



Links Players

On Faith, Hogan, and Historians

For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. (1 Peter 1:16, NASB)

I always cringed when I heard people speak about Christianity as “a faith,” but I never thought about it much. Then, recently, someone mentioned to me something about integrating one’s “faith with work,” and I silently cringed again.

As I thought about it, I realized the problem I had was when someone used “faith” as a synonym for Christianity instead of as a synonym for trust. Calling Christianity “a faith” seemed a subtle way of moving Christianity’s claims from the historically verifiable into the fictional and fanciful.

Christianity’s claims, though, are far from fanciful; they are rooted firmly in history. Atheists and agnostics often ask, “If God exists, why doesn’t he just show Himself to us?”

Well, if, as Christians and Jews claim, God is such that no man can look on Him and live (Exodus 33:20), then the best way for God to reveal His existence is to take on human flesh, identify Himself, and show us how to relate to Him. That is exactly what Jesus claimed to do (John 14:6).

But Jesus didn’t expect us just to take His word for it. He said He would prove His identity through His resurrection (John 2:18-22). The veracity of Christianity, then, hinges on a historical event. (1 Corinthians 15:13-14).

Here is where it gets interesting because there is so much evidence supporting Jesus’ resurrection. All Jesus’ disciples who were alive after His resurrection claim to have seen Him after His resurrection and willingly gave their lives in martyrdom (though John survived the attempt).

Paul, one of Christianity’s fiercest persecutors, converted to Christianity after encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus. Jesus’ own brother, James, became a believer after seeing Jesus post-resurrection and ultimately gave his life in martyrdom.

Additionally, there is evidence that Jesus appeared to over 500 witnesses after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:6).

I’ve persuaded juries in employment discrimination cases on less evidence than this. In fact, in the realm of evidentiary standards, the evidence for the resurrection surmounts what the law calls “clear and convincing evidence.”

Belief in the resurrection, then, does not require so much that one have faith, only that one be a good historian. Where faith (read, “trust”) comes in is in what one does with this information.

I don't need faith to believe Ben Hogan is one of the greatest golfers of all time. Hogan won 64 PGA tournaments, nine majors, three majors in 1953, and between 1946 and 1948 entered 58 tournaments, winning 30 of them.

I don't need faith to believe these things happened. But when I read Ben Hogan's Five Lessons: The Modern Fundamentals of Golf, I must decide whether I trust Hogan enough to make changes to my golf swing.

Similarly, believing the resurrection took place is not where I exercise faith, but in deciding whether I will repent, leave my old life behind, and follow Jesus fully.

Just like I exercise my faith in Hogan when he talks about supination and pronation, I exercise my faith in Jesus when He talks about justification and sanctification.

In short, being a good historian leads one to an inevitable confrontation with the Author of history, who says, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Prayer: Lord, help me always to be surrendering fully to follow You. Amen.

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Scott Fiddler

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