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IMMORTALITY.

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IN no other sphere of thought is the infinite superiority of Christianity over all other religions and philosophies so clearly demonstrable as in the concept of immortality. Paul claimed that Jesus Christ "annulled death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1, 10). His statement suggests that, apart from Christ, man is still comparatively in the dark as to this, his most persistent enquiry of the ages; he has hopes and intuitions but neither the means of confirming them nor the knowledge of how to attain to their fulfilment. It is claimed that Christ replaces hope by assurance, speculation by revelation, yearning by actuality of possession. It is a stupendous claim which, for its verification, needs to be examined not only on its own merits but in comparison with the thought of the rest of mankind.

It needs hardly to be stated that philosophy finds itself peculiarly handicapped in this realm. The elusive nature of the data on which it has to proceed, and the large place inevitably occupied by presuppositions as to the nature of reality, have caused constant fluctuations in the conclusions arrived at by various scholars. T. H. Huxley made a confession in this respect which contains much truth. "Relatively to myself," he wrote, "I am quite sure that the region of uncertainty—the nebulous country in which words play the part of realities—is far more extensive than I could wish. Materialism and Idealism; Theism and Atheism; the doctrine of the soul and its mortality or immortality—appear in the history of philosophy like the shades of Scandinavian heroes, eternally slaying one another, and eternally coming to life again in a metaphysical 'Nifelheim'." It is getting on for twenty-five centuries at least since mankind

began seriously to give their minds to these topics. Generation after generation, philosophy has been doomed to roll the stone uphill, and, just as all the world swore it was at the top, down it has rolled to the bottom again."¹ Professor Huxley did not make it clear as to what mode of thought he conceived to be represented by the top of the hill, but nowadays the inclination is to stop half way. Many are agreed that there is much to be said in favour of the truth of immortality. The fact of our being potential rather than actual personalities, with its suggestion of another realm of existence wherein our unexhausted potentialities come to full development; the seeming absoluteness of the moral law, which is meaningless without persons living in relation to it; the universal desire of mankind for immortality, so universal as almost to seem a primary instinct, which, on the analogy of physical life, postulates a reality corresponding to that want; the difficulty of conceiving the cessation of thought and therefore of personal consciousness which gives rise to it; all these considerations tend in one direction and give various degrees of satisfaction according to one's individual bent; yet even the most enthusiastic advocates of these arguments admit that they fall short of proof. For immortality to be a compelling factor in this life, one needs stronger foundations than these on which to build.

The regard in which the testimony of the historic religions concerning immortality is held varies according to one's theological presuppositions. Certainly they reveal how persistently man has reached out after a satisfactory view of the after life, so that Professor Huxley's modest "twenty-five centuries" have to be increased to at least *sixty* centuries during which men have wrestled with this problem. Despite many assertions to the contrary, it appears to be incontrovertible that primitives generally believe in an immortality of some sort; every exception so far adduced has been found, on further investigation, to be no exception. But with regard to the ethnic religions, a curious phenomenon is observable in every case, viz., that such records as we have attest a more vivid expectation of immortality in the earliest periods than in the later times; in many cases there is considerable advance made on the basis of the early thought but as time goes on the purer elements and more vivid hopes become swamped by the official creed.

¹ *Science and Christian Tradition*, pp. 312-313.

The oldest Vedic hymns show that the earliest Hindus believed immortality to be the gift of the gods ; in some way this life was identified with the divine life and was conceived to be lived in the presence of the gods, in "that everlasting and imperishable world where there is eternal light and glory." But a complex sacerdotalism arose and developed into Brahmanism, with Buddhism as its offshoot. Instead of a desirable and developed life after death, the Buddhist goal became the extinction of desire in Nirvana, with a series of heavens and hells for the less fortunate folk and an interminable existence by transmigration. "This is the conclusion of Indian thought," writes Salmond. "Death is not man's end. He has a future, but of how dread an aspect ! The early faith in an immortality with the gods, in which the individual continues to exist, disappears. For the mass of men the Future is one in which the soul passes from shape to shape, wears out body after body, and works out its retribution, in a hopeless struggle with its demerit, in a perpetual effort to burst the mesh of existence. For the select few it is a Future which means with the Buddhist the extinction of individuality in Nirvana, and with the Brahman the absorption of the individual soul in the Universal Soul."¹ So is India to-day.

Egyptian eschatology shows, in the earliest portions of the Book of the Dead, a cheerful expectation of life after death. The departed are called "the living"; only evil spirits have the name "the dead." The land of the dead was called "The Land of Knowledge," "The Concealer of the Resting." Although their ideas of the after life were very materialistic, so that their tombs in which the soul should live were conceived on the plan of their homes, the justified, nevertheless, had the universe open before them. They drank the water of life, they became spirits of light, shared in the glory of Osiris, and obtained perfection in the bosom of the sun ; the wicked, on the other hand, suffered the "second death" in hell, though this did not involve annihilation. But the henotheism which lay at the root of Egyptian religion could not resist the incroachments of polytheism and zoolatry and hope faded, so that the land of the dead now became the land of darkness, sleep, and perpetual sorrow. Magical rites robbed immortality of its moral energy, and by the beginning of the Christian era the Egyptian faith had so far degenerated as to become an object of ridicule to heathen writers and abhorrent to the Christians.

¹ *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 36.

Greek thought prior to the days of Homer can only be conjectured from the traces of earlier animism in his writings and by inferences in those of others. In books 10-11 of the *Odyssey* there are to be seen survivals of ancestor worship; the shades have thought and will and action and enjoy blood offered to them. Hesiod tells how the men of the golden age became *δαίμονες ἐπιχθόνιοι*, watchers over mankind in a good sense; the men of the silver age became *δαίμονες ὑποχθόνιοι*, though not in Hades; but the men of the bronze age (Hesiod's own age) became *εἶδωλα* (phantoms) in Hades. In other words, earlier generations had great expectations as to their state in the after life, but by Hesiod's age nothing better was expected than the lifeless existence of the Greek Hades, such as Homer had made popular; it was a life in which the soul lost consciousness; it knows nothing of the upper world and cannot return to it; it is incapable either of anguish or affection. Despite the Dionysiac and Orphic cults and the teaching of Pythagoras and Plato, the Greek people generally never rose above the Homeric view. And though Plato's philosophy was noble, its fundamental postulates are foreign to us, involving as they did the *eternity* of the soul and the idea of transmigration; these notions made his system an "individualism run riot," as Charles described it, and kept it for the philosophic few.

The Persian religion is important for the student of eschatology, for it possesses the most developed system of thought on this subject of all ancient peoples, apart from the Jews. Their view of reality was essentially dualistic, but they believed the powers of good to be stronger than the powers of evil. They looked for a paradise with Ahura for the righteous, a hell with the Dævas for the wicked, and an intermediate state until the great Judgment for the "neutrals." Their view was thus truly moral. As this system developed, hope came to be placed on a deliverer, Shaoshyant, who was to effect the restoration of all things. The dead were to be raised to life; all would undergo purgatorial cleansing, resulting in salvation for all; by means of a final conflict, the evil powers were to be destroyed and the purged humanity enjoy a blessed immortality in a "kingdom of God" on a renewed earth. The parallels between this and the Biblical picture of the End are striking; yet this system went the way of the rest. Ceremonialism and casuistry reduced the future hope to an affair of offerings and the casting of spells; the moral elements in the hope of the future were dissipated and

buried beneath a mass of puerilities and absurdities. "The Parsis have been called the ruins of a people," wrote Salmond, "and their sacred books the ruins of a religion. The doctrine of the future which is taught in these remnants of the sacred books of Mazdaism is the ruins of an eschatology."¹

The only other ancient people needing to be considered in this brief survey is the Babylonians, who had close contact with the Hebrews. They never proceeded far in speculation on immortality, but it is clear from their literary remains and from the discoveries of their tombs that the popular Babylonian hope of the after life was as vivid as that of most of their contemporaries. We see evidence of ancestor worship, spiritism, and the hope of continuing earthly occupations in the realm of the dead. But this early and widespread hope seems to have been extinguished by the official priesthood, who taught that Sheol was a land of darkness, covered with dust; conceived as a great city, the underworld was inhabited by dusty shades whose food was dust, whose drink was muddy water, who knew no love nor hate but only wailing and sorrow, whose only sound was moaning. Such was the hope of the people to whom Israel went in captivity.

The foregoing survey prepares us to find that something of the same process appears to have gone on among the Hebrews. It is to be remembered that Abraham came from *Ur of the Chaldees*; further, that the Biblical record makes it plain that the lofty teaching of Moses and the prophets was never wholeheartedly embraced by the mass of the people; that that teaching found the people perpetually under the influence of contemporaneous paganism and was continually fighting its influences. Hence we ought not to be surprised at finding evidences of beliefs irreconcilable with the prophetic revelation made known through Moses and the later prophets. Further still, it is to be remembered that that revelation itself was concerned largely with the affairs of this life and, in the realm of eschatology, with the destiny of the nations; individual immortality was not a major subject of revelation.

The earliest ideas of the Israelites seem to imply a clear conception of active life in the world of the beyond. A man on death went to his fathers (Gen.xxv, 8); that presumably implies a reconciliation with them. The many prohibitions against spiritism show that it must have been widely practised; we have,

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 93.

of course, the very full narrative of the calling up of the departed Samuel by Saul (1 Sam. xviii, 13f.). Such a passage as Is. xiv, 9f. attests conscious activity on the part of the dead : "Sheol from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming : it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth ; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall answer and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we are ? Art thou become like unto us ? "

Yet alongside such representations as these we have to place, particularly from the later literature, expressions of utter pessimism with regard to the future life. Sheol is a place of silence ; "The dead praise not the Lord neither any that go down into silence " (Ps.cxv, 17). It is a land of slumber from which there is no recall ; "Man lieth down and riseth not : Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be roused out of their sleep " (Job. xiv, 12). It is a place of unconsciousness ; "The dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward . . . there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave " (Eccles. ix, 5 and 10). To one psalmist at least, therefore, death is cessation of existence ; " O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more " (Ps. xxxix, 13). In any case, it is a state in which there is no hope of contact with God ; the writer of Ps. lxxxviii felt he was "like the slain that lie in the grave, *whom Thou rememberest no more, and they are cut off from thy hand* " (v. 5).

The reason for this divergence of views is obscure ; Charles thinks it is due to the popularity in the prophetic era of the view of man which is set forth in Gen. ii, 3, according to which the principle of life in man is the impersonal spirit given by God, the withdrawal of that spirit being thought to cause cessation of individual existence.¹ Oesterley and Robinson are confident that it is due to the official teaching which set out to counteract the popular beliefs ; those beliefs had to be destroyed because they were bound up with practices contrary to the worship of Jehovah.² Whatever the reason, it seems to have been part of the providence of God, for the early beliefs, bound up as they were with heathen practices, were destroyed to be replaced by a *doctrine of immortality based on a revelation given through the experience of fellowship with God on the part of his saints.*

¹ *Eschatology*, 2nd edition, p. 41.

² *Hebrew Religion, its Origin and Development*, p. 248.

We can trace this process in the book of Job. In the earlier parts of the book expression is constantly given to the hopeless views of death that were current in Israel (see especially chapters iii, vii, x and xiv). Yet out of the agony of his condition and by a faith that will not be silenced, Job gives vent to that noblest of all Old Testament declarations of immortality: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand up at the last upon the earth; and after my skin hath been thus destroyed, yet without my flesh shall I see God . . ." (xix, 25*f.*). This probably testifies to a conviction that he will survive death and see God's justification of himself; it does not contain his settled conviction as to his eternal destiny, as the preceding part of the book shows; but clearly a man led to such a position as this could not stop there, but would be led to further conclusions in the same direction. The other outstanding Old Testament expression of the conviction of personal immortality comes from a man exercised in his heart somewhat similarly to Job; the author of Ps. lxxiii is troubled about the prosperity of the wicked as compared with the sufferings of the innocent. He is, however, led to see that whereas the wicked are cast away from the presence of the Lord, "Nevertheless I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden me with thy right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory . . ." (vv. 23*f.*). Again, this faith is due to the realisation that the God who sustains his saints in all the vicissitudes of this present existence will not leave them at the end of the journey.

The faith so won in the battlefields of life's experience began to enter on a new development. For centuries the expectations of the people of Israel had been directed towards the advent of the "Day of the Lord" when God should introduce a new and blessed era of peace. But this had been a national hope; the ordinary individual did not imagine that if it tarried till after his death he would participate in it. When, however, the saints of God were given to see the light that shone from the other side of the grave, they began to realise that when that great day came, *they* would be there too, no matter how long it tarried. It is noteworthy that the earliest expression of this hope was wrung out of similar circumstances to those of Job and the author of Ps. lxxiii, viz., the writing of the Fourth Servant Song of Is. 53. The Servant who knew no iniquity was to be shunned by his associates as though he were leprous, ruthlessly beaten as though he were a criminal, led to the slaughter like a beast, and

at the end cast into a grave with the vile. Yet all this was the innocent bearing of the sins of his people. Death could not be the end for him. Hence the prophet declares, "When Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. . . ." (vv. 10-12). If this poem relates to an individual, as we are convinced it does, these words can mean nothing less than resurrection after death. Not simply survival, but a life in some way renewed among the men of earth. This privilege is stated to belong to all the righteous in Is. xxvi, 19; in Dan. xii, 3, the only other mention of personal resurrection in the Old Testament, it is extended to the wicked with a view to judgment. From this time on, the more spiritual minds of Israel were perpetually engaged on the further elucidation of this matter; so arose the great apocalyptic movement, some of whose literature has survived to the present day in the pseudopigraphic apocalypses.

We cannot stay to dwell on the literature of the centuries immediately prior to the ministry of Christ save to mention one thing: in all the speculation which took place on the nature of the after life, it is clear that the formative principle which moulded the varying beliefs was the conception which was held as to the nature of the expected Kingdom. Where that kingdom was thought of in terms of earthly prosperity, the resurrection which preceded it was a purely earthly one; e.g., in the Fourth Book of the Sibylline Oracles it is said that "God himself shall fashion again the bones and ashes of men, and shall raise up mortals once more *as they were before*" (see lines 179-192). When, however, the Messianic kingdom is felt to be a temporary one, the resurrection is usually delayed to the end of that kingdom, after which the new heavens and earth are fashioned; since the resurrection body is for a new sphere, it is thought of in more spiritual terms. In 2 Enoch, therefore, which anticipates a millennium followed by the eternal kingdom, God says to Michael, "Go and take Enoch from out his earthly garments, and anoint him with my sweet ointment, and put him into *the garments of my glory* (xxii, 8)." Indeed, from the discussion as to the nature of the resurrection in 2 Baruch, one gathers that the conception of a glorified resurrection body is consequent on the idea of a new heaven and earth. Thus we read of Baruch's question, "In what shape will those live who live in Thy day? Or how will the

splendour of those who are after that time continue? Will they then resume this form of the present, and put on these entrammeling members, which are now involved in evils, and in which evils are consummated, or *wilt Thou perchance change these things which have been in the world as also the world?*" (xlix, 2-3). The answer given is that the earth is to restore the dead precisely as they were committed to it, in order to enable recognition and that the living may know that the dead have returned to life again; the wicked will then gradually waste away and the righteous will advance from glory to glory (chs. 1-11).

The writers of Alexandrian Judaism looked for no future kingdom to appear; in that case resurrection, if such we may call it, takes place immediately on death; the righteous immediately gain the blessings of heaven, the wicked go to the pains of hell. Such a thought does not seem to be native to Palestinian Judaism and was rejected by the Jews of the homeland. They did, however, believe that the righteous and wicked entered at death on a foretaste of their respective eternal states while awaiting the Day of Judgment; 2 Ezra vii, 75-98 sets this view forth in great detail.

When we turn to the pages of the New Testament, accordingly, we are already in the presence of a vivid and passionate hope, even before we read the words of Christ. The Sadducees, it is true, were reactionary, in that they clung to the older views which Job and the more spiritual minds of Israel grew out of; but the mass of the people followed with the Pharisees and hoped for better things. When, however, we turn to the Christ himself, we find ourselves confronted with an astonishing situation. The long awaited kingdom, in which men are to be raised from the dead, He claims to be introducing here and now; He wields authority from God to bestow the eternal life which belongs to that Kingdom; the condition of gaining that life is attachment to himself. "The law and the prophets," said our Lord, "were until John"; that is to say, the last prophet of the old order of expectation was John the Baptist. "From that time the gospel of the kingdom of God is being preached, and every man entereth violently into it" (Lk. xvi, 16); if men are entering the kingdom, despite its great cost, then the kingdom is present. Jesus accordingly told the Jewish leaders, "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you" (Mt. xxi, 31). He could tell the Pharisees, who were wanting to know at which future date the kingdom of God would

come, that "The kingdom of God is in your midst," for He, its king, was standing among them, with his disciples as some of its citizens.

Although this is clear from many utterances of our Lord in the Gospels, there is a persistent strain in the Fourth Gospel that has a forward look to an impending crisis, an hour that was soon to come upon the world. Jesus tells the woman of Samaria, "The hour cometh when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father" (Jn. iv, 21); that hour undoubtedly refers to a time when the Kingdom will be manifested in fuller measure, so that the presence of God will be known to be universally available. Similarly, after the great invitation, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me . . .", the evangelist adds that this referred to the bestowal of the Spirit, which was not yet given "because Jesus was not yet glorified" (Jn. vii, 37-39); the scripture to which our Lord alluded was probably the prophecy of Ezekiel, which looked forward to the flowing of living waters from the temple in the kingdom age (Ez. xlvi, 1f.), while the Spirit himself was prophesied to be sent when the kingdom came (Joel ii, 28f.). Both these manifestations of the Kingdom were consequent on the "glorification" of Jesus. Yet again, when Greeks came to see Jesus, we find Him declaring, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself" (Jn. xii, 31-32). This we are told, and we hardly need the admonition, has the cross of Christ in view; it would be the occasion of the conquest of the "prince of evil" and so of all his powers; this overcoming of satanic powers is likewise yet another element in the expectation of the coming of the Kingdom of God (see Mt. xii, 28).

It now becomes plain that Jesus taught that through some stupendous act of his, the kingdom of God would be released in the world and with it the immortal life of God be bestowed on men in the here and now. This act was the twofold deed of death and resurrection; its culmination was the phenomena of Pentecost, which Peter declared was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel and was the action of the risen Christ now exalted to the right hand of God (Acts ii, 16 and 33). The rest of the New Testament is full of this theme. The writers believe not merely that the kingdom of God is present but that they are living in it; God "delivered us out of the power of darkness and translated

us into the kingdom of the Son of his love," declared Paul (Col. i, 13). Christians have been made alive together with Christ, share in his resurrection and in his exaltation to the heavenly life (Eph. ii, 5-6). Since they possess the Spirit of God, and with Him the life of God, they know that the rest of the blessings of the future life will not be denied them. For this reason, the Holy Spirit is called "the earnest of our inheritance," *i.e.*, the first instalment of the full quota, the sample of what is to be. The Holy Spirit mediates to the Christian the life of God now; He will bring that "germ" to full fruition by granting resurrection in the last day. "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. viii, 11). The time when this resurrection takes place is significant; it is at the Second Coming of Christ, when the kingdom of God that has been unfolding itself through successive stages will be brought to its full consummation. "As in Adam all die," said Paul, "so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order ('rank' or 'class'): Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ's at his coming. Then the end, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God . . . The last enemy that shall be abolished is death" (1 Cor. xv, 22-26). Just as the resurrection of Christ resulted in the bestowal of the life of God through the Holy Spirit, so the Second Coming will result in the consummation of that gift by the operation of the same Spirit with a view to resurrection. If it be asked, "How does this affect those who are not Christians?" the answer is that they too will be raised, but clearly in a form that cannot be the same as the Christian's, for the one is the result of the life of God coming to fruition, the other is the end of the process of a life lived alienated from God. Paul probably refers to these in the scripture quoted; the various "companies" to be raised are first Christ, then his own at his coming, then "the end company," when He delivers up the kingdom to God.

Two questions urgently arise from this outline. The first is one which naturally arises in the mind of an enquirer into Christian doctrine; "What proof has the Christian for believing that his system deserves any more credence than that of any other religion?" And secondly, "What is meant by the term 'resurrection'?" The former we can answer more confidently than the latter, which, however, is certainly a more desirable state of affairs than *vice versâ*!

It will have been noted that the crux of the Christian doctrine of immortality is not a philosophic principle, nor a peculiar angle on psychology, nor a supposed process of the future, but *an historic event of the past*, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. On that depends the Christian's present life no less than his future existence. That He was an extraordinary man none can doubt ; but He went further and declared that He was the Son of Man, *the Man*, sent from God to save mankind from the death to which all are heirs ; this He was to do by sharing in their death and bearing the brunt of the sin that keeps man from the life of God ; yet in that same moment overcoming death by rising in the fulness of the life of God, a risen man, or rather, *the Risen Man*. Henceforth all who identify themselves with Him in his work for them may share that deliverance that He wrought for them.

That resurrection, we claim, is as historic as the death of which it was the logical issue. We possess documents that tell of the event, which, *in the sum total of their witness*, whatever critics may say about certain details, are unimpeachable. That event was the historic fount of the Church's life ; without it, the world would never have heard of the Church ; it would have died when Jesus breathed his last breath on the cross. Furthermore, it is the source of Christian experience which stretches in an unbroken chain from the first Easter Day across the centuries to to day. Every man or woman who can honestly testify to a new power that came into their lives when they committed themselves to Christ is a witness to his resurrection and therefore to the truth of the Christian doctrine of immortality. Eternal life is not something to which the Christian wistfully aspires as he gazes shudderingly at the grave ; it is the inspiration of his present existence ; in proportion as he knows the help of God in his daily life so he is sure of the future unfolding of that life in the ages that are to be. So many and so clear are the proofs of the resurrection of Christ, one does not hesitate to affirm that if they related to any other event of mundane history no one would dream of questioning the actuality of that event. The reality of Christian experience to those who yield themselves to Christ is such that they have a sufficient witness within that He who fulfilled his word that He would rise from the dead will also fulfil his promise that He will come again and so raise *them*. Christian immortality, therefore, has its feet firmly rooted in history and experience ; nothing that hostile critics have ever adduced, or, we are persuaded, ever can, has power to shake it from its security.

As to the form of the resurrection body, the clearest evidence we possess is in the descriptions of the risen Christ. The simple statement of the first letter of John suffices for most Christians : " We shall be like Him " (iii, 2). If we wish to enquire further as to what He was like in his appearances we have to study the records. From them we gather that the body of the risen Jesus was not simply a resuscitated corpse ; He was able to appear and disappear at will, He was never *immediately* recognised, He assumed different forms (Mk. xvi, 12), He wore clothes which apparently went out of view when He did. From considerations such as these Westcott inferred that " the special outward forms in which the Lord was pleased to make Himself sensibly recognisable by his disciples were no more necessarily connected with his glorified Person than the robes which He wore."¹ We generally content ourselves with saying that Jesus " transformed " his body so that it became a " spiritual " body. If we are honest, we have to admit that we do not know what we mean by the word " transformed " in this connection, except that it was a process by which the body of Jesus became something wholly other than what it was before. It may be that the particles of the Lord's body were dissolved to give place to a form of matter for which we have no better term than to call it " spiritual " (i.e. not " made of spirit," but " subordinate to spirit " ; the body of Jesus manifested itself through the spirit, rather than his spirit manifesting itself through the body as in our case). This was what Paul anticipated our resurrection body would be like ; " It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body " (1 Cor. xv, 44).

The great difficulty, however, on which we have not touched, is the connection between the " natural " and " spiritual " bodies. In our Lord's case, his body did not see corruption whereas humanity in general does experience it. If, however, we are right in supposing that even in our Lord's resurrection the dissolution of his material body was involved in order to give place to the spiritual body, then the difference is more apparent than real. It is unlikely that Paul imagined the material particles of a corrupt body would be regathered in resurrection, for he distinctly disclaimed that flesh and blood, otherwise termed " corruption," can inherit the incorruptible kingdom of God (1 Cor. xv, 50). Even the living have to be " changed "

¹ *Gospel of the Resurrection*, p. 112, note.

at the coming of the Lord. If Paul thought the material body was first raised and then changed, he would be advocating the view already referred to as set forth in 2 Baruch, but the whole drift of his teaching is against it. It is generally agreed that the essential nature of a body lies not in its material elements but in the principle of life which maintains its characteristics through all forms of development; it is not impossible that what we mean by the resurrection of the "body" is the reclothing of that principle of life by elements suited to the new environment of the heavenly life, so forming a "spiritual body." Again, what relationship that "principle of life" holds to the surviving personality or soul of man that subsists in both forms of existence, no man has yet been able to say. Perhaps we never will be able to comprehend it this side of the resurrection.

Undoubtedly we are treading in realms beyond the experience of our present life, and realms, therefore, in which speculation can only be tentative. What, however, we must insist on is that where reason is baffled through lack of knowledge, it is to be remembered that the process has taken place *in history*, and that not simply in the case of *a* man but of *the* Man, who stands in the unique relationship to all mankind as creative Lord. That resurrection is a datum of human nature as such, and shows that our resurrection, whatever it involves, is as certain as his, even though our own particular conception of the process may be inadequate.

It remains to be noticed that the resurrection of man is to be part of the renewing of the entire cosmos. Not only man but his whole environment is to be made worthy of the kingdom of the new creation. "Nature will not be discarded in order that men's souls alone may be salvaged and saved" wrote A. M. Ramsey; "rather will all that God has made have its place and its counterpart in the new heaven and new earth."¹ The Christian doctrine of immortality thus not only ensures a true community of immortals but their complete unity with the creation of God. He who has already broken into history in order to achieve this, and even now holds the reins of government for the outworking of his purpose will surely consummate his plans in his own good time. Then, at last, will the cry go forth, "Behold I make *all things* new!" (Rev. xxi, 5).

¹ *The Resurrection of Christ*, p. 115.