

deavours to return to Him and to lift our weak wayward wills into accord with his righteous will? Are they rapturous outbursts of grateful song, in which we summon our soul and all that is within us to a loving and happy contemplation of his goodness, and celebrate his praise in forms and hues borrowed from a kindled imagination and an adoring heart? Or are they only, or mainly, an importunate solicitation that we may take our own way, choose our own gifts, and be enriched with temporal and spiritual blessings at our own will? Are they even less and worse than this—a cold and formal recitation of our wants and desires, fresh with no play of thought, bright with no expectation of good; or even a perpetual and querulous lamentation over our infirmities and needs, and God's reluctance to supply our needs and strengthen our hearts?

Surely it is *we* who are to blame if the world misconceives the very idea of prayer! Only as we heartily adopt the broad biblical conception and act upon it, only as we form a more adequate, a more vivid and spiritual, conception of it, and enter into a sincere and cordial fellowship with our Father in heaven, shall we put the efficacy of prayer to a decisive test, and find it abundantly verified.

CARPUS.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

III.—THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FACT.

BUT what is there in the fact of the Resurrection which is so precious to faith? Does this miracle differ essentially from the many others recorded in our sacred writings?

On two occasions, Jesus being asked to confirm by some miraculous sign his claim to the dignity of Messiah, referred those who thus importuned Him to the miracle of his resurrection, and added that "no other sign should be given to them." His other miracles, indeed, are of a casual nature; but this belongs to the essence of the Divine plan, and forms part of the work of man's salvation. It is one of the great redeeming acts. It has, therefore, a character of necessity, and that is the reason why Jesus could announce it beforehand as the true sign. He could not have spoken thus of any of his every-day miracles.

In order to bring out more clearly this special value of the fact of the Resurrection, I will first make two preliminary observations. (1) If the Resurrection be true, it cannot be an isolated fact; this Divine act must be a constituent part of a complete Divine plan. Without any relation to that which precedes and to that which is to follow it, such a miracle would be even more strange than it is in its own nature. It is by the place which it occupies in a homogeneous whole, that, without ceasing to be supernatural, it becomes conformable to reason and to nature. It drops by this means its abrupt character. It is a mountain summit in the middle of the chain of which it forms one of the cardinal points. This chain it will not be difficult for us to discover, if we try to do so. It consists of the sacred history—both that of the Old Testament, which converges in all its lines upon the great fact on which we are now reflecting; and that of the New, of which it is the great source and spring. Just as from the existence of the

fruit we can deduce that of the tree which produced it, and account for that which will follow, so from the Divine event of the Resurrection we can demonstrate the Divine character of the *Jewish* history which culminates in it, and explain the Divine renewal which from that moment takes place in the condition of humanity. (2) No more can the miracle of the Resurrection, if it be true, have been an isolated fact, than the place which it occupies in the Divine history, of which it is a part, can have been a *secondary* one. Through the fact of the absence of all human instrumentality, it takes its place on a level with the most marvellous of all miracles—that of the Creation. This analogy reaches to the essential nature of these two events; to call into life and to recall to life—are not these both acts of the same nature? Creation is the victory of Omnipotence over nothingness; the Resurrection is the victory of the same Omnipotence over death, which is the fact most resembling nothingness of any known to us. Just in the same way, then, as the Creation is the primordial event in the history of the universe, must the resurrection of Jesus Christ be its central fact. It is either that or nothing.

Let us now endeavour to penetrate into the essence of the fact. And, in the first place, it is right to listen on this subject to those whose mission it was to proclaim the Resurrection, and to present this Divine work as an object of faith to mankind. Now the apostolic commentary upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ is thus briefly formulated by the greatest of the founders of the gospel: "Christ was delivered on account of our offences, and was raised again on

account of our justification.”¹ Just, St. Paul would say, as all the offences of mankind have contributed and led up to *one* unique fact—the death of Christ, so has the remission of these offences, obtained by this death, led up to another fact of cardinal importance but of an opposite kind—the resurrection of Christ.

This is not the place to unfold the nature of that work of expiation of which we are reminded in the former proposition of this apostolic saying, or to set forth the wisdom, the holiness, the moral sublimity, nay, even the justice of it. We must be satisfied with emphasizing the point that, according to the first part of the verse, it would seem that three facts appear to the Apostle to be inseparable: mankind sins, God condemns, Christ dies. This Christ, the Son of Man, and as such the normal representative of the race, dies under the condemnation which smites Him.

In the same manner, according to the second proposition in the verse, parallel with the first, three other facts are quite as clearly connected in St. Paul’s view: Christ expiates, God absolves, Christ rises again.

A glance from God has a Divine power in it—that of killing when it is a look of condemnation, that of calling back to life when it is changed into a look of absolution. The filial heart of Jesus felt in all its fulness this twofold power, which fails of its effects upon our hearts of stone. Under the look of

¹ Rom. iv. 25. We translate *on account of* and not *for*, because the meaning of this latter proposition is equivocal. It is impossible to misunderstand the Greek, if one does but keep close to the expressions used by the Apostle.

condemnation which smote his whole family, the heart of this Son, become our brother, broke; and in breaking morally, it ceased to beat physically. But when restoration was once accomplished, this same filial heart became the primary object of the look of absolution which was now brought to bear upon us; it recovered life, force, warmth; and being thus divinely reanimated, it communicated its life to the body itself, in which it had used to beat, and raised it into a new condition.

You perceive how deep-seated is the solidarity, how close the inter-connection which unites the destiny of each man with that of the Son of Man—that living centre of our race. I sin; Christ dies. I am absolved; Christ, who is mine, revives. Jesus made of my condemnation a cause of death to Himself; my pardon, my forgiveness, was made life to Him. Thus (while keeping fully in mind the distance which separates between these two moral facts, which I have not the least wish to forget) Paul could say to the Thessalonians, as if bearing within him the bowels of the love of Christ, “For now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord.”¹

You have a friend who is more to you than a brother; he is to you a second self. He pledged himself to act as your security. You find yourself insolvent, and the law lays hold of him. If he succeeds in setting you free, does he not find that he is at the same time freed himself? He was in debt only for your debt; and when that has once been paid, how should he not be free once more? And when he issues from the prison into which his

¹ 1 Thess. iii. 8.

love had cast him, is it not your acquittal which has brought him out? Thus it is out of the absolution granted to us that the resurrection of Christ springs. The decree which brings Him out of the grave is no other than that which frees us from condemnation and proclaims our absolution; and when, with the eye of faith, we meet Jesus on our way, risen and glorified, we may say: I have been looking upon my own salvation. As it was my sin which put Him to death, so has it been my acquittal which has restored Him to life.

Do you wish to become really acquainted with yourself, and to know all that you are for good or evil? It is in this Jesus, dead and risen again, that you must contemplate yourself and study yourself. In Him crucified, forsaken by God, expiring, you see yourself as you are *in reality*—a malefactor, condemned, accursed. In Him risen again, radiant, victorious, you behold yourself as you are *by right*—favoured, blessed, adopted by God.

What, then, does the resurrection of Jesus Christ leave for us to do? One thing and one only: to make ourselves in fact, that which we are by right; to substitute this new condition—peaceful, holy, glorious, for that which was before—bitter, painful, ignoble; in a word, to become in ourselves what we already are in Jesus. That is the miracle wrought by faith; a second miracle, worthy of the first, and which, by completing that of the Resurrection, sets the seal to our individual salvation.

This relation of solidarity between Christ and us, which He could only establish on his side, by his love, our faith completes by establishing it on our

side. Faith is, as it were, the counterpart of Divine grace—the response of man to the gracious overtures of God. She takes possession of the forgiveness which has been obtained for her and offered to her, by laying hold of it as presented to her in its visible pledge—Jesus risen. By her, each man in turn comes to merge himself in the death of the Son of Man, by a mystic fellowship of suffering and condemnation, to come forth with Him, justified in Him, made alive again as He is.¹

Do not then look upon faith as a mere opinion adopted by the imagination, a whim of the intellect, standing in no relation to our moral life, whether anterior or subsequent. Faith has upon our spiritual life the same effect which is produced upon the life of a tree by the deep incision through which we insert into it the graft—that new source of life which is to change the nature of its juices and the properties of its sap. Thus does faith open our hearts to the holiest and the most powerful of principles. By its means Jesus is enabled to establish Himself within us, and to labour thenceforth at substituting Himself for our condemned and perverse selves. How should not such a principle, once admitted into the soul, and so long as access is open to it, have power to transform our whole life from sap to fruits?

Just as a fresh breeze from the east is all that is needed to sweep away the masses of clouds which have gathered over our heads, and to restore to us, after a rainy season, the blue sky and the life-giving rays of the sun, so does the apparition of the risen Jesus, and, in Him, of our completed justification,

¹ Rom. vi. 3-5.

suffice to disperse the thick clouds which interposed themselves between our hearts and God, and which cast a dark shadow over our life. It allows the face of a Father, just and holy, but reconciled and full of tenderness, to shine forth upon us once more; and this look of God is the ray of sunshine which vivifies all our inner life. By it we become ourselves associated with the heavenly life of the risen Saviour.

One who has not had the faith of the gospel for his starting-point, but has approached it by degrees, under the sway of a moral logic more powerful than that of Aristotle, Professor Keim, has said these words: "It is upon an empty tomb that the Christian Church is founded." Yes; empty, not only of the body which had there been laid to rest, but of our curse also, which at the same time had descended into it; emptied of that power of sin which found its support in that curse; emptied of the power of death itself which had triumphed by means of that curse, and by the Divine rights of the law which there proclaimed, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law."¹ Emptied of that which constitutes our death, this sepulchre is filled instead with that which is the cause of life to us—the invisible presence of Jesus risen; filled with the glory of the Father which broke forth in that sanctuary into which no eye of man penetrated, and where, in a conflict—the mystery of which is known to God only—death was swallowed up of life. "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."²

Let us often visit this spot. To do so it is not necessary to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem; the

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 56.

² Ibid. xv. 57.

entrance to the Holy Sepulchre is in the depths of each of our hearts. Let us go down into it in order to find there the pledges of our adoption, the fragments of that record of debt which bore witness against us, now torn up by the hand of our heavenly Creditor; the fragments also of the sceptre of death, which has been shattered by the foot of our Deliverer; and finally, the helmet of hope that has been laid there by his hand, in order that every believer may enter and put it upon his own head. Oh, how comforting is such a visit to the overwhelmed soul! It returns from thence, as John came out of the sepulchre after seeing the linen clothes and the napkin wrapped together in a place by itself. "He *saw* and *believed*," he tells us himself, summing up in those few words the deepest experience of his life. Let us *believe* the testimony of those who have seen, a testimony which authenticates itself to our hearts as holy and therefore true. Then we, too, shall *see* also; we shall behold, even here below, the glory of God.¹

F. GODET.

THE GOSPEL IN THE EPISTLES.

I believe in the Holy Catholick Church, and in one Baptism for the remission of sins.

CLOSELY interwoven with the history of Christ's earthly life must of necessity be the history of those institutions which He founded among his disciples, and left through them as an inheritance to all who

¹ Professor Godet has treated the subject of the evidences of the Resurrection of Christ, and summed up his arguments respecting it, more completely, in some respects, with reference to modern objections; in an *excursus* appended to the forthcoming edition of his Commentary on St. John's Gospel.—TR.