

# THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

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VOL. XI.

APRIL, 1907.

No. 2.

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## EVIDENCE OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD.

(By request.)

The faith of Christendom is found ultimately to rest upon a single miracle. Christians themselves are taught to stake all on this miracle: "If Christ be not risen; then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised. And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." 1 Cor. 15, 14—18. Thus Paul. This is not hyperbole.

Facts of sacred history show that the supreme importance of the resurrection of the Lord was recognized not only in verbal statement, but in the entire activity of the early Church. In the same chapter from which we have just quoted Paul sketches in a few lines the essentials of apostolic preaching. He states, v. 1: "I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received," etc.; and then proceeds in vv. 3. 4 to say: "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." Peter's Pentecostal oration, the first public effort of an evangelical preacher in the New Testament, states, and proves by means of Old Testament

prophecy, the fact of the Lord's resurrection, Acts 2, 22—32. Peter's second recorded oration in Solomon's porch treats the resurrection of the Lord, Acts 3, 14. 15. The first persecution of the Church by the Jewish Sanhedrin aimed at the suppression of this preaching of the risen Christ, Acts 4. Twice in quick succession Peter and John defended the Lord's resurrection in the teeth of the high priests, and at their second confession of this miracle they had just been brought from prison, nothing daunted by the threatening of the men who had crucified their Lord, and might be permitted to crucify them also. Philip declared the name of Jesus in Samaria, explained the suffering and glory of Christ to the eunuch. But why multiply instances? The preaching of the risen Lord was the stereotype message of the apostles in every part of the then known earth. That is the marrow and substance of the Gospel: Christ is risen from the dead!

Again, in Rom. 10, 9 Paul has reduced the faith which Christians profess to its briefest expression. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." He impresses upon Timothy, as a sacred duty, this: "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my Gospel," 2 Tim. 2, 8. That is the sweet kernel of all Christian faith and profession: "I know that my Redeemer liveth!"

Again, the resurrection of the Lord in the theology of the apostles represents not only the basis of their dogmatics, but also of their ethics. The daily life of Christians has its moral fundament in, draws its moral strength from, patterns its spiritual renewal after, the resurrection of the Lord. To quote a single passage out of many, Paul says: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the like-

ness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof," Rom. 6, 3—12. That is the crown and glory of a truly Christian life, viz., that it is being transfigured into the glory of the risen Lord by daily rising from sin.

Again, the resurrection of the Lord is the secret of the courage of Christian martyrs. "I see the heavens open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand!" Acts 7, 56 — this cry of the protomartyr of our faith has been ringing down the centuries. Robert Turnbull in his "Christ in History" portrays the power of resurrection-faith from Ireneus, Polycarp, and Justin to Luther and to the nineteenth century. (pp. 346—473.) It is a noble account, this tale of the cloud of blood-witnesses for the despised Galilean whose praises are sung in mortal agony, rising triumphant above the crackling of devouring flames, the howls of wild beasts and the frenzied shouts of still wilder men. That is the mighty stimulus of Christian martyrdom: "I have fought a good fight; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which He shall give me who said: I live and ye shall also live! I go to prepare a place for you!"

Again, the resurrection of the Lord has given color and character to the public acts of Christian worship. The Lord's Day, the day when God brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, stands like a benediction at the entrance of our weeks of toil and worry. The Lord's Gospel sheds its

health-giving rays from every Sunday morn to Saturday night. Every new week is placed afresh under Easterly influences. Christian Passover, *i. e.*, Easter, came to be celebrated quite a while before the Church celebrated Christmas. The feast of the resurrection was the keystone in the arch of annually recurring church-festivals.

Briefly, then, we may say with Uhlhorn: "From whatever side we may view life in the oldest Christian congregations, again and again we meet with this living faith in the resurrection as its moving and propelling force." (*Aufersteh. Chr. als heilsgesch. Tats.*, p. 182.)

Yes, such is the importance of the Lord's resurrection. We fully agree to the statement of Quenstedt and Gerhard: "Resurrectio Christi est basis et fundamentum omnium fidei articulorum." (Qu., *Theol. d.-p.* II, p. 376. Gerh., *Harm.*, C. 212.) And we fail to understand how a theologian like Steinmeyer (*Aufersteh.-Gesch.*, p. 3 f.) can minimize the importance of the resurrection for the Christian apologist, or how a type of theologians, the school of Schleiermacher, can blandly propose to discard the resurrection of the Lord as a myth, and declare: It does not matter much whether Jesus rose or not. Christianity will continue to exist, independently of belief in the reality of His resurrection.

Alas, that theologians of the negative school have been quicker to see the overshadowing importance of the Lord's resurrection. Strauss has made statements to which believers affix their devout Amen. *E. g.*: "The resurrection of Jesus represents the center of the center, the real heart of conventional Christianity, and it is for this reason that the keenest missiles of opponents have at all times been aimed against it." (*Halb. u. Ganz.*, p. 125.) "We are here facing the point where the decision must come; where we must either retract all our former claims and abandon our whole undertaking, or must come forward with the offer to explain the origin of the belief in the resurrection of Jesus without a corresponding miraculous fact." (*Leb. Jes.*, p. 288.) He calls the resurrection of the Lord "an

unheard-of event, an event without a parallel," and declares that "in the face of this event the question whether miracles are at all possible pales into utter insignificance." (*Halb. u. Ganz.*, p. 125.) In a lecture on the resurrection of Christ, delivered at Hildesheim, Uhlhorn's opening remarks were: "I am placed opposite to that point in the great conflict which in our day is being waged about the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, where the strife at this moment is hottest. Having first become concentrated about the person and life of Jesus, the conflict now turns upon Jesus' resurrection. Both parties feel that the decision must come at this point." (*Auferst.-Gesch.*, p. 177.) And Pressense has correctly stated: "If the resurrection cannot stand as an integral part of Christianity, it is not worth while to talk about the remainder." (*Ibid.*, p. 216.)

Such is the importance of this miracle of the Lord's resurrection, as acknowledged by friend and foe of Christ. Now, it is true that we are here dealing with a miracle, something that will prepossess the skeptically inclined against the truth of the resurrection. They spurn miracles, and an event based on, or accompanied by, miracles is at once placed under suspicion by them. The average skeptic is never a good pupil. He lacks that passiveness which is necessary for the successful impartation of knowledge. He is ever on the alert to discover fraud and imposition. His attitude is defiant. He seems to say: Convince me, if you dare! He does not say: Pray teach me! He is biased. His mind is preoccupied and prepossessed. His receptivity is limited. He only accepts what he cannot well afford to decline. He may be silenced and cowed by a presentation of truth, but in his heart of hearts lurks the wish that he might have had the better of the argument. He may acknowledge the victory of truth, however, with a keen regret over his own discomfiture.

The skeptic is usually a bad historian. History is the study of known facts, together with their known consequences. It is occupied with these two questions: 1. What has happened? 2. What came of it? Within these limits history gives an ac-

count of events on the basis of cause and effect. The historian cannot go behind the facts. He cannot undertake to explain the cause of the cause. He must not question the reality of an occurrence on the ground of its incomprehensibility. The historian does not care to know whether anything could have happened, but only whether it did happen. In the address already referred to, Uhlhorn says: "Indeed, I am well aware that the claim is set up in many quarters that the only method truly historical is to absolutely exclude the acceptation of miracles. For, it is said, miracles are inexplicable, are matters which cannot be comprehended from the natural connection of cause and effect, and hence, they cannot form the subject-matter of historical research. Just as if history were able in every instance to pursue its subjects to their primal base and beginning, and to show, in every instance, a perfect chain of cause and effect! The fact that miracles cannot be explained does not exclude them from the consideration of the historian; from such consideration they would be excluded only if they were unknowable. But they are not unknowable; for, although miracles are themselves effects of a higher cause, still, being something that is caused, they readily enter into the natural connection of cause and effect, and are, in their turn, governed as to their effects and consequences by natural laws just as any other fact. However, if miracles are knowable as far as they are facts, they are also subject-matter for historical research, for history deals with facts. It is not from a desire to be historically unprejudiced that miracles are excluded, but from dogmatic bias. A person approaches historical investigation without prejudice when he calmly waits to see whether a strictly historical research will yield facts which, to our conception, are miracles. From the standpoint of the historian I can acknowledge as just this demand only, viz., that whenever we have to do with facts out of the ordinary course of affairs, we must institute a more earnest and searching examination and cross-examination of the witnesses." (*Aufersteh.*, etc., p. 180 f.) Again, this same authority says: "An historical fact cannot be proved except by historical

testimony, nor can it be set aside on any other ground. It can neither be proved on common grounds of reasonableness when historical testimonies for its actual occurrence are wanting, nor can it be set aside on such grounds, if these testimonies are available in sufficient force." (Ibid., p. 179.) This argument has been employed with telling effect in behalf of the fact of our Lord's resurrection by Dr. Paley. He writes: "The history of the resurrection of Christ is a part of the evidence of Christianity: but I do not know whether the proper strength of this passage of the Christian history, or wherein its peculiar value, as a head of evidence, consists, be generally understood. It is not that, as a miracle, the resurrection ought to be accounted a more decisive proof of supernatural agency than other miracles are; it is not that, as it stands in the Gospels, it is better attested than some others; it is not, for either of these reasons, that more weight belongs to it than to other miracles; but for the following, viz.: That it is completely certain that the apostles of Christ, and the first teachers of Christianity, asserted the fact. And this would have been certain, if the four Gospels would have been lost, or never written. Every piece of Scripture recognizes the resurrection. Every epistle of every apostle; every author contemporary with the apostles; of the age immediately succeeding the apostles; every writing from that age to the present, genuine or spurious, on the side of Christianity or against it; concur in representing the resurrection of Christ as an article of his history, received without doubt or disagreement by all who called themselves Christians, as alleged from the beginning by the propagators of the institution, and alleged as the center of their testimony. Nothing, I apprehend, which a man does not himself see or hear, can be more certain to him than this point. I do not mean that nothing can be more certain than that Christ rose from the dead; but that nothing can be more certain than that His apostles, and the first teachers of Christianity, gave out that He did so. In the other parts of the Gospel narrative, a question may be made, whether the things related of Christ be the very things which the apostles

and first teachers of the religion delivered concerning Him. And this question depends a good deal upon the evidence we possess of the genuineness, or rather, perhaps, of the antiquity, credit, and reception of the books. On the subject of the resurrection no such discussion is necessary, because no such doubt can be entertained. The only points which can enter into our consideration are, whether the apostles knowingly published a falsehood, or whether they were themselves deceived; whether either of these suppositions be possible." (*Evid. of Christianity* III, 301 f.) And Dean Milman, in his way, acknowledges the same, when he says: "History, to be true, must condescend to speak the language of the legend. The belief of the times is part of the record of the times; and though there may occur what may baffle its more calm and searching philosophy, it must not disdain that which was the primal, almost universal, motive of human life." (*Lat. Christianity* I, 388.)

The resurrection of Christ is more than an event of history; it is the epochal event without parallel. It is the point where ancient history ends and modern history begins. It is the turning point in the life of the race. It is not possible to ignore this event. He has not read history at all who assumes to pass over this event, claiming that it is of no moment. Voices from all lands under the sun, from every archive of the past accessible to us, say, after the year 70 p. Chr., do not whisper, hint at, suggest, but cry aloud and shout: He is risen! He must be deaf and blind who has failed to perceive this. To understand present conditions in this world of men without accepting the resurrection of Christ as a fact, necessitates the assumption of a greater miracle than the one which skepticism rejects. Jerome quoting Eusebius says: "Do you believe that rustic fishermen from a hamlet . . . conceived the idea of going out to the world — without literary ability, the illiterate to the refined, the ignoble to the skilled? Consider the abject state, low social rank, the absence of learning, the poverty, and the small number of these preachers." (*Lardner's Works* IV, 79.) Chrysostom is astonished, "That a few men, some fishermen,



another a publican, all illiterate, and destitute of worldly wealth and authority, should prevail over both living and dead, and bring over to their scheme not one, or two, or twenty men, or a hundred, or a thousand, or ten thousand, but cities, and nations, and people." (*Hom. in Matth.* 1. See Lardner IV, 563.) At another time he rises to declare: "For the Christian religion to have been spread over the world without miracles, would be a greater miracle than any recorded in the New Testament. If He had not risen, there would not have been any miracles wrought in testimony to it; nor would any have been able to work any miracles in His name: whereas the same power wrought miracles before and after His crucifixion, yea, more and greater after it than before. But how does it appear that miracles were wrought then? will an infidel say. From whence does it appear that Christ was crucified? From the Holy Scriptures, he will answer. Well, that miracles were then done, and that Christ was crucified is manifest from the Holy Scriptures; for they relate both the one and the other. And if the adversary should say that the apostles wrought no miracles, it may be replied: You make their power and the divine favor greater, if indeed, without miracles, they allured so large a part of the world to true religion. For that would be the greatest and most wonderful miracle of all that a company of twelve men, poor, mean, illiterate, despicable, should draw over to themselves so many cities, and nations, and people, and kings, and tyrants, and philosophers, and rhetoricians, and, in a word, the whole earth, without working any miracles. But do you expect to see miracles done now? I will show you some, and greater than any that are recorded: not one dead man raised to life, not one blind man restored to sight, but the whole earth recovered from the darkness of error; not one leper cleansed, but many nations washed from the leprosy of sin. What miracle dost thou desire, man, beyond this great change made in the world all on a sudden?" (*In Princ. Art.* H. 4. T. III, p. 92. 93. See Lardner, IV, 563 f.)

In order to study the evidence of the resurrection of our

Lord with any degree of satisfaction to ourselves, and so as to enable us to readily discover the vulnerable points in any skeptic argument which may be advanced against it, we will have to be thoroughly familiar with the account of the witnesses of that event. Before we weigh testimony, we must have a complete knowledge of the testimony. I shall, accordingly, begin by telling the Easter story in chronological order from the harmonized narrative of the four Gospels and collateral texts.

Loving hands had entombed the Lord in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea, and had shut the entrance to the sepulcher with a huge stone. That was in the late afternoon of Friday. That night, Friday night, the garden was forsaken. No human being was left near the tomb. Friday night passed, and Saturday morning dawned, when, behold, a delegation of Jewish church dignitaries wend their way up the steps to the governor's palace. Matthew relates (ch. 27, 62—66): "Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulcher be made sure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night, and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."

Lardner accounts for the fact that the Jews did not procure the guard on Friday in the following manner: "The priests and Pharisees did not go to Pilate till the next day, or the morrow after our Savior's crucifixion and burial. And there are obvious reasons for such delay. The day in which our Lord was crucified had been a day of full employment and great perplexity to Pilate. And the Jewish priests and Pharisees might not judge it convenient to disturb him in the evening of it. Possibly this thought of a guard, to watch the sepulcher, came not into the minds of any of them that evening. Whenever the

thought arose in the minds of one, or two, or some few of them, it would require time to propose it to others, and gather them together, to go with the request to Pilate. And the morning of the next day was soon enough. For they could none of them suspect the disciples to be so horribly profane and desperate, as to attempt to remove a dead body on the Sabbath! They therefore made provision against the night that followed after the Sabbath. Which was all that could be reckoned needful in the opinion of the most suspicious. Indeed, it is not easily supposable that any of those Jews did really suspect the disciples of a design to steal the body. But they were willing to cast upon them the scandal of such a supposition, the more to bring them under popular resentment. But the contrivance turned out to their own disadvantage." (X, 354.) He also cites Grotius: "The council could not sit on that day. But after a private consultation some of the priests and elders of the sect of the Pharisees went to Pilate, as if they had somewhat to say to him of the utmost importance. Nor had they much difficulty to obtain from him what he regarded of no consequence." (Grotius in Matt. 27, 62. See Lardner, X, 356 f.)

Meanwhile the disciples had disappeared. They were in hiding, partly from shame, partly from fear. But a few of the female followers of the Lord were anxiously waiting for the passing of the Sabbath which kept them indoors and from all manual labor, Luke 23, 56, in order that they might go and embalm the body of Christ. The dawn of the first day of the week was just creeping up from the east, but it was still dark, when a company of women, the two Galilean Marys, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and certain others, among whom were Salome and Joanna, started for the sepulcher, bringing spices and ointments which they had prepared after returning from the burial on Friday, Luke 23, 56; 24, 1, and which they had in part purchased that very morning, Mark 16, 1. They were not aware of the action taken by the Jewish church council on the preceding day, viz., of the sealing of the stone, and the posting of the Roman guard. Had they known this,

it is likely they should not have ventured forth. Their only concern, as they were walking toward the grave, was the removal of the huge stone, Mark 16, 3. That threatened to baffle their effort.

However, great things had meanwhile transpired at the sepulcher of the Lord, or were just then transpiring. A great earthquake shook the region, — it matters little whether *σεισμός ἐγένετο μέγας* in Matthew be understood as, in effect, the perfect or as the imperfect tense. If the women, as Meyer claims, were eye-witnesses of the phenomenon, the discovery which they made only served to hasten their steps towards the tomb. They beheld, from a distance, that the stone had been dislodged. Being of huge size it could be easily discerned at a considerable distance. Mary Magdalene, it appears, no sooner noticed the removal of the stone than she hurried back to the city to bring the report to Peter and John. No doubt, she believed that some harm had been done to the Lord's body, perhaps grave-robbery had been committed.

Meanwhile messengers of another sort were speeding toward the city: the Roman guard. They had been dazed, not only by the earthquake shock, but still more by the apparition of a gorgeous angel who had rolled the stone from the mouth of the tomb and had sat upon it. From this vision the guard ran, as soon as they had recovered themselves. Their destination was the Jewish church council. Thus the news of the resurrection must have reached the friends and foes of Christ at about the same time. After the flight of the guard the angel took up a position in the grave. There was a companion with him, whom Luke and John mention, but whom the women seem not to have discovered at first. The nearer angel addressed the women in the words recorded by Matthew and Mark when they had reached the grave. Calming their fears, he breaks to them the Easter news, and his companion joins him. The women are invited to inspect the place where their Lord had been laid, and which they had marked sadly on the preceding Friday evening. With greetings to the brethren, particularly to penitent Peter,

and with the injunction to meet Christ in Galilee, the angels dismiss the women. Meantime Mary Magdalene has returned, accompanying John and Peter who had decided to investigate the state of affairs at the tomb. Neither of them believed that a resurrection had taken place. John outran Peter on their way to the sepulcher, and quickly glancing into the tomb, and finding it empty, he hastens back to inform Peter. In John's mind there may have faintly dawned the perception of the great truth. Peter was determined to make a thorough investigation. Arriving at the sepulcher he enters it deliberately and finds the linen that had been wrapped about the body and head of Christ neatly folded and laid each in a particular place. Perfect order, no confusion was what met his eyes. No sign, no trace here of grave robbers. John beheld the same, and was convinced. Peter, too, must have had his doubts shaken. He returned to the city, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass. Mary Magdalene, who had now arrived fully at the grave, lingered behind sorrowing, when Peter and John left. She beholds the angels seen by her sisters, and whom John and Peter appear not to have beheld. She makes complaint to them of her anxiety when asked for the cause of her sorrow, and before receiving their reply turns and faces Christ, whom she mistakes for the keeper of the place. Then follows that meeting so touchingly told by John. Mary had been the first to see and hold converse with the risen Christ. She goes to bear the tidings of this blessed interview to the disciples. The Lord vanished from Mary's sight, as suddenly as He had appeared, and just as suddenly stands before Mary's companions, the other women, with whom she had started for the tomb, and who were now hurrying back to the city. "All hail!" He greets them; they hear His voice, they recognize His familiar figure, and fall prostrate at His feet. With a greeting to their brethren, whom He now calls His also, and with the direction already communicated by the angels, to meet Him in Galilee, He dismisses them. That was the second manifestation.

Mightily the holy city must have been stirred by the rumors

which seemed to have been blown in upon its inhabitants upon the morning breeze. Consternation reigned among the priests, when the guards had made their report. A hurried meeting is convoked, and the bold plan is decided upon to offer hush-money to the first involuntary witnesses, not of the Lord's resurrection, which no one had seen, but of the amazing circumstances under which the tomb had seemed to open of its own accord. The injunction to the bribed soldiers, to spread the rumor: "His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept," required that the soldiers should incriminate themselves, and that, with an offense which is regarded as an unpardonable offense in military life. For a picket to sleep at his post is considered such a grave dereliction of duty that it has been made punishable by death in all ages. Accordingly, Paley remarks: "It has been rightly, I think, observed, by Dr. Townshend (*Dis. upon the Res.*, p. 126), that the story of the guards carried collusion upon the face of it. Men in their circumstances would not have made such an acknowledgment of their negligence, without previous assurances of protection and impunity." (Works III, 303.)

(To be continued.)

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