

*THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.*

THE question of miracles is more than all else a question of experience. We know too little of the essence of God, of Nature, and of ourselves, to be able to say a miracle is or is not possible. Our business is to observe and study. If the supernatural does undeniably exhibit itself in history, we must submit. It is clear that whatever is real must be possible. "Nothing," Napoleon is reported to have said, "is so obstinate as a fact." Perhaps it would have been better to say, Nothing is so sacred as a fact. In the sum of ascertained facts we have the infallible inviolable code of science. It is by following the guidance of this principle that the study of Nature makes progress. The man of science cannot claim the right to create for himself a new Nature, according to his own fancies; he makes observations, he ascertains their truth, he repeats his experiments; then he works upon the materials thus obtained. Neither has Reason any right to create history anew, according to her own caprices; she also must in this province proceed by observation alone. To this end she makes use of those evidences which are to the study of history what experiments are to that of Nature. Just as the naturalist repeats, as many times as is necessary, the experiments which are to serve for the establishment, in the first place, of the facts, then

of the laws, so does the historian study his documents, and then pass them through the sieve of criticism. Their validity once recognized, he submits, and has no further care but to discover the *how* and the *why* of the facts that have been established. And the more strange and exceptional the fact is, the more sure will historical science be to discover in it one of her most important secrets.

It is this experimental method, now adopted by all sound minds, that we are about to apply to the cardinal fact of Christianity—the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. We do not ask at this moment, Is the supernatural possible? Is it credible that God should revive the dead? We do not wish to proceed by *a priori* assertions grounded purely on reason, which would be in the highest degree unscientific. We will rather inquire whether, according to the laws of historical criticism, the fact of the Resurrection may be regarded as ascertained. After that, it will be time to examine *how* and *why* such a fact was a possibility and a reality.

It will be seen that I identify the question of the Resurrection of Jesus with that of the supernatural in general. For, as a fact, when the subject under discussion is that of the miraculous cures worked by Jesus Christ, as they cannot be entirely denied, endeavours are made to explain them by certain exceptional influences—such as the magical effect exerted over the nerves of the sick by a personality of so exquisite a nature as that of the Rabbi of Nazareth. It is, we see at once, impossible to apply this solution to the cases of resurrection from the dead which were effected by Jesus Christ. The

dead have no nerves which can be made to vibrate. And how can his own resurrection be explained in this way? What personality, what human agent, intervened within that mystic tomb? Between God and that dead body nothing interposed. Thus, then, either the fact did not take place, or, if it did, we have here in truth a miracle properly so called—the supernatural in the real sense of that word; and St. Peter has every right to say, “*GOD has raised up Jesus.*” Here, then, we come to a point in history at which we can make a really decisive experiment respecting the supernatural.

1. We shall first establish the *fact* of the apostolic testimony. 2. We shall examine into the *validity* of that testimony. 3. We shall inquire into the *importance* of the Resurrection itself.

Indeed, if we should find that the religious worth of this fact could not be clearly demonstrated, we should ourselves be tempted, notwithstanding the solidity of the historical proof, to doubt the reality of the event. A fact which in that case would appear to be only an idle display of Divine power would, after all, remain under suspicion.

I. THE APOSTOLIC TESTIMONY.—Our investigation must have a point of departure, bearing the stamp of undeniable certainty, universally conceded by all. This starting-point does exist; it is the fact of the testimony borne by the apostles to the Resurrection of Jesus. We can ascertain for ourselves the reality of their testimony from the discourses of SS. Peter and Paul which are recorded in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. The Resurrection of Jesus occupies

the central place in all these discourses.<sup>1</sup> But it may be objected by some that these addresses are perhaps only literary compositions by the author of the book. We appeal, therefore, in the second place, to the fact of the foundation of the Church, and to the unanimous conviction of the Christians in the first ages of the Church. These two great historical facts leave no room to doubt that the proclamation of the Resurrection formed part of the testimony of the founders of the Church.

But, further, we are in possession of this apostolic testimony; we read it with our own eyes, we hear it, so to say, with our own ears. It lies before us in the writings which came from the very hands of the apostles, or of the men who laboured with them.

Amongst these written testimonies, the first we shall study—because it is the earliest in date, and because, by its very purport, it includes all the others—is that of St. Paul. In all his Epistles he speaks of the Resurrection of the Saviour. But there is one in which he addresses himself directly to this question, — the First to the Corinthians. The authenticity of this document has never been disputed by any one, nor is it disputed at the present time. Men are also agreed as to the time and place of its composition. It was at Ephesus, in the year 58 A.D., in the spring of that year, about twenty-five years after the death of our Lord.

The following is the passage relating to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ :—

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

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 24-32; iii. 15; iv. 10, &c.; xiii. 30; xvii. 31, &c.

that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures : and 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 greater part remain unto this 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. . . . Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preached, and so ye believed (1 Cor. xv. 3-12).

These words were written by St. Paul to meet an assertion made by certain members of the Corinthian Church, that when once our bodies had returned to dust, they could never again come forth from it. The soul alone, according to them, was to benefit by the salvation purchased for man by Jesus Christ. St. Paul answers, " Salvation is to be realized by the believer in the same manner in which it was accomplished in the person of Christ, our pattern. Now, the unanimous testimony of the apostles and of a great number of the brethren, to which I may add my own, proves that Jesus did live again after death—not in his soul only, but in his body too. This follows from each of the appearances of which we have an account from those who had witnessed it. The salvation which we expect includes then our bodies also. As we have borne, in our physical death, the image of the first Adam, so shall we also bear, through the resurrection of the body, that of the second Adam—of the Christ."

Such is the occasion which induces St. Paul to enumerate the several testimonies upon which the belief of the Church in the Resurrection of her Head rests. He mentions six of these.

(1) That of St. Peter, to whom Jesus shewed Himself alive on the very day of his Resurrection, in an appearance which is also indicated but not described

in our Gospels.<sup>1</sup> The inner details of this event were doubtless kept secret from all but the Lord and his disciple. (2) That of the Twelve, in the midst of whom Jesus appeared, as related in the Gospels, on the evening of the day of his Resurrection, when they were still in Jerusalem. (3) That of five hundred brethren, to whom Jesus shewed Himself at one time. St. Paul does not tell us where this appearance took place. Probably it was in Galilee, for it was from thence that Jesus had brought the whole multitude of his disciples to Jerusalem, and it was there that He had determined to reconstitute his flock which had been dispersed by his death. He had already expressed this intention on the eve of his Passion.<sup>2</sup> Immediately after his Resurrection He takes up again this plan, and invites the whole multitude of his disciples—including the women who formed part of his retinue—to meet together in Galilee, where He will appear once more in the midst of them.<sup>3</sup> It is probable, therefore, that the great and solemn reunion of which St. Paul here speaks was the result of this rendezvous fixed so long beforehand, and that it was under these circumstances that the Lord took leave of his Church as a whole. (4) The testimony of James, the brother of Jesus. During our Lord's ministry his own brothers did not recognize Him as the Messiah.<sup>4</sup> But after the Ascension we find them present with the disciples in the upper chamber, where they all together awaited the feast of Pentecost.<sup>5</sup> Some decisive event must

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiv. 34.                      <sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvii. 31, 32; Mark xiv. 27, 28.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxviii. 10; Mark xvi. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. iii. 21, 22; John vii. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Acts i. 14.

therefore have taken place, to put an end to their doubts and to silence their objections. This event, doubtless, was the appearance of Jesus to James, the oldest of his brothers. St. Paul had known Peter and James personally at Jerusalem, as we find from the Epistle to the Galatians, which is also an undisputed Epistle.<sup>1</sup> It was probably from the very lips of these men that he had gathered their testimony respecting the appearances which had been granted to them. (5) The testimony of all the apostles together. This certainly refers to the last appearance of Jesus on the day of the Ascension, which is described in Luke xxiv. 50-53, and which was the special farewell of Jesus to his apostles. (6) That of Paul himself; for he also had seen the risen Jesus, and it was this appearance which made him at one stroke a believer and an apostle.<sup>2</sup> No doubt it has been asked if it were possible for Jesus to appear in a bodily form to St. Paul after his departure from the earth. This question has been answered in the first place in the negative; then it has been supposed that a manifest reference is here made to a mere vision; lastly, endeavours have been made to extend this same explanation to all the appearances previously mentioned by the apostle.<sup>3</sup> We will examine this supposition later on. At present we will content ourselves with shewing that it is contrary to the idea in the mind of the apostle, for his object in this passage is to prove the *bodily* resurrection of believers by that of Jesus. It is clear therefore that

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 18, 19.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 1: "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"

<sup>3</sup> Strauss.

the appearance made to him would have borne no relation to the question in hand if he had regarded it as a mere vision. Paul declares, in the Epistle to the Colossians, that in Christ glorified “dwelleth *all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*”<sup>1</sup> Jesus, in glory, possesses therefore still, according to St. Paul, our human nature, and consequently is able to appear in a bodily form. Had not Jesus Himself predicted that, as the lightning shineth from one end of heaven to the other, so shall the Son of man appear visibly and simultaneously to all beholders, in his day? <sup>2</sup> “Whether it were I or they” (the apostles), St. Paul adds, after this enumeration, “so we preach; and if Jesus be not really risen, we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified *against God*, that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if the dead rise not.”<sup>3</sup> *Against God*, says the apostle, for to attribute to any one an act, whether good or bad, which he did not really do, is to testify against him. This expression shews us how distinctly conscious St. Paul was of the moral gravity of his situation and of that of the other apostles in standing forth as witnesses of the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus.

The whole of this passage positively demonstrates the fact that the apostles, and the whole multitude of the first believers, eye-witnesses of the ministry of Jesus, and, lastly, St. Paul, his persecutor before he became his apostle, testified to his Resurrection.

The written testimony of the other apostles is contained in our Gospel narratives. Our three first Gospels, according to the latest critical researches,

<sup>1</sup> Col. ii. 9.<sup>2</sup> Luke xvii. 24.<sup>3</sup> I Cor. xv. 11-15.



date from only a few years later than the Epistle of St. Paul which I have just quoted—from the year 60 A.D. to 80 A.D., according to Holtzmann, a free-thinking theologian of the Duchy of Baden.<sup>1</sup> That of St. Matthew mentions two appearances of the risen Jesus:—(1) That granted to the women at the sepulchre on the morning of the Resurrection; (2) that which took place *upon a mountain in Galilee where Jesus had appointed his disciples to meet Him*, and in which He commissioned the eleven apostles to evangelize the world and to baptize all nations.<sup>2</sup> This appearance is probably the same as that which took place in presence of the five hundred of whom St. Paul speaks. St. Matthew only mentions the eleven, because it was to them alone that the great Messianic mission was committed, on account of which the First Gospel records this scene.

St. Luke mentions four appearances:—(1) That to Peter, of which St. Paul speaks; (2) that to the two disciples going to Emmaus, a distance of two leagues from Jerusalem, on the afternoon of the day of the Resurrection: this is given in detail by Luke alone; (3) that to the Twelve on the evening of the day of the Resurrection—referred to by Paul; (4) that on the day of the Ascension—also mentioned by Paul.

St. Mark narrates three appearances: that which was granted to Mary Magdalen, then that to the two of Emmaus, and lastly that to the Twelve.

It is St. John who in this case, as in so many others, has transmitted to us the most abundant and exact data. His narrative contains four appearances:—

<sup>1</sup> *Die synoptischen Evangelien*, 1863.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxviii. 16–20.

(1) He describes with inimitable touch that granted to Mary Magdalen at the grave ; then he relates (2) that to the apostles in the absence of Thomas ; (3) that which took place eight days afterwards, in presence of Thomas ; (4) that granted to the seven disciples on the shore of the Lake of Gennesareth. These two last are recorded by St. John alone.

There are two characteristics to be noticed in these Gospel narratives—variation in the details and agreement in fundamentals. The fundamental point is the fact of the Resurrection ; upon this point the accounts are unanimous. The diversity in detail arises from that of the witnesses who instructed the writers, or who themselves edited these narratives. It proves that no previous understanding between them, no astute calculations, governed these compilations.

It is, moreover, very easy to recombine all these various appearances now distributed amongst the Gospels into one complete and connected picture. They are like the separate pieces of one of those puzzles which children amuse themselves by recomposing, fitting together again the scattered fragments. In this way, by combining all these narratives of the appearances, we perceive that the first work which Jesus did was that of consoling and encouraging. This was the first task before Him, for were not all these hearts trembling and distressed ? This was the work of the first day, and was accomplished successively in the cases of Mary Magdalen, of the two disciples at Emmaus, of Peter, and of the Twelve. "Peace be unto you!"—all is summed up in these words. After that, Jesus labours at bringing back into the flock the refractory sheep which seemed

about to be lost—Thomas. This is the work of the succeeding days. The flock once more restored to its integrity, He sends them to Galilee, where He had before appointed them to meet Him. There, upon the mountain which He had pointed out, He renews his commission to the apostles; He explains it to them, and adds the promise of his help. Lastly, He brings them back to Jerusalem, where they are to wait for his spiritual return at Pentecost; and in a final appearance He bids them farewell.

Looking back at the whole, we easily see how wonderfully the separate pieces of the picture fit into one another. But the narratives themselves do not give the smallest hint of this interconnection of the parts, or of this natural gradation.

What a proof is here of the perfect fidelity as well as intrinsic truth of these primitive records!

Lastly, let us notice, in passing, the testimony of St. Peter in his First Epistle (Chap. i. 3): "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead;" and that of the Apostle John in the Apocalypse (Chap. i. 18): "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hades and of death."<sup>1</sup>

We have thus far then ourselves ascertained the existence of a sevenfold testimony to the Resurrection:—That of the three Evangelists, Matthew, Mark,

<sup>1</sup> How can Strauss have the audacity to dispute the fact that this passage relates to the Resurrection of Jesus? What would be the meaning of those words, "*and was dead*," if the question here was only of the continuance of the life of Jesus spiritually?

and Luke; that of the three principal Apostles, Peter, John, and Paul; lastly, that of the entire primitive Church, in the persons of those five hundred of whom St. Paul speaks, and of whom the greater part were still living at the time when he quoted them without fear as his witnesses.

We are now about to study the validity of this testimony, or, in other words, to see if it would be possible to explain this fact of the testimony borne to the Resurrection by the apostles, under the hypothesis that this event did not really take place.

F. CODET.

### THE BOOK OF JOB.

#### III.—THE FIRST COLLOQUY. (CHAPTERS IV.—XIV.)

##### (6.) JOB TO ZOPHAR. (CHAPTERS XII.—XIV.)

EACH of the three Friends has now spoken, and the First Colloquy, the Conference of the First Day, perhaps, draws to a close. In the harangue which closes it, Job does not simply answer the last speaker, who indeed has added little to the argument of his predecessors; but rather sets himself to reply on the whole discussion, so far as it had yet gone. He *does* reply to Zophar—rebuking the insolence of his tone, yet admitting the unsearchableness of the Divine Wisdom on which Zophar had laid so much stress, nay, affirming that it was far more inexplicable than even Zophar conceived it to be; and challenging that very-encounter with God, that open encounter with his almighty Antagonist in public court, with which Zophar had sought to appal and silence him: but the whole course of the Contro-