

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWSDID CHRIST RISE FROM THE
DEAD?

By Rev. W. Harvey-Jellie, M.A., B.D.

Upon the reality of the Resurrection of Our Lord are staked the most tremendous issues conceivable for the Christian. If Christ rose from the dead, He is demonstrated to be our divine Saviour, all His work is attested of God, our faith and hope are well founded, and eternity of life is our sure heritage. If He did not rise then the faith of the Church is based upon a lie, the supernatural element in revelation is a mere delusion, and the Christian's hope of immortality will break into derisive mockery at the grave. But this, at least, is certain, the Christian Church was founded and has endured for nineteen centuries on belief in Our Lord's resurrection; and the continuity of that belief is attested by the fact that the first day of the week has been observed for Christian worship ever since three days from His death upon the Cross.

Hence the question arises, "Did His life end in final and overwhelming defeat amid the world's hate on the Cross, or did He actually emerge from the grave in Joseph's garden a Victor over death and sin?" The wrecker of a risen Christ meets with critics and doubters so frequently that there is need even for the believer to look anew at the grounds of his acceptance of the great fact; and those grounds I wish to present as succinctly as possible.

Let it be borne in mind that we have already seen cause to believe in a personal God, in the reality of revelation, in the possibility of miracle, and in the supernatural character of Christ. Let us also remember that for nineteen hundred years the Christian Church, so rich in thought and experience, has existed and has pursued its ever-advancing career upon a profound belief in the Resurrection. Then let us put the question whether it were conceivable that the life of Christ should end in defeat. Upon all reasoned spiritual grounds which should we expect to prove the stronger: Christ, the Holy, the divine Saviour, or the grave, the representative of sin and death? And we may proceed to answer our question of examining the arguments employed by those who deny the Resurrection.

"Perhaps," say certain critics, "He did not really die." There is no more popular subterfuge for unbelief than this. But in the days immediately following the events of Calvary, all the authorities of the Jewish State were possessed by a frenzied determination to crush belief in the Resurrection; yet amid all the arguments and assertions brought forward by them there seems never to have been a mention of what would have been a complete vindication of their scepticism, viz., that Jesus did not die. There can be but one reason for this—there was evidently no shadow of proof for such an idea. On the other hand, the very authorities certified His death. Moreover the disciples were at least capable of distinguishing between a resurrection and a resurrection; and they lived and died thenceforth in an unshakable belief in the reality of His Resurrection, twelve honest men whose lives attested the sincerity of their convictions. And, yet again, it is so diametrically opposed to the character of Jesus to be a party to deception as to be utterly inconceivable.

It is quite natural that the only record of the fact of the Resurrection should be the New Testament, for our risen Lord, always averse to winning His way by

miracle, would reasonably limit His appearances to believers; and the New Testament is at least the historic record of what men believed. In it we find it recorded that He appeared on ten different occasions, to as many as five hundred at once, bearing His wound-prints, able to eat and converse with His friends, yet capable of transcending material limitations. When we look at the men who are said to have seen Him we find that formerly they had no true conception of His Person and work, and that all their hopes went out with the Crucifixion; but after His alleged appearances they went forth with lives transformed and faith rehabilitated, as men able by their preaching to turn the world upside down. Clearly something must have happened to produce this change; and what could it have been except the reality of the Resurrection? When we examine the earliest preaching of the Apostles we find its constant theme was a risen Christ (cf. Acts ii. 24, iii. 15, iv. 10, 13, x. 40, etc.); they proclaimed the Resurrection before bigotted Jews, scholars, merchants, all contemporaries of the life of Jesus; they met no reasoned attempt to disprove their words, only with the blind opposition of authority; and, remarkable fact! everywhere their words won their way to the acceptance of thousands, and transformed the lives of those who accepted them. And this process has gone on through the ages. This preaching began in days of superstition, but superstition fled before it. It met a hostile world, but it conquered the Empire in three centuries, and to-day it is winning the world. It is not even possible to rank modern science against it, seeing that the camp of physical science is divided on the matter, and that there are many modern scientists who would stand where George Romanes stood, and accept it after years of wavering.

But, to recur to early days, we may declare that nothing could have produced among the Apostles their persistent, harmonious certitude in the Resurrection unless it had been an objective fact. The vision-theory is almost too childish to deserve serious attention. To account for Paul's changed life by an hallucination is contrary to all we know of the nature of hallucinations, for he showed no trace of those early fixed ideas which are psychologically essential to visions. And as to those who account for it by epilepsy, it needs a fair stretch of imagination to apply it to the five hundred who saw Christ at once. All such trumped-up explanations receive the lie from the honesty, the calmness, the intellectual grasp, and the spiritual certitude which history attributes to the men who claimed to have seen their Lord alive from the dead, and who lived and died in their belief in the fact of the Resurrection.

Those who accept the position of modern unbelief and explain away the Resurrection must admit that the Church is founded upon a delusion and the source of holy living for all the saints has been a lie. Material explanations always involve a greater miracle than the Resurrection itself—greater because it would be so utterly unreasonable, so inconsistent with the facts of history, and so barren in its results, viz., that Christ did not rise.

The recorded testimony in favour of the Resurrection would be sufficient to establish any other fact in history, and it is adequate for Christian faith. But when historic evidence is supplemented by reasoned assurance, by spiritual insight, and by religious experience, then the Resurrection stands out as the most potent of all truths for the eternal welfare of mankind; and for all believers it

becomes indeed true that death is swallowed up in victory. In union with the Christ who rose again, we even now, enjoy eternal life, in an experience so deep and strong that it produces the glorious conviction that nothing, not even death itself, can separate us from the love of God manifest in the risen Saviour.

OLD TESTAMENT MARRIAGE
CUSTOMS.

Not everything mentioned in the Bible is mentioned as an example of right action. It is well to bear this truth in mind when considering such a query as the following, from an Illinois reader:

In studying the account given in the Bible of the marriage of Jacob to Rachel, the daughter of Laban, in the 29th chapter of Genesis, the question was raised as to whether or not this should give us to understand that the marriage of consins is not contrary to the teachings of the Bible. Jacob being the son of Rebekah, sister of Laban, Rachel and Jacob were consins, were they not? Will you please give me your opinion in this matter?

Certain words in the Bible are specifically labeled as warnings, others as models for limitation, still others are apparently recorded neither as warnings nor as models, but simply as facts of history. There were practices recorded as part of the life of the Old Testament characters which evidently were not set down as illustrating right principles of living, yet which were not specifically condemned. One of the commonest illustrations of this is in the matter of marriage. Jacob married his consins, two sisters; Abram married his half-sister; the offspring of two of these marriages were signally blessed as the chosen people of Jehovah, and from that family tree sprang the Messiah. Yet there is nothing in the mere fact of the record either to justify or to condemn the marriage of blood kin. There is many a detail of life and conduct with the right or wrong of which, as a detail, the Bible does not deal. But the Bible gives us a sufficient revelation of God's will to enable us to learn what he would have us do in every detail of life.—Sunday School Times.

WEEK-DAY LIVING

Week-day conduct, rather than Sunday conduct is the test of a man. No one is quite normal on Sunday. Some are outwardly better on that day, some are outwardly worse. Many a teacher of "the worst boy in Sunday-school" has been amazed, upon coming to know him in his home through the week, at the evidences of manly character and unselfishness that cropped out when the boy was off his guard. To be on guard for Sunday behavior with "bad boys" is to live up to the reputation wrongly given him by his elders. On the other hand, some Sunday-school pupils have been equally surprised to find that their teachers' ordinary, every-day life between Sundays is not of quite so high a standard as the Sunday conduct and teaching would indicate. In either case, Sunday is apt to be a day of dress parade, as it were. This is not the fault of the day, but of us mortals. The Sabbath's true purpose is fulfilled when our best is strengthened and uplifted on that day, so that the average of week-day and Sunday alike is raised. But as six-sevenths of our time is week-days, so six-sevenths of our real character is likely to be indicated by our week-day living.