

***EDWARD
HOARE***



***WITNESSES
TO TRUTH***

Edward Hoare

Witnesses to Truth

EAN 8596547342670

DigiCat, 2022

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DIFFICULTIES.

THE RACES.

I. The Historical Truth .

II. The Prophecy .

THE JEWS.

PALESTINE.

I. The Geographical Accuracy .

II. Historical Truth .

III. Prophetic Inspiration .

SCOFFERS.

THE SACRAMENTS.

WORKS BY THE REV. CANON HOARE, M.A.,

JUST PUBLISHED.

PUBLISHED BY HATCHARD .

BY THE LATE MRS. E. HOARE .

PUBLISHED BY ELLIOT STOCK.

DIFFICULTIES.

Table of Contents

THE Bible has been compared to a river in which a child may wade, and an elephant swim; by which is meant that it is full of practical truth so plainly revealed that a little child may rejoice in it, while at the same time it is full of truth so deep that the loftiest intellect of man is very soon out of its depth in the study of it. Thus there are few things more beautifully simple than a living faith. It is the unquestioning trust of one who loves his God and Saviour; the calm repose of the dependent heart on One who has summed up His Gospel in the words "Come unto Me." Thus there are thousands, and tens of thousands, of happy believers who have accepted the great salvation just as God has given it; and who, without perplexing their minds about matters which they cannot understand, most thankfully receive what God has revealed, and rejoice in it with their whole hearts as belonging to themselves and their children. As little children they receive and trust, the result of which is that they rest in their Saviour as a child rests in its mother's arms. I believe there are those by whom such persons are despised, and by whom they are regarded as weak, foolish, and contemptible; but they have the joy of the Lord, and, instead of being *despised*, they may well be *envied* by those who, in the consciousness of superior intellect, consider themselves qualified to despise their folly.

But, while we rejoice in this simple and childlike Christian faith, it is vain to deny that in "the deep things of God" there are difficulties, and that there are other minds to

whom these difficulties are a source of real and grave perplexity. I am not now speaking of those who delight in magnifying difficulties, and whose only object in reading their Bible is to find out something at which they may cavil; but I am speaking rather of thoughtful men who respect religion, and are not opposed to truth; who have never set their face against the Gospel; and to whom it would be a real cause of heartfelt thanksgiving if they were able to receive, in the simplicity of faith, the great salvation revealed to them in the Word of God. They have no wish to be unbelievers; their hearts are not set against the truth; and they believe enough to make them long to believe *the whole*. But there are some things that perplex them, and there are certain difficulties which they cannot quite get over.

Now, without the slightest hesitation or disguise, I fully and frankly admit that there are very serious difficulties in the revelation of God, and difficulties which I believe it is not in the power of the human intellect to solve. When, therefore, a person says that he cannot understand all that is revealed, I agree with him. If he add that on that account he cannot believe, I altogether dissent from his conclusion; but as to the existence of difficulties he is undoubtedly right. We, who believe, know perfectly well, and fully admit, that there are things in divine revelation which we are altogether unable either to explain or understand.

Think, for example, of the divinity of our blessed Lord and Saviour, and the perfect union of a divine and human nature in His one sacred person. I am not afraid to state plainly my firm conviction that no human intellect can explain it. If He

were only an appearance of God Himself that would be intelligible; or if He were only man endued with very high qualifications, that again would be within our reach; but that He should be in His one person both perfect God and perfect man, or, in other words, both infinite and finite, that I believe to be far beyond the reach of *human* explanation.

It is the same with the doctrine of election, and its union with human responsibility. The two appear to be opposed to each other, but, notwithstanding that, they are both found in the Gospel. How can it be explained? How can it be? I cannot tell. Some people meet the difficulty by cutting out one side, and some by cutting out the other; but neither one process of excision nor the other can satisfy a really thinking mind. And the difficulty remains, for we find both sides in Scripture.

Who, again, can explain a resurrection? We see in spring that wonderful revival of life which is a type of it. But who can explain the thing itself? What physician, or what scientific philosopher, can explain how the dead shall be made alive? Whenever it is done it must be done by some power of which man knows nothing, so that the resurrection of the dead is something which, *to the knowledge of man*, appears impossible.

Then again, in conclusion, look around on all the sin and misery of the world. We know that it is explained in the Scriptural account of the fall, and that there is a remedy provided in Christ Jesus. But there is something inexpressibly appalling in the facts. Here is this beautiful world, that appears to have been created as a happy home for holy inhabitants, filled with sin, misery, ruin, pain,

anguish, remorse, strife, sickness, and ultimately death. And when we think of the words, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and when we contrast the Creator with the present condition of creation, there is enough to fill the heart with amazement, and to make the thoughtful man exclaim, "How can these things be?"

Now with this full and frank acknowledgment of difficulty we are brought face to face with the question, *What effect should these difficulties have on our faith?* Should they shake it, or should they confirm it? Should they lead us to give up the Gospel, or should they establish our trust, and induce us to cleave to it more steadfastly than ever? Some people will say, "Give it up," and will tell you, because there are difficulties to settle, to settle down in sceptical distrust! But surely they are not wise in giving such advice, nor in acting on such principles. They certainly do not act so in common life, and such conduct is not in harmony with the wisdom of the world.

Can you explain how a little thin vapour rising up from boiling water can force a long line of heavy-laden carriages through the country at the rate of fifty miles an hour? But you rely on the arrangements of those who can, and, trusting them, you do not refuse to take your seat in the train.

Can you explain all the deep currents of the ocean, or how it is that water became endowed with such properties as to bear up a great, heavy, iron ship? But you trust those who have constructed the vessel, and, without attempting to understand the construction, you do not hesitate to go to sea.