
Evidence All But Coercive.
By Arnold Lunn.

Question XVIII. A Galilean Jew who proved himself to be God by rising from the dead? Nothing less than coercive evidence could establish so tremendous a claim.

Answer. If the Resurrection were the only recorded example in the history of a miracle it would be difficult to accept the evidence, though strong, as conclusive. But this is not the case. The Resurrection is not a unique miracle. It is only a particularly impressive example of the modification by Supernatural Agency of the normal effects of Natural Law. In our time miracles have witnessed at Lourdes which have resisted the most exacting inquiry. The evidence for miracles (evidence to which every age and every race contributes its quota) is cumulative and overwhelming.

Now if Resurrections were as common as meteors, and --like meteors--accepted as scientifically demonstrated, no skeptic would deny that Jesus rose from the dead. Every critic who was prepared to concede the premise "Resurrections occasionally occur" would admit that the evidence for this particular Resurrection is overwhelming. It is clear then that the denial of the Resurrection proceeds not from a reasoned refutation of the evidence, but from the conviction that no evidence, however strong, suffices to establish so improbable a conclusion. It is, of course, hopeless to argue with people whose pious faith in the great dogma 'Miracles don't occur' is immune to the erosion of facts.

The Christian claims that the Christian hypothesis fits all the facts and is always more reasonable and more plausible than the anti-Christian hypothesis. Our explanation solves the mystery of the Empty Tomb. No other explanation is even plausible. Our explanation solves the psychological mystery of the transformation of cowardly and broken men into the flaming apostles of a new creed. Our theory that the Supernatural sometimes intervenes and modifies the normal effects of Natural Law explains every miracle whereas the skeptic has to invent a whole series of hypotheses to cover different cases, fraud, hallucination, inaccurate observation, etc. Surely we can apply the principle of Occam's razor, Entia non sunt multiplicanda sine ratione, for explanations should not be multiplied needlessly.

Now the Christian hypothesis explains not only all miracles but also all those other phenomena of the Christian religion which confirm and strengthen our belief in the Resurrection. For our faith in the Resurrection rests not only on the contemporary evidence but on the experiences of Christian men in all ages. Men have turned to Christ for help, and have found in Christ a power which has the fierce force of passion. Permanent and radical revolutions of character have been effected under the influence of great revival movements. Within the Christian culture saints have flourished, saints who by the testimony of a great Jewish philosopher, Bergson, differ radically in their dynamic power from the good men produced by other religions.

The evidence for Christianity in general and the Resurrection in particular is a complex of many factors all of which point to the same conclusion. It is arguable that the historical evidence for the Resurrection would just fail, if unsupported (just as the evidence of religious experience would fail, if unsupported by historical evidence) to establish our sublime conclusion. But the combined effects of all these converging arguments is all but coercive.

Question XIX. Why 'all but coercive'? Why shouldn't the evidence be coercive? If it's as important as all that for all men to be Christians, why doesn't God work a really first class miracle in the presence of millions of witnesses? If the Cardinal Archbishop of New York were to remove the Statue of Liberty to Chicago in support of his claims, I'd join the Catholic Church tomorrow and so would everybody else.

PRAYERS: (deceased) grandfather of Frank Guindon (Fresh.); Rev. James McManus, C.S.C. Ill, aunt of Tom Quinlan (Dill.); Dale Pillers, '36, friend of Matt Sheeley, (Korr.); Dick Swisher (How.); Sr. Mary Hyacinthis, sister of B.G. Kesting, '25; father of Miss Cheppard (Secretary's office); Rev. James M. Drought, New York, N.Y. 1 spec. int.