

the closest association with physical powers of the universe. Nay, in Psalm civ. 4 they are actually identified with winds (not as A.V. *spirits*) and flaming fire—the very form of their existence is unstable, in correspondence with the changing necessities of their ministrations. This connection between the angels and cosmical powers must probably be taken as giving additional point to the subsequent citation from Psalm cii. In their appearance and ministerial functions the angels are connected with created things, which pass away; whereas the eternal sovereignty of Christ is unchangeable as the person of Him who is superior to all these mutations, inasmuch as the mutable things of creation are his own handiwork. Finally, in Verses 13, 14 we have a fresh statement of the contrast. While the Son sits at God's right hand in kingly dignity, the angels are continually sent forth (mark the present participle) on ministerial functions; yea, in the service of the heirs of salvation, who, therefore, are no longer in any sense subject to them and their dispensation.

W. ROBERTSON SMITH.

THE CORINTHIAN SADDUCEES.

I CORINTHIANS XV.

A VERY good canon for the exposition of the argumentative parts of Holy Scripture is, Never to be satisfied until we ourselves feel the force of the sacred writer's reasoning, that is, until he compels us, if we accept his premises, to accept also his conclusions. For, unless the arguments of the Bible convince us as arguments, we cannot be sure that we understand the sense they were designed to convey.

To feel the logical force of the arguments in St. Paul's famous Chapter on the resurrection is by no means easy.

For this Chapter is a refutation of a very definite assertion by some members of the church at Corinth; and, like all refutations, can be appreciated only so far as we place ourselves in the mental position of those against whom it was originally directed. And, unfortunately, this position can now be determined only by indications scattered through St. Paul's attack upon it, and by uncertain inference from casual allusions elsewhere to opinions which seem to have been somewhat similar. In spite, however, of the scantiness of our sources of information, and pursuing the only safe method of elucidating refutations, I shall attempt to reconstruct in this paper the opinions of those who in the early Corinthian church denied the resurrection of the dead; and in another paper I shall endeavour to reproduce the arguments with which the Apostle meets this denial.

The words, *How say some among you*, imply that the opinion in question was held by only a part, by a small part we may hope, of the church members at Corinth; but that by them it was openly asserted. These men were, however, sufficiently numerous, or their error sufficiently serious, to demand a long and earnest refutation in a letter written to the whole church.

There is no hint that this matter, like the question of marriage in Chapter vii., was mentioned in the letter from the Corinthian church to St. Paul. Indeed, the surprise with which in Verse 12 he introduces it, in contrast to the matter of fact style of Chapter vii. 1, Chapter viii. 1, but similar to Chapter v. 1, Chapter vi. 1, suggests that it came to him by hearsay. It would seem that the Christians at Corinth, like many others in similar circumstances in all ages, had sought information about matters of secondary importance, while overlooking altogether evils, such as the toleration by the church of the gross offender of Chapter v. 1 and of the erroneous teaching here refuted, which were eating away the life of the community.

The conspicuous and exact repetition of the words which St. Paul puts into the lips of his opponents, which we may render literally *resurrection of dead men there is not*, and the precisely equivalent phrase, *dead men are not raised*, also repeated verbatim, suggest that we have here the exact words used at Corinth. If so, the error before us took the form not of doubt or of mere dissatisfaction with the Apostle's positive teaching, but of direct and confident counter assertion. These men were by no means agnostics, as are so many now. They categorically asserted the contradictory of that which in this Chapter St. Paul maintained.

As the words stand before us they deny in the widest sense the possibility of the uprising into bodily life of those from whose bodies life has once departed. The compass of this denial is widened by the absence of the article from each of the nouns. For the article might have limited the denial to some special class of dead men, or to resurrection in some definite form present to the speaker's mind. The words before us declare, without any limitation whatever, that for those of whom it may be said that they are dead there is no rising from the couch of death.

That these words were actually used at Corinth in this wide sense, or at least in a sense almost as wide as this, is made quite certain by St. Paul's argument. For we notice that although he summons a long line of witnesses to the fact that Christ is risen, and carefully develops the proof of this afforded by his own testimony taken in connection with the spiritual effect of this testimony upon his readers, he does not find it needful to give any proof whatever that the resurrection of Christ overturns the Corinthian denial of the general resurrection. This he assumes without hesitation in Verses 13 and 16. And that he does so implies that the denial was meant in the wide sense indicated above. For, otherwise, it would not be disproved by the simple fact that Christ has risen.

This will be the more evident if we remember that many objections to the general resurrection are not valid against the resurrection of Christ. For instance : the dissolution of the body and the reappearance of its constituents in other material forms present a most serious objection to the general resurrection as understood by some ; but have no bearing upon the case of Him whose "flesh did not see corruption." And to all men the resurrection of those who have been dead thousands of years is more difficult to conceive than that of Him who lay in the grave less than two days. In other words, objections might be brought against the resurrection of dead men generally, which would not be met by the case of Christ. And that St. Paul quotes the case of Christ as conclusive against his opponents proves that their objection did not rest on the dissolution of the bodies of the dead, but upon the supposed absolute impossibility of a departed spirit returning to take up its abode, or at least its permanent abode, in a material body.

That the denial at Corinth of the resurrection involved a denial that Christ had risen, and this so clearly that St. Paul even in argument contents himself with merely asserting that the one denial implies the other, suggests at once that this could not have altogether escaped the notice of the deniers themselves. Certainly, if the great fact that Christ has risen had taken firm hold of them, and had moulded as it ought to have done their entire thought and life, they would have detected its incompatibility with this denial : for we are ever ready to trace to its logical consequence that which we fully believe. Therefore, since in a very special way the resurrection of Christ was the ground of the faith of the early Christians, we infer surely that these men were Christians in little more than name : and of this inference we shall find in Verse 34 a strong confirmation. At the same time, that St. Paul does not charge them with denying expressly that Christ had risen seems to imply that

they had not ventured openly to do this; although they must or might have seen that it was necessarily involved in their own bold denial.

That, after discussing the fact of the resurrection, St. Paul goes on in Verse 35 to discuss at length the manner of it, suggests that, at least by some at Corinth, the fact was denied because the manner was to them inconceivable. Indeed, the charge of folly in Verse 36 implies clearly that the foregoing question had been actually put, though not necessarily by all who denied the resurrection. Evidently some persons foolishly assumed, as men have done in all ages, that resurrection of the dead implies that the very bodies laid in the grave will again come to life. And, since the present body is unfit for endless life, they probably denied the resurrection altogether. This is suggested also by the argument that the resurrection body will differ from that laid in the grave as much as the rising blade of wheat differs from the seed cast into the earth or as the bright celestial bodies above our heads differ from the earthly objects around us, and by the assertion that, whether or not we die, our bodies cannot pass unchanged into the kingdom of God. This explanation is, I must admit, in part inconsistent with the hope, implied in Verse 19, of surviving to the coming of Christ and thus passing without death into endless blessedness. And this inconsistency I cannot altogether remove. It is, however, well to remember that all error is more or less inconsistent with itself. And we need not suppose that all the opinions combated in this Chapter were held by the same persons. Of those who denied the resurrection, it is quite possible that Verses 18, 19, 29-34 were directed against some who professed to expect to pass without essential change into glory at Christ's coming and who based all their hopes on surviving to his day; and that Verses 35-49 were a reply to others who thought that human bodies were altogether unfit for endless

blessedness. Against both these classes the protest of Verses 50-57 would come with full force. The inconsistency alluded to above is therefore no sufficient reason for casting aside my suggestion about Verses 35-49, and still less my suggestions about the earlier part of the Chapter.

It is worthy of notice that although St. Paul's set purpose is to disprove the assertion *that there is no resurrection of dead men* he makes use of several arguments which have no direct bearing on the resurrection of the body, but simply prove that there is a life beyond death. Such are the arguments in Verses 18, 19, 29, 30-32. By using these arguments he tacitly assumes that the latter of these doctrines implies the former. But this is by no means self-evident. Indeed Plato,¹ and Cicero,² taught expressly and emphatically that the soul will survive the body and endure for ever; but neither of them seems to have had any conception of resurrection of the body, *i.e.* of the soul reclothing itself in an abiding material form. They looked upon the body as being merely a prison of the soul, and death as release from it. It is true that Plato taught that sometimes departed spirits return to earth to animate other bodies. But this he regarded³ as but a lengthening of the period of bondage, and held that at death the purer spirits were free for ever from material clothing. In their experience the bondage of the soul to the body was so complete and so hurtful that their highest hope was simply for the soul's rescue from this bondage. Of a spiritual body, *i.e.* one over which the spirit will have complete control and which will be a perfect organ for the self-manifestation of the spirit, they had no conception. So complete a victory of spirit over matter was utterly beyond their thoughts. In absolute contrast to these views, St. Paul, when proving the resurrection of the dead, simply proves that there is a life

¹ Especially in the *Phædo*.

² Tusculan Disputations, Book I.

³ *Phædo*, p. 81, etc.

beyond death. This implies that both he and his opponents held that these doctrines stood or fell together; otherwise some of his arguments had no force. And we cannot doubt that he understood the opinions of his adversaries. We therefore infer that the Christians at Corinth who denied the resurrection meant by that denial to deny also that there is a life beyond death.

We notice in passing that the inseparable connection, assumed both by the Apostle and the Corinthian sceptics is implied in the very creation of man; for it is evident that his body is an essential part of his nature. We cannot therefore conceive that he will attain the goal of his being until his body is rescued from the foe who once triumphed over both body and spirit, and is made a sharer of the glory promised to the spirit within.

With the opinions asserted at Corinth and with St. Paul's refutation of them we have an interesting coincidence in the teaching of the Jewish Sadducees and our Lord's refutation of it. They taught, as we learn from Mark xii. 18 and Luke xx. 27, *that there is no resurrection*; and against them Christ brings an argument (Luke xx. 38) which, like some of St. Paul's arguments, proves clearly that the departed servants of God still live, but has no direct bearing upon the resurrection of the dead. A connecting link between this argument and the Sadducean denial of the resurrection is found in Acts xxiii. 8, where we learn that the Sadducees denied not only the resurrection of the body but the existence of a disembodied *spirit* and of higher orders of beings. Yet in the passages quoted above from the Gospels we have mention only of a denial of the resurrection. It is therefore evident that this denial, like that of the Gentile Sadducees at Corinth, was meant to deny also a life beyond death.

Yet these Corinthians were professed Christians, as we learn from the words *some among you*; just as the

Sadducees were professed followers of Moses. And from Verse 19 we infer with certainty that they professed to cherish a *hope in Christ*. But their hope was dependent on continuance of the present bodily life. Now all hope in Christ implies belief of at least some part of the good-tidings about Christ; and we may conceive that they held not a little of the gospel preached by St. Paul. They believed probably that God accepts as righteous and receives into his family all who believe the Gospel, and gives the Holy Spirit to be in them the source of a life like that of Christ. And they were waiting professedly,¹ for the return of Christ to earth to found an endless Kingdom of which they were already citizens. At the same time they had no expectation of life beyond death. Consequently, their hopes of glory hung upon their survival to the day of Christ. They were *only men who in this life had hope in Christ*.

To these views an interesting comparison and contrast is found in 1 Thessalonians iv. 13-18. These Verses cannot be accepted as full proof that the Sadducean opinions held by some church members at Corinth were shared by the Thessalonican Christians: for all men console the sorrowing by truths well known to and admitted by them. At the same time St. Paul's matter of fact teaching suggests that the instruction he gives was needed, and that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead had not taken its proper place in their thoughts. And this is just what we might expect in a church from which, within a month of its founding, its founder was rudely and suddenly torn. We may well conceive that at Thessalonica St. Paul had plainly taught the judgment to come, righteousness by faith, the adoption of believers into the family of God, and the gift to them of the Holy Spirit; but had said very little about the death of the people of God. This omission would be the more easy because, as a child of Pharisees,² the

¹ 1 Cor. i. 7.

² Acts xxiii. 6.

Apostle had been taught from childhood that the faithful departed still live in the presence of God; to him this doctrine was not distinctively Christian. We notice however that, in spite of this defect of their faith,¹ these Thessalonican Christians are most highly commended. In many things they form a marked contrast to the men whose opinions we are now discussing. But their deficiency in this one point helps us to understand the opinions which in the Chapter before us St. Paul so severely condemns.

The warnings of Verses 33, 34, imply that the denial of the resurrection was beginning to produce at Corinth immoral results, results inconsistent not only with belief in a future life but with belief in the coming of Christ. For, apart from all thought of a life beyond death, the prospect of Christ's return to judge the world is sufficient reason, and in 1 Thessalonians v. 1-11 is appealed to as sufficient reason, for vigilance and sobriety. This confirms our former inference that the Corinthian Sadducees were Christians in little more than name. Indeed, the Apostle intimates that they were ignorant of God and a disgrace to the church. In contrast to them the sorrowful doubters at Thessalonica were sincere followers of Christ, who found it difficult to believe that those separated from them by death would share the glory for which the living were waiting. For them their brother in Christ has only words of sympathy and love. The Corinthian unbelievers were bold deniers, careless of the terrible logical consequences of their denial; men whose loose morals betrayed the worthlessness of their faith.

What were the opinions about a future life prevalent at Corinth among the classes of men from whom the earliest Christian converts were drawn, it is impossible now to determine with certainty. We have already seen that St. Paul's argument implies that the teaching of Plato and of

¹ 1 Thess. iii. 10.

Cicero about a future disembodied state of blessedness had no place among those to whom he wrote. And it is not difficult to conceive that this teaching was understood and accepted only by the educated few. Indeed, of the people of his own day Plato says as much in the *Phædo* (p. 70a): "Touching the soul men have much unbelief, fearing lest when it has left the body it is no longer anywhere, but that in the day in which the man dies it corrupts and perishes, and as soon as it is removed from the body it goes forth scattered like breath or smoke, and goes away flying in all directions and is no longer anywhere." Or they may have shared the thought which gave rise to, and would be perpetuated by, Achilles' lament¹ that he would be a serf of a man of small means on earth rather than reign over all the dead.

Let us now suppose that to men who from childhood had been accustomed to think that at death the soul ceased to be or continued only in a worthless shadow-life, or who thought very little about the whole matter, St. Paul had preached that God accepts as righteous and adopts to be his children all who believe the Gospel, and gives to them the Holy Spirit to be in them the source of a new life; that Christ will return to earth to establish an endless Kingdom of infinite glory, and, though perhaps less conspicuously, that at his coming the dead will rise clothed in material bodies to share this endless Kingdom. Let us also suppose that by many men of different dispositions this teaching was accepted. In their thought life beyond death would be indissolubly linked with resurrection of the body. For they had heard of the one doctrine only in connection with the other. And perhaps some of them had observed that, in view of the creation of the race, the one doctrine involves the other. Supposing all this, it is not difficult to conceive that in some the impression made by the Gospel was

¹ *Odyssey* xi. 489.

gradually weakened by the upgrowth of deeply rooted love of the things of the present life ; and that in these, even while they were professing to wait for the coming and Kingdom of Christ, there sprang up first doubt and then disbelief that the iron hand of death could be made to release its prey, and bodies once laid in the grave or reduced to ashes could participate in endless life. Such disbelief would assume the form of denial of the resurrection ; for it would be prompted by the difficulty of conceiving the process of resurrection. But it would practically involve a denial of life beyond death ; for this had been put before them only in connection with the uprising of the body.

Such is my reconstruction of the creed of those whom I venture to call the Corinthian Sadducees. In another paper I shall endeavour to support this reconstruction by an exposition of the arguments with which St. Paul refutes it. If I can shew, as I hope to shew, that against these opinions every argument of the Apostle bears with full force, I shall do something to prove that, at least in its main features, my reconstruction is correct. And among these arguments I shall pay special attention to that contained in the allusion to those who were *baptized for the dead*.

JOSEPH AGAR BEET.

THE HISTORICAL CHRIST OF ST. PAUL.

INTRODUCTION.

THE design we have here in view is an attempt to discover to what extent the facts of the Four Gospels are confirmed by the statements of the four undoubted Pauline Epistles. The field of research is by no means new. It was first suggested to us by Dr. Stanley Leathes in his Boyle Lecture for 1869, and it has since formed the subject of many essays