

murder the Son of God. How you and I would love to know the exact motive of this murder! How we should be strengthened to know something of the brave or of the forgiving words which James uttered with his last breath--to know, in a word, how the first apostle who fell a martyr to his faith met the grim monster! And how it would have delighted any Christian who knew the facts to tell them to his brethren, and hand them down to posterity! But this New Testament writer was allowed only a sentence of seven words in the Greek for the whole story, and they are represented by only eleven in our English version. Truly, if it were said of Jesus, "Never man spake like this man," we must say, never man wrote like these men; and the logical

inference is that they wrote as he spoke under the restraining power of the Spirit of God.

But this argument from the brevity of the narratives is not seen in its full force until it is considered in connection with the omissions of remarkable events by which it was chiefly brought about. What sketch of a great man's career was ever written which told only of the last three years of his life, if the previous part were known to the writer? What biographer would consider himself at liberty to omit from even a brief sketch all that was known of the boyhood and early manhood of his hero? Yet two of these three Gospel writers, though they must have known the whole story, have not a word to say of the first thirty years of the life of

Jesus; and the other two furnish us within that period nothing but a few glimpses of his unconscious infancy and a single adventure of his boyhood. Uninspired writers have not been content with this; for the Protevangelium, an apocryphal work of the second century, devotes twenty-five chapters to the period between the imaginary announcement of the birth of Mary and the slaughter of the babes of Bethlehem, while another, styled the Gospel of the Infancy, has fifty chapters, drawn from a very feeble imagination, on the first twelve years of the life of Jesus. This may help us to imagine what our Gospels would have been had they come from the pens of uninspired men of the second century, as some rationalists have affirmed. ~

(to be continued)

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Cunningly Devised Fable?

by David King

"For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Pet. 1:16).

Skeptics dismiss Christianity as an elaborate hoax. In short, they claim that our religion is a concoction of "cunningly devised fables" that have duped millions of people.

In our opening text, of course, the apostle Peter denies that charge. But upon what basis? How can we be confident that the religion we follow is legitimate, and its claims valid? How can we refute the charges of the skeptics who insist that Christianity is built upon a foundation of fraud and deceit?

Notice the response that Peter himself gives in our text: "(we) were eyewitnesses of His majesty." Christianity does not require our personal experience to validate its credentials.

Like any other artifact of history, Christianity's claims rest upon the recorded testimony of those who were there at the beginning. That's why we have four gospels to tell us the story.



the transfiguration of Jesus. Peter was one of three apostles who was with Jesus on the mountain when He was transfigured. Peter saw Jesus' appearance turn angelic, and he heard the booming voice from heaven (Matt. 17:1-9). This incident must have left a deep and lasting impression upon Peter, because it is the only specific incident he mentions here.

In addition to the transfiguration, there were many other miracles witnessed by others during Jesus' ministry. The four gospels recount some of these miracles, but indicate that there were many others, the details of which are not recorded (Jn. 20:30-31; Mk. 6:54-56; Matt. 4:23-24). How else can we explain the explosion of contemporary interest and controversy surrounding a man of such humble origins who led no army, wrote no book, and held no political office? Something extraordinary happened to generate all this attention in the first century. If not the miracles, then what?

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But all the miracles of Jesus pale in comparison to the greatest miracle of all: His own resurrection from the dead. The writers of the New Testament repeatedly point to this one event as the foundation of Christianity (1 Cor. 15:12-19; Rom. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:3). When Jesus was executed, every precaution was taken to ensure that His defeat was complete. Yet something happened

to His body. Despite every attempt to explain it away, the only story that fits all the evidence is that He arose from the grave and appeared to His disciples, all of whom devoted the rest of their lives to defending the integrity of what they had seen.

Many of the eyewitnesses who left behind the story about the

origins of Christianity gave their lives in defense of their testimony. If Christianity really is a hoax, somebody would have cracked and exposed the details. But they didn't, because they couldn't.

Christianity is not a fable. It is based on real, certifiable facts that we can build our lives upon.

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Inspiration of the Scriptures



By J.W. McGarvey

(Editor's Note: This transcript of a sermon delivered by J.W. McGarvey before the YMCA of University of Missouri, May 28, 1892 is continued from last issue. The writer has already offered the amazing impartiality of the New Testament writers as the first indication of their inspiration, and now continues his list of evidences...)

In the second place, you can scarcely fail to have observed the imperturbable calmness with which they describe all events alike--the most wonderful as the

most common-place, the most touching as the most indifferent. The most astounding miracles are described by them with no more manifestations of excitement in their manner than the most trivial everyday events. They betray no more feeling when they speak of the murder of John the Baptist, than when they speak of his voice crying in the wilderness. They are as calm and self-possessed when describing the agony in the garden and the overwhelming scenes of Calvary, as when they tell of Jesus passing through the fields on the Sabbath, or taking His seat at Jacob's well. They use no word of exultation when Jesus arose from the dead, or when He ascended on high; and their tones betray no trembling or tearfulness amid His outcries on the cross, no tenderness as His mangled form is quietly laid in the tomb. Yet these are the very men of whom it is said, that they were mourning and weeping when the first announcement of the resurrection broke upon their ears (Mark xvi. 10).

Who can account for this -- for this elevation of these plain men above all the emotions which characterize other men when writing of scenes in which their tenderest sympathies and dearest hopes are involved? The experience is superhuman. It is accounted for only when we know that they were restrained by the Spirit of Him,

"Who sees with equal eye as God of all, A hero perish or a sparrow fall; Atoms or systems into ruin hurled, And now a bubble burst, and now a world."

In the third place we invite attention to the unexampled brevity of the New Testament narratives; and first, to their brevity as whole books. Never since time began were a set of writers burdened with a theme so momentous in their own estimation, or so momentous in reality. Never were writers so oppressed, when they thought of brevity, by the multitude of

wondrous details before them, and the difficulty of determining what to insert and what to omit, when the eternal well-being of a world depended on what they should write. One of them shows how keenly he felt this sense of oppression, when he exclaims with startling hyperbole: "If they should be written, every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written" (John, xxi. 25).

What, then, could have induced these four evangelists, thus weighted down by the abundance of their materials, overwhelmed with a sense of the importance of their theme, and burning with a desire to vindicate the fame of their adored Master, to compress their accounts into thirty-six pages each of this little book which I hold in my hand? What, but some restraining and irresistible power, guided by superhuman judgment? As to the book of Acts, the argument is the same in kind, and perhaps greater in force; for this writer had to deal with the widespread and ever-varying fortunes of the church through a period of thirty years, the most eventful and thrillingly interesting period of its whole history to the present day; and yet he condenses the story into nearly the same narrow limits.

When, secondly, we study this brevity with respect to the accounts given of single incidents, the wonder remains the same. Out of the many examples we select a few. Few scenes have ever been witnessed on earth of deeper interest from several

points of view than that of the baptism of our Lord. There was the humble yet lofty mien of him who came to be baptized; the surprising demeanor of the great preacher as he confessed his unworthiness to baptize such a person; the solemn act of the baptism itself; the still deeper solemnity of the prayer on the river's bank; the startling voice which was heard from heaven--the voice of Jehovah--which had not thus broken the silence of the skies since it thundered from the summit of Mount Sinai; the graceful descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove; and the oracle, big with the fate of a lost world, in which God confessed his own beloved Son. What man with a writer's instinct could have stopped short of many pages in describing the scene so as to do it justice. But the sublime story is disposed of by the first Evangelist in twelve short lines, in six each by the second and third; and in a mere allusion quoted from the lips of another person by the fourth.

Again, the one event which, above all others, these four writers felt themselves obliged to set forth with overwhelming proof, was the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, the event, as they confessed, on which their own pretensions and their eternal hopes depended; yet of the twelve appearances of Jesus after his resurrection, only two are mentioned by the first Evangelist, only three by the second, only three by the third, and only four by the fourth. We wonder and wonder why every one did not give all the evidence and press it home upon the reader by many words of

comment.

In the book of Acts the same surprise confronts us. Never did a writer have a more prolific theme, or one on which he would be more delighted to dwell than that wild commingling of prayers and maledictions, lamentations and silent despair, which filled every street of Jerusalem, when Saul made havoc of the Church, entering into every house and dragging to prison both men and women, until the ten thousand saints were driven to the four winds, and the Church in Jerusalem, the only Church then in existence, was dispersed and apparently destroyed. A whole volume would scarcely have sufficed to describe all the harrowing scenes; and the writer to whom we owe what we know of it was a companion of the principal actor in it for many years; yet some irresistible constraining power shriveled his account of it into four short lines!

Next to this event in the history of the young Church, with respect to those tragic elements in which historians love to revel, stands the death by martyrdom of James, the son of Zebedee. The death of Stephen was tragical and heartrending, but that of the Apostle James, about eight years later, was far more so, both because he was one of the original twelve on whose labors the future of the whole Church seemed to depend, and because it was a cold-blooded murder by a descendant of the tyrant who had butchered all the infants of Bethlehem in the vain effort to