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Articles on THE RESURRECTION

By Drs. Vos, Beattie, Edgar and Rev. Francis Palmer

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# The Bible Student

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all things; hold fast that which is good.

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# The Bible Student.

CONTINUING

## The Bible Student and Religious Outlook.

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### Facts.

There seem to have been always two parties to the discussion of the nature of religion, divided by the emphasis placed on doctrine or life. One party depreciates doctrine as relatively unimportant, adopting as its motto the popular couplet of Pope:

"For modes of faith let graceless  
zealots fight,  
His can't be wrong whose life is in  
the right."

The other party conceives its mission to be a strenuous contention for the faith once delivered to the saints and very naturally, therefore, puts eminent emphasis on doctrinal soundness, and preaches a salvation through belief of the truth.

We need not attempt here to adjust the balance between these contending parties. Surely seriously reflecting, thoughtful people need no demonstration to prove that Pope's much quoted deliverance is sophistical enough to be well nigh frivolous, so illogical as to be irrelevant, inasmuch as it patently "begs the question" in each line of its sonorous sophistry. It may be more to the point, however, to suggest that in much discussion, particularly in re-

ligious debate, the difference is often mainly a matter of emphasis and both parties are likely to be extreme; neither wholly right nor yet either wholly wrong.

In the religious sphere this logomachy is as unnecessary as it is unfortunate. What a ceaseless pity it is that devoted disputants cannot preserve the beautiful balance so uniformly characteristic of the Scriptural presentation of themes which form the arena of unending conflict! How significant and suggestive of the peace which might reign, is the striking fact that each party can find in the Scriptures so much to justify its claim!

Christianity is primarily a religion of facts. By this is not meant that it is simply true as opposed to false nor yet practical as contrasted with theory or speculation; but rather that it is strictly and literally *historical*; that it is in the first instance a series of great events world wide in their relations and age long in their influence; that what is called in modern technical statement "historicity," lies at its basis and is fundamental to its integrity.

Occasionally it looks as though in some quarters this truth is not ap-

product of the resurrection, and not the result of a subsequent transformation of the body first risen from the grave in its previous natural condition.

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## THE VALIDITY AND SUFFICIENCY OF HUMAN TESTIMONY TO THE MIRACULOUS.\*

PROFESSOR R. A. WEBB, D. D., CLARKSVILLE, TENN.

The morning after the crucifixion the plight of the disciples was abject; their leader was dead—dead, in their opinion, discreditably; his promises, as they had understood them, had failed; their cause seemed lost; they felt themselves to be victims and a laughing-stock; they were chagrined, irritated, disgusted; they felt like dupes, and were resolved to be more cautious in the future; they would not soon commit themselves again to the discipleship of some plausible character, claiming to be a messenger of God.

On the very next morning—Monday—however, it began to be noised about that the grave, in which the remains of their late Lord had been deposited, was empty. It was being said on the streets of Jerusalem that his disciples had filched the body. Presently Mary Magdalene came running with the story that the sepulchre was really empty, but that the Lord was alive, and she had seen and conversed with him (Mark xvi. 9; Jno. xx. 14). In a little, her story was confirmed by certain other women, returning from the tomb (Matt. xxviii. 9, 10). The women were then confirmed by Simon Peter (Luke xxiv. 34); and he by two other disciples returning from Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 13). This sort of talk soon brought ten of the despairing disciples together that they might converse with one another, when Jesus himself suddenly appeared behind the closed door in the very room where they were holding their secret council (Jno. xx. 19). From this meeting Thomas was absent, perhaps because his very weariness of spirit had made his feet tardy and his heart indifferent; but meeting the others a little later, they joyfully cried out to him, "We have seen the Lord." But the smarting Thomas will not easily be duped, as he supposes, again. He will receive now

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\*This article was prepared with my eye on Jno. xx. 19-29—the Sabbath School lesson for the fourth Sabbath in April.

R. A. W.

nothing but the evidences of his own senses, nothing but the proofs of his own experience. "Except," he says, "I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (Jno. xx. 25).

Heretofore Thomas has been relying upon testimony. He has been believing what other people say. He has had confidence in human veracity. He has trusted one person, Christ, implicitly, intensely. He has believed every syllable which fell from his lips as he understood it. He has accepted everything upon his sheer testimony, upon the naked word of his Lord. He has tested nothing by experience. He has had no desire to invoke tests of sense and experience. It has been his delight, his religion, to believe anything, everything, simply because it was said by Jesus of Nazareth. His credulity has brought him to bitter disappointment. He feels that he has been trifled with, imposed upon, outrageously victimised. Such humiliation he is resolved shall never come upon him again. He will never believe human kind again as long as he lives. He would not accept the word of any living being. He will henceforth and forever trust only his own senses and actual experience. Thomas virtually says to his fellow-apostles, "I will never believe another man as long as I live. The only doors to my mind henceforth are my five senses. Hereafter, I must see with my own eyes, and confirm my seeing with the feeling of my own hands, before I credit anything. It is the only way in which a self-respecting man can protect himself against humiliating deceptions and fraudulent practices. Trust nobody but yourself; and as to yourself, trust only your five senses; and trust them only when they confirm each other."

No wise man will blame Thomas for his resolution to be cautious; particularly when he is called upon to accept the extraordinary, the wonderful, the miraculous. No man ought to believe a supernatural event as long as he can rationally and sensibly dispute it. But was Thomas' position tenable? Is it rational, sensible, practical, to discredit all human testimony?

There are three ways in which men come to accept fact: (1) by consciousness; (2) by thinking; (3) by testimony.

Knowledge by consciousness, I understand to be immediate knowledge; *scientia visionis*; internal and external perception.

Mind and fact are brought into relation with each other, with nothing intervening, and the mind cognizes because it sees the fact.

Knowing by thinking, I understand to be indirect knowledge; fact is reached by climbing; premises and conclusions are the names of the rungs in the ladder which we climb; it may be long or short, have two rungs, or a thousand; but the fact is obtained by a mental going after it.

Knowledge by testimony, I understand to be indirect knowledge also. Instead of experiencing the fact as I do in consciousness; instead of going after it as I do in thinking; the fact is brought to me by somebody else. I trust the consciousness of other people.

It is a fact that I am now writing on a white sheet of paper; it is a fact that a square described on the hypotenuse of a right angle triangle is equal to the sum of the squares described on the other two sides; it is a fact that the city of London exists in England. All three of the things here referred to are facts; I am just as certain of one as I am of the other. But I got each of the facts in a different way. I got the first by consciousness or sense-perception; I got the second by reasoning; I got the third by testimony. The common sense of mankind would buffet with scorn and contempt the man who would deny the sufficiency and validity of either of these ways of obtaining fact.

This same common sense—the only true philosophy—has flailed the sceptic off the old premise of Hume, who had the temerity to deny the competency of human testimony to prove anything.

The contention is now restricted to the supernatural and miraculous. It is only with respect to this class of facts that the sufficiency and validity of human testimony is called in question. The animus of the limitation is so obvious as to discount the argument in its support. Theodore Parker is quoted as saying, "Miracles hang like a millstone about the neck of many a pious man, who can believe in religion, but not in the transformation of water into wine, or the resurrection of the body." Others tell us that miracles are "the main hindrances and difficulties to the acceptance" of Christianity.

Here, then, is the "last ditch" of "doubting Thomas;" the last

premise upon which he plants his feet: he admits the competency and credibility of human testimony with respect to every other fact except supernatural fact; he concedes that his fellow-men are believable about every other matter; he consents to accept every other kind and class of fact from their hands; but he "draws the line" at the miracle, and, if they bring that sort of fact to him, he proclaims them impostors or fools. And why this great exception?

On *a priori* grounds; from the very nature of a miracle. A miracle is (1) an event in the external world (2) wrought by the immediate power of God. Factor (1) he concedes to be knowable, but he denies the knowableness of (2). For the miracle to be known, however, both (1) and (2) must be cognized.

Let us test this contention at the grave of Lazarus. The first factor is his resurrection from the dead—a fact which was apprehensible by the five senses of the beholders. The second factor in the case was the cause of that resurrection; and that cause was Christ—a cause likewise apprehensible by the five senses of the beholders. In this case we have a miracle in which both the fact and the cause of the fact are matters of sense-perception—a mode of cognizing, which no sceptic has any interest in disputing.

But let us further test the agnostic premise by the greatest of all miracles—the resurrection of Christ—the miracle which so staggered Thomas, who had been able to believe many others. The fact—the external fact—was in this case cognizable by the five senses of every beholder of our risen Lord; and the cause of this event was our Lord himself. So again, in this most critical of all miracles, both the fact and the producing cause of the fact were matters of sense-perception, judged by the sceptic to be the only trustworthy mode of knowledge.

Then why should not Thomas believe his ten fellow-apostles, seeing that the matter about which they spake fell within the range of their five senses? Certainly his unbelief could not be defended on *a priori grounds*—on the ground that a miracle is intrinsically unknowable, and so cannot be transmitted and certified to by his fellow-men.

That all the facts of the resurrection of Christ were thus matters of sense-perception is proved by the fact that, the Sabbath following the day Thomas declined to receive the testimony of

his fellow-apostles, Christ presented himself again to them, Thomas now being present, and the instant he saw, he cried, "My Lord and my God." Unbelief was transmuted into faith, doubt became doctrine.

If vision convinced Thomas, it had antecedently convinced his fellow-apostles; if Thomas was justified in believing his own eyes, he would have been justified in believing the eyes of his ten fellow-apostles. They could see as well as he; they were as honest as he; and if seeing was believing in the case of the apostles, seeing would be believing in our case also; and, it may be asked, if we can be right in believing our own eyes, why are we not obliged to believe the eyes of our fellow-men who can see as far and as truly as we can? The apostles, out of their own experience, send down the centuries to us the facts which they gathered with their own senses; if the story is incredible, it is because the witnesses are liars or fools; it cannot be discarded on the ground that the event is intrinsically unknowable.

This was clearly perceived and fully acknowledged by Strauss, who said, "If the gospels are really and truly historical, it is impossible to exclude miracles from the life of Christ."

But the wisest of all, He who never made a mistake, put the seal of His approval upon the validity and sufficiency of human testimony when he said, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believed" (Jno. xx. 29).

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## THE EMPTY TOMB AND THE RISEN JESUS.

PROFESSOR F. R. BEATTIE, PH. D., D. D., LOUISVILLE, KY.

In the teaching and faith of the apostolic age two facts were constantly dwelt on. These were the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The apostles ever preached Christ crucified, and Christ risen. They showed that he died for our sins, and rose again for our justification.

Both the apostolical and doctrinal significance of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead have a large place in apostolic teaching. The fact that Jesus left the tomb is taken to be proof of his divine Messiahship, and the assurance of the resurrection of his