

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE V.

THEORIES OF THE RESURRECTION.

BY REV. J. C. STOCKBRIDGE, D.D., PROVIDENCE, R.I.

IF a man has been living in a pleasant and costly house, and is about to vacate it, it is not an unworthy curiosity which leads him to ask what probably will be the destiny of the mansion in which he has dwelt. Will it remain as it has been? As the process of decay goes on in its different parts, will the work of reconstruction also go on? Or will it at last crumble into ruins, and on its foundations another structure, more elegant, better adapted to meet the wants of its occupant, be reared? These questions have reference to the house of wood and stone in which we dwell. But we, as immaterial beings, live in another house. Ere long we are to depart from our dwelling-place. The "earthly house of our tabernacle" is to be "dissolved." Is it an idle curiosity which prompts us to inquire concerning the destiny of this tabernacle?

In the following pages it is not the writer's purpose dogmatically to state and defend any formal doctrine of the resurrection, but to set forth some of the theories which have been advanced on this subject. It will be seen, in the course of the examination, that the most diverse views have been held by men whose claim to be sincere disciples of the Great Teacher, no one can reasonably dispute; and, therefore, no particular theory can be set forth as a sure test of orthodoxy.

The earliest belief on the resurrection, so far as we can ascertain, may be traced to the sacred writings of the Hindoos. In these writings, however, this belief does not take the form of a distinct doctrine, but is embraced in the system of pantheism which was worked out with such minuteness of detail by the Oriental mind. In so far as that system came

to be received by other nations, who derived their highest culture from the East, the doctrine of a bodily resurrection, followed by an absorption into the Deity of the matter of which human bodies are composed, was necessarily held.

It is a debatable question whether the doctrine is taught in the earlier Jewish writings. Calvin maintains that the oldest of Jewish writers, the author of the Book of Job, firmly believed in the literal resurrection of the body, and quotes the famous passage "I know that my Redeemer liveth," etc. (Job xix. 25, 27), in support of this opinion. It is conceded, however, we believe, by the best biblical critics, that a different and more correct rendering of this passage gives to it such an interpretation as to exclude the idea that the patriarch had any reference to a future resurrection of the body. The language of Jehovah to Abraham on the occasion of the renewal of his covenant with him is supposed by Rabbi Manassah Ben-Israel to furnish proof of a literal resurrection: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." On these passages the good rabbi says: "It is plain that Abraham and the rest of the patriarchs did not possess that land. It follows, therefore, that they must be raised in order to enjoy the promised good, as otherwise the promises of God would be vain and false. Hence, therefore, is proved, not only the immortality of the soul, but also the essential foundation of the law, to wit, the resurrection of the dead." It is hardly to be supposed that the "father of the faithful" put any such interpretation as this on the promise of God. Knapp asserts, without any qualification, that there are no distinct intimations of the resurrection of the body in the writings of Moses or in the Psalms. Passing down to later writers, we find, in Isaiah, a striking passage: "Thy dead men shall live; together with

my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." Calviu thinks that these words teach the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, without a doubt. Alexander, a high authority, and with him several other expositors, take the ground that the apostrophe of the prophet is figurative, and conveys the idea that "God would raise his people from the dust of degradation and oppression, where they had long seemed dead, though only sleeping." Still, they contend that the figure here used implies that the belief of a resurrection of the body must have been prevalent, otherwise the figure would never have been used—an opinion which those who deny a literal resurrection controvert by calling in question the rhetorical principle assumed, viz. that an image used to describe or represent anything allegorical must be an image commonly known and understood, as otherwise it will not answer the purpose for which it is assumed. As well might we say, it is contended, because Jesus declares to him that overcometh "I will give him the morning star," it appears from hence that the belief that saints will be presented with stars was at that time a common or popular belief. Or, because John says that he saw "a woman clothed with the sun," it appears from hence that to suppose a woman might be clothed with the sun was at that time a common and popular superstition. The second verse of the twelfth chapter of Daniel apparently teaches the doctrine of a literal resurrection: "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." It would seem that no words could more plainly teach the doctrine of a literal resurrection; and those who maintain this theory point to it, as they think triumphantly, as a strong proof-text in their favor. On the other hand, it is said that "the evidence, even to a cursory view, of the context, would seem to indicate pretty clearly that the period referred to can scarcely be that of the 'end of the world,' as that phrase is usually apprehended; for

the sequel obviously announces an extended order of events, stretching onwards through a long lapse of centuries to the time, whatever that be, when Daniel himself is to stand up in his lot at the end of days."

It will be seen that there are honest differences of opinion as to whether the doctrine of a literal resurrection is taught in the Old Testament. Traces of the doctrine begin to be found after the captivity. The allusions, however, are few. Indeed, the absence of almost all historical knowledge of the period which intervened between the restoration of the Jews and the advent of our Lord suggests a sufficient reason why we still remain ignorant of the development and progress of religious opinions in that age. Some passages in the Second Book of Maccabees, it is thought, imply a belief in the doctrine. In vii. 9, one of the seven martyrs condemned to die because they refused to eat swine's flesh is represented as saying to King Antiochus: "Thou like a fury takest us out of this present life; but the King of the world shall raise us up, who have died for his laws, unto everlasting life." Another of the seven said: "It is good, being put to death by men, to look for hope from God, to be raised up by him." It may be that these words of the dying martyr convey the idea of a literal resurrection of the body.

Coming down to the time of Christ, we find numerous intimations that it was the commonly received opinion that, as man is a compound of soul, body, and spirit, his highest perfection in the future life could not be attained without a restoration of the primitive condition of his being. While an intermediate state of existence was recognized, this state was represented as being an imperfect one, because the soul was separated from the body. They spoke of it as a state of nakedness, and of the soul as longing to be arrayed once more in its terrestrial garment.

That Christ and his apostles taught a doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, there can be no doubt. But what precisely was *the* doctrine which they taught has given rise to endless discussion. The general theories, subject, as we

shall see, to various modifications, may be reduced to two; viz. the one which regards the resurrection as literal, and and the other which regards it as spiritual.

The baldest, most literal theory is, that at some future time there will take place a "revivication of the human body, after it has been forsaken by the soul, or the reunion of the soul hereafter with the identical body which it had occupied in the present world"; or, as one of the most determined opponents of the literal theory has stated it: "The uniform, orthodox doctrine of the Christian church has always been, that in the last day the identical fleshly bodies formerly inhabited by men shall be raised from the earth, sea, and air, and given to them again to be everlastingly assumed. The scattered exceptions to the believers in this doctrine have been few, and have ever been styled heretics by their contemporaries." It is asserted that the vague conceptions and misapprehensions which prevailed at the time of the advent were rectified by Christ and his apostles, and the gross, sensual ideas which had been entertained on the subject were dissipated by them. We find the subject thoroughly discussed by the Fathers, and very early there came to be used by them the expression *ἀνάστασις τῆς σαρκός*, for the *ἀνάστασις τῶν νεκρῶν* of the New Testament. Justin Martyr maintained the literal theory. Even cripples, he tells us, will rise with the body which they had while on earth, to be perfectly restored by Christ after the resurrection at his second coming. He has some speculations with regard to the relation of the sexes to each other, that have the merit, to say the least, of being somewhat original. Tertullian wrote a treatise "concerning the resurrection of the flesh." To the objection that certain members of the human body will be of no use in the future life he replies, by saying that the members of the human body are not only designed for the mean service of the visible world, but also for something higher. Even on earth, he tells us, the mouth serves not only for the purpose of eating, but also to speak and praise God. He made the following happy discovery, in what manner he

does not inform us, which we commend to the attention of those who maintain what may be called the "germ theory": "The teeth are providentially made eternal to serve as the seeds of the resurrection." The views of Origen, as we might suppose from what we know to have been the tendencies of his mind, were less literal. Gregory of Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Basil the Great sympathized with Origen. The former says: "The mortal body is that which perishes; but the soul is the breath of the Almighty, and the deliverance from the fetters of the body is the most essential point of future happiness." Jerome maintains the most literal view. Of the resurrection bodies he says: "Habent dentes, ventrem, genitalia, et tamen nec cibis, nec uxoribus indigent." Augustine, who also held the literal view, has some remarkable speculations on the subject. He thinks that all the raised will have the stature of the full grown man, and, as a general rule, will be thirty years old, this being our Lord's age when he entered upon his public ministry. "Every man's body," he says, "however dispersed here, shall be restored perfect in the resurrection. Every body shall be complete in quantity and in quality. As many hairs as have been shaved off, or nails cut, shall not return in such enormous quantities to deform their original places; but neither shall they perish; they shall return into the body, into that substance from which they grew." But to what part of the body they shall return, or how a fearful disfigurement of the body is to be prevented by the addition to it of so large an amount of matter, he does not inform us. He arrives, after much sage reflection on the subject, at the conclusion, that the resurrection will take place towards evening, assigning as his reason what would hardly be recognized by modern astronomers as a very potent one, that, before the resurrection can take place, the heavenly bodies which rule over matter must first cease to move, and that would be about sun-down. Some of the later followers of Origen, we are told, "held that the resurrection bodies would be in the shape of a ball—the mere heads of cherubs."

The speculative tendencies of the mediaeval doctors found an extended field over which to expatiate in the discussion of the doctrine under consideration. Such questions as the following were themes of most thoughtful and earnest inquiry: "Will the resurrection be natural, or miraculous? Will each one's hairs and nails all be restored to him in the resurrection? When bodies are raised, will each soul know its own body, and enter it, or will the power of God distribute them as they belong? Will the deformities and scars of our present bodies be retained in the resurrection?" Thomas Aquinas maintained that "no other substance would rise from the dead than that which existed at the moment of death"; a conclusion from which one shrinks a little when he thinks that the body which he may happen to have at death would be the last one he would choose to be the habitation of his soul through the ages of eternity.

From what has been said, it will be perceived that both the literal and the spiritual theory were held, the one by some of the ablest earlier theologians of the Christian church, and the other by names equally honored and renowned. Those who adopted the literal theory, certainly, were not sparing in their speculations on the subject, giving us very minute details of what, in their judgment, would be the peculiar characteristics of the resurrection bodies that should come forth from the earth and the sea. Those who held the spiritual view avoided this minuteness of detail, without doubt, for the simple reason that there was so little that was tangible that they could grasp.

If, now, we come down to more modern times, we find both the theories to which we have referred held by writers on the subject. Sometimes the literal theory has been presented with a nakedness and strictness of conformity to what seems to be the meaning of some passages of scripture, that leave no doubt where we ought to rank him who sets it forth. President Davies makes use of the following language, which it is evident he wishes to be received by no means as a rhetorical flourish, but as a plain statement of

what is to take place in some distant period in our world's history: "Now, methinks, I see, I hear the earth heaving, charnel-houses rattling, tombs bursting, graves opening. Now the nations underground begin to stir. There is a noise and shaking among the dry bones. The dust is all alive and in motion, and the globe breaks and trembles as with an earthquake while this vast army is working its way through and bursting into life. The ruins of human bodies are scattered far and wide, and have passed through many and surprising transformations. A limb is in one country, and another in another, here the head, and there the trunk, and the ocean rolling between." In a foot-note President Davies says: "This was the fate of Pompey, who was slain on the African shore. His body was left there, and his head carried over the Mediterranean to Julius Caesar." "Multitudes have sunk in a watery grave, been swallowed up by the monsters of the deep and transformed into a part of their flesh. Multitudes have been eaten by beasts and birds of prey, and incorporated with them; and some have been devoured by their fellow-men, in the rage of a desperate hunger or of an unnatural, cannibal appetite, and digested into a part of them. Multitudes have mouldered into dust, and this dust been blown about by winds, and washed away with water, or it has petrified into stone, or been burnt into brick, to form dwellings for their posterity; or it has grown up in grain, trees, plants, and other vegetables which are the support of man and beast, and are transformed into their flesh and blood. But, through all these transformations and changes, not a particle that was essential to one human body has been lost, or incorporated into another human body so as to become an essential part of it. And now, at the sound of the trumpet, they shall all be collected, wherever they were scattered; all properly sorted and united, however they were confused, atom to its fellow atom, bone to its fellow bone. Now, methinks, you may see the air darkened with fragments of bodies, flying from country to country to meet and join their proper parts."

“ Scattered limbs, and all
 The various bones, obsequious to the call,
 Self-moved, advance — the neck, perhaps, to meet
 The distant head ; the distant legs, the feet.
 Dreadful to view, see, through the dusky sky,
 Fragments of bodies in confusion fly
 To distant regions, journeying there to claim
 Deserted members, and complete the frame.
 The severed head and trunk shall join once more,
 Though realms now rise between, and oceans roar.
 The trumpet's sound each vagrant mite shall hear,
 Or fixed in earth, or if afloat in air,
 Obey the signal wafted in the wind,
 And not one sleeping atom lag behind.”

No one, in reading this passage, can doubt that President Davies held the doctrine of the literal resurrection of the body in the most literal way. It may be said that this distinguished divine had a remarkably vivid imagination, and that he did not mean that this should be taken for sober, simple reality. But we quote from two writers of more recent times, neither of whom can be charged with presenting the workings of fancy for the assertions of honest conviction. The venerable Dr. Spring, in his work on the “Glory of Christ,” says: “Whether buried in the earth, or floating in the sea, or consumed by the flames, or enriching the battle-field, or evaporate in the atmosphere, all, from Adam to the latest born, shall wend their way to the great arena of the judgment. Every perished bone and every secret particle of dust shall obey the summons, and come forth. If one could then look upon the earth, he would see it as one mighty, excavated globe, and wonder how such countless generations could have found a dwelling beneath its surface.” And President Hitchcock sets forth his view of the resurrection in language equally striking: “When the last trumpet shall sound, the whole surface of the earth will become instinct with life — from the charnels of battle-fields alone, more than a thousand millions of human beings starting forth, and crowding upward to the judgment-seat.”

We think no one can mistake the theory which these eminent and godly men mean to present. It is evident that they believed that the construction of the scripture passages is to be made so literal, that all that is said about bones flying through the air, heads buried in one place flying to meet trunks buried in another place, is not mere imagination, but simple fact, and that these fearful phenomena will certainly take place. Their occurrence being suspended upon the fiat of a divine, omnipotent will, there can be not the least shadow of doubt they will take place.

As a modification of the strictly literal theory, we find another set forth in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, for January, 1853. The Article, which is an exceedingly able one, was written by Professor D. R. Goodwin, then of Bowdoin College, in reply to one which appeared in the *Democratic Review* of September, 1849. The writer of this latter Article took very strong ground against the literal theory of the resurrection, urging with apparently great force the grave philosophical difficulties in the way of such a resurrection. Professor Goodwin's statement is this: "In order to a proper resurrection of the body it is not necessary that the body raised should be identical with any former body whatever, in such a sense as that it must consist of precisely the same elementary particles, neither more nor less, arranged in precisely the same combinations and relationships." He then proceeds to present what he says he will not dignify by the name of a theory, but only as an hypothesis among many hypotheses: "The principle of animal life in man is presumed to be distinct from the intelligent and immortal spirit; but, as it is not itself a substance, when abstracted entirely from the body, it ceases to be. Now, we will suppose, on such premises, that in the economy of human nature it is so ordered that when the spirit leaves the body this vital principle is neither lost nor annihilated, on the one hand, nor, on the other, able to keep up the functions of the animal system, but lies dormant, in connection with so much of the present natural body as constituted the seminal principle or

essential germ of that body, and is to serve as a germ for the future spiritual body; and this portion may be truly body — material substance — and yet elude all possible chemical tests and sensible observation, and all actual physical dissolution. On the reunion of the spirit with this vital dormant principle and its bodily germ, we may suppose an instantaneous development of the spiritual body, in whatever glorious form God shall see fit to assign it. Such a body, so produced, would involve a proper resurrection of the present body. The new body would be a continuation of the old, a proper development from it. The germinal essence is the same; the vital principle is the same; the conscious spirit is the same. The organic connection between the two is as real as that between any present body and the seminal principle from which it was first developed in the womb, as that between the blade of wheat and the bare grain from which it grew.”

This hypothesis of Dr. Goodwin is certainly an ingenious one, perhaps we may say, plausible. It relieves the literal theory of the resurrection of many of the objections which those who reject it bring against it. We see no more legs and arms flying through the air from continent to continent. Headless trunks no longer wait for the heads from which they have been severed, and the myriads of particles which once entered into the formation of the human system, scattered through infinite space, return not to effect the reconstruction of the body raised from the grave. Still, the philosophical difficulties are not removed, any more than they are in the baldest literal theory. They may be somewhat more refined, but they are yet there. For he who questions the truth of the literal theory asks: *What* and *where* is this germ out of which the future resurrection body is to be developed? Does it leave the body “in articulo mortis”? If this germ be a material substance, as it would seem it must be, if it “leaves” the body, then it must have the properties of matter. It can therefore be seen and handled, or in some way be subjected to the tests of the senses.

Has any one ever seen it, and if so, what is its appearance? If it does not escape from the body at death, what becomes of it in the process of complete corruption which goes on? If out of this germ one body has already been developed, why may there not be just reason to suppose that another body has sprung from it in the past, as to suppose that another body will spring from it in the future? And if one, then an indefinite series in the past to be followed by an indefinite series in the future? Moreover, if the law of nature remain unaltered, the body to be developed will be like the one that has been developed, with reference to which we can certainly say that God made it to be adapted to the sphere of earthly existence — to live on the earth, to feed from its fruits, to increase and multiply, — in short, to perform all the functions appropriate to a being who is to live and act on the globe which it was fitted by divine wisdom to inhabit. Unless, then, the other world be like this, such a body would not be adapted to it. If we adopt a “physical theory of another life,” it must be such a theory as will allow for the action and full play of the members of the human body as now constituted. The opponents to a strictly literal theory ask: Are you prepared to adopt such opinions as these? When our Lord says that in the other world “they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God,” does he not necessarily imply that there will be a most radical change in those who are permitted to enter the heavenly state?

Before closing that part of our subject which has reference to the literal theory, let us refer to the views of two divines held in high repute among English theologians. The first is Richard Baxter, the depth and earnestness of whose piety will be questioned by no one who is familiar with his writings. It will be seen that he is far from maintaining the views which have been set forth by some of the writers from whom we have quoted. “The union of the natural soul with the body which has been formed anew is the resurrection.” “Baxter,” says Dr. G. P. Fisher,

“indulged in curious speculations on the mode of the resurrection. He conjectures that the vital principle [*anima vegetativa*] is pure, ethereal fire, and that a portion of this fire adheres to the perishing body, another portion is indissolubly connected with the mind, and forms a spiritual organism. The subtile flame which invests the soul has only to touch the dust, and the body is restored to its pristine life and proportions.” We take an extract, also, from the writings of William Archer Butler, late Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Dublin. Referring to a class of objectors who assert the impossibility of the recovery of the earthly body, or any part of it, he says: “those who think this difficulty really unanswerable have but to conceive the resurrection body a totally *new* organization, and the objection at once disappears. But those who consider this solution an evasion of the scripture doctrine have merely to reflect that the resurrection of the same body will only require that that *small portion* of the frame which is essential to existence at any period of our life (for the body, we know, is in incessant change) should be preserved for each individual, and attached to the separated spirit. The whole mass of material necessary for this purpose to all the past and future generations of mankind would be but a speck upon the surface of the globe. It would require a secret arrangement of Providence to prevent a confusion of the portions intended for each; but it cannot with any plausibility be pretended that the formation of a field of grass, which requires much the same accurate distribution of the particles of matter, is not a difficulty to the divine agent as insuperable as this.” It will be admitted, we think, that the views of Baxter and Butler are more subtile and refined than those held by theologians represented by such men as President Davies.

Before passing to the consideration of what may be called the spiritual theory, it may not be amiss to glance for a moment to the views of that profound thinker and writer, Archbishop Whately. “It is not a little remarkable,” he

says, "that the prevailing opinion should be (as I believe it is) that the very same particles of bodily substance which are laid in the grave, or otherwise disposed of, are to be reassembled and reunited at the resurrection, so as to form, as it is supposed, the same body in which the soul resided before death, and that scripture teaches us to believe this. . . . This is not a notion authorized by scripture, and liable to many objections hard to be answered." The theory of Whately does not make it necessary that into what the apostle calls "the glorious bodies" of the saints in heaven there should enter a single particle of the old body, not even the "germ" of Dr. Goodwin. "Some, I believe, cling to the notion," he says, "that the same bodily particles must be reunited at the resurrection, from an impression that otherwise it could not be called 'a resurrection of the body.' I find no fault with them for believing this; and if they insist that the phrase 'resurrection of the body' ought not to be used except to express this sense, though I do not agree with them, it would be foreign to the present purpose to discuss that question, since the interpretation of scripture is not concerned in it; for throughout scripture the phrase 'resurrection of the body,' or 'resurrection of the flesh,' nowhere occurs." He then makes use of the following illustration: "If any one's house, for instance, were destroyed, and another man promised to rebuild it for him, he would not be considered as failing in his promise because he did not put together all the former materials. If the materials were equally good, and if the man were put in possession of a house not less commodious and beautiful than he had before, that would be to all practical purposes sufficient. . . . Those who sleep in Christ will be raised up with bodies which they will feel to be their own, and which will, for that reason, be their own, but which will be far different from the 'earthly tabernacles' (that is, tents) of flesh and blood in which they dwelt here, and will be made like unto the 'glorious body of Christ.' If we are to enter on a new kind of existence, we must be qualified for it by a new kind of body."

Having thus considered the literal theory of the resurrection under the threefold aspect of reconstruction from the actual particles which formerly composed the body, reconstruction from a germ lying unvitalized during the intermediate state, and reconstruction from entirely new materials, we pass on to an examination of the spiritual theory.

The doctrine of a literal resurrection was very early opposed. The Gnostics rejected it, as, from the views which they held respecting matter, it might be supposed they would do. Indeed, nearly all the sects that were denounced as heretics by the orthodox church denied a literal resurrection of the same body. Those who maintain the spiritual theory, first of all, enter upon a critical examination of the expression *ἀνάστασις τῶν νεκρῶν*. They think that they find in the word *ἀνάστασις* only the idea of future existence; and the sentiment is meant to be conveyed by them that "the person—the sentient, intelligent being who now yields to the universal sentence, and appears to become extinct—shall again be restored to life by entering immediately upon another sphere of existence. This existence will, indeed, be in a body, but it will be a spiritual body—some exceedingly refined and ethereal substance with which the vital principle is connected, but of the nature of which we are ignorant, and which we denominate 'body' from the inadequacy of language to afford any more fitting term." The word *ἀνάστασις*, translated 'resurrection,' it is contended, denotes, not a rising of the material body from the grave, but simply existence beyond the grave. It is thought that the word is very clearly used in this sense in the controversy of our Lord with the Sadducees, who attempted to puzzle him with reference to the future condition of the wife who had had seven husbands. The Sadducees, supposing that, of course, he held to the Pharisaic idea of a literal resurrection of the body, presumed that they would confound him by proposing the question they put to him. His answer is deemed to be sufficient proof that he did not hold the Pharisaic dogma of a future literal resurrection of the identical buried body:

“As touching the dead, that they rise, have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush, God spake unto him, saying: I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.” ‘You mistake,’ he says to these captious inquirers, ‘you mistake the doctrine in two points. You do not rightly comprehend, in the first place, the nature of the state in which the raised are. Your gross, sensual ideas respecting it are all out of place. They who enter that state become *ὡς ἄγγελοι*, like the angels. You err, in the second place, in supposing that there can be no resurrection but that which you think will take place at some far-off, indefinite period. The pious dead have already risen. The patriarchs are now with God.’ Martha, standing by the grave of Lazarus, her mind dwelling on the Pharisaic doctrine of a coming of the bodies of the dead, exclaims: “I know he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Jesus replies: “I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” It is contended that these words involve the theory of a spiritual, rather than a literal, resurrection of the dead.

The spiritual theory is thus developed by Rev. E. H. Sears, in his “Foregleams of Immortality”: Man’s resurrection is the putting forth at death of new existence, just as the decaying seed puts forth the blade. Its decay is necessary, in order to release the life and beauty that were impressed within its foldings. Death and resurrection describe processes, one the inverse of the other, but the former helping on the latter, and preparing its triumphant way. Our future being is insouled and inurned in our present. The spiritual body is included elementally in our present mode of existence, with its perceptive powers all ready for their enlargement. The soul is not a metaphysical nothing, but a heavenly substance and organism, fold within fold. The material falls off, and the spiritual stands forth,

and fronts the objects and breathes the ethers of immortality."

And thus, according to this view, the resurrection really takes place immediately at death. There is no long waiting, while the body is returning to the dust, and its particles are scattered throughout the universe, at length to be brought back and formed anew into what is called a spiritual body. The theory takes us out of the graveyards, and away from the corruption and dismal horrors of the tomb. It declares that at death we go out of the tabernacles in which we have dwelt, and with which we shall have nothing more to do than the worm with the covering in which it has lived until it has emerged into its butterfly condition. These bodies have already performed the functions assigned them by God. But we are not only "unclothed," but at once "clothed upon" by our house from heaven. At once the spiritual body is inhabited by the soul which has gone forth from its earthly tent, a new organism, in the construction of which no atom of the old material body enters, and which is as different as it is possible to conceive from that old body.

It will be seen that the theory does not accord with that usually laid down in the standards of orthodox faith, and it is considered downright heresy. It may be interesting to see how the advocates of the theory interpret those passages of scripture which are regarded as being such strong proof-texts in favor of the literal theory. And as the fifteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians is more largely occupied with a discussion of the doctrine than any other part of the New Testament, special attention is directed to the interpretation of this chapter, and it is believed that all the statements of the apostle best harmonize with the spiritual theory. The apostle says: "Every man in his own order. Christ the first-fruits, and afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming." The advocates of the spiritual theory reason thus: "As the first-fruits of the harvest are a sample of the whole, and being presented in the temple denominate the remainder pure and holy, so Christ, who after his resurrection was

presented in the heavenly temple, may be justly regarded as an exemplar and type of the state of those who fall asleep in him, and an argument that they are not, as dead bodies were, among the polluted things of the world, but holy to the Lord, and admitted to his presence. The whole harvest began to be gathered in immediately after the presentation of the first-fruits, and it would be a very violent construction of the analogy to suppose it to imply that hundreds and thousands of years might elapse between the resurrection of the grand Precursor and that of the mass of his followers."

"But some man will say, How are the dead raised, and with what bodies do they come?" This is the question which the believers in a literal resurrection propose; and the answer the apostle gives is very pointed, and at the same time subversive, it is thought, of the literal theory. "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance, of wheat or some other body." If the perfected plant is not the identical seed raised up, with no loss of its particles, out of the ground, so the spiritual body of the saint in glory is not the identical body raised from the grave. But here the advocates of the spiritual theory have to meet the "germ" hypothesis. It is very clear that the new plant rises from the outgrowth of a germ in the old one. "We do not see," say they, "but we must be forced to the admission of some kind of germ, which is developed from the one that is the nucleus, the essential vital principle, of the other." We have already intimated that those who cannot accept the bald literal theory fall back upon this idea of the expansion of a germ in every body that is buried, out of which germ comes the new resurrection body. This germ is regarded by the literalist as being material, although there is a variety of opinion as to the character of the matter of which it is composed. The old rabbis taught that there is an immortal bone in the human body, called by them "luz" — "ossiculum luz" —

which is the germ of the resurrection body. They maintained that this bone one might burn, boil, bake, pound, bruise, or attempt to bruise, by putting it on an anvil and submitting it to the strokes of the sledge-hammer, but all in vain. Anatomists, we believe, have thus far been unable to discover this bone. We have already seen that one of the Fathers held that the teeth are immortal. As from those of Cadmus armed men sprang, so from ours will the resurrection bodies be developed. Mr. Samuel Drew, who wrote on the "Identity and General Resurrection of the Human Body," adopts the germ theory, although he does not pretend to decide in what part of the body the germ is. His theory, in brief, is this: "There are four distinct stages through which those parts constituting the identity of the body must necessarily pass, in order to their attainment of complete perfection beyond the grave. The first of these stages is that of its elementary principles; the second is that of an embryo in the womb; the third is that of its union with an immaterial spirit, and with the fluctuating portions of flesh and blood in our present state; and the fourth stage is that of its residence in the grave." Out of some material germ which will be in the grave he supposes the new body will be recreated, and, being taken possession of by the soul, will be the spiritual body of the saints in glory. Dr. Edward Hitchcock, while showing the utter impossibility of a literal resurrection of identical particles, holds to a germ theory. He says, speaking of the two bodies: "It is not necessary to suppose that more than a millionth part of a ten thousand millionth part is common to them both; but this atom, however minute, serves as an infinitesimal germ for the future body." He is obliged, however, to do violence to the analogy which is seen in the natural world. Here the uniform law is that seeds invariably produce their likes. But from this germ, residing somewhere in the human system, there is developed a body totally unlike the old body. The resurrection body will not be flesh and blood, will not be subject to pain or decay. It will be immortal, and possess

powers and capacities of which we can form but the very faintest conception. Noticing this theory of Dr. Hitchcock, Mr. Sears says: "The reader will perceive that the doctrine as here modified by Dr. Hitchcock differs essentially from the old traditional one, and that he comes within an 'infinitesimal' particle of clearing himself from the church-yard altogether. But for the 'millionth part of a ten thousand millionth' part, his theory and what we have unfolded as the Bible theory might easily be made to blend together. But naturalism in theology, though infused homoeopathically, gives its cast to the whole, and colors the entire conception of the future life." Dr. Hitchcock proceeds a step further, and ventures upon some ingenious speculations respecting the constitution of the body which we are to have at the resurrection. He thinks it not improbable it may be composed of that third substance, distinct from matter and spirit, known as luminiferous ether. It may be that some portion of this ethereal substance is connected with every human organism, and, under special divine direction, kept in a state of isolation till the resurrection, when, developing itself as the germ of the new body, it may be taken possession of by the soul. Of course, those who maintain the strictly spiritual theory decline to accept this explanation of the resurrection. A writer in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for November, 1845, denies a literal resurrection of the dead from the graves to which they have been consigned. He contends that not even a single particle of our present bodies will enter into our resurrection bodies. He does not refer even to a germ out of which the resurrection body will be developed. His view is that there is in every vital organism what he calls a "uniting power" — a power to attract from the outward world whatever may be necessary for the constitution of the body which God may propose the soul should inhabit. In the distant future, when the resurrection day shall come, each soul, by virtue of this "uniting-power," shall attract to itself whatever may be necessary to constitute what the apostle denominates "the spiritual body." "We are out of

the graveyards at last, then," exclaims Mr. Sears, in his notice of this theory. "Theology is free from the charnel-house, and can escape the smell of corpses, orthodoxy itself being judge. The umbilical cord that held her to corruption and the clay-pits has become not only 'infinitesimal,' but is completely sundered. Thank God for that! Now she can fly, or she can run. If we carry along with us the 'uniting power,' retaining that after death, we can draw up by it the elements of our new body wherever we please—from the air, from the sun, from Sirius, or from some paradise unknown. Not even the smallest germ need come out of the grave, and so farewell to its contents forever."

It will be seen in what manner those who hold the spiritual theory of the resurrection of the dead interpret the scriptures. Many of those passages which seem to teach a literal resurrection, they explain as manifestly referring to the awaking of the "dead in trespasses and sins" to a newness of life in Christ Jesus. Thus the words of our Lord "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall come forth," etc., are thus interpreted. It is said that the verb *ἔρχεται* denotes an order of events just on the eve of occurring. If our Lord meant to speak of what was to take place at some far off, indefinite period, he would have used the word *ἐλεύσεται*, *the hour will come*. They urge, moreover, that if we adopt the theory of a literal resurrection, then we must say that all men are now in the graves, buried there as conscious, sentient beings, since the word used to point them out is *πάντες*. Would not our Lord have used the expression *πάντα σώματα*, they ask, if he intended to say that the dead bodies of the departed would hereafter be raised out of the grave?

It would be doing injustice to the subject now under consideration not to refer to the different views which are held on the relation which the resurrection of Christ holds to that of his disciples. Those who maintain the theory of a literal resurrection hold that Christ rose out of the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea in the same natural body which was

laid in the tomb; that, if any change took place previous to the ascension, it was but a partial change; that in the ascension he carried to the heavenly world a body still bearing the marks of his crucifixion, although in many remarkable respects it differed from the body in which he lived on earth. This, it is said, is the type and resemblance of our resurrection. As his body came forth from the grave, so will ours come forth. It matters not how many thousand years it may have been since these bodies have laid in the tomb, they shall come forth, and be transformed into the likeness of his glorified body. "If Christ actually rose in his material body," says Prof. Bush, "in the self-same body in which he was crucified, it doubtless affords some countenance to the idea that his people are also to rise, in like manner, in the bodies which they laid down in death."

As may be supposed, then, the advocates of the spiritual theory deny that the material body of Christ rose. They contend that the crucified body returned to its original gaseous elements in the tomb, and disappeared entirely, and that he rose in the spiritual body. In this body he appeared to his disciples only at certain times, when their spiritual senses were opened to apprehend him; and his apparent ascension was merely the shutting again of this faculty of spiritual sense, so that they saw him no more. Such a theory explains, it is said, the sudden and mysterious appearances of the Saviour to his disciples. In harmony with this view, it is asserted that the ascension really took place on the very day of the resurrection, and that for forty days he was from time to time making his appearance to the disciples in such ways as to make upon their minds the deepest impression of his present existence and interest in them and in the work which they were to perform. Paul refers to his having seen the Lord Jesus as a proof of his apostleship. He was thus a witness of the resurrection. But this appearance was substantially similar to the manifestations made during the forty days; and if this was in the spiritual body with which he ascended to heaven, so

were those other appearances made during the forty days. The inference is a very obvious one, that if Christ rose out of the grave, and at once ascended into heaven clothed with a spiritual body, so will it be with his followers. Immediately at death, having laid down the earthly tabernacle, they will be "clothed upon with their house which is from heaven."

Other writers who reject the literal theory are not prepared to adopt that which we have just been considering. They think that Christ rose in the natural body, but that it was changed for the glorified or celestial body during the forty days. Some suppose the change to have occurred at once; others, that it was gradual; still others, that it did not take place until the ascension. Those who hold the spiritual theory maintain that the change was entirely a spiritual one — that the gross, material body was at length superseded by the spiritual body, and, the transformation having been fully accomplished, our Lord ascended to heaven. This delay of forty days was for wise purposes, which are obvious. No such delay, however, will hold back the soul of the departed saint; but he will at once take on his new spiritual body.

From what has been written in the foregoing pages, it will be seen that there is great diversity of sentiment on the subject of the resurrection of the dead. Probably entire harmony of view will never be reached, until the light of eternity dispels our ignorance. We shall then learn what was the precise meaning which the inspired writers attached to the words to which they gave utterance. If the soul shall at once enter the new spiritual house which the divine Architect has prepared for its indwelling, this falls in with many analogies which we see in this world. If countless ages shall roll away, and then Omnipotence shall reunite the spirit to a body whose perfect personal identity shall at once be recognized, who may dare to say that this will not accord with the highest wisdom of him who "doeth all things well"?