

Nearly 50 years ago I had an experience from which I still shudder at little bit. That was the time when I gave out this hymn [Up From the Grave He Arose] that we just sang. The pianist, a fine evangelistic pianist, immediately began striking the keys very hard, and everyone sang out loudly "LOW IN THE GRAVE HE LAY." Terrible! I still shudder when I think of it. I appreciate the way you sang it this morning with the contrast between the terrible misery, the suffering, the ~~angish-in-these~~ anguish of those days when He lay in the grave, and then the last part, the wonderful joy as He was raised from the dead.

It is good at the beginning of the year to think about first things. To think about the foundations. Here I think it is important to think about the greatest miracle that every occurred. The foundation miracle of our Christian religion. We find it stressed right at the beginning of the book of Acts. I'll read the first few verses. [Acts 1:1-5.] Paul was just as emphatic about the importance of the resurrection and our faith. 1 Cor. 15:1-8 (reading text).

After the great evangelical fervor of the puritan movement in England had rather died out, 50 years or so after the end of the great Puritan movement, and 50 years before the beginning of the Great Awakening, England was in a period religious decline, and morality was perhaps at the lowest ebb in the history of the nation.

There were two young men who met one day who spoke about the foolishness of Christianity and how newer knowledge had displaced it, and it would soon disappear. Yet one said, YOU know, he said, I think that the story of the conversion of Paul as a supernatural event is one belief that would have to be completely disproved before we could get rid of Christianity. And the other said, I think the same way about the story of the resurrection of Christ. He said, I've been thinking of making a very thorough investigation of all the facts and writing a book to prove it. The first one said, You do that, and I'll do the same with the matter of the conversion of Paul.

Sometime later the two met again. One of them said, You know, I thoroughly investigated the matter as I expected and to my surprise I reached the opposite conclusion. I am now convinced that Jesus Christ actually did rise from the dead and I've written my book to prove that. The other said, It's strange that I've had a similar experience. The more I studied the story of the supernatural conversion of Paul and looked into all the evidence possible, the more I came to the conclusion that this actually happened, and ~~W~~ I have written my book to prove that.

Well, these matters still stand at the very foundation of Christianity. The resurrection of Christ is certainly the greatest miracle that has ever occurred.

When I was in college I went to a conference one time, and there was assigned to room with a student who was a student in a liberal theological seminary. He told me he had come from a very earnest Christian family. He said how he had felt when the minister made the call to serve the Lord and proclaim the gospel, and he could not resist it. He had given his life to that. Now he acknowledged it was all superstition. It was only psychology, but it made such an impression on him he could not get away from it. So he was in the seminary, a liberal seminary,