

# The Bible Student

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Prove 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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A great French ecclesiastic when asked by his sovereign for a short but conclusive proof of divine Truth is said to have answered, "The Jew, Sire". This scattered nation remains today a phenomenon inexplicable except upon the basis of biblical history and prophecy. For full twenty centuries mingling, but never mixed, with racial currents; thrown into constant contact with all races but assimilating with none, resisting alike and equally the attrition of relentless persecution and the absorption of milder fortune, the race holds its own like a great gulf-stream amid the peoples of the earth, a nation without king or country, found every where, and wherever found, separate and distinct; a peculiar people, well nigh as manifestly marked in the twentieth century as it was in the first.

What a tribute to their intense, inveterate, invulnerable individuality!

We know that Christ was a member of this race, born and reared under all the prejudices of its unique traditions cherished from the days of Abraham, traditions whose cumulative force, even to the present mo-

ment, knows no moulding or moderating touch from the influence of the centuries. We know that he was a Jew, and yet the simple statement of the fact gives one a sort of shock because we have never thought of him as such, we find it impossible so to do, his character resists, and our feelings resent, the classification; and this, mark it, not on account of any prejudice against the Israelite, we would feel the same protest against aligning him with any nation or race whatever. He belongs to all, and in this sense he was in a unique degree, The Son of Man, the one universal man of all the ages; as his mission is world wide in its scope so was his character universal in its affinities and sympathies; he suits one race as well as another, one age as well as another; his character and his teachings fit as perfectly the peculiar needs of a complicated twentieth century occidental civilization as they did the primitive conditions of the dreamy orient two thousand years ago.

What an illustration of his limitless universality.

When we meditate upon the matter, we recognize in Christ a marked

**Present-Day  
Depreciation  
Of Christ's  
Resurrection.**

ulous facts which lie at the basis or constitute the substance of the Christian religion, to represent them as unimportant. Thus for example the Ritschlite school deals with the resurrection of Jesus. It is calmly transmuted into a merely spiritual fact—of continued life on the part of Jesus, in a word of the mere immortality of the soul—and then the remark is made, that this is all that Christians have any interest in. "Faith has nothing to do", says HARNACK, for instance, "with the knowledge of the form in which Jesus lives, but only with the conviction that he is the living Lord" (*History of Dogma*, E. T. i., 85-86 note). Thus also the matter is conceived by the French school of Paris, which has a very close affiliation with the Ritschlite type of rationalism: and thus it is presented, for example, in the treatise by Dr. EDMOND STAFFER which has been given to English readers in the three little volumes called respectively *Jesus Christ before his Ministry*, *Jesus Christ during his Ministry*, and *The Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*—the fundamental purpose of which is to present as desupernaturalized a picture of Jesus as possible. In the last volume STAFFER attempts a somewhat minute examination of the accounts of the resurrection of Jesus given in the Gospels, with a view to maintaining that all the manifestations of Jesus historically credible were merely spiritual apparitions having no bodily substance behind them, and that the "resurrection" of Jesus was nothing more than his continued spiritual life after bodily death. The venerable Dr. ALVAH HOVEY has subjected this construction of STAFFER'S to a

**Dr. Hovey's  
Refutation  
Of Staffer.**

searching criticism in the July number of *The American Journal of Theology* (pp. 536-554) and experiences little trouble in exhibiting the flimsy character of its methods, and the untenableness of its conclusions. The reader of this excellent paper will be very deeply impressed afresh with the unassailable cogency of the evidence for the actual resurrection of the Lord, and with the violence of the dealing with documentary material which is necessary if doubt is to be cast upon this great central fact of Christianity. There are some points, naturally, in the detailed harmonizing of the several narratives which present difficulties: and in these there is room for dissent now and then from Dr. HOVEY'S preferred scheme of harmonization. But with respect to the main outlines of the course of events there is no room for doubt. We may remark in passing that we do not think it possible to emphasize unduly, as Dr. HOVEY complains is done by STAFFER, the sameness of Christ's risen body with that which was laid in the sepulchre. There was no doubt some change—parallel to that signalized by Paul when speaking in 1 Cor. xv. of the change in the bodies of the saints. But the risen body was in such a sense the same body that was laid in the sepulchre, that when it came forth the *tomb was left empty*. And in this undeniable fact of "the empty tomb" centers the apologetic of the resurrection. STAFFER does not deny the empty tomb: but neither STAFFER nor any one else can be permitted to ignore it,—or to account for it by *a priori* suggestions derived, not from historical data, but from the exigencies of their theories. And it ill becomes critics whose whole construction of the history is thus the outgrowth of the necessities of their preconceived theories to gird at "apologetes" as if

they were especially sinners in "assuming to know what must have taken place, instead of seeking for what actually did take place",—for "concluding that facts must have been thus and so, instead of simply discovering what they were." This is just the whole procedure and constant method of the naturalizers: and constitutes in fact the sole principle of their examination of the sacred history.

We are led to throw an especial emphasis on these remarks by the character of a paper by Prof. PAUL SCHWARTZKOPFF of Göttingen, which is printed in *The Monist* for October (pp. 1-29). Its title is "The Belief in the Resurrection of Jesus and its Permanent Significance", and it exhibits all the vices of the naturalistic school in a specially offensive form. The "empty tomb" he does not dare to deny; nor the reality of the "Christophanies." But he suggests that the tomb may well have been emptied by some other method than a "resurrection": and the "Christophanies" may have been produced by something else than the actual encountering of a bodily Jesus. After all *how* could a body rise, and *where* out of this earth can a risen body abide? True, Jesus is Himself committed to the physical resurrection: but this was not a part of "the religious thought revealed to Him by His Father", but only of the traditional forms in which His new revelation necessarily clothed itself: it is only again a question of kernel and husk—"what a precious kernel! what a childish husk!" It is not in matters of external form that the real religious value of the Disciples' faith in the resurrection of their Lord is to be found. *That* is discoverable only in their assurance that Christ lived on

after death, and lived on as Christ, that is as Messiah. They had accepted Him as Messiah on the strength of the deep impression His life in communion with God made on them. This impression was too profound to be destroyed by His death: after a moment of occultation it revived: and "the faith of the disciples was resurrected as faith in the resurrection, and as a matter of course in the forms which the piety of the times had cultivated for this thought." It is for us to transmute it into the forms which the piety of our times has cultivated for this thought. Thus once more, as in the whole period since the rise of the modern variety of naturalism, we have the whole substance of the Christian faith sublimated as "husk", that the "kernel" of a purely natural religion may be substituted for it.

We turn with avidity from such violent manipulations of the historical data, to an inspiring paper that comes to us along with Dr. SCHWARTZKOPFF'S, as if the poison were not to be permitted to be disseminated without the antidote accompanying it.

It is from the hand of another venerable Baptist scholar,—Dr. HENRY G. WESTON, and is printed in *The Bibliotheca Sacra* for October (pp. 696-708). It takes up the naturalistic indifferentism as to the resurrection of Christ from the essential rather than the critical side; and proposes to show—and, we may add, does show,—that "the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the central fact in Christianity". Nothing can exceed the verve or the sweet reasonableness of this beautiful paper. We may not agree with all that is said in it: we do not think it true that the soteriological center of Christianity lies in the resurrection of Christ rather than in His

death; and we can only judge that in the superior emphasis thrown on the resurrection instead of the out-poured blood of Jesus Dr. WESTON has been led a step too far in the natural enthusiasm engendered by his great theme. But in the general course of his rich exposition, every Christian heart will go with him. And how strongly and clearly he states the facts as to the "living Jesus" and the significance of the living Christ to Christian faith. "If the resurrection of Jesus can be disproved, if it can be shown that he is dead and not living, Christian faith is completely destroyed." So much for the necessity of the resurrection. As to its uniqueness: "All other religious teachers are dead; of Jesus alone can it be said that he is living. For the resurrection is not synonymous with a future existence. Belief

in a life beyond the grave is a permanent conviction of the race. It was not the immortality of Jesus that the Apostles were forbidden by the Sanhedrins to preach. The Athenians did not deride Paul's presentation of man's existence after the death of the body, for in that they believed; it was when they heard of a resurrection from the dead that they mocked." As with the old naturalists so with the new ones. They are ready enough to believe in the continued existence of Jesus after death. When it comes to a "resurrection" they mock. In other words they wish to eliminate from the religion of Jesus all that distinguishes it from natural religion, and still to call themselves Christians. It is the essence of distinctive Christianity that is at stake in the controversy they raise. B. B. W.