

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE II.

THE TRIAL OF JESUS: ITS VALUE IN THE
FOUNDATION OF FAITH.¹

BY THE HON. F. J. LAMB.

FOR more than eighteen hundred years, odium and anathema have been heaped on the Jews, in scorn for the infamous proceedings of their rulers, in their trial and condemnation of Jesus; and, at the present day, the mere announcement of a paper or address on that subject awakens at once a lively expectation of finding in it some new fuel to feed the old hate. So I hasten to disclaim any such purpose in this discussion.

On the contrary, I am persuaded, that, rightly viewed, the record of the trial of Jesus has (in the rational apprehension of God's moral government) a function and place that exalts it into an essential and immediate connection with supreme and eternal things; so elevated and ennobling that, in their contemplation, the malignity shown by Christ's enemies in his trial and crucifixion may, for the time at least, be overlooked, if not forgotten. This function or use of that record is the very simple and yet, as Christ uses it in his dispensation, the exalted function of testimony. But it is testimony which, because of the combination into which it enters and is essentially united, becomes an indispensable part of that sure foundation on which faith—faith in God, and Christ, and the Christian religion—may be safely built and securely rested.

¹Read before the Ministerial Association of Beloit, Wisconsin, October 18, 1898.

Lest I be thought to exalt too highly this element of evidence in connection with the process of engendering faith, I will make a brief attempt at analyzing one conception, at least, of faith:—that virtue that Christ so earnestly enjoins upon his followers. I conceive the Bible idea of faith to be not a single or simple, but a compound, virtue: compounded of belief and trust, in action; belief in some person or truth that may be trusted in; and trusting in fact in such person or truth and committing one's self to it seem to me the essential factors of the Bible idea of faith. If right in this, then we have two conceptions to deal with; namely, *belief* and *trust*. They are radically different in this: Trust is voluntary, a matter of the will. One may trust or refuse to trust as he wills. Not so with belief. Honest normal belief (such as we are here contemplating) is not voluntary, not a matter of the will; but such belief is a product, a product of testimony.

Analysis of any Bible example of faith will make this plain. Saul, fresh from participation in Stephen's martyrdom, believed Jesus was not the Christ, but an impostor, and his alleged resurrection a wicked fabrication; so he persecuted Christ's disciples. But the overwhelming evidence vouchsafed to Saul on the Damascus road when Saul saw Jesus, and heard him talk in the Hebrew tongue, produced an instant reversal of Saul's convictions; and he at once *believed* both that Jesus was the Christ and that he had risen from the dead; and Saul's *trust* in Christ and faith in him were shown to be complete, when he cried out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do," and *did it*. Again, the woman sick twelve years *heard* of Jesus. Her verdict on the evidence she heard was, I believe, "if I can but touch his clothes, I shall be healed." She trusted to that belief, touched, and was made whole. Thus every Bible example of faith may be analyzed with the same results.

So that, before the intelligent exercise of faith, the individual must have an honest belief in the being or promise or truth to be trusted. That honest normal belief, in rational analysis, is not a matter under one's unconditional control; but, on the contrary, it is conditioned on the production or reception of evidence or information fitted to, and which does in fact produce belief in, the being, the promise, the principle, or the truth that is to be trusted. On such belief or conviction, the individual may rationally trust and act, and in so doing exercises and exhibits faith. Hence the essential necessity of evidence in the rational, intelligent exercise of faith. One of the most spiritual divines of this century has truly said, that neither God nor Christ ever required a human soul to believe anything without furnishing that soul with evidence adequate, if fairly considered, to produce that belief.

We now recur to our principal theme: The trial of Jesus. It is the consensus of Christendom, that the resurrection of Jesus is the crowning miracle of all ages (since the creation), and stands in the profoundest relation to man, because, by common consent, the resurrection of Jesus is demonstration of the truth of all the claims Jesus put forth, including his own holy and sinless life and his equality with God, and stands the supreme, divine pledge of eternal life to all who accept Christ.

"If Christ be not risen, then our preaching is vain, and your faith is also vain."

If, therefore, any research may supply in quantity or moral quality, if only a link or only a buttress, to perfect the proofs that make the resurrection of Jesus such demonstration, the quest ought not to be deemed unworthy. That the record of the trial of Jesus will be found to supply such evidence, I believe will be shown as we progress; and to point out and apply that testimony in the demonstration, in accordance with maxims and

principles that ages of experience have developed and established as essential in eliciting truth, is the object of this article.

First, then, what testimony is indispensable for proving conclusively the resurrection of Jesus; and further proving the fact adequately for all classes and conditions of men, in all ages, climes, and circumstances, and which can stand successfully against the most searching scrutiny, the keenest criticism when applying to the evidence the severest tests that the wisdom of ages and experience, in discerning between truth and falsehood, have proved worthy of adoption.

The indispensable proofs must establish:—

1st. That Jesus was dead, that his physical life was in fact indubitably extinguished.

2d. That subsequently Jesus was alive.

As this discussion is designed primarily to deal with the trial of Jesus, as evidence, connected with and essential to the inestimable value of the resurrection, I discuss the evidence that Jesus was alive after the crucifixion only incidentally, and I pass at once to consider the question, Was his death verity?

But I notice—what hardly needs notice—that the resurrection could not be a fact, and so could not be a pledge of immortality to a believer, unless the death of Jesus was beyond any question a preceding verity.

The record proof of the death of Jesus is, that the Jews vehemently demanded that he should be crucified. The record is (I quote literally):—

“And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required”; “and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.”

“Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus . . . and when they came to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.”

“Joseph of Arimathea . . . went boldly in unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. And Pilate marveled if he were already dead; and, calling

unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he *knew it of the centurion*, he gave the body to Joseph, and he laid him in a sepulcher which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulcher."

These extracts from the record demonstrate that death was inflicted upon Jesus:—

- (1) By an official public executioner;
- (2) By virtue of a death warrant;
- (3) Issued pursuant to, and to enforce, a judgment and sentence condemning Jesus to death as a malefactor; a judgment rendered in open court, by the supreme judge and tribunal of the government then and there established, which had undoubted jurisdiction to hold the court, hear, try, and determine the case, and render and enforce the sentence.

In short, the record furnishes all the elements of official proof that Jesus was arraigned and tried as a malefactor, by a court of general and competent jurisdiction, and on such trial, judgment was rendered against him, and he was sentenced to death as a malefactor, and was executed by the public executioner, who, after inflicting the penalty of death, was called upon by the judge to make return of his doings upon the death warrant, and the executioner in his official capacity certified to the judge, that the warrant had been duly executed and that Jesus was verily dead. Much other cumulative evidence of Jesus' death, especially its notorious publicity, I pass without comment. Our special immediate interest is with the consequences of the official proofs of the death of Jesus. These official proofs, as we have seen, are so complete and conclusive in all requisites, even of form and detail, as to assure to all men, in all time, the absolute verity that Jesus' body when laid in the tomb was dead.

It is proper to note here, that, as we are examining the record in part to see if the evidence validates the resurrection of Jesus, our purpose is, to rigorously search and scru-

tinize the testimony and every aspect it presents, so that it shall be demonstrated that every objection that learning or criticism may raise, having, for any recognized reason, any seeming or presumed validity, shall be openly and honestly met and overcome, not on any technical grounds, but on the merits of the matter. At this point, therefore, I notice that a difficulty and objection may legitimately be raised by an opponent. And the objection is based on grounds that for ages have been recognized by wise men, lovers of truth, who by ample and extended experience have found those grounds indispensable in the due administration of justice, government, and affairs among men. That objection or embarrassment in the case before us arises from the very amplitude of the proofs, and conclusiveness so to speak, of the *official* testimony of the death of Jesus.

The objection or embarrassment is this:—

“Where acts are of a judicial or official nature, or require the concurrence of official persons, a presumption arises in favor of their rightfulness, and that the judgment and action decreed and executed by them officially were in every way justified. This presumption was embodied in the maxim of the Roman law, *Omne Praesumuntur rite et solemniter esse acta donec probetur in contrarium*, ‘Everything is presumed to be rightly and duly done, until the contrary is shown.’”

The principle embodied in this maxim was found by the experience of ages to be indispensable, for the welfare of mankind, in the administration of justice, and evidently took shape in the form of this maxim, at a date earlier than the Christian era, in the administration of justice, by the Roman people, whose system of laws and maxims have come down to us, and by common consent of scholars and jurists embody such wisdom as puts them immeasurably above every other system of laws developed by any other nation of antiquity. But the experience of all ages since, even to the present time, has only corroborated the wisdom, and necessitated maintaining the principle embodied in the maxim. The application of the maxim

presumes that a man acting in a public official capacity is duly authorized so to do; that magistrates do nothing causelessly or maliciously; that the decisions of a superior court or magistrate are well founded and their judgments rightly rendered. All these things, and what is implied by them, stand forever to be presumed right until the contrary is shown.¹ It is presumed that the doings of a court of record are regular and proper; that its jurisdiction was properly acquired; that its proceedings are legal and valid; that its decisions are well founded and free from error.²

The Supreme Court of the United States, in *Voorhies v. Jackson* 10 Pet. 449-472, state the rule thus:—

“There is no principle of law, better settled, than that every act of a court of competent jurisdiction shall be presumed to have been rightly done, until the contrary is proved; this rule applies as well to every judgment or decree rendered in the various stages of their proceedings, from the initiation to the completion, as to their final adjudication.”

The legitimate application of this rule to the record we are examining, raises the legal presumption that Jesus was rightfully convicted, sentenced, and executed as a malefactor in due expiation of crime. Obviously while that presumption prevails, the claim of holiness or moral perfection, if not of the deity of Jesus, and all moral claims based on his life, example, and testimony, would be annulled, and the alleged resurrection would not be a demonstration of the truth of the claims made by Jesus, but they would be overcome by the presumption that he was a malefactor and an impostor. Opponents of the Christian religion have not failed to see and insist on the spirit and scope of this rule and maxim, when writing to defend the Jews from obloquy growing out of their participation in the trial of Jesus, or when opposing Christianity. An appeal to the spirit of this presumption may be found in a chapter entitled “The Trial and Condemnation of Jesus”; being Chap-

¹ Broom's Legal Maxims, 7th Am. Ed., 165-942 *et seq.*, 944-948.

² 1. Black on Judgments, Section 270.

ter III. of Book IV. of "The History of Moses and the Hebrew People," by Mr. Joseph Salvador, a learned Jew, published in France in the early part of this century.

The maxim or rule is, that the presumption in question prevails until the contrary is shown. The only way of showing the contrary to all men, in all time, was by making and preserving a full, clear record of what transpired on the trial of Jesus; and hence its supreme importance. In this connection it may be proper to notice the large space taken up by the evangelists in recording the arrest and trial of Jesus, namely, over two hundred verses. Nearly twice as much space and fullness is given to this, as to any other event or transaction recorded of Jesus, not excepting his birth and the long chapter by Luke on that event. Was not the hand of God in such elaborate preservation of the evidence?

THE TRIAL OF JESUS.

The trial of Jesus was twofold, or he passed through the ordeal of two trials: one before the Jewish Council, the Sanhedrim; and another before the Roman Governor, Pilate. Although the trial before Pilate was last in order of time, yet, because of its evidential importance in meeting the official record, out of which the presumption arises that Jesus was a malefactor, and in establishing Jesus' absolute innocence of any crime whatever, his perfect purity, I propose to first consider his trial before Pilate. But, to get the full force of that trial, let us see what was Pilate's position and attitude toward the case; what the surroundings, forces, and conditions operating on Pilate, impelling him to find Jesus guilty, if he could.

The Jews, it seems, were at that time permitted by the Romans to exercise some judicial functions and authority; for, when Pilate proposed to set Jesus free, the Jews said they had a law, and Jesus had violated that law and de-

served death. Pilate then told them to take Jesus and try him by that law.

Note that this was when the leaders of the Jews brought Jesus before Pilate to procure from Pilate a warrant⁴ for Jesus' crucifixion. The record discloses the fact, that it was nothing but Pilate's fear of the very same leaders of the Jews, and Pilate's desire to placate them, that finally, after extreme mental struggle, extorted from him the warrant for the crucifixion. In other words, the situation and surroundings impelled Pilate to find Jesus a guilty criminal deserving death, if it was possible on any view of the testimony of the case to do so. If he could by any tortured construction or conception of the evidence have found Jesus to be a wrong-doer, a corrupt or wicked person, a malefactor, Pilate could at one and the same time, and by the same act, have quieted his conscience and satisfied his desire to placate the Jewish leaders whom he feared. Pilate's infamous act in ordering an innocent person to be crucified, may be said to be proof that he was not so morally upright, that he would not misconstrue the testimony to find Jesus guilty if he could. In other words, all these considerations conspired to impel Pilate to construe all the evidence unfavorably against Jesus, and on such testimony to find him guilty and deserving of death.

With all these forces impelling Pilate to misconstrue everything against Jesus and to pronounce judgment against him, and Pilate's capacity to do so, what does the record disclose? What on that trial is the eternal testimony of Pilate in regard to Jesus? The chief priests accused Jesus of many things, and, after Pilate had examined him, Pilate's verdict was: "I find no fault in this man."

Being informed that Jesus was a Galilæan, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, who remanded him to Pilate, who then

"called together the chief priests and all the rulers and the people, and said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that pervert-

eth the people: and behold, I have examined him before you, and have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him. No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him, and lo, nothing worthy of death hath been done by him."

After a great uproar and clamor had been made, Pilate, willing to release Jesus, spake again unto the chief priests, but the Jews cried out "Crucify him." Then Pilate said unto them the third time, "Why what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him." Later it seems, after Jesus was scourged, and arrayed in mock majesty,

"Pilate went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came forth Jesus, wearing a crown of thorns and the purple robe. The Jews cried, Crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him. Pilate also took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person."

Such, in spite of the surrounding forces and motives impelling him to a contrary decision, was the finding and verdict of Pilate, the Roman governor, as to the perfect innocence and complete vindication of Jesus. Such, too, is the verdict of the ages, concurred in by all intelligences, human and divine.

Now let us turn back to the consideration of the other and, if possible, more important instalment of the trial of Jesus, by and before the Sanhedrim. Notice that this was the Supreme Court of Judicature of the Hebrews—charged with the administration and vindication of the laws of the Pentateuch—a body of learned men, thoroughly versed in those laws. Jesus was indicted or charged before the Sanhedrim with the violation of the law against blasphemy, the penalty for which was death. This law may be conceived as a part of the laws of the Jewish theocracy, and its violation a direct offense against Jehovah (the Theocratic Head of the nation); and, as challenging the supremacy of Jehovah, it embraced the element of treason, and was probably the highest crime known to the Jewish law,

and regarded with such horror that universal custom required a Jew who heard it to rend his robe before the world in condemnation of the sin.

This was not a new charge then invented against Jesus. Jesus had said to the Jews,—

“I and my Father are one: and they took stones to stone him” (saying they purposed to stone him for blasphemy), “because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.”

The original attempt of the accusers of Jesus was to prove that he had averred, that if the temple (which occupied forty and two years in building) were thrown down, he, Jesus, would rebuild it in three days. This, if duly proved, in the view of the Sanhedrim, would prove the charge, on the proposition, that no one not possessing divine power could do such an act; and to claim such power was, on the part of the claimant, to assert himself equal with God, which was blasphemy.

While many witnesses were called to this charge, there was not sufficient agreement in their details to justify conviction under Jewish law. Wearied, and perhaps despairing of procuring witnesses to sustain the charge in the form first attempted, the high priest in desperate mood, in gross violation of the law he was administering, proceeded before the whole body of the Sanhedrim to administer the oath to Jesus, and demanded of him, “Art thou the Christ?”

In contemplation of the standard of valid testimony on which as a foundation to rest an intelligent faith, and confidence in the Christian religion, when the high priest thus called on Jesus to testify, the situation made it a supreme moment of the ages for the sinful race of Adam. The tribunal was, up to that time, the solitary one of all the world that had any apprehension of Jehovah, the God of the Bible; the Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of the Universe, the Judge of all the earth. If Jesus was an impostor; if he was not fully, completely, and verily the Word,

who was with God and was God, by whom all things were made, and without whom was nothing made that was made, as recorded by John,—then the Sanhedrim were perfectly justified in trying Jesus on the charge of blasphemy, and, on due proof, in condemning him to death. There was no indefiniteness or obscurity in the charge against Jesus. It was, that he claimed and asserted himself equal with God. Moses, overmastered for the once with the honor which God had conferred on him in empowering him to work miracles, lost his reverence for Jehovah, so far only, as to say to a rebellious host of Hebrews, "Must we fetch you water out of this rock?" That seeming disregard by Moses of his place in his relation to God and the miracle, required, in God's judgment, a severe punishment upon Moses, to vindicate God's honor, which Moses' most humble and sincere repentance could not avail to avert.

Jesus knew with ample, yea infinite, fullness and clearness, exactly what the question of the high priest called for. He knew the law. He knew the heinousness of the crime involved in the act of a mere man's asserting himself to be God or equal to God. Jesus not only knew the very point and grip of the question of the high priest, but also, that for a mere man to answer it in the affirmative would be to commit the highest and most horrible crime known to the laws of his nation—a heinous crime against the God and Father Jesus loved, glorified, obeyed, and to whom his prayers ascended always—God whose mission and work Jesus was then and there in the world to perform.

It is plain, also, that if Jesus would only answer the high priest, No, his release would follow, for that would be the intellectual and moral suicide of Jesus,—the repudiation of all he had taught and done in his mission on earth, and leave Jesus an impotent, self-confessed impostor, despised by all, and no longer to be feared or hated by

priest or Pharisee. Not only this but, if Jesus was not divine, not Deity, one with and equal with God,—God as revealed in the Bible, in Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms,—he knew it was his imperative duty to save his life by saying No, if No was the truth.

But Jesus knew also that to answer, Yes, was to assure his condemnation to death, and the infliction of the penalty. Was there no horror to Jesus in all this? Let the bloody sweat and the triple prayer of agony in Gethsemane answer.

Think you, that the few human souls in the high priest's palace at Jerusalem were the only intelligences that took in the scene? Only a few months before this, Moses and Elijah, after a thousand years' absence from earth, had come down upon the mount of transfiguration, and there communed with Jesus in regard to this very event, now transpiring, part of the exodus he should shortly accomplish at Jerusalem. And, as part of the same meeting on the mount and the same communing, came the audible word of God, the Father himself, in laudation of Jesus and his mission, "This is my beloved Son: hear him."

Can we think that the Father of this beloved Son; and the angels of God who, at an hour previous, but in that very night, had ministered to Jesus in Gethsemane to strengthen him for this terrible ordeal; and Moses and Elijah, who with Jesus had so lately contemplated this very scene in prophetic vision as shortly to be accomplished,—can we think that they were not witnesses of that supreme moment and event, burdened as it was with the question of the salvation of the race? Nay, the testimony of the record justifies the conclusion, that all the intelligences of the Paradise of God were observers in loving and reverent sympathy when Jesus,—in the focused light of the eternal past and of the eternal future, with all knowledge, and full apprehension of the infinite importance and eternal conse-

quences of his answer, as in the high presence of God, angels, redeemed souls, and mortal men,—answered the high priest, clearly, shortly, in the exact thought and grip of the question, “I am.” The act of the high priest rending his robe; his question to the Sanhedrim; and their answer, that Jesus was guilty, and had incurred the penalty of death,—all conspire to prove, beyond any quibble or cavil, that the Sanhedrim understood that Jesus did make himself to be, and insist that he was, very God, equal with the Father—the Christ the prophets had foretold—the Word who was with God before the world was, and was God. That claim was the supreme and all-embracing claim of Jesus. Was Jesus’ answer true?

This, too, depends on testimony. How could it be conclusively proved to be true to all men in all time? The enemies of Jesus in the Sanhedrim thought of that. Note their conclusion. By common knowledge they knew Jesus had said of his life:—

“No man taketh it from me.” “I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again,” and “I must be killed, and after three days I will rise again.”

His enemies reasoned, that, if this prediction should be fulfilled, it would prove Jesus divine, and his claim true, including his answer to the high priest. So, after the dead body of Jesus was laid away in the tomb,

“the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, that the sepulcher be made sure until the third day.” “Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch; go, make it sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.”

In short, in legal terminology, Jesus’ enemies, after his dead body was laid in the tomb, persuaded Pilate to take the sepulcher into *custodia legis*; have it sealed by imperial Roman authority, and a military guard detailed to watch the sepulcher constantly, night and day, for the

three days, purposing thereby to be able to prove that Jesus did not rise from the dead, and to preclude any possible fabrication of false testimony that he did. Jesus' own words, as we shall see, show that his enemies in this reached the right conclusion; namely, that the resurrection of Jesus would demonstrate his divinity; that he was the Christ, and that all his claims were true.

Although Jesus' answer to the high priest was true when given, the testimony that should furnish to all men in all time conclusive proof of its truth was yet incomplete; the supreme fact that made the proof verity had not yet transpired. On the third day Jesus rose from the dead. After his resurrection, Jesus assembled his apostles to lay and enjoin on them his great commission to teach and preach his gospel of salvation to all the world, and in doing so Jesus warns and admonishes them especially of the equipment of testimony with which he had endowed them to enable them as witnesses to testify, and give evidence to men in executing the commission.

In this, note Christ's estimate of the momentous importance of the function of evidence in his plan of salvation. Not, as may be said was done under the older dispensation, does Jesus send out his apostles with merely a "Thus saith the Lord," as their equipment for conquest; but, with infinite solicitude for the salvation of men, Jesus, it seems, would present his gospel of salvation to their rational judgment for acceptance. Rightly understood, this course, adopted by Jesus, is an appeal to the most exalted idea of humanity, as made in the image and after the likeness of God himself, in capacity to judge, to weigh testimony, and render a true verdict, and so resting human submission to Christ and acceptance of his salvation on consciousness of truth itself, and not on the mere authority of a "Thus saith the Lord," however well authenticated.

The proposition, if allowable, is that, if men will exam-

ine the testimony regarding Christ, they shall know and realize the very truth, and the truth shall make them free, free to act on their own realized consciousness of the truth itself, rather than because dictated to them as by authority.

This, if apprehended aright, seems to me infinite condescension and infinite brotherliness in our Lord and Master. Accordingly Jesus, in the very act of commissioning his apostles, reiterates to them that his being killed, and his resurrection from the dead on the third day, were the fore-ordained, indubitable signs, prophesied by himself, which should conclusively prove to all men, in all time, that the person in whom those signs or tests should combine was the Christ, and that his claim was true; and in that same connection, and as part of their equipment for the great commission, Jesus furnished them, then and there, simple, easily apprehended, yet incontestable, evidence that he had risen from the dead and was alive.

“And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and blood, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, *he showed them his hands and his feet.*”

The evidence justifies the conclusion, that, in view of the supreme importance of equipping the apostles with indubitable, immediate, and actual personal knowledge of the truth, so that they could testify it to the world from actual participation, Jesus did not merely offer his person to be examined, but his invitation was, and was understood like the invitation of royalty to be, equivalent to a command; and that the apostles did, then and there, literally and in fact inspect and actually handle the physical body, wounded hands and feet, and pierced side of Jesus.

The evidence of the Apostle John (1 John i. 1-3) is:—

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we

have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and *our hands have handled*, of the Word of life . . . , that . . . declare we unto you."

After such express scrutiny and actual handling of the physical body of Jesus, his wounded hands and feet and side, Jesus added to the equipment of the apostles as witness the yet more (if possible) incontrovertible evidence that he was in fact and in truth alive, and his physical body then and there actually performing the essential functions of life, by asking for food, namely:—

"While they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures. And he said unto them, Thus it is written and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. **AND YE ARE WITNESSES OF THESE THINGS.**"

Forty days later, on his final physical separation from his apostles, and at the very moment of his ascension, as his final word on earth to his apostles, Jesus repeats the same injunction,—

"*Ye shall be witnesses unto me*, both in Jerusalem, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

How simply, yet, when rightly apprehended, how perfectly, does Jesus in these few words and acts and use of human testimony verify and make the crowning miracle of his resurrection, in evidential force and power, to be very demonstration to all men, low and high, unlearned and erudite, poor and rich, in all ages and climes, that he was Christ, and so very demonstration also of the truth of every claim put forth by him.

This scrutiny of the evidence of the trial of Jesus constitutes triumphant destruction and reversal of the stigma and brand of infamy, legally presumed to be just, which

was imposed upon Jesus by the fact and record of the judicial sentence and execution by the Roman Court. The result of the evidence of the trial of Jesus, preserved in the record duly considered, is as glorious and perfect a triumph over the logical and legal presumption of guilt, arising from that judgment, as his resurrection was over death and the grave. But that evidence and the record of it was, and must ever be, indispensable to justify that result—nothing else to rational minds could or can take its place or produce that result.

This brief review of the three intimately related, momentous facts of Christianity—the Trial, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection of Jesus—must always awaken in a believer a strong and deepening sense of devout gratitude to God, that in his wisdom he has, in the record of those events, as well as in his dealing with mankind through the ages, furnished and preserved to sincere and honest souls ample evidence for human belief in him and all his counsels, promises, and warnings, so that we may trust them all, and thereon as a sure foundation our faith may safely build and securely rest.