

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

I

THE doctrine of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is so characteristic a feature of Christian belief, and so fundamental a truth, that it may confidently be expected to continue to be believed in and prized, so long as the inspired Word of God is permitted to dominate the theological thinking of men. It is a truth indeed that forms an essential part of the foundation on which rests the Christian Hope. The death of our Lord alone will not warrant the cherishing of that Hope. His death can by no means be dispensed with in the matter, but it is the death through which He, as Mediator, triumphantly passed into Resurrection life and power. Hence our Lord says of Himself : " I am He that Liveth " (the great " I am ") " and was dead, and behold I am alive for ever more, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death ".¹ The Apostle Peter definitely connects the Hope with the Resurrection of Christ : " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time ".² Indeed no doctrine is more stressed in the New Testament than that of our Lord's Resurrection ; and none is more clearly and definitely stated. Not only is it extensively testified to—there being at least sixty references to it in the New Testament, twenty of these being in the Acts of the Apostles—but it is also treated as a truth that is of the most important and fundamental character. The whole system of Christian teaching is made to appear to be vitally and inseparably connected with it. In view also of the fact that the Christian Church owes its origin to and is founded on it, the doctrine might be expected to be so greatly valued that no countenance would be given by her to its being called in question, or to anything done or said that would

¹ Revelation i. 18.

² 1 Peter i. 3-5.

compromise or minimize, in any measure, its reality and importance.

The Resurrection was a cardinal doctrine among the Jews in the time of Christ's earthly ministry. It was strongly asserted by His Apostles. It appears in early literature. It continued to be believed in during the Middle Ages. At the Reformation it was reaffirmed, and it has its due place in the Formularies of the Churches at the present time. Indeed, the Church of God in all ages asserted belief in it, and especially the early Apostolic Church. As it is a doctrine that is definitely one of Revelation, the testimony of Scripture should be held as being decisive and final in the determination of all questions connected with it. The Apostle Paul states that belief in the doctrine was held by the Church in his day. "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received; how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried; and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures".¹

Notwithstanding, however, all the testimony that exists in proof of the reality of the Resurrection of our Lord, there have been men throughout the history of the Church who did not believe in it, and the case has continued so to the present time. Opposition to the doctrine is directed, sometimes to the Resurrection of Christ, and at other times to that of believers. It is, however, in both cases, alike in character. The resurrection of believers also is so dependent on that of Christ, that they stand or fall together. So at least reasoned the Apostle Paul: "If there be no Resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain".² Even at the present time there are ministers of the Christian Church who hold the belief that the bodies of the dead, that they commit to the dust, will, contrary to the words of commitment, "we commit this body to the grave in the sure hope of a blessed Resurrection", ever remain in the dust of the earth. It is this growing unbelief in the resurrection of the physical part of man, rather than the expressed opinion, or teaching of any individual person, however eminent he may be, that renders the question at the present time one of serious concern to the Christian community.

¹ 1 Corinthians xv. 3-4.

² 1 Corinthians xv. 13-14.

II

STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE

In the case of Christ the reference of the term Resurrection is to His physical body that had been laid in the grave of Joseph of Arimathaea on the day of the Crucifixion, and from which it had disappeared three days later. What is involved in the consideration of the doctrine is the question of the restoration to life of His dead body, and the identity of His Resurrection body with that which had been committed to the tomb. The very term, *ἀνάστασις*, which means rising after a time of lying down, is the word that almost invariably is used to designate resurrection from the dead of the physical body of man. It is never once applied in the New Testament to a spiritual resurrection. It applies to the material part of man alone, which is the only part to which it could appropriately be applied, because it alone is what lies down in the dust of the earth. The spiritual part of man cannot be meant, as its existence is continued after death, and of its consciousness there is no suspension. Such a claim for it is made even by Spiritualists. To the so-called etheric body the term cannot apply, because it is not material, and is not subjected to the slumber of death as the physical body is. The soul is said rather to function in the psychical body after death.

The Apostle Paul asserts the reality of Christ's Resurrection, and the identity of the body. He says in regard to believers that, it is that which is sown in corruption that is raised in incorruption ; it is that which is sown in dishonour that is raised in glory ; it is that which is sown in weakness that is raised in power ; it is that which is sown a natural body that is raised a spiritual body. "When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory."¹ Christ's Resurrection is the same in character as that of His people. It is, therefore, to be regarded as an historical fact, and as such historical evidence can be appealed to in proof of its reality. There is abundance of such available. The fact indeed is so well authenticated as to be put entirely beyond the region of any reasonable doubt. The references are to the Lord's physical body, and to it alone. What was restored to life is what was

¹ 1 Corinthians xv. 54.

previously dead and buried. In the case of Lazarus, it was his dead physical body that Christ called forth from the grave into life, after it had been dead four days. So in the case of Christ Himself, it was the body that three days before then had been taken down from the Cross, and laid in Joseph's tomb, that was made alive at the Resurrection. It cannot be conceived possible that the testimony of the Angel, which was, "He is not here, for He is risen, as He said, come see the place where the Lord lay";¹ could have reference to anything other than the body of Jesus. The body of His Resurrection was identically that of the Crucifixion. Christ had even had His disciples to verify this. He showed them that His body, now risen, bore the marks of the nails by which it had been held to the Cross, and of the spear by which His side had been pierced. "And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet."² "Then said He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing."³ The account also given of the burial of our Lord confirms the belief that it is His body that is referred to in the Resurrection account. Resurrection indeed implies previous burial, and Christ's burial could apply to His body only.

III

SCRIPTURE TESTIMONY IN FAVOUR OF RESURRECTION

Throughout the Old Testament the doctrine of Resurrection is assumed rather than directly stated. Direct references, however, though not numerous, are not wanting. One of the most definite of these is: "O, that my words were now written! O, that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for

¹ Matthew xxviii. 6.

² Luke xxiv. 38-40.

³ John xx. 27.

myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another ; though my reins be consumed within me.”¹ Reference was made on the Day of Pentecost by the Apostle Peter to Psalm xvi., and he declared that the words in it, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption”, refer to Jesus Christ.² There is also the testimony of Daniel : “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”³ The statement in Hebrews : “others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection”,⁴ probably has reference to those who had suffered for their belief in the doctrine. If so, there is evidence in such a fact, that men of God among the Jews believed in the doctrine. The Apostle Paul also appears to certify the existence of the belief among the Jews of a past age, when he says : “and now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers ; unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come, for which hope’s sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead ?”⁵ In the New Testament direct references to the Resurrection are numerous, and the testimony is clearer than is that of the Old Testament. It is made evident by such definite teaching, that “life and immortality have been brought to light by the Gospel”. Additional New Testament references will appear throughout the subsequent parts of this narrative.

IV

IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT

A distinct impression is left on the mind of the reader of Scripture to the effect that the fact of Resurrection assumed vast importance in the estimation of the founders of the Christian Church. Christ referred to it in refutation of the Sadducees

¹ Job xix. 23-27.

² Acts ii. 27.

³ Daniel xii. 2-3.

⁴ Hebrews xi. 35.

⁵ Acts xxvi. 6-8.

who disbelieved in it. He did the same in His comforting of Martha and Mary on the death of their brother Lazarus ; also when He sent out His disciples to the " lost sheep of the House of Israel " ; in preparing His disciples for His death and departure from them ; in assuring John the Baptist of His being the long-expected Messiah ; and in His announcement of the final judgment and the end of the world. A similar extensive and varied use was made of the matter by the Apostles. In their appointment of a successor to Judas Iscariot, they insisted on the choice being confined to such of the people as were eyewitnesses of the Resurrection of Christ. Peter, before the Jewish Council, maintained that what he was mainly called in question for, was belief in the resurrection of the dead to which he gave utterance. Peter and John declared that it was in the name of the crucified Jesus whom God raised from the dead that they performed the notable miracle of healing the cripple at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. Paul defended himself at Athens for preaching the doctrine. In the great classical passage of 1 Corinthians xv., it is seen how essential belief in the doctrine was regarded to be for the spiritual life and hope of the Church. The importance, indeed, attached by the New Testament to Christ's Resurrection leaves it one of the most important articles of the Christian Faith.

There is a tendency in some quarters to isolate the death of Christ, and to view it apart from other doctrines, and especially from that of the Resurrection. Ritschlianism has taught, and the erroneous belief has widely spread, that the spiritual value of Christ's Resurrection may be conserved, though belief in the bodily or physical resurrection were surrendered. The Apostle Paul did not think so. He represents the connection between Christ's Resurrection and His death for sin, to be so close that they form two constituent parts of the work of Redemption, and that so indissoluble is the connection between them, that unbelief in the Resurrection implies rejection of the whole scheme of Redemption. It may not be overlooked that, though Christ was delivered for our offences, He was raised again for our justification. The one act is as essential as the other. A living Saviour is needed, but a living Saviour who, as a sin-bearer, had been dead and buried, but had triumphed over death and the grave, is now alive, and can say : " O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? " ¹ When the Apostles went forth,

¹ 1 Corinthians xv. 55.

after the promise of the special gift of the Holy Ghost was fulfilled, to execute their Master's great commission, two elements characterized their teaching, i.e. Christ's death, and Christ's Resurrection.

The importance of the subject of the Resurrection is twofold, arising from the bearing it has on Christ Himself, and that also which it has on believers in Him. It undoubtedly proves the Risen One to be the Son of God, as He claimed to be. The fact could not have been accomplished by the power of man. It required the almighty power of God. "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."¹ There also follows from His Resurrection that "He dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him".² "In that He liveth, He liveth unto God".³ His acquired dominion also is such that He is Lord both of the dead and the living; "For to this end Christ both died, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and the living."⁴ The bearing of Christ's Resurrection on believers is of immense importance. In addition to their justification being dependent on it, or as expressed negatively: "if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins",⁵ the seal of Divine approval on His work of Atonement assures salvation to them as believers in Him, because it gave undeniable evidence of the completion and worth of His work of satisfaction. Had He remained under the power of death, the hope of salvation would have remained buried with Him. Further, there follows upon Christ's Resurrection the work of the Spirit of Christ in quickening the sinner, and making him meet for "the inheritance of the saints in light", through transforming him into the likeness of Christ. It is also a pledge of his resurrection. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body".⁶ Their relation to Christ is twofold, for it is both external and internal. He is the Head of His mystical body, and they are the members. They are also of one spirit with Him. His rising as the Head guarantees theirs as the members of the body. "But if the Spirit of Him

¹ Romans i. 4.

² Romans vi. 9.

³ Romans vi. 10.

⁴ Romans xiv. 9.

⁵ 1 Corinthians xv. 17.

⁶ 2 Corinthians iv. 10.

that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you."¹

V

EXISTING MONUMENTS OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

Three such monuments stand and bear each its special testimony, in the world to the reality of Christ's Resurrection. They are : Christianity, the Christian Sabbath, and the Ministry of the Holy Ghost. The combined testimony of the three will easily withstand the strongest possible array of opposing arguments that can be marshalled against it.

The early propagators of Christianity, and its defenders in different ages, gave proof of their deep personal belief in the risen Christ. They went about preaching a living Christ, mighty to save, and were prepared to bear much opposition, suffering and loss, not a few of them even sealed their testimony with their blood. A very graphic description of the sufferings of some of them is given in chapter xi. of Hebrews. Christ warned His followers of what they might have to suffer for His sake, yet they were not deterred. The existence and success of the Christian Faith in the world, notwithstanding the tremendous efforts that have in various ages been put forth for its destruction, bear irrefutable evidence in favour of the risen Christ. Had He remained under the power of death, His Church would never even have been founded. It required that the doubt and misgiving that had taken hold of and unnerved the disciples, on their Lord's death and burial, when all their hopes and expectations appeared to be laid with His dead body in the grave of Joseph, should have been changed into the triumphant courage and confidence that came to them with the Resurrection, and the comforting sense it gave them of His presence and power anew among them. Even at the present time there is still active a tendency to eliminate the supernatural from religion. Our Lord's Resurrection is only part of what is embraced within the scope of this unbelieving process that is at work among men. It challenges the entire Christian conception of His person and work. In its wide sweep, from denial of His Virgin Birth to repudiation of belief in His Resurrection, not even the moral

¹ Romans viii. 11.

purity of His nature finds exemption. In the existence, however, of Christianity, and the immensity of the work that has been accomplished by it in the world, there is evidence of there being other than man's power at work, and none is more conscious of such a fact than the Christian worker himself.

With the evidence afforded by the continued existence of the Christian Church must be associated the fact of the Christian Sabbath, and especially its substitution for the Jewish Sabbath. It is impossible to conceive how the erection of such a memorial could have been contemplated, not to speak of its being made to displace one already existing of Divine appointment, had there been no reality in the event to be commemorated, and had not immense importance been attached to it. Good and convincing cause must have been shown why the change should be given effect to, before it could have been secured. Strong Jewish prejudice had to be overcome, the enmity of the carnal mind to the sanctity of the day subdued, and the verdict of the wisdom of the world disregarded.

Christ's promise to the Church of the Holy Ghost, as the Comforter, was conditioned on His returning to the Father. "It is expedient for you that I go away; for, if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart I will send Him unto you."¹ The disciples were enjoined not to leave Jerusalem till they were thus endowed from heaven. At Pentecost the promise was fulfilled. They were filled with the Holy Ghost, and thereby richly fitted for executing the great task which had been given them by the Lord, ere His bodily presence was removed from among them. They thereafter went forth declaring the glad tidings of a risen Saviour. Evidence, accordingly, of the presence of the Spirit of God is proof of Christ's having ascended to the Father, and this He would not have done, had He not risen from the dead. Pentecost will ever bear its testimony against unbelief in our Lord's Resurrection. The same glorious fact, to a minor extent, is also attested by all manifestations of the Spirit's work in the believer. Every believer, however humble his lot on earth may be, is a living epistle which may be read of all men, testifying to Christ's Resurrection from the dead.

When the day of the Lord comes, in the which the heavens "shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent

¹ John xvi. 7.

heat", the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up, and these give place to "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness",¹ there will be the monument of the glorified Church of the Living God, the members all perfect in the likeness of Jesus Christ, "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, holy and without blemish", and of the renovated heavens and earth, and these will bear their testimony throughout the eternal ages, to the praise of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the three-one God.

VI

THE RESURRECTION BODY

In the consideration of the subject of the Resurrection body, it is necessary that there should be kept in view what the Resurrection is not. It is not mere resuscitation, or reanimation, or restoration of suspended animal functions, such as were the cases of restoration to life recorded in the New Testament. Again it is not creation. A new being is not produced. The change wrought is one effected on man already existing. The change does not involve the destruction of any essential constituent element of his nature, nor any addition to such. It does not make any radical alteration of his existing constitution. Christ declares that He came to destroy the works of the devil. One part of these works was causing the severance by death in man of the two elements of soul and body. This is what is to be undone through these parts being reunited. God's purpose concerning His people is, however, not limited to life on earth. Such a life is temporary. They have here no continuing city. They are consequently strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Their home is in heaven. Resurrection, consequently, has heaven in view, and the change effected is one fitting them, not for entering anew on an earthly existence, but on a heavenly one. Their Lord's Resurrection was the beginning of His estate of Exaltation. His Humiliation ended with His brief tenancy of Joseph's tomb. Corresponding with this change of state is that which took place in respect of His humanity. We are incapable of comprehending what of this change pertains to His rational soul. It must have been immeasurably great, fitting Him for the exalted existence

¹ 2 Peter iii. 13.

on which He has entered as King-Priest on the throne of the Universe. We are here principally concerned with the change that took place on His body. Of the fact of such a change there can be no doubt. The term, *μετασχηματιζώ*,¹ implies identity of subject with change of form. The integrity of His human nature was restored. Identically the same body that was laid down, and was deposited in the tomb, was resumed by Him, and in it He ascended to heaven. It, however, underwent so great a change that it seems not to have been even visible, except when He willed it to be so. Even when He was visible He was not always recognizable by His friends and disciples, as is evidenced in the cases of Mary at the tomb, and the two disciples with whom He conversed on the way to Emmaus. His humanity was no longer adapted to the state in which He previously was in Humiliation, and the state of Exaltation on which He had now entered demanded an adaptation of all the elements of His humanity for this higher and more advanced state of existence. It was effected in His Resurrection. The nature of the change is indicated by the statements: "It is sown a natural body", *σῶμα ψυχικόν*, "it is raised a spiritual body", *σῶμα πνευματικόν*. It is also indicated in the words: "from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself".² Notwithstanding the nature and greatness of the change, the subject of it, in the case of man, is always viewed and dealt with in a corporeal form. Without such a structure he would not be man. Body is an essential element of his constitution. He was created with a material body forming a constituent part of his being. The account of his beginning shows his body to be as essential a part of his nature as the breath by which he became a living soul. This constitution, too, was assigned him before sin entered the earth to mar the perfection and beauty of God's work of Creation. Man is always contemplated as he thus came into existence. The severance of his corporeal integrity as caused by death is viewed as an unnatural occurrence. The future presents him as restored to his primitive integrity. Nowhere, indeed, does that future reveal him in either of the constituents which go to his

¹ Philippians iii. 21.

² Philippians iii. 20-21.

formation. In Scripture his state is unknown as one of severed elements. Even the immortality of the soul, in its separate abstract form is not to be found in Scripture. The future state dealt with is one of corporeal existence. The risen Christ and the risen saint will in this respect be alike.

The end of God's work of Redemption in regard to His believing people is evidently their glorification in heaven. The Apostle Peter asserts that they are called "unto God's eternal glory".¹ Christ has promised and prepared a place for them in the "Father's House",² and also intercedes for their being with Him there.³ For this they are being prepared of God. Man's body differentiates him from beings that are pure spirits, such as angels, and there is nothing in Scripture that will warrant belief in such a difference ceasing to exist in the heavenly hereafter. Man was evidently never meant to be pure spirit. His future existence, however, necessitates the great change that is to be effected at the Resurrection, as well as that spiritual work carried on in a state of grace. The fitness of man for the place, and of the place for man, is beautifully stated by a great Scottish preacher of a past generation⁴: "There are two good reasons for calling a desire for a purified earth as heaven foolish. The first is that 'the things which are seen' are expressly declared to be 'temporal', and the second is that, to bodies made 'spiritual' by the resurrection power of God, any location which had aught in it of the earth that now is, would be utterly unsuitable. You must dispense with a glorious resurrection if you continue to dream of an earthly heaven, and if you are not raised a 'spiritual body' there can be no heaven for you at all. . . . While heaven is the abode of God, 'the earth hath He given to the children of men'. These words give us the true idea to be associated with 'earth' in the text. This 'new earth' is the place of abode appointed for saved men. This place may be called an 'earth', but this place prepared for them is a heavenly earth—an earth in heaven. It must be there it is, because it is there their inheritance is reserved for them, and there alone can they perfectly enjoy it. But though there it is perfectly adapted to be their abode. It is not suited to what they are, but to what they shall become, under the renewing work of God. New men

¹ 1 Peter v. 10.

² John xiv. 2.

³ John xvii. 24.

⁴ The Rev. John Kennedy, D.D., Dingwall (*Printed Sermons*).

alone shall dwell in the 'new earth'. But He who made the earth new shall make His loved ones new, and when they and the place prepared for them shall meet, they shall find it to be a perfect home."

VII

UNBELIEF OF THE DOCTRINE

Unbelief in the doctrine of Resurrection was professed by the Sadducees as a sect. Hymenæus and Philetus, referred to by the Apostle Paul, appear to have embraced the same error. The Apostle says of them: "But shun profane and vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness; and their word will eat as doth a canker; of whom is Hymenæus and Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the Resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some."¹ Gnostic sects made a like denial of the resurrection. The only resurrection believed in by them was one associated with Baptism, and it, accordingly, passed with the administration of that sacrament. Some of the Athenians and of the Corinthians rejected the teaching of Paul on the subject. Of the Athenians it is even said that, "when they had heard of the Resurrection of the dead, some mocked."² Celsus and the Deists also rejected the doctrine. In the dialogue entitled *Octavius*, one of the earliest defences of Christianity, written by Marcus Minucius Felix, a Roman lawyer, who lived about A.D. 230, Caecilius, who personates a heathen, reproaches the Christians with belief in the resurrection of the dead. "They tell us", he says, "that they shall be reproduced after death and the ashes of the funeral pile; and believe their own lies, so that you might think that they had already revived. O two-fold madness! to denounce destruction to the heaven and the stars, which we leave as we found them, but to promise eternity to themselves, when dead and extinguished!"³ Gregory of Nyssa, in his "*De Anima et Resurrectione*", marshals a series of arguments against the possibility of resurrection, which, it may be assumed, were used in his day. Swedenborgians, or the New Jerusalem Church, view man as possessing two bodies,

¹ 2 Timothy ii. 16-18.

² Acts xvii. 32.

³ *English Translation in Ante-Nicene Fathers Series*, Vol. IV.

an external or physical one, and an internal, psychical, or ethereal one. At death the physical one is cast off, and laid in the grave and has no part in the resurrection. It returns to the dust from which it had been taken, and remains there for ever more. The psychical one, on the other hand, continues to be permanently inhabited by the soul, and this is regarded as the only resurrection. This Swedenborgian view has lately been reasserted by a well-known Scottish minister. "When Paul", he writes, "used the figure of speech of the trumpet being sounded, and the dead being raised, he never imagined that there would be found in the West men so dull in mind, and so lacking in imagination, as to think that a real trumpet would be heard throughout the whole world, and that the material bodies would emerge from the graves, and from the depths of the sea. At death we are done with the physical body. . . . When death comes, the physical body at once begins to disintegrate, but the psychical body continues to function in the etheric world as before."¹ The doctrine of the Resurrection, as might be expected, does not find favour with Rationalists. It is not a matter that Rationalism can accept, because of the measure of the supernatural, or the miraculous, that is involved in it. Pantheistic theology, which makes no adequate recognition of separate personality such as is required in connection with the doctrine of the Resurrection, can give it no countenance. It is a matter also that is almost unknown among the heathen. A few passages have been discovered which may seem to discountenance universal ignorance of it among them. There are common to men glimmerings of light as to the immortality of the soul, but such in regard to the reviving of the dead body are wanting. What exceptions there may appear to be may be due to tradition, or some rays of the light of Revelation that may have penetrated the general darkness. Resurrection is a fact that unassisted reason could not have discovered. There is much, indeed, connected with the matter that might seem to warrant unbelief in it on the part of men who are not in possession of Revelation. It has, however, to be kept in view that it is not the bodies of the dead that alone come into consideration. Account must also be taken of the bodies of those who will be alive on the earth at the last day. There may be vast multitudes of such. Of them it is written: "Behold I show you a mystery, we shall not all

¹ *Death Cannot Sever.* By the Rev. Norman MacLean, D.D., Edinburgh.

sleep, but we shall all be changed".¹ Reformed Church testimony is: "At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die but shall be changed; and all the dead shall be raised up with the self-same bodies, and none other, though with different qualities, which shall be united to their souls for ever".²

VIII

THE EMPTY TOMB

Various references in the New Testament connect Christ's body with Joseph's tomb. It is definitely stated that after death it was laid to rest there. "After this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him leave. He came, therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus, therefore, because of the Jews' Preparation Day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand."³

After the burial what were considered to be effective measures were taken to prevent the sepulchre being broken into and the body removed. "Now the next day, that followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night, and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch; go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."⁴ Further references bear upon the removal of the stone from the entrance to the sepulchre, the

¹ 1 Corinthians xv. 51.

² *The Westminster Confession of Faith.*

³ John xix. 38-42.

⁴ Matthew xxvii. 62-66.

finding of the tomb empty, the grave clothes laid aside in the tomb, the women, who had gone to the grave to anoint the body, failing to have their purpose accomplished through their not finding the body, the tomb being empty, and a declaration made by an angel that the emptiness was due to Christ's having risen from the dead as He said He would do. The empty tomb, accordingly, is a factor in the case that is of vast importance. His short occupancy of the grave amply testified to the fulfilment of the declaration that had previously been made by Himself: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas; for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."¹ How, however, is the empty tomb to be viewed? A recent writer² conclusively argues that our Lord could not have revived within the tomb and come out. The body could not have been removed by the Jews. Their interest lay in its remaining in the grave. Further, if they had been in possession of it, they had only to produce it, and thereby give undeniable evidence against the Resurrection. The disciples could not have removed it. They did not believe in it, even when it was reported to them by the women. Neither could the soldiers have removed it. The danger in their case was too great to be undertaken. The only possible explanation was that the Lord had actually risen from the dead.

Of His power over death Christ gave evidence, during the years of His Humiliation on earth, in the three cases of restoration by Him to life that are recorded in the New Testament. These, however, are cases of mere restoration to their previous state. They differ from Resurrection cases, in that the latter are of persons raised to die no more, whereas to the others mortality still adhered. There are, however, the saints, who rose out of their graves on the day of Christ's Resurrection, and who entered Jerusalem, and were seen of many. These appear to be different from the three cases of reanimation just referred to.³ Who these saints were, and how many there were of them, we are not informed. We are disposed, however, to conclude that they are real Resurrection cases, in respect of their not returning to the

¹ Matthew xii. 39-40.

² B. F. C. Atkinson, *Is the Bible True?*

³ Matthew xxvii. 52.

state of the dead. There is at least nothing in Scripture requiring belief in their having returned to their graves. The probability appears rather to be that they were raised by the risen Christ, that they were companions of His during the forty days that intervened between His Resurrection and Ascension, and that they ascended with Him when He returned to the Father. If this was the case, what a marvellous sight must that have been that was presented on the mount of Ascension! With the Lord of Hosts, these risen ones, escorted by the Angel Chariots of God, would have entered the realms of glory as the first fruits, in respect of the glorified body, of Christ's victory over death and the grave. They would have afforded actual demonstration of that victory, and given assurance to those who were waiting beyond death for the redemption of their bodies, that their resurrection was sure. When men stand by the open grave, and see loved ones committed to the dust, their comfort comes from one direction only. They look across the span of time, and feel assured of another and brighter day, when the grave will be commanded to give up its dead. "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake."¹ "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise."² "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."³

Man was created a being consisting of both body and soul. Body and soul are evidently complementary parts in his case, and he stands forth as the being that he was meant to be. It is for such a person, and not for either of the two component parts that go to his formation, that immortality was destined. It is as man that he is a being that shall never cease to be. Christ, accordingly, in undertaking man's redemption, became man by taking to Himself a true body, as well as a rational soul. He thus assumed the material as well as the spiritual part of man, for otherwise He would not have been true man; and consequently would have failed to be a correct substitute for man. Also in His glorified life in heaven, "the body of His glory" remains a fact, and into His likeness, in respect of it, as well as that of the soul, His people are to be transformed. In His Exaltation He continues, in respect of His person, what He was in

¹ Daniel xii. 2.

² Isaiah xxvi. 19.

³ Psalm xvii. 15.

His Humiliation, man, as surely as God, an essential part of that manhood being His body. It is no less a real body, though it is glorified. It is in such that He appeared to Paul on the way to Damascus. It is in view of it that He is said to be "the First Born of every creature".¹ It is in Him as such also that it is said that, "in Him dwells all the fulness of Godhead bodily".² All that God is is here said to have in Him a bodily *σωματικὸς*, dwelling place. At His second coming also it is stated that every eye shall see Him. The dignity assigned in Scripture to the human body may not be overlooked. The words, "now the body is for the Lord", are very significant. Man at his creation was included among the works of the Creator which were declared by Him to be very good. On him, as constituted of soul and body, the Divine image was impressed. On the body also, under the Jewish economy was imprinted the sign of the Covenant in circumcision; and under the Gospel dispensation the body receives the sign and seal of the Covenant in Baptism; while even in the outward part of the Sacrament of the Supper the body participates. The body of the believer is thus represented, under the Divine arrangements, as an instrument consecrated to the service of God, through which the renewed will carries into execution the revealed Will of God. Independently of the body it would be impossible for the believer to be a doer of God's Word, and be a living epistle known and read of all men. Moved by the Spirit of Christ, the believer seeks to let his light so shine before men that they, seeing his good works, may glorify his Father who is in heaven; realizing at the same time that "it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure". The Apostle Paul, accordingly, could say as to the agency of his own Christian activity, "yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me".

Under the patriarchal and prophetic period of the Old Testament Church, there were two instances of miraculous exemption from the ordinary law of mortality, and a direct translation to heaven given instead. These cases must have served to strengthen the faith and hope of the people, and to indicate to them not only the certainty of an after-life, but also the nature of the glorious future that lay before the righteous in respect of the whole man, soul and body combined.

¹ Colossians i. 15.

² Colossians ii. 9.

IX

CHRIST'S APPEARANCES

The four Evangelists, and the other writers of the New Testament, bear testimony in favour of Christ's Resurrection. Further, no attempt was made in Apostolic times to disprove such testimony as they gave. Although the occurrence was so remarkable and unique as that nothing like it had ever before been seen or heard of, refutation of the testimony in its favour given by eyewitnesses was not even attempted. It is extremely improbable that this would have been the case had there been no reality in what was alleged to have occurred. The Sadducees especially, who professedly denied the fact of Resurrection, would not have been silent, for there was in the matter the greatest possible challenge to their teaching. Denial of the declared fact of our Lord's Resurrection was evidently not possible, or it would have been attempted. The evidence in its favour authenticated it so completely that the witnesses of it could not be shown to be in error. They who bore the testimony were not misled by illusions. They could not have been imposed on in the matter. Their risen Lord gave them convincing proof of the reality of His having risen. Men were at liberty to apply every appropriate test, such as His conversing with them, His eating in their presence, the marks of the nails in His hands and feet, and of the spear in His side, His ascending visibly before their eyes, and the testimony of the angel that He would again descend in manner like that in which He was seen to ascend. There must also have been given by Him such a bodily identification in His personal appearance with what it was before His Crucifixion, as put the matter of the reality of His Resurrection beyond the possibility of doubt on the part of the many witnesses who saw Him. It was his seeing Him that rendered the Apostle Paul an eyewitness of the Resurrection, and made him so zealous and uncompromising an advocate of it. He must have recognized in the Glorious Being who arrested him on the way to Damascus the One whom he had previously regarded as an imposter, whom he believed was dead and buried, and whose followers he was persecuting unto the death, being exceedingly mad against them. To him the matter of the Lord's Resurrection became one of absolute certainty. There was in it also a confirmation of the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself. In comforting Martha and

Mary, on the death of their brother, Lazarus, our Lord said, "thy brother shall rise again". Martha answered: "I know that he shall rise again in the Resurrection at the last day." Jesus said unto her: "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me, even though he were dead, yet shall he live." At another time Christ testified, saying: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me, and this is the Father's will which hath sent me that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

The witnesses were not few in number. The Apostle Paul says that "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the great part remain unto the present, but some are fallen asleep. After that He was seen of James; then of all the Apostles, and last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."³ These were reliable witnesses. They had no previous expectation of seeing alive again the Christ, whom they knew had been put to death on Calvary, and had been buried, "for as yet they knew not the Scriptures, that He must rise again from the dead".⁴ At least one of them had even to have the most tangible evidence of the reality of the occurrence before he was prepared to give it credence. These witnesses had most favourable opportunities for ascertaining the verity of the matter. Our Lord withheld no evidence from them that was fitted to bring conviction to their minds. He extended His appearances over a period of forty days, and went out and in among them, conversing with them, and giving convincing proof of His Resurrection power. "To whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."⁵

¹ John xi. 25.

² John vi. 37-40.

³ 1 Corinthians xv. 5-8.

⁴ John xx. 9.

⁵ Acts i. 3.

The renovation glory of the Resurrection is not to be confined to the Lord Jesus Christ and the saints. It is to extend to even the material universe. The present state of existence may not be viewed as something distinct and apart by itself. It may not be so separated from the future. It is but a part, and a very minor one, of everlasting existence, and ought to be viewed as such. Expressions such as "Whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's"¹; as likewise "die unto the Lord"²; and "sleep in Jesus"³, indicate that the intimate relationship, presently existing between believers and Christ, is not to come to an end with the termination of the present life. It is prolonged, into the eternal future. Believers are Christ's, having been bought by Him at a price, having also been effectually called by His Spirit into newness of life, and fitted by grace for His service. One writer⁴ in reference to the words: "In the Regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory", remarks⁵: the period alluded to will be characterized by a renewal of the entire material system, comprising the human body, by the deliverance of the creature "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God"⁶. The body of man has its own honourable and distinctive part to play in the rendering of that service that pertains to this present life. Hence the need there is for obedience being rendered to the Divine injunctions given *re* the preserved purity of the body. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."⁷ For its part, however, in the future service the change rendered necessary is so great as to be beyond our powers of comprehension. Of its existence, however, we are not left in doubt. It is said in regard to it: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."⁸ One able writer⁹ indicates how, by inferential reasoning, we may

¹ Romans xiv. 8.

² Romans xiv. 8.

³ 1 Thessalonians iv. 14.

⁴ Goulburn's *Bampton Lectures*, 1850.

⁵ Matthew xix. 28.

⁶ Romans viii. 21.

⁷ 1 Corinthians iii. 17.

⁸ 1 Corinthians xiii. 12.

⁹ Taylor, *Physical Theory of Another Life*.

be led to realize how immense the development must be that will take place in the case of all the faculties and powers of the risen saints, whereby they will be adapted to the future life and its enjoyment. They will resemble their risen Lord in such a matter in respect of kind, though they may not do so in measure.

The Resurrection life, however, is to be lived, not on the earth, but in the place prepared of Christ for them in the mansions of the "Father's House". The earth, laden with the curse for man's sin, will have seen the completion of that for the effecting of which it has been maintained in existence, and will give place then to new heavens and a new earth, which sin will never mar, but in which righteousness will ever dwell. A great churchman and theologian,¹ has left to us his graphic reference to the upheaval of such a time: "The universe may be shaken and broken down from its present arrangements, and thrown into such fitful agitations as that the whole of its existing framework shall fall to pieces; and with a heat so fervent as to melt its solid elements, may it be utterly dissolved. And thus may the earth again become without form and void, but without one particle of its substance going into annihilation. Then out of the ruins of this second chaos, may another heaven and another earth be made to arise."

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¹ The Rev. Thomas Chalmers, D.D., *Astronomical Discourses*.