

The Dominion Review.

VOL. III.

JULY, 1898.

NO. 7.

IS CHRISTIANITY FOUNDED UPON A MYTH?

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CHRISTIANITY is often defined as a system of belief founded upon Christ. The definition should be more explicit. Christianity is a system of belief founded upon the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. That is to say, the Resurrection of Christ is the cornerstone of Christian belief. If that cornerstone be removed out of its place, or if it crumble away into dust, the system of belief founded thereupon is disintegrated and destroyed. St. Paul, the chief apologist of Christianity, clearly takes this position: "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain; your faith also is vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we witnessed of God that He raised up Christ, whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable." (First Epistle to the Corinthians, 15: 14-19.)

From this strong statement of St. Paul, in which he appears to stake Christianity itself upon the historical reality of Christ's Resurrection, there has been a disposition to recede from time to time, even on the part of some undoubtedly earnest Christians. The literal fact of the Resurrection has become veiled beneath a philosophic conception of immortality and an ethical appreciation of the influence of Christ. But on Easter morning one confronts the fact of a Risen Christ rather than an abstract conception of immortality; one is brought back to the concrete; one is forced to make with St. Paul the great confession of faith, "Now is Christ risen from the dead," or, with St. Paul to look full in the face the tremendous alternative: "If Christ be not risen." For in the end of the nineteenth century, as in the end of the first century, Christianity stands or falls by the fundamental thesis of a rising of Jesus Christ from *absolute* death to *absolute* life. "According to the divine instinct of the first age," says one of the greatest of living scholars, "the message of the Resurrection sums up in one fact the teaching of the Gospel. It is the one central link between the seen and the unseen. We cannot allow our thoughts to be vague or undecided upon it

* This article was specially prepared by Dr. Hall for the Easter number of the *New York Times Illustrated Magazine*.