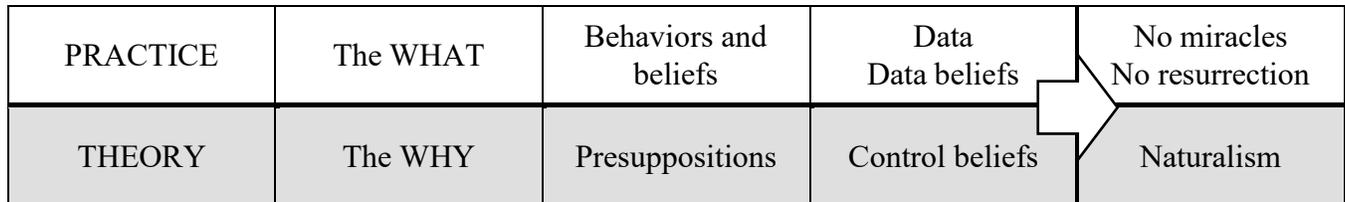


# RESURRECTION RESISTANCE

(A look at Naturalism)

Last time, we examined the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus and concluded that it was adequate to make belief plausible, but asked, “Why do so many *not* believe?”

Today, we look briefly at the philosophy of *naturalism*, which rejects historical evidence because of the control beliefs that it uses to process the historical evidence or data. Look at the following diagram and let’s talk about ghosts and being able to fly!



- A person’s presuppositions may not even allow them to consider historical evidence
- NATURALISM is one such philosophy that rejects the resurrection because the resurrection is a miracle and naturalism rejects all belief in miracles

Naturalism says:

1. Nature is the whole show (all that exists)
2. When nature is the whole show, there is no *supernatural* realm
3. When there’s no supernatural *realm*, there can be no supernatural *events*
4. Miracles are—by definition—supernatural events
5. Thus, there can be no supernatural events. Miracles—such as the resurrection—cannot occur

Naturalism views life events this way:

|                                  |                      |                                      |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Kind of events</b>            | Regular              | Rare                                 |
| <b>Example of these events</b>   | Natural—thunderstorm | Supernatural—miracles = non-existent |
| <b>Evidence for these events</b> | Greater              | Lesser                               |

Many people today view life this way, even though they may not be aware of it. Naturalism is the secular, default worldview (philosophy) of our age. Its influence may lead you to ask:

1. Are we crazy for believing the things we believe as part of the Christian faith?
2. Must we check our minds at the door when we walk by faith?
3. Must one commit intellectual suicide to become a Christian?

4. Can faith and reason—or at least being reasonable—coexist?
5. How can you have a conversation with an intellectually honest person who thinks this way?

The Christian doctrine of revelation, far from making the human mind unnecessary, actually makes it indispensable and assigns to it its proper place. God has revealed himself in words to minds. His revelation is a rational revelation to rational creatures. Our duty is to receive his message, to submit to it, to seek to understand it and to relate it to the world in which we live.

(John Stott, *Your Mind Matters*)

Imagination is the capacity to make connections between the visible and the invisible, between heaven and earth, between present and past, between present and future. For Christians, whose largest investment is in the invisible, the imagination is indispensable, for it is only by means of the imagination that we can see reality whole, in context.

(Eugene Peterson, *Subversive Spirituality*)

I believe we can **answer** the above questions this way:

1. **No** (Christian belief is reasonable)
2. **No** (the mind is an essential ingredient in spiritual growth)
3. **No** (faith may have its reasons which reason does not know, but faith is reasonable)
4. **Yes** (revelation must take over where reason ends)
5. We'll examine this next time...

Our preexisting ideas and assumptions are precisely what determine what we can see, hear or otherwise observe. These general ideas—which often we hold because they express how we want things to be—determine what stories can mean to us. They cannot, therefore, be changed by stories and miraculous events alone, since they prevent a correct perception of those very stories and events.

(Dallas Willard, *Hearing God*)

The believers in miracles accept them (rightly or wrongly) because they have evidence for them. The disbelievers in miracles deny them (rightly or wrongly) because they have a doctrine against them. The open, obvious, democratic thing is to believe an old apple-woman when she bears testimony to a miracle, just as you believe an old apple-woman when she bears testimony to a murder. The plain, popular course is to trust the peasant word about the ghost exactly as far as you trust the peasant's word about the land-lord. Being a peasant, he will probably have a great deal of healthy agnosticism about both. Still you could fill the British Museum with evidence uttered by the peasant and given in favour of the ghost. If it comes to human testimony, there is a choking cataract of human testimony in favour of the supernatural. If you reject it, you can only mean one of two things. You reject the peasant's story about the ghost either because the man is a peasant or because the story is a ghost story. That is, you either deny the main principle of democracy, or you affirm the main principle of materialism—the abstract impossibility of miracle.

(G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*)