing more than that to these persons the Lord did appear is no proof that he had nothing more to say. He could, no doubt, have told a great deal more about that last appearance which the Lord had made to himself, if he had thought it relevant; and the probabilities are that in this outline

1. With Schmiedel (Encyclopedia Biblica, 4058),

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 105

of his gospel and of the evidence on which it rested, he is merely reminding the Corinthians in a summary fashion of what he had enlarged upon in all its circumstances and significance when he was among them. The term [Greek characters omitted] (He appeared), which is used alike in speaking of Christ's appearing to Paul and to the others who had the same experience, does not enable us to define that experience with any precision. It is used elsewhere, certainly, of 'visionary' seeing, but it is used equally, for example, in Acts 7:26 of seeing which is in no sense visionary. What it suggests in almost every case is the idea of something sudden or unexpected; that which is seen is conceived to be so, not because one is looking at it or for it, but because it has unexpectedly thrust itself upon the sight. The translation 'He appeared,' rather than 'He was seen,' adequately represents this. But though Paul can use the active form, as in ch. 9:1 -- 'Have not I seen Jesus our Lord ?' -- neither by that nor by the passive does he do more than convey the fact that he had had, in what he can only describe in terms of vision, an experience in which he was conscious of the presence of the Risen Saviour.

Into this experience we may not be able to penetrate, but we are entitled to reject explanations of it which assume it to be a mere illusion. Such as it was, it left Paul in no doubt that Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified at Calvary, was exalted to the right hand of God in divine power and glory.

Power and glory are the two words which the apostle most frequently uses in speaking of the resurrection. The Risen Jesus is the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8). He was declared or constituted Son of God in power by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4). He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father (Rom. 6:4). The working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ when

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 106

He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this world but also in that which is to come -- this was the supreme manifestation of what the power of God could do. Paul has no abstract term like omnipotence, and when he wishes to give a practical religious equivalent for it he points to the power which has raised Christ from the grave and set Him on the throne with all things under His feet. The power which has done this is the greatest which the apostle can conceive; it is the power which works in us, and it is great enough for every need of the soul (Ephes. 3:20, 1:19 f.). In one passage he uses the expression 'the body of His glory' (Phil. 3:21). The Risen Lord, in contrast with mortal men upon the earth, who bear about a 'body of humiliation' or 'lowliness,' lives in the splendour and immortality of heaven. It is no use asking for a definition of such words: Paul could no more have given them than we can. It is no use asking for an explanation of the precise relation between the body of humiliation and the body of glory; such an explanation was entirely out of his reach. All, he could have asserted, and what he undoubtedly did assert, was that the same Jesus whose body had been broken on the cross had manifested Himself to him in divine splendour and power; and though he should never be able to say anything about the connection of the two modes of being further than this, that Jesus had been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, it would not in the least affect his assurance that the exaltation of Jesus was as real as His crucifixion. If any one wished to argue that for Paul's belief in the resurrection of Christ, the empty tomb in Joseph's garden is immaterial, he might make a plausible case; the apostle's certainty of the resurrection

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 107

rested immediately and finally on the appearing of Jesus to himself, and he would have possessed that certainty and lived in it though he had never become acquainted with the circumstances of the death and burial of Jesus, and with the subsequent events as they are recorded in the gospels. But the whole of the discussion in the fifteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians shows that, though a plausible case could be stated on these lines, it is not the case for which we could claim the support of the apostle himself. Unable as he is to explain the relation of the natural to the spiritual body, of the body of humiliation to the body of glory -- a 'mystery' (ver. 5:1) can only be announced, it cannot be explained -- his assumption throughout is certainly not that the two have nothing to do with each other. It is the body of humiliation itself which in the case of Christians is transformed and fashioned like the body of Christ's glory; and it is this, rather than the idea that there is no connection between the two bodies, which suggests the line on which the apostle's own thoughts would run.

But what, it may be said, is the value, historically speaking, of such evidence as this to the resurrection of Jesus? Grant that Paul and the other persons whom he enumerates had experiences which they announced to the world in the terms, 'We have seen the Lord,' the question as to the nature of these experiences remains. In the Christian religion one interpretation has been put upon them. They have been regarded as historical and independent guarantees of a transcendent world, a life beyond death, the sovereignty of Jesus, the reconciliation of the sinful world and God. But is this interpretation necessary? No one any longer questions the honesty of the apostolic testimony to the resurrection: the

only question is as to its meaning and value. There can be no doubt that appearances did appear to certain

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 108

persons; the problem is how are we to give such appearances their proper place and interpretation in the whole scheme of things? Is it not much more probable that they are to be explained from within, from the moods of thought and feeling in the souls which experienced them, than from anything so inconceivable, and so incommensurable with experience, as the intrusion of another world into this? Is it not much more probable, in short, that they were what philosophers call 'subjective,' states or products of the soul itself, and not 'objective,' realities independent of the soul? This is not equivalent to denying them any reality, though it relieves us from the necessity of discussing such questions as the empty tomb. Neither does it impair the greatness of Jesus. On the contrary, it may even be urged that it magnifies Jesus. How great this man must have been who could not be extinguished even by death, but who had made an impression on the minds of His friends so profound and ineffaceable, who had inspired them with faith and hope in Himself so vivid and invincible, that He rose in their hearts out of the gloom and despair of the crucifixion to celestial glory and sovereignty! This is a line of argument which is constantly and powerfully urged at the present time, and that too by many who are far from wanting sympathy with the life and teaching of Jesus. This is of itself a reason which entitles it to the most careful consideration. But it demands attention further because it is clear that, if it leaves anything at all which can be called Christian religion, it is not that form of Christianity which alone we have been able to discover in the New Testament.

Without professing or feeling any undue sympathy with the Paley or Old Bailey school of apologetics, we may surely have our doubts as to whether the testimony of the first witnesses can be so easily disposed of. Practically

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 109

this estimate of it means that it is to be treated as a pathological phenomenon: it belongs to the disease and disorder, not to the health and sanity of the human spirit. Paul and the other apostles no doubt had visions of Jesus in power and glory, but they ought not to have had them. Unless their brains had been overheated they would not have had them. It can never be anything but a pity that they did have them. There are people who say such things because their philosophy constrains them, and there are people also, equally entitled to have an opinion, who would not say such things for any philosophy. It is not easy to discredit off hand, as mere illusion, what has meant so much in the life of the human race. It is not easy to suppose that men, who in other respects were quite of sound mind, were all in this extraordinary experience victims of the same delusion. There are, of course, things which no testimony could establish; but where there is, as here, a great mass of testimony, and that in conditions which compel us to treat it seriously, it is, to say the least, rash to put upon it an interpretation which annuls completely the significance it had for the witnesses themselves.

It is at this point, therefore, that we must take into account those considerations which gave weight from the beginning to the apostolic testimony, and won acceptance for it. If the resurrection of Jesus could be treated purely as a question in metaphysics, and the witness of the apostles purely as a question in psychology, we should find ourselves confronted with insoluble difficulties. A theory of the universe which had no room for the resurrection would find in psychology the means of reducing the evidence; those who could not reduce the evidence would plead for a more elastic view of the universe; but the issue would never be decided.

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 110

If, however, we leave these abstractions behind us, and come face to face with the facts, the situation is entirely changed. The resurrection is not attested to metaphysicians or psychologists as a thing in itself; it is preached to sinful men, in its divine significance for their salvation, and it is in this concrete reality alone that it exists or has interest for the primitive witnesses. 'Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins' (Acts 5:31). 'And He charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is He which is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead' (Acts 10:42). The considerations which are thus brought into the scale, it is easy to caricature and easy to abuse, but fatal to neglect. Any one who appeals to them is sure to be charged with shifting his ground, with evading the issue, with [greek characters omitted] and all the other devices of the apologist at his wits' end; nay, he may even be represented as saying to his supposed adversary, 'I believe this because I am accessible to spiritual considerations, and you disbelieve it because you are not; if you were as good a man as I am, you would believe it too.' But it is surely possible, without being either complacent or censorious, certainly without making any personal comparisons, to view the testimony to the resurrection not as an abstract or insulated phenomenon, but in the totality of the relations in which it was delivered; and if these relations include some which are specifically moral, so that the attitude of men to the evidence was from the beginning and must ever be, in part at least, morally conditioned, it is surely possible to say so without being either a Pharisee or an intellectually dishonest man.

Now there are three ways in which the testimony to the resurrection is morally qualified, if one may so speak,

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 111

and therefore needs to be morally appreciated. In the first place, it is the resurrection of Jesus. If the witnesses had asserted about Herod, or about any ordinary person, what they did about Jesus, the presumption would have been all against them. The moral incongruity would have discredited their testimony from the first. But the resurrection was that of one in whom His friends had recognised, while He lived, a power and goodness beyond the common measure of humanity, and they were sensible when it took place that it was in keeping with all they had known, hoped, and believed of Him. When Peter is reported to have said that God loosed the pangs of death because it was not possible that He should be holden of it (Acts 2:24), it is not too much to infer that this was the truth present to his mind. Is it too much to infer that sometimes, when the resurrection of Jesus is rejected, the rejecter forgets that it is this resurrection which is in question? He thinks of resurrection in general, the resurrection of any one; possibly he thinks of it really as the re-animation of a corpse; and he judges quite confidently, and if this be all that is in his mind quite rightly, that it is not worth while weighing anything so light against a well-founded conception of reality in general. But if he realised what 'Jesus' means -- if he had present to his mind and conscience, in His incomparable moral value, the Person whose resurrection is declared -- the problem would be quite different. He might find himself far more ready, under the impression of the worth of such a person, to question the finality of his scheme of the universe; more willing to admit that if there was not to be a perpetual contradiction at the heart of things, a perpetual extinction of the higher by the lower, such a personality must find it possible somehow to transcend the limitations of nature and its laws.

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 112

This consideration, it may be said, is capable of being turned in the opposite direction. Those who hold that Jesus only rose again in the hearts of His disciples may assert that they put to the proper account whatever truth it contains. They admit that only Jesus could have risen, only a person who had so wonderfully impressed Himself on the memory and affections of His followers; but it was this wonderfully deep and vivid impression which itself produced the resurrection. Death, for a moment, so to speak, had extinguished Jesus in their lives, but the extinction could not be lasting. Very soon He reasserted His power. He came to life again more triumphant than ever. One may venture to think that in all this there is much confusion, and even much playing with words, in a style quite unworthy of what is at stake. To lose a dear and valued friend is no uncommon experience, and we know how to describe what follows. Those who do not forget their departed friends remember them. But to remember them means to recall them as they were; it means to have them present to our minds in the familiar associations of the past. We may say if we please that they live in our memory; if we have been so unhappy as to forget them, and then remember them once more, we may say that they have come to life again in our memory; but it is the old familiar friend who so comes to life. There is no revelation here, no suggestion of being in a new and higher order, nothing, in spite of the language of life and death in which it is expressed, which has any analogy whatever with the resurrection of Jesus. Hence we may say confidently that no brooding of His friends on the memory of Jesus would have given that revival to His personality which they asserted when they preached the resurrection. Their sense of the greatness and the worth of Jesus, in all probability, would come back

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 113

on them and fill their minds in the hours which followed His death; but though this prepared them in a manner for His appearance, it had no tendency whatever to produce it. Jesus did not appear as they had known Him, in the lowliness and familiarity of the life they had shared in Galilee; He appeared as one exalted to the right hand of God, and having all power given Him in heaven and on earth. Their belief that such an appearing was no illusion, but the revelation of the final truth about Jesus, was morally conditioned, no doubt, by their previous knowledge and appreciation of Him; but it is hardly short of unmeaning to say that their previous knowledge and appreciation of Him evoked it in their minds. It was no coming to life again in memory of the dear familiar friend whom even death could not dislodge from the heart; it was something transcendentally and unimaginably new, and it needs a cause proportioned to it to explain its presence.

To say that the testimony to the resurrection is morally qualified by the mere fact that it is the resurrection of Jesus which is attested does not exhaust the truth. The apostles did not preach the resurrection of Jesus itself as a mere fact; what they preached was the gospel of the resurrection. It was the fact read out to the mind, heart, and conscience of men in its divine significance -- the fact and its interpretation as indissolubly one, and constituting a supreme appeal on the part of God to man. If we could imagine a person to whom all the ideas and experiences which for the first witnesses were part and parcel of their faith in the exaltation of Jesus were meaningless or unreal; a person who had no interest in the forgiveness of sins or in judgment to come; to whom a life like that of Jesus, ending in a death like His, presented no problem, or none that much disturbed his soul; to whom it was not a matter of any

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 114

moment to be assured that sin and death were not the final realities in the universe, but were destined to be swallowed up in victory -- if one could imagine such a person, we should have imagined one to

whom the resurrection must be permanently incredible. He could not believe it, because, to begin with, he could not even conceive it. He could have no idea of what those who attested it had in their minds; and even if he accepted something which did not transcend his conception of the 'purely' historical, some bare fact with none but a metaphysical significance, it would not amount to believing in the resurrection in the sense of the New Testament. No one can really appreciate the testimony unless the moral conditions under which its meaning is realised are to some extent real for him.

It is possible, as has been already noticed, to caricature this truth on the one side, and to abuse it on the other. Those who reject the resurrection caricature it when they say that it is a mere evasion, an attempt to prove what is either a historical fact or nothing by evidence which is not historical at all; and those who accept the resurrection abuse it when they presume to judge others on the ground of it, and insinuate that their unbelieving attitude is due to their insensibility to the spiritual truths which the gospel of the resurrection embodies. But when we bring into view the fact that the testimony to the resurrection is morally qualified in the way which has just been described, we do not disregard the testimony itself. The primary fact is that we have such testimony. There were really men in the world who stood forth before their fellows and said 'We have seen the Lord.' That is fundamental, and must "always be so. There is no attempt to make inward evidence take the place of outward -- no argument that the witness of the Spirit, as theologians have called it,

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 115

can establish a historical fact; what is asserted is that the historical testimony to the resurrection of Jesus is testimony to a fact of moral significance, a fact of such a kind that the testimony to it cannot be duly appreciated, even in respect to its credibility, by a person for whom its moral significance has no interest. This is not a way of asserting that the resurrection is historical, and at the same time securing it against historical criticism; it is only pointing out, what is surely the case, that the historical fact with which we are here concerned must be taken as what the historical witnesses represent it to be, and not as something different -- as the concrete and significant reality which it was for them, and not as an abstract and isolated somewhat, which has no significance 'whatever. Perhaps if 'man' could be reduced to 'historian' or 'natural philosopher' the resurrection might remain for ever a mere puzzle to the brain; all that the considerations with which we are here concerned import is that this reduction is impossible. 'Man' is more than 'natural philosopher' or 'historian.' His relations to reality are more various and complex than those of such scientific abstractions, and, therefore, his power of responding to it, of apprehending and comprehending it, is greater. Neither nature nor history is invaded in its rights by the resurrection, but both are transcended. Neither natural science nor history can deny the resurrection except by claiming for themselves to exhaust the truth and reality of the universe -- a claim the untruth of which is self-evident. It is just because of its moral significance -- because of its meaning and purpose in the relations of God and man -- that the resurrection, as the apostles preached it, rises above what is called the purely historical; it makes a kind of appeal to men which a purely historical event, if we could realise such an abstraction, never makes; it is on our susceptibility to

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 116

this appeal that our appreciation of the testimony to it depends, and yet the testimony itself, in the last resort, is historical testimony. There would be nothing to go upon whatever if there were not men who had seen the risen Jesus -- here is the point of attachment with history; but what the testimony of these men shall amount to for us -- what weight it shall have in our minds -- whether we shall take it as simply as it is given, or feel ourselves obliged to attempt the reduction of it to something by which the equilibrium of our world shall be maintained and disturbing revelations excluded -- here is the point at

which the moral elements in the case exert their legitimate influence. To see this and to say it is not to be Pharisaical, even if one believes in the resurrection. It gives no right to judge others. It is necessary, however, that the preacher of the resurrection should be conscious of it, otherwise he may preach something which is out of touch with the apostolic gospel of the Risen Christ -- something which attempts more than the first witnesses attempted, a demonstration of the fact apart from its significance; something, too, which is less interesting than their message, a fact so emptied of divine and human meaning that it defies the intelligence instead of appealing to the whole man.

About the third way in which the evidence for the resurrection is morally qualified there can hardly be any dispute. If the alleged fact had been insulated in human history, if it had been ineffective and fruitless, it might well have been questioned whether it were a fact at all. But from the very beginning men were persuaded that the resurrection was a fact, because they, saw it operate as a moral power. It has been said already that the supreme evidence for the resurrection is the, existence of the Church in the fulness of that exuberant life which we see in the apostolic writings. And

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 117

this was understood from the first. The sermon of Peter in Acts 2 is conscious of all the moral qualifications which we have reviewed. The primary historical fact of course is that the Lord had appeared to Peter and those for whom he spoke: they were witnesses of His resurrection. But Peter knew the weight which his word would receive from his appreciation of the character of Jesus: 'it was not possible that He should be holden of death.' He knew the added power with which it would tell when the Risen Christ was preached at the author of reconciliation to God: 'repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for remission of your sins.' He knew that he gave conclusive evidence of the exaltation of Jesus when he pointed to the spiritual phenomena of the early Christian days: 'He hath poured forth this which ye both see and hear.' We must not narrow unduly the application of the last words. If we thought of nothing but speaking with tongues, and took our ideas of this from Paul, we should probably not rate it very high. But 'this that ye both see and hear' covers the whole phenomena of that eventful time. The wonder of it was not that the apostles spoke in foreign languages, but that they spoke; men who had till then been silent or rather dumb opened their lips, and preached with tongues of fire. With great power they gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. This is the truly significant thing, the transformation of the apostles and the birth of the Church. What we think of the apostolic testimony to the resurrection cannot but be influenced by our estimate of these moral phenomena and of the mode of their causation. The greater they appear, the more valuable in their spiritual contents, the more decisive in the history of humanity, so much the more inevitable must it seem that what lies behind them is not an illusion

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 118

or a morbid experience misunderstood, but the highest reality and truth which have ever told with regenerating power on the life of man. Yet here again a straightforward mind is bound to guard the argument from reproach by making it quite clear that there is no_ desire to evade any historical issue. There are historical witnesses: to that we must always recur. The moral phenomena to which reference has been made are transacted on the stage of history. But something in our appreciation of the witnesses will always depend on our appreciation of the moral phenomena; and it is not scientific conscientiousness, but philosophical perversity, which tries to ignore the obvious truth. Surely it only needs to be stated that the man to whom Christian history and the New Testament life are the divinest things he can conceive, and the man to whom they are meaningless or even pathological phenomena, must take different views of what their earliest representatives attest as their cause. In this sense, it is

fair enough to say that belief in the resurrection is a value-judgment. But it is not implied, when the word is used in this sense, that the resurrection never took place, and that we cannot speak of historical evidence in connection with it.

It is well worth remarking that in the earliest great discussion of this subject -- that in the first epistle to the Corinthians -- Paul does justice to both the historical and the spiritual evidence for the resurrection, and sets the two in their proper relation to each other. The historical evidence comes first. 'He appeared to Peter, then to the Twelve... He appeared to me also.' It cannot be repeated too often that this is fundamental. If there had not been men who could say this, there would never have been such a thing in the world as Christian life, with the evidence for the resurrection which it brings. Unless the apostolic testimony among men, supported

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 119

as it was by the spiritual power with which it was delivered, had commanded faith, the Christian religion could never have come to be. There is the exaggeration of paradox in a saying like Mr. Inge's 1 that 'religion, when it confines itself strictly to its own province, never speaks in the past tense. It is concerned only with what is, not with what was. History as history is not its business.' Paul spoke in the past tense when he said, 'He appeared unto me.' If we drop what was out of what is, how much is left? The true case of any one who believes in the resurrection is not that 'history as history' is not the business of religion; but that, as Paul says about older idols, 'history as history' is nothing in the world. If Jesus actually rose, as Paul attests on the ground that He appeared to him in His exaltation, we may require to enlarge our conception of the historical, but we cannot say that religion and history are independent of each other. This is very far from the mind of Paul. The apostle never argues that 'the real basis of our belief in the resurrection of Christ is a great psychological fact -- a spiritual experience'.² The resurrection must certainly be attested, if it is to win faith, by witnesses like Peter and Paul who have been spiritually transformed by it; if the appearing of Jesus had made no difference to them, if it had left them the men they were before, no one would have believed them when they told He had appeared. But testimony does not cease to be testimony when it is delivered by men who have been themselves transformed by what they attest. The truth does not cease to be independently true when its power is demonstrated in its moral workings, and we must take care that the desire to put Christianity on a basis independent of history, a

1. In *Contentio Veritatis*, p. 90.

2. Inge, *ut supra*, p. 87.

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 120

basis beyond the reach of historical doubt, does not lead us to withdraw from under it the only basis on which it has ever been sustained.

Premising this, however, it is of extreme interest to notice how Paul adds to the direct historical testimony for the resurrection an indirect spiritual evidence which in its place is of the highest value. To put it broadly, Christian experience in all its forms implies the resurrection. State the content of this experience as you will, take any aspect or illustration of it you please, and if you deny the resurrection, instead of being the highest and truest form of human life, such experience must be considered a thing illegitimate, abnormal, delusive. All through his argument Paul employs the *reductio ad absurdum*. At first he states his case quite indefinitely: 'if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain, and your faith is vain too' (1Cor. 15:14). Vain, [greek characters omitted] means empty, with nothing in it.

Whatever is to be said of Paul's preaching, we surely cannot say this. A nature so powerful and passionate as his cannot be raised to the most intense action, and sustained in it through life, by that which has nothing in it. A preaching that so stimulated the intelligence of the preacher himself, that put the irresistible constraint on him which he so often describes, 'that carried away the auditors as it swept upon them 'in power and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance' (1 Thess. 1:5) must have had something in it. It must have had behind it a power corresponding in character and in force to the effects which it produced both in the apostle and his audience; and that power, as Paul apprehended it, was the power of the Risen Saviour. But the apostle proceeds to give a more special point to this general truth. 'If Christ is not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins.' Vain is in this

1. See 1 Cor. 9:16, 2 Cor. 5:13, Acts 18:5 -- this last also at Corinth.

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 121

place [greek characters omitted] not [greek characters omitted] futile or to no purpose, rather than having nothing in it. Your faith means your Christianity, your new religion. The great blessing it has brought you is, as you imagine, reconciliation to God; as believers, you are no longer in your sins; in the consciousness of reconciliation to God they are annulled both in their guilt and in their power; the regenerative pardon of God in Christ has made you new creatures. But this regenerative pardon is the pardon of God in Christ: it is preached to men in the Risen Lord who died for sin, and who sends His spirit to those who believe in Him; apart from this Risen Lord it has no legitimacy, no reality at all. But who will dare to say that the consciousness of reconciliation to God, which is the essence of all Christian experience, the inspiration of all Christian praise, the spring of all Christian life, is no more than an illusion? To Christians, at all events, it is more real than anything else which human beings call reality, and its reality stands and falls with that of the resurrection. There may be morbid phenomena in the Christian life, as in life on every plane, and no doubt there are; but to say that the Christian life itself, in that which is most intimately characteristic of it, is nothing but a morbid phenomenon, is too much. At all events it was too much for Paul. For him the doxologies in which men who were no longer in their sins celebrated the living Lord who had redeemed them were not wild and whirling words: they were the only words in which utterance was given to the final truth of life.

And he has still other ways in which he can press his case. If Christ is not risen, 'then they also who have fallen asleep in Christ are perished.' Paul had seen men fall asleep in Christ. He had watched Stephen stoned, and heard him cry, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' He

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 122

had seen our poor human nature, in mortal weakness, lay hold of the immortal love of God in Christ, and through faith in Him triumph over the last enemy. He believed that there was nothing on earth so priceless as such faith, nothing so real and so honouring to God. He could not believe that it was in vain. God would be ashamed of such people, to be called their God, unless their hope of immortality was made good. He would be unworthy of their trust. But such hope was inspired by the resurrection of Jesus; it is only through the resurrection it can be satisfied; and therefore for Paul who so judges, and for all who share his appreciation of the dying Christian's faith, the resurrection is as certain as the fidelity of God to those who trust Him even in death. The final turn which the apostle gives to his argument has been much censured by superior moralists: 'if in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.' The enlightened multitude which has advanced so far as to know that virtue is its own reward has been very severe upon this. A man, we are told, ought to live the highest life quite irrespective of whether there is a life beyond or not. It is hardly profitable, however,

to discuss the kind of life a man will live quite irrespective of conditions. Life is determined by the kind of motives which enter into it. If a man believes as Paul did in the Risen Christ and in the immortal life beyond death, motives from that sphere of reality will enter into his life here, and give it a new character; and it will be time enough to disparage the morality of this verse when we find the people who dispense with the apostolic motive leading the apostolic life. That man would be of ill men most miserable who ran a race for a hope set before him, and found when he had reached the goal that he himself and the hope and all that had inspired him crumbled into dust. It is in

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 123

the same temper that the apostle writes immediately afterwards: 'If after the manner of men I fought with beasts at Ephesus, what doth it profit me? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.' This is not a childish petulance, as if he had said, 'I will not be good unless I get to heaven'; it is rather the passionate expression of the feeling that if goodness and all that is identified with it is not finally victorious -- in a word, is not eternal -- there is no such thing as goodness at all. If life is bounded by time, men will live in one way; if it has an outlook beyond death, they will live in another way, for the range and balance of their motives will be different. Paul is concerned about the Corinthian denial of the resurrection, because it seems to him to spring from a moral preference for the limited view and the narrower range of motives, a preference by which life is inevitably degraded. He does not argue that a man who rejects the resurrection is a bad man, sensual or petty in his morals, but he does assume that the mind of a bad man, whether it be sensual or only small, is weighted against the evidence for the resurrection; and in that he is undoubtedly right. Such a man does not so easily see or sympathize with the meaning of the resurrection; he does not relish what it stands for, and is so far disqualified from doing justice to the evidence on which it rests.

It is not possible to present the various ways in which the evidence for the resurrection is morally qualified without saying or assuming things which to some minds will seem unfair. But this seeming unfairness is not to be imputed to the person who presents the case; it is involved in the necessities of every case in which moral considerations come into play. If a man can easily assume that the Christian consciousness of reconciliation to God, the Christian hope of immortality, the Christian

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 124

devotion of the apostolic life, are things which have no proper place in the moral experience of human beings; if it is easy for him to argue that they must be eliminated, reduced or discounted somehow, to bring the mind to moral sanity; if he can seriously think that the New Testament is no more than the wonderful monument of an immense delusion, he will not easily be persuaded to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. Not that he is invited to believe in it on the ground of these moral phenomena, in the appreciation of which men may conceivably differ. But with these phenomena present to his mind, or rather, as we must say of all moral phenomena, to his conscience -- with some sense of the character of Jesus, with some perception of the gospel of the resurrection, the appeal which God makes through it to sinful man, with some knowledge of what it has produced in human life -- he is invited to accept the testimony of witnesses who say, 'We have seen the Lord.' It is the whole of this complex of facts taken together which constitutes the evidence for the resurrection; and the moral qualifications of it, which the writer has tried to explain, may be said at once to impair and to strengthen its appeal. They impair it for those whose estimate of the moral phenomena involved is low; they strengthen it for those whose estimate of these phenomena is high. If there were no such phenomena at all -- if the alleged resurrection of Jesus were an insulated somewhat, with neither antecedents nor consequences -- no one could believe it; that which has neither relations nor results

does not exist. But the mere fact that the phenomena with which the alleged resurrection is bound up are moral phenomena, which will be differently appreciated by different men, makes it impossible to give a demonstration of it as we give a demonstration in mathematics or in natural science. As far as demonstration can be

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 125

given in history, it is given by the word of credible and competent witnesses like Peter and Paul. No historian questions that Paul had the experience which he described as seeing the Lord; the open question is, what is the worth of the experience which he so describes? Was it an illusion? was it the accompaniment of an epileptic fit? was it a self-begotten vision of an overheated brain? Or was it a real manifestation of the exalted Lord, with all the significance which Paul discovered in it? There is no value in an off hand answer prescribed by the general view of what is or is not possible in nature or in history. The only answer which has value is that which takes into account, first, the confirmation -- if there be such a thing -- of the testimony of Paul by that of other witnesses; and second, the other realities of experience which stand in necessary relation to the alleged fact. It is on its estimate of this evidence as a whole that the Christian Church has since the beginning based its faith in the resurrection of Jesus, and the writer cannot feel that any philosophy or criticism has diminished in the least its convincing and persuasive power.

To present the evidence for the resurrection in this way will not surprise those who have thought about the subject. The broad facts on which the certainty of it rests are that it is attested by men who declare that Jesus appeared to them, and that it stands in such relation to other realities as guarantees that it is itself real. Of course this leaves a great many questions unanswered. It does not tell us anything we can realize as to the mode of being in which Jesus appeared: it does not enable us to interpret the appearances scientifically, and to relate the Risen Saviour to the constitution and course of nature with which we are familiar. The original witnesses like Paul never bring Him back into this world, so as to be a part of it as He was before death;

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 126

His appearing is the revelation of a transcendent life, and of another world which eludes the resources of physical science. But it is on the broad foundation of the certainty which the resurrection of Jesus had for Paul, and which it has for all who accept the primitive testimony in the large scope given to it above, that we have to investigate such narratives of the appearances of Jesus, and of His intercourse with His disciples, as we find in the synoptic gospels and the book of Acts. Though we should find these full of difficulties which elude all attempts at explanation -- nay, though there should turn out to be features in them to which we could not assign any historical value -- our faith in the resurrection, firmly established beforehand on its proper basis, would not be disturbed. We should know less than we thought we did about how the resurrection life was manifested, but we should be as sure as ever that the manifestation was made, and that is all in which we are concerned.

The strict sequence of the argument, therefore, does not require us to enter into such details, but they have been so prominent in most discussions of the resurrection that it is worth while to refer to them in passing. The principal difficulties have been found in connection with three features in the narratives. The first concerns the sequence of the appearances of Jesus; the second, the progressive materialising, or what is alleged to be such, in the representations of the Risen One; and the third, the place of His appearing. 1

As for the first, it has to be frankly admitted that no one has ever succeeded in constructing a harmony which combines without inconsistency or contradiction all that we read in the Gospels, in Acts, and in 1st Corinthians, on this subject. He who wishes to see the best case that can be stated for the accuracy and credibility of the

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 127

New Testament witnesses may find it in the Essay of Dr. Chase'; he who wishes to see the strongest case that can be made against them may consult Schmiedel's article in the Encyclopedia Biblica.² Whether the time over which these appearings extended were longer or shorter -- and everything in the New Testament favours the idea that it was comparatively short -- it must have been a time of intense excitement for all concerned. The agitation of the actors, their emotions, their amazement, incredulity, fear, joy, are vividly reflected in the stories. If their depositions had been taken on oath immediately afterwards, it is certain that discrepancies in detail would have appeared; but no one who knows what evidence is would maintain that discrepancies of this kind discredit the main fact which is attested. We do not know how soon accounts of the resurrection appearances of Jesus began to be put on record; but, as has been already observed, the gospels as we have them were not written till after the death of Paul, and it was too late then to find out with any precision how this or that appearing preserved in tradition was related in time to the others. The series in 1st Corinthians xv. is no doubt chronological, but it does not profess to be complete, and it leaves us perfectly free to combine other appearances with those it records as best we can. One of the greatest difficulties connected with the temporal aspect of the resurrection is that which rises out of the apparent inconsistency of one and the same writer -- the author of the third gospel and of Acts. The first impression left upon the mind by the gospel is that it was on the day of the resurrection itself that Jesus appeared to the two disciples on His way to Emmaus, to Peter, and to the company in Jerusalem; and that on that same day, after

1. Cambridge Theological Essays.
2. Resurrection and Ascension Narratives, Vol. iv. 4039 ff.

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 128

giving this company His final charge, He led them out to Bethany and there parted from them with blessing (and ascended into heaven). But this, notoriously, is not what we find in Acts. There the parting and the ascension at Bethany do not take place till six weeks after the resurrection. It is not easy to believe that Luke in writing the sequel to his gospel which he had in view from the beginning, which is indeed only the second chapter of the same work, and which was in all probability produced continuously with it, was conscious of any such inconsistency in his own mind. He did not write for people who knew nothing of his story, but for a circle -- for his work was never intended for Theophilus alone -- which was acquainted with him and the tradition he represented; and not to insist on the fact that a day of impossible length would be required to take in all the events of the last chapter of the gospel, the probabilities are that its earliest readers, who may never have read it apart from Acts, knew that its closing section was essentially an abridgment or summary, and that whether it was to be interrupted at this point or that -- after ver. 43 or after ver. 49 -- it covered a much longer period than twelve or eighteen hours. There is much to be said for the idea that in the last verses of the gospel Luke condenses into a few lines what he is able in the opening of Acts to expand in some detail, just as in the last verses of Acts he condenses into a sentence two whole years of Paul's preaching in Rome, which he would have expanded in a third book had he been able to bring his history of Christianity down to a provisional termination with the fall of Jerusalem and the death of his

two great figures, Peter and Paul. But however this may be, no chronological difficulty impairs in the slightest degree the value of the testimony to the resurrection on which faith has rested from the first. We see how such

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 129

difficulties would arise; we see how inevitably they must have arisen; and seeing this we know how to discount them.

Many have felt the second class of difficulties more serious -- those arising out of the progressive materialization of the appearances of Jesus. At first, it is said, He only appears; and the visionary reality of an appearance is not to be disputed. Appearances do appear, however they are to be interpreted. It is a step further when the appearance speaks. Still, speaking is only the counterpart of hearing, and as hearing may be as inward and subjective as seeing, the speaking also may be allowed to pass as a way of representing one aspect of the experience. This, it may be said, is all the length we are carried by Paul. He saw the Lord, and the Lord spoke to him, but there is nothing materialistic in this. He does, indeed, speak of His body, but it is the body of His glory (Phil. 3 21) -- that incorruptible spiritual body into the likeness of which He will change the body of our humiliation; not a body of flesh and blood, which cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. We might conceive the Risen Saviour saying to Thomas, 'Reach hither thy finger and see My hands; and reach hither thy hand and put it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing': we might conceive this in consistency with Paul, for the body of His glory is the body in which He suffered, changed as we shall be changed when this corruptible has put on incorruption. But can we, in consistency with Paul's doctrine of the resurrection body, conceive Jesus saying, 'Handle Me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye behold Me having'? Can we conceive that He took a piece of broiled fish and ate it before the disciples "(Luke 24 39-43) ? It is not wanton to ask such questions: they rise involuntarily in the mind, and we have no choice but to face them. One way of doing so

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 130

is to argue that the only reality in the resurrection stories is that of visionary appearances of Jesus, and that everything else in the gospel record is to be explained as the effort of those who believed in these appearances to persuade others to believe in them -- the effort to exhibit them as so indubitably and convincingly real that no one would be able to refuse his faith. But reality for the popular mind is that which is demonstrable to the senses; it is material reality; and hence the proof of the resurrection is more and more materialized. The first step in this process of materialisation is the introduction of the empty grave: the real proof of the resurrection, such as it is, had originally nothing to do with the grave; it was the quiet independent fact that Jesus had appeared beyond the grave. To the empty tomb one infallible sign was added after another -- conversations, the hands and the side, the flesh and the bones, and at last the crudity of eating and drinking. It is a strong argument against this way of explaining all these phenomena that if this be their genesis, it has left no trace of its motive in the New Testament. The empty tomb comes before us only as a fact, not as an argument. It is never referred to as throwing light either on the character or the reality of the resurrection, though it is assumed, of course, in Matthew 28, that if the Jews had been able to produce the body of Jesus the evidence for the resurrection would have been destroyed. It is not easy to dispute this assumption. The confidence of the disciples in their Master's victory over death could not be without relation to His victory over the grave. They did not believe that He would rise again at the last day, they believed from the very beginning that He had risen again already; and it is merely incredible that with such a faith inspiring them they never so much as thought of the grave, or had not a moment of trouble in reconciling to

their belief in

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 131

the resurrection of Jesus the demonstration given by the grave, if His body still lay there, that He too saw corruption. The empty grave is not the product of a naive apologetic spirit, a spirit not content with the evidence for the resurrection contained in the fact that the Lord had appeared to His own and had quickened them unto new victorious life; it is not the first stage in a process which aims unconsciously as much as voluntarily at making the evidence palpable, and independent, as far as may be, of the moral qualifications to which we have already adverted; it is an original, independent and unmotivated part of the apostolic testimony. The whole mysteriousness of the resurrection is in it; in combination with the appearances of Jesus, and with all that flowed from them, it brings us to a point at which the resources of science are exhausted, the point at which the transcendent world revealed in the resurrection touches this world, at once enlarging the mind and bringing it to a stand. This mysteriousness attaches to all that we read in the gospels of the appearances of Jesus -- His coming and going, His form, as it is called in Mark 16:12, His showing of His hands and His side; but whether it can be extended in any way to His eating may well seem doubtful. Meats for the belly and the belly for meats, Paul says, and God shall destroy both it and them. Eating is a function which belongs to the reality of this life, but not to that of immortality; and there does seem something which is not only incongruous but repellent in the idea of the Risen Lord eating. It makes Him real by bringing Him back to earth and incorporating Him again in this life, whereas the reality of which His resurrection assures us is not that of this life, but of another life transcending this. The eating is only mentioned by Luke (Gospel, 24:39 ff., Acts 1:4, 10:41), and when we consider the fact, which a comparison with the other

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 132

gospels renders unquestionable, that Luke everywhere betrays a tendency to materialise the supernatural, it is not too much to suppose that this tendency has left traces on his resurrection narrative, too. But though we have to discount this, the resurrection itself, as the revelation of life in another order, is not touched. It only means that we do not assign to the resurrection life, which has a higher reality of its own, that same kind of reality, with all its material conditions and limitations, with which we are familiar in this world. To reject the eating is not to reject the resurrection life of Jesus, it is to preserve it in its truth as a revelation of life at a new level -- life in which eating and drinking are as inappropriate as marrying or giving in marriage.

We now come to the third of the difficulties connected with the gospel narratives of the resurrection, that which concerns the place of Jesus' appearing. If we take the gospels as they stand, and attempt to harmonise them, we may think at first that there are sufficient facilities for doing so. If in Matthew Jesus appears to His disciples only in Galilee, and in Luke only in Jerusalem, in John He appears to them in both; and it may seem reasonable to apply to difficulties about space the same considerations which have already enabled us to discount the difficulties about time. But a closer scrutiny reveals to us that in their representation of the scene of Jesus' appearances the evangelists do not differ from each other merely as men might differ who were recording the testimony of agitated observers. In this case there might no doubt be divergences, but they would be of an accidental character; they would explain themselves, or would need no explanation. What we find in the gospels is far more conscious, deliberate, and serious than this, and there is something perplexing, not to say disconcerting about it, until we understand

 THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 133

the evangelists' point of view. What are the facts, then, under this head, and how are we to look at them?

In the gospel according to Matthew, ch. 26:31 f., we have the remarkable word of Jesus spoken to His disciples as they left the upper room for the garden of Gethsemane. 'All ye shall be offended in Me this night; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee.' This is not the only passage, as we shall afterwards see, in which Jesus predicts His resurrection, but it is the only one in which He connects it with the immediate future of His disciples, and gives what is in a sense the programme of His appearances. There is no reason to suppose that Jesus did not speak these words. It is not always safe to lean on internal evidence, but the truly poetic conception of the Good Shepherd rallying His dispersed flock and going before them (cf. John 10:4) to the old familiar fields is at least in keeping with the occasion and its mood. The evangelist certainly takes the words seriously, and his resurrection narrative carries out the scheme which they suggest. When the women visit the tomb on the first day of the week, an angel says to them: 'Go quickly, and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him' (Matt. 28:7). The same message is repeated by Jesus when He appears to these women on their way to execute the charge of the angel: 'Go tell My brethren that they depart into Galilee, and there shall they see Me' (Matt. 28:10). It is not necessary to consider whether verses 9 and 10 are no more than a 'doublet' of what precedes -- the tradition of the same fact in another form; the point is that this is the programme which is carried out in the first gospel. The eleven disciples departed into Galilee (v. 16), and

 THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 134

saw Jesus there. There also they received the great commission, Go and make disciples of all nations. Not only is there no appearance of Jesus to the disciples at Jerusalem, but any such appearance is carefully excluded. The disciples are promptly directed away from Jerusalem -- go quickly and tell them -- both by the angel and by Jesus, and we must assume that they left at once. As far as they are concerned the appearing of Jesus is an experience which is connected with Galilee alone.

If we turn to the gospel of Mark, we find there also at ch. 14:27, the prophetic words of Jesus quoted above.. It can hardly be doubted that for him also, as for Matthew, they determined the character of his resurrection narrative. He reproduces them in his account of what took place at the grave. The angel says to the woman, Go tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto You. The gospel of Mark, like everything in the New Testament, was written by a believer in the resurrection; and it is inconceivable that it broke off without the fulfilment of this programme. The consternation of the women described in verse 8 -- 'And they went out and fled from the tomb: for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to any one; for they were afraid' -- is not the end of the story; and in spite of the ingenious comment of Wellhausen can never have been the end of it. As it stands at present, the gospel according to Mark records no appearance of Jesus whatever; but it is no rash assumption that with the same prophetic intimation as Matthew (Mark 14:28, Matt. 26:32), and the same or an even more emphatic reproduction of it by the angel at the tomb (Mark 16:7, Matt. 28:7), the original conclusion ran on the same lines as that of our first gospel. The fear-stricken women may have been met, as in Matthew, and reassured by the,

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 135

Risen Jesus Himself; and when they did their errand the eleven would start for Galilee and see the Lord there. Indeed, the relation of the two evangelists is such that the only plausible construction of the facts is that the last chapter of Matthew, barring what is said about bribing the soldiers, which corresponds to a passage earlier in Matthew and with no parallel in Mark, is based throughout on Mark's original conclusion. Had this been preserved, it would have answered to Matt. 28:16-20; that is, it would have given a Galileean appearance of Jesus to the eleven, and would have excluded an appearance at Jerusalem.

When we turn to Luke, it is of the first importance to remember that he wrote with Mark before him. It is not possible here to give the proof of this; but though there are still scholars who hold that the evangelists had no literary relation to one another, and that each wrote immediately and only from oral tradition, the writer can only express his own conviction of the entire inadequacy of any such view to do justice to the phenomena. Assuming, therefore, that Luke knew Mark, we notice in the first place that he does not give the words of Jesus on leaving the upper room. There is nothing about the smiting of the shepherd, the scattering of the flock, the rising and going before into Galilee. This is not because Luke was ignorant of the words, or accidentally overlooked them, for we can see when we come to his resurrection narrative that the sound of them was in his ears. His two angels say to the women, 'He is not here, but is risen; remember how He spake unto you while He was yet in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.' Here a general reference to Jesus' predictions of His death and resurrection, made while He was yet in Galilee, is substituted for the

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 136

direction to the disciples to go into Galilee and meet Him there. We may say 'substituted' without hesitation; for there is nothing accidental about it. Luke had what he thought sufficient reasons for omitting altogether what he read in Mark 14:27 f.; and for giving what he read in Mark 16:7 an entirely different turn. A reader unfamiliar with the minute comparison of the gospels may think these reckless statements, but no one who has been at pains to examine the way in which Luke habitually makes use of Mark will find any difficulty in them. The only question they raise is, Can we find out the reasons on the strength of which Luke felt entitled or bound to treat these passages as he has done?

The answer is obvious. Luke omitted or modified these passages because they connected the appearances of the Risen Jesus with Galilee, whereas everything he had to tell about Him was connected with Jerusalem. Hence he not only records appearances only at Jerusalem or in its vicinity, but he 'takes as much pains to confine the disciples to Jerusalem as Matthew takes to get them away. The women do not, as in Matthew, see Jesus on the way from the tomb, but He appears on the very day of the resurrection to Cleophas and his friend, to Peter, and to the eleven and those with them. He bids them, apparently on this occasion, continue in the city until they are clothed in power from on high (24:49). They are not only not represented as going to Galilee and seeing Jesus there, according to His commandment: His commandment is reversed; they are forbidden to leave Jerusalem; and it is there, and not amid the scenes of His early fellowship with them, that they receive the great commission. These are the facts: what do they signify, and how are they to be explained?

If we were merely dealing with texts, the relation of which to reality was indeterminable except from them

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 137

selves, we might be hopelessly baffled. We should have to say that both these ways of representing the case could not be true, and that quite possibly neither was. If one witness says, Jesus appeared to His disciples in Galilee only, not in Jerusalem; and another, He appeared to them in Jerusalem only, not in Galilee; the temptation is strong to say that we cannot depend on anything that is said about His appearing. But here it is necessary to remember the evidence for the resurrection which is quite independent of Matthew and Luke. Those manifestations of the Risen Saviour which in themselves and in the spiritual quickening which accompanied them created the Christian Church and the New Testament retain their original certainty even under the extreme supposition that we can make nothing whatever of the testimony of the evangelists. But there is no need even to contemplate a case so extreme. The faith of the evangelists themselves did not rest on the isolated stories they told of the appearing of Jesus, whether in one place or another; it rested where such faith must always rest, on the basis of the apostolic testimony in general, and on the powerful working in the Church of the spirit sent from Christ. The apostolic testimony, however, was much broader and more comprehensive than anything we find in the evangelists, as a glance at 1 Corinthians 15:4-8 is sufficient to show. Of this, the writer believes, the evangelists themselves were as well aware as we; they could not have been ignorant of a tradition which was common, when Paul wrote, to all Christendom -- handed over to him at Jerusalem, and by him transmitted to the Gentile churches. The question suggested by the phenomena of the gospels accordingly takes another form. It is not, How are we to believe in the resurrection in face of the indubitable and intentional inconsistencies of Matthew and Luke?

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 138

but, What was the interest which guided an evangelist in what he wrote about the resurrection? What did he conceive to be his duty in this matter, and how were Matthew and Luke led to do their duty in a way which at first sight is so disconcerting to the reader?

In view of the facts which have just been presented, it is not too rash to suggest that in their resurrection narratives the evangelists did not conceive themselves to be stating systematically or exhaustively the evidence for the resurrection. Not that these narratives are not evidence, but, as the writers must have been aware, they are quite inadequate to represent the evidence as a whole. The aim of the various writers -- their conception of an evangelist's function -- seems rather to have been this: believing in the resurrection themselves, and writing for those who believed in it, they aimed at giving such an account of it as should bring out its permanent significance for the Church. The main thing in all the resurrection narratives in the gospels is the appearing of Jesus to the eleven, and His final charge or commission. This is obviously the case in Matthew, where apart from the appearance to the women in ch. 28:9 f., which is only used to prepare for this, there is no other manifestation of Jesus at all. To the writer, it is not doubtful that in the original form of Mark it would have been the same. Even the later conclusion to Mark, which mentions appearances to Mary of Magdala and to 'two of them as they walked, on their way into the country,' has nothing to tell of these borrowings from Luke and John; in keeping with the true conception of a gospel narrative it enlarges only on the appearance to the eleven, and on what Jesus said to them. Luke, no doubt, in his exquisite story of the two disciples at Emmaus, represents the Lord as interpreting to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself, but he too concentrates

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 139

attention on an appearance to the eleven and on the great commission given on that occasion. If we leave out of account the supplementary twenty-first chapter, and regard the fourth gospel as closing according to the original intention of the writer with ch. 20:31, we see that there also the same holds good. What John is interested in is to be seen in ch. 20:19-23. Incidentally an evangelist might mention this or that with regard to an appearing of Jesus to an individual; he might tell expressly that He was seen of Mary Magdalene, as John does; or of more women than one, as Matthew does; he might imply, without expressly telling, or having any details to tell, that He had appeared to Peter, as Luke does; but it was not in these incidents that he was interested, and it is not on the precision of his knowledge as to their time, place, or circumstances, that his belief in the resurrection or his sense of its significance depends. The one main thing is that Jesus appeared to the disciples, the men whom He had chosen to be with Him, and whom He had trained to continue His work; and that in His intercourse with these chosen men their minds were opened to the meaning of the resurrection both for Him and for themselves. His greatness rose upon them as it had never done in the days of His flesh. They became conscious of His exaltation, of His entrance into the sphere of the divine. They saw Him seated at the right hand of God. He had all power given to Him in heaven and on earth, and in the strength of this exaltation He sent them forth to win the world for Him.

It is not in the least improbable -- or so, at least, it seems to the writer -- that in the great appearing of Jesus to the eleven recorded in all the gospels (Matt. 28:16-20, Mark 16:14-18, Luke 24:36-49, John 20:19-23) we have not the literal record of what took place on a single occasion, but the condensation into a representative scene of all

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 140

that the appearances of Jesus to His disciples meant. These appearances may well have been more numerous -- with 1 Cor. 15 in our hands we may say quite freely that they were more numerous -- than the evangelists enable us to see; but it is not separate appearances, nor the incidental phenomena connected with them, nor the details of time and place, in which the evangelists and the Church for which they write are interested. It is the significance of the resurrection itself. If for the purpose of bringing out this significance the whole manifestation of Jesus to His disciples was condensed into a single representative or typical scene, and if Jesus nevertheless had in point of fact appeared in different places, we can understand how one evangelist should put this typical scene in Galilee and another in Jerusalem. When we see what is being done we should rather say that both are right than that either is wrong. If the gospel according to Matthew rests on the authority of an original disciple of Jesus, it is very natural that he should make Galilee the scene of the appearing; Galilee, as we have seen, had been prepared for by the word of Jesus, and it would be endeared by old associations. Luke, on the other hand, knew Christianity only as a faith which had its cradle and capital at Jerusalem, and it was as natural that he should put the representative appearing there. In either case, however, it is a representative appearing that is meant, and with whatever relative right it is located in Jerusalem or in Galilee, it is not in the location that the writer's interest lies. It is in the revelation which is made of the exaltation of Jesus and the calling of the Church. This, too, has a representative character, as is evident from the fact that, though the meaning is substantially the same in all the gospels, the language in which it is conveyed is surprisingly different. If we compare the words which Jesus speaks in the four passages

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 141

just referred to -- all of which unquestionably serve the same purpose in the gospels in which they

respectively stand -- it is evident that we have no literal report of words of the Lord. We have an expression of the significance of His exaltation for Himself and for the Church. What this significance was we have considered already in speaking of the place of Christ in the faith of the synoptic evangelists; it covered their assurance that He was Lord of all, that He was exalted a Prince and a Saviour, that forgiveness was to be preached to all men in His name; it included the gift of the Holy Spirit and His own spiritual presence. This is what an evangelist is concerned to attest, and if the difficulties which a literal and formal criticism finds in his narrative had been presented to him, the probability is that he would not have taken them seriously. He might cheerfully have admitted that with a perfectly honest mind he had been mistaken about a detail here or there; but that he had been mistaken about the main thing -- that the Lord had appeared to His own, and that this great commission was what His appearing signified -- he could not possibly admit. Nor need we. The resurrection is not attested in the gospels by outside witnesses who had inquired into it as the Psychological Research Society inquires into ghost stories; it is attested -- in the only way in which it can be attested at all -- by people who are within the circle of realities to which it belongs, who share in the life it has begotten, and who therefore know that it is, and can tell what it means. To see this is to get the right point of view for dealing with the difficulties in the narratives; it is not too much to add, that it takes away from these difficulties any religious importance. Whether we can tell precisely how they originated or not, the testimony of the apostles and the Church to the resurrection is unimpaired: Jesus lives in His exaltation, and He holds from the beginning in

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 142

the faith of His disciples that incomparable place which He can never lose.

The question with which we are ultimately concerned -- whether the Christian faith which we see in the New Testament has a basis of fact sufficient to sustain it -- is in part answered by what has now been said. The New Testament life would have no sufficient basis, indeed it would never have been manifested in history, but for the resurrection. It is in a sense the fulfilment of the word of Jesus in the fourth gospel: Because I live, ye shall live also; we could never have seen or known it if the creed had ended, as some people think a Christian creed might end, with 'crucified, dead, and buried.' But though without the resurrection the New Testament attitude to Christ would have no justification, and would in point of fact be plainly impossible, the resurrection, taken by itself, is not that complete historical justification of Christianity which our ultimate question had in view. The resurrection is the resurrection of Jesus, and though it lifts Jesus, as it were, into His place of incommunicable greatness, it is this Person and no other who is thus transcendentally exalted, and there must be some inner relation between what He is and what He was. There must be some proportion between the life which He now lives at God's right hand, and that which He lived among men upon the earth; there must, if Christian faith is to be vindicated, be some congruity between His present significance for God and man, as faith apprehends it, and that which can be traced in His historical career. It is in the life He lived on earth that His mind is mainly revealed to us; and if His mind, as we there come in contact with it -- His mind, in particular, with regard to Himself, and the significance of His being and work in the relations of God and man -- did not stand in essential relation to the believing Christian attitude

THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH page 143

towards Him, we should feel that Christian faith, historically speaking, had an insecure foundation. The New Testament estimate of Christ can only be vindicated if we can show that the historical Person, whose resurrection is attested by the apostles, explicitly or virtually asserted for Himself, during His life in the world, a place in the relations of God and man as incommunicable and all-

determining as that which we have seen bestowed upon Him in the primitive Christian books. The question, therefore, we have now to answer is, What do we know of Jesus? In particular, what place - in His own apprehension -- did Jesus fill in the relations of men to God?

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