

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

(1 COR. XV. 35-41.)

I.

AT the point at which we propose, in a short series of papers, to consider the great argument of St. Paul, in the fifteenth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians, on the resurrection of the dead, the fact that there will be a resurrection of believers had been already proved. The apostle had established it, in the portion of the chapter preceding ver. 35, by the resurrection of Christ. That Christ was risen was admitted without hesitation by those to whom he wrote. Their whole faith rested upon the conviction, not only that the Lord in whom they believed had died, but on the further truth, that He had been raised again, "according to the Scriptures" (ver. 4). In so far therefore as St. Paul had dwelt upon the fact, and even upon the remarkable chain of evidence by which it was established, he had done this, not so much for the purpose of proving it, as for the purpose of reinvigorating his readers' faith, and of bringing the resurrection of Jesus home to them with liveliness and power. Hence also the degree to which he had enlarged upon the disastrous consequences that would flow to Christian faith and life in general, if Christ had not been raised.

The Corinthian Christians are now supposed to be thoroughly alive to this. No further argument upon that particular point was necessary. It followed that the universal proposition maintained at Corinth, that no one who had died would rise again, was false. One made in all

points like unto His brethren had died and risen from the dead, and His brethren *might* in like manner rise. It followed not less certainly that they *would* rise. The bond of union between Christ and His people was such, that whatever befell Him must also befall them. By the arrangements of that Almighty Being who giveth no account of any of His matters, but whose dealings with His creatures were always infinitely wise and good, they had been so connected with their first parent Adam that they had inherited from him a sinful and mortal nature. It was incontestable that it was so. By a similar Divine arrangement they had inherited from the Christ the principle of spiritual and everlasting life; and again it was incontestable that this, not less than the former, was the case. As then they had become what the one was, so they had been made partakers of what the Other was. In the coming forth of Jesus from the grave they beheld only the resurrection of the First-born, to be followed in due time by that of the other members of His family; the dedication of the first sheaf of harvest in the unending and joyful service of the Father, to be followed by a similar dedication of the other sheaves of the harvest-field.

The argument was closed, but difficulties still remained which might weaken its force. Questions might still be asked, answers to which inquiring spirits might fairly expect. The apostle felt that he could not neglect this aspect of the case. He must meet the difficulties, he must answer the questions; and he is to do this by an appeal to the analogy of nature. Analogy cannot indeed demonstrate, and in the passage before us it is not intended to demonstrate, that the thing reasoned about is true. Analogy can only meet a difficulty, although it may do this in an impressive and powerful way. When it is shown that the laws of the spiritual world have laws closely corresponding to them in the natural world, a strong presumption in their

favour is instantly created. The God of grace must be the same as the God of providence, for God is one; and, although we may not understand the processes by which He works, we are prepared to believe that whatever law is met with in the latter may be expected in the former sphere. The principle lies at the bottom of our Lord's method of instruction by parable. There is unity in the whole system of the universe, and everything that illustrates and brings out that unity is probably true. Thus it is then that St. Paul proceeds to answer the difficulties suggested to him.

At ver. 35 an objector is introduced to us: "But some one will say, How are the dead raised? and with what manner of body do they come?" Have we here two questions, or one expressed in two different forms? When we turn to the answer contained in the following verses, the probability is that we have two: the first referring to the *process* of the resurrection; the second, to its *result*: the first concerned with the difficulty of imagining that a resurrection should take place at all; the second, with the difficulty of thinking how, if it is to take place, it can do so in a manner adapted to a heavenly world and existence there. That the latter thought is involved in the second question appears not only from the general strain of the reply, but from the singular use of the word "come." St. Paul does not say "come out of their graves" or "come into the world again." He says simply "come." "With what manner of body do they come?" The coming of Christ, with whom His saints come, is in his mind; and it was not inappropriate to transfer that thought to the mind of an objector who, notwithstanding his present difficulties, believed in the second coming of his Lord.

The two objections taken together are most natural; nor are they less natural now than they were then. We stand by the bedside of a Christian friend who has just uttered

his last word or breathed his last sigh. Still more, we stand by the open grave, and see the body deposited in its last resting-place, till it is for ever hidden from our sight by the earth that has been filled in to cover it. We think of its helplessness, and of its insensibility to the sorrow of the surrounding mourners. Nay, we remember even that already the process of corruption has begun, and that but a short time will pass before dust will have returned to dust, no member of the cherished form, no feature of the loved face, discernible; and, when we think of all this, it is in no spirit of scepticism or scorn, but in one of deep perplexity and anxiety, that we ask, "How are the dead raised up? and with what manner of body do they come?" Satisfy us only upon that point, we exclaim, and many of our doubts will vanish. Let us see that it may be so, let us obtain some intelligent conception of the manner in which it will take place, and we shall ask no more. The chamber of death has awakened many to a purer and a nobler life. But is it not equally true, that the sight of the dead has instilled, and even now instils, into many a mind the suspicion that a resurrection is an impossibility, and that the Christianity of which it is a central part is no more than a beautiful but sad delusion? Therefore may we well try to understand what the apostle says upon the point.

To the first question before us the answer is given in ver. 36: "Foolish one" (certainly not "thou fool" of the A.V., hardly even "thou foolish one" of the R.V.), "that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened, except it die." Every one allows that there is such a thing in nature as a quickening. We see it in the seeds which, when sown under proper conditions, spring up in new forms of life. But something precedes this change, and what is that? The apostle answers, Death. But what again is death? We can be at no loss for a reply; for modern science has established with a certainty upon which it is impossible to

cast a doubt, that in no case is the death of a body the destruction of the particles of which it had been previously composed. Nature knows nothing of annihilation. Whatever has been continues to be. It may be changed into other shapes, it may pass into other things; but it is never wholly blotted out from that state of *being* into which it has once been introduced. Death therefore is not destruction: it is simply disorganization, the dissolution of the bond which held the old particles together in their old sphere of existence, that they may enter upon a new one. Not only so. An entirely new form of life cannot be obtained, except through the disorganization of the old. As our Lord Himself said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit" (John xii. 24). We take a corn of wheat into our hands. It is dry and hard, a small body which will keep for many years without the slightest apparent change; and which, so long as it is thus kept, will produce nothing, although it may waste by a process of decay so slow as to be imperceptible. On the other hand, we drop it into the soil, and thus supply it with the conditions taught us by experience to be necessary for the result we are desirous to secure. Disorganization immediately begins; and, lo! instead of remaining any longer what it was, a change sets in. The husk of the seed is broken by some internal power. A little shoot issues forth in the dark bosom of the earth. That shoot parts into two directions, in one of which it goes downward, a thin, white, pulpy fibre, while in the other it pushes upward, seeks the free air of heaven, and appears as a green stalk, sending forth leaves, lengthening the stalk, and crowning it with the ear of corn. We call this a passing through death, says the apostle. But call it by any name you please. What you really have is disorganization, decay, corruption, such a mingling of the particles of the seed with those of the

surrounding soil that you cannot separate them. Yet out of that disorganization, decay, corruption, and mingling of particles, there comes a new form of life and loveliness.

It is no doubt true that the seed was never what we call dead. There was always a principle of life in it. But who shall say that there is not a principle of life in the believer which the cold hand of death cannot chill, which the power of death can only set free and not destroy? In the infant of an hour old are there not undeveloped powers of nature? May there not be also in it undeveloped powers of grace which no physical analysis can discover, and no principles of physiology explain? And why may not he who has been united to a living Lord have in him some principle of life which is only emancipated when the last look is taken and the last sigh breathed?

One remark may be made in passing. Have we not here an answer to a difficulty felt by many minds upon this point? It is said that, whatever may be the case in the vegetable kingdom, the animal kingdom supplies us with no instance of death producing life. "The animal creation dies; but where, in all the mouldering ruins of that empire which life once animated, is there any sign or token of its restoration?"¹ The question is a sad one; and, when we hear it, what a world of wreckage and of ruin spreads out on every side before the eye! But the answer is, In the lower animal creation there is no principle of union with the living Lord, there is no principle of life which death cannot touch. In the case of the believer it is otherwise. Christ is risen, and is at the right hand of the Father. That is the proposition from which we start. But, if He is risen and at the right hand of the Father, then just as in the seed there is a principle of life at the moment when we commit it to the soil, so in the believer, at the moment of death, there is that principle of union with an exalted Lord

¹ Hanna, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, p. 114.

which is ready to spring up into quickened life when the poor frame in which it has been sheltered for a time returns to corruption.

Nor does it make any essential difference that in the one case the plant begins immediately to spring up, that in the other centuries after centuries may pass before the quickened frame is bestowed. The seed does not immediately sprout unless it is immediately sown; in other words, unless the conditions of God's plan are complied with. In the case of the believer the apostle has taught us in this very chapter that one of these conditions is "at His coming." "Each in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; then they that are Christ's, at His coming" (ver. 23). The time fixed in the Almighty's counsels for the rising of His saints has not yet arrived. They are not to take part in the contest which their Lord carries on by means of the saints still living in the flesh. They rest, they wait; and He can keep them safe till those conditions are supplied in the midst of which their principle of life shall be clothed with its appropriate frame.

The first question of ver. 35 has been answered; and at ver. 37 St. Paul proceeds to answer the second, "With what manner of body do they come?" It would appear from his reply that there are especially three difficulties in connexion with the matter which he feels it necessary to meet.

1. Is the body to be bestowed at the resurrection to be the same body that we possess now? It neither need nor will be so, is the apostle's answer. It need not be so; for, if we look around us upon the works of God, we behold everywhere tokens of the inexhaustible resources of His Almighty hand. There is no limitation to His power, no end to the variety in which all things, whether in heaven or earth, are made. Look for a moment at the vegetable world. How diversified are the trees, the shrubs, the

flowers, the vegetables, the grasses, the mosses of the field! There might have been a few forms only, yet there are forms without number and without end. Trace the ascending scale from the lowest to the highest; pause at any round of the ladder, and diverge into the side groups which bear the marks of belonging to the common type—everywhere something new, something different from what we have seen. Let us take even two specimens of the same species into our hand, and we shall find that they are not the same. Submit the smallest corresponding parts of these specimens to a close examination, and we shall find that a similar law holds. No two leaves of the same tree, no two blades of grass, are in every respect the same.

In the animal world the same thing is again perceptible. The various animals of the earth, of the air, and of the sea are all different from one another; and how infinite is the variety of their forms! From the huge elephant to the tiniest insect that lights upon a leaf, from the great eagle that soars far beyond the ken of human eye to the smallest bird that chirps upon the spray, from leviathan, the mightiest monster that plays in the great deep, down to the little minnow of the brook, every conceivable variety of figure and habit and life!

Nay, further. From the creatures of earth let us pass to the orbs of heaven, to sun and moon and stars; and, once more, they differ. Even to the imperfect vision of man they are distinguished from one another. The constituent elements of each group, the basis of the substance of each, may be the same; yet upon that one basis is built up the infinite variety that meets the eye upon every side. Each group differs from other groups, and within each group the individual objects also differ. The apostle indeed applies this thought only to the second group when he says that all are "flesh," yet "not the same flesh." Perhaps he did not know that the same remark might have been made as to

the first; and certainly he did not know, what is one of the latest discoveries of the spectroscope, that it might have been made as to the third. But we know that, in the fundamental molecules of their nature, each group is the same. Few and simple are the materials with which the Creator works; and yet with them, above below around us, we see forms so utterly inexhaustible in number that the mind is bewildered in the attempt to grasp them.

What then is the conclusion? There is no need that the body to be given us at the great day should be the same as it is now. He who has made all things has an infinite store of forms at His command.

If however our resurrection bodies need not be the same, neither will they be the same, as our present bodies. Had this not been the case St. Paul would at once have said so. His argument proceeds upon the supposition that they will be different, and is only intelligible if we accept that supposition as correct. Besides this, it is plainly implied in the contrast drawn by him between the "bare grain" and the future plant. He does not bring the former into comparison with the grains of the same kind with which the ear of corn is filled, but with the whole plant which springs from it; and to the most careless glance these are entirely unlike each other. Another comparison leading to the same conclusion is made by him in 2 Corinthians v. 1-3, when he contrasts "the earthly house of our tabernacle, to be dissolved," with the "building from God, the house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens"; when he speaks of our "habitation which is from heaven," and anticipates the hour at which, being clothed, we shall not be found *γυμνοί*, the *γυμνόν* of the present passage. The resurrection body will not then be the body we possess now. What degree of resemblance it may have to this last, how far it may be identified with it, in what respects it may in both stages still be *ours*, may receive further elucidation as

St. Paul proceeds. In the meantime we have only to do with the fact that it will not be the same. Again therefore we may stand by the bed of death or the open grave, and St. Paul will say to us, Do not perplex yourselves with the idea that the particles of that frame already returning to corruption will on the morning of the resurrection be reunited as you see them. What you see is only the outward husk of the principle of life contained in the seed. When the seed germinates it will spring up something wholly different to the outward eye.

2. The second difficulty which the apostle has to meet is this, Will the bodies to be bestowed at the resurrection be adapted to the new condition of things then introduced? When men heard of a body to be inhabited by the spirit in the heavenly world, they naturally thought of the body possessed by them in this world. They had neither heard of nor seen any other, and no thought of any other could occur to them. But, if so, was not this at variance with all that they otherwise knew of that better land, which was the goal of their hopes and expectations? Whatever else that land might be, it was surely a land of light and glory, of freedom from pain and sorrow and death. What harmony could there be between such a land and the present bodies of believers, wearied with toil, subject to disease, tormented with pains, liable at any moment to become the spoil of the last enemy of man? Yet what else was there to look for? Or, if we are after all persuaded that there will be a new body, what assurance have we that it will be suitable to the light and glory that we anticipate in the heavenly world? We see the answer to this difficulty in the fact that there runs through St. Paul's argument more than the thought of many forms already dwelt on. Not only is there an infinite variety of forms, but these are everywhere adapted to the scene in which they play their part. The plants and beasts of the earth,

the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, are not only different from each other, they are also, whatever the seed or germ from which they spring, in perfect harmony with their surroundings.

It is interesting to notice the manner in which this thought comes out, incidentally rather than directly, the unpremeditated expression of a state of habitual conviction, rather than of argument, deliberately sought for and used at the moment. The word "glory" is the key to it. Why say, "There is one *glory* of the sun, and another *glory* of the moon, and another *glory* of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in *glory*." Why not rather say, There is one nature of the sun, and another nature of the moon, and another nature of the stars; for one star differeth from another? Because it is the firmament of heaven in its splendour by day, it is the star-bespangled sky by night, of which St. Paul is thinking. That firmament, that sky, is a glorious spectacle, and each orb of light that shines in it is fitted to hang from such a glowing roof; each is a glory. True, St. Paul extends the thought to things of earth, to terrestrial as well as celestial bodies, but he may do so with propriety; for "the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another." Everywhere glory; yet not alone in the idea of the object itself, but in the idea of its adaptation to its surroundings, does the "glory" lie; and, once the mind takes hold of this idea, it sees glory everywhere. The correspondences of nature, in short, are so universal and so marked, as to assure us, that whatever body the Almighty gives His children at the coming of the Lord will be perfectly conformable to "the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

The second difficulty, like the first, has been met by a consideration of the analogies supplied by nature. These analogies show us that there is no need to fear that there cannot be a resurrection body adapted to a resurrection

life. He who gives to each beast and bird and fish and orb of heaven its suitableness to the sphere in which it is to move will not fail to see that the frame destined to be the eternal home of the redeemed spirit shall be suitable to its future heavenly abode.

3. A third difficulty has still to be met. For if, at the resurrection, the body is to be so different from what it is at present, will it be *our* body? Shall we when clothed with it be the same persons that we are now? Shall our personal identity be preserved? This question is perhaps not met so fully as the two already considered, because the answer is implied in the whole course of the argument. Yet it would seem to be distinctly in the apostle's mind, and his view upon the point comes out more particularly in ver. 38. Speaking there of the springing seed, he says, "But God giveth it a body even as it pleased Him, and to each seed a body of its own." According to the later reading, there is no article before *ἴδιον σῶμα*; and its absence makes a difference in the sense. *Τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα* would mean a body distinct from other bodies, just as the plant which springs from a grain of wheat is distinct from that which springs from a grain of barley. The emphasis would thus be laid on the fact already considered, that God has such an infinite variety of bodies at His command, that He can have no difficulty in providing His people at the resurrection with the bodies which they may require, and which shall be suitable to their new sphere of life. *Ἰδιον σῶμα*, without the article, means that God does not merely make, as it were, a draft upon universal matter in order to find a body for the risen believer, but that He gives him a body of which it can be said, "That is his own body: it corresponds to what *he* is"; and inasmuch as he rose the same man as he died (otherwise we need not speak of a resurrection), it corresponds to what he *was* when he lived on earth. Emphasis is thus laid upon a new fact. The plant which

springs from a grain of wheat is, not only distinct from that which springs from a grain of barley, it corresponds to what the grain of wheat in itself was. How, in what particulars, the correspondence is to be traced, the apostle does not say. He could not. Put a plant of wheat and one of barley along with a grain of wheat and one of barley into the hands of one wholly devoid of experience in these matters, and he certainly could not tell us which of the plants belonged to either grain. Even with experience he can only say, "The one plant belongs to the one grain, the other to the other." There is a correspondence between each pair, so that the grain of wheat could have given rise to no plant but the one, the grain of barley to no plant but the other. The grain of wheat has passed into the plant of wheat, the grain of barley into the plant of barley. Identity is preserved through all the changes which the grains have severally undergone.

What has now been said is still further brought out by the contrast of tenses used by the apostle in ver. 38, "God giveth" (*δίδωσιν*), the present, "even as it pleased Him" (*καθὼς ἠθέλησεν*), the definite historic past. Why not "God giveth even as it pleaseth Him"? Because then we should see no law regulating His procedure. He might still indeed bestow a body in such a way as to preserve the identity which is so important; but we might not see that, in doing so, He acted upon a fixed principle. We should be unable to resist the fear that He might choose at one moment one form of body for the plant rising from one kind of seed, and then again another form of body for the same plant. He does not however act thus. He acts upon a law which He has laid down for Himself. It is His eternal will that, through whatever changes the seed or the germ of life passes, there shall be something that connects its latest with its earliest stage.¹

¹ "The *καθὼς ἠθέλησεν*, pointing back to the time when at His bidding the

Nor does the doctrine of the transmutation of species affect the argument. It has been said that it weakens the analogy. "It does not destroy it altogether, because the transmutation, if it occurs at all, is brought about too slowly to be perceptible to the eye. We see only wheat springing from a grain of wheat; and this is enough for the apostle's purpose. The analogy is not the proof."¹ The remark appears to be only so far, not wholly, just. Whatever measure of apparent transmutation of species there may be, it is always within certain lines which fix down the final form of the transmutation to one particular beginning, and not another. The slowness of transmutation too, although in insect life it is often exceedingly rapid, is nothing to the purpose. It is the keeping of the same lines, so that there shall always in the last be something of the first, that is the apostle's point; and the principle of the Creator's government laid down in the words, "to each seed a body of its own," at once disposes, by analogy, of the difficulty with which he deals.

Changes indeed as great as those here referred to go on continually in the case of man, while we yet remain conscious that we are the same persons that we were. The observation need hardly be repeated, that the particles of our bodies undergo a complete change in the course of a comparatively small number of years. It is of more consequence to notice that the particles lost by us have already entered, or will certainly soon enter, into the bodies of other men whose individuality is as distinct as ours. Yet neither our identity nor that of these others is thereby

earth brought forth the 'herb yielding seed after his kind' (Gen. i. 12), and when each seed and the body into which it was to develop were bound by creative wisdom in enduring organic unity" (Ellicott *in loc.*). Comp. also Edwards *in loc.*: "The aorist denotes the first act of God's will determining the constitution of nature. The present expresses the necessary activity of God in the production of every single growth."

¹ Edwards *in loc.*

affected. The very thing which we are apt to think cannot happen has already happened. Transferences not less marvellous than those which are to take place at our death have already taken place with all of us, and are at this moment continually going on in that seething state of existence in which we are all giving and receiving with every breath of air we draw. Disorganization, in a certain sense death, has been long ere now at work in each of us. Others are living by means of what we were. We are living by means of what others were; and yet we live and they live our own independent lives. The memories and experiences of the past were not attached to the particles of our bodies that have disappeared or, in other words, died. They are ours and ours alone, and by no possibility can they become the property of others. If they—that is, if we—do not survive disorganization, death; if we do not survive identical in our personality with what we were, then something as real as the particles of matter has been annihilated; and such a conclusion science contradicts.

Thus then, up to this point, has St. Paul met by analogy the difficulties with which he deals. He has not indeed exhausted his subject. He has much that is positive as well as negative to say. But he has shown “the foolish one,” the unobservant student of nature who, consciously or unconsciously, draws his conclusions from what he believes of nature, that he has not studied nature with sufficient care. It may be perfectly true that nature affords no example of individual resurrection in the sense in which we speak of the resurrection of the believer,

“So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life.”

But St. Paul will not go to nature for his proof of that momentous fact. He will only show that there are processes and laws at work in her which do not contradict it,

which may even prepare us for it if it rest upon other sufficient grounds. In the meantime he only dispels the idea that our resurrection bodies either need or will be the same as our present bodies; that they cannot be bodies at all if they are adapted to a heavenly, not an earthly, world; and that the changes we are to undergo must forbid our being hereafter essentially the same personalities that we are now.

Having accomplished this, St. Paul is free—free from having to deal with doubts or to answer difficulties. He is free to spring exultant from the earth, and to expatiate in that glorious realm of hope which is associated with the thought of his risen and exalted Lord.

W. MILLIGAN.

*INTERNAL EVIDENCE FOR THE AUTHENTICITY
AND GENUINENESS OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.*

III.

NOR, when we travel beyond the city and its suburbs, does the writer's knowledge desert him. One instance must suffice; but it is, if I mistake not, so convincing, that it may well serve in place of many.

The country of the Samaritans lay between Judæa and Galilee, so that a person journeying from the one region to the other, unless he were prepared to make a detour, must necessarily pass through it. This was the case with our Lord and His apostles, as related in the fourth chapter. The high-road from Jerusalem passes through some very remarkable scenery. The mountain ridges of Ebal and Gerizim run parallel to each other from east to west, not many hundred feet apart, thus inclosing a narrow valley between them. Eastward this valley opens out into a