

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

X.

DOCTRINAL BEARINGS OF THE RESURRECTION.

IT will probably be evident from the preceding discussion that a movement is at present in process which aims at nothing less than the dissolution of Christianity, as that has hitherto been understood. It is not simply the details of the recorded life of Jesus that are questioned, but the whole conception of Christ's supernatural Person and work, as set forth in the Gospels and Epistles, which is challenged. If the Virgin Birth is rejected at one end of the history, and the bodily Resurrection at the other, not less are the miracles and supernatural claims that lie between. With this goes naturally on the part of many a hesitancy in admitting even Christ's moral perfection.¹ A sinless Personality would be a miracle in time, and miracles are excluded by the first principles of the new philosophy. Bolder spirits, taking, as they conceive, a wider outlook on the field of religion, and on the evolutionary advance of the race, would cut loose the progress of humanity from Christianity altogether.² It is an illusion to imagine that a tendency of this kind can be effectively met by any half-way, compromising attitude to the great supernatural facts on which Christianity rests. It is only to be met by the firm reassertion of the whole truth regarding the Christ of the New Testament Gospel—a Christ supernatural in

¹ This tendency is seen in various recent pronouncements. E.g., Mr. G. L. Dickinson, in the *Hibbert Journal* for April, 1908, asks: "How many men are really aware of any such personal relation to Jesus as the Christian religion presupposes? How many, if they told the honest truth, really hold Him to be even the ideal man?" (p. 522)

² The same writer rejects Christianity, and advocates a return to "mythology" (p. 509).

origin, nature, works, claims, mission, and destiny; the divine Son, incarnate for the salvation of the world, pure from sin, crucified and risen, ever-living to carry on to its consummation the work of the Kingdom He founded while on earth. None need really fear that the ground is about to be swept from beneath his feet with respect to this divine foundation by any skill of sceptics or revolutionary discoveries in knowledge. One notices in how strange ways the wheel of criticism itself comes round often to the affirmation of things it once denied. To take only one point: how often has the contrast between the Jesus of the Synoptics and the Pauline and Johannine Christ been emphasized? The contrast is, of course, still maintained, yet with the growing admission that the difference is at most one of *degree*, that the Jesus of the Synoptics is as truly a supernatural being as the Jesus of St. John. Bousset, e.g., states this frankly: "Already," he says, "the oldest Gospel is written from the standpoint of faith; already for Mark is Jesus not only the Messiah of the Jewish people, but the miraculous eternal Son of God, whose glory shone in this world. And it has been rightly emphasized, that in this respect, our first three Gospels are distinguished from the fourth only in degree. . . . For the faith of the community, which the oldest Evangelist already shares, Jesus is the miraculous Son of God, in whom men believe, whom men put wholly on the side of God."¹

In the history of such a Christ as the Gospels depict the Resurrection from the dead has its natural and necessary

¹ *Was wissen wir von Jesus?* pp. 54, 57. To explain these traits some scholars feel it necessary to postulate a revision of St. Mark's Gospel from a Johannine standpoint. Thus J. Weiss, in the *Dict. of Christ and the Gospels*, ii. p. 324: "For our own part we have been able to collect a mass of evidence in support of the theory that the text of Mark has been very thoroughly revised from the Johannine standpoint, that a host of Johannine characteristics were inserted into it at some period subsequent to its use by Matthew and Mark." There is no real proof of such revision.

place. To the first preachers of Christianity an indissoluble connexion subsisted between the Resurrection of Jesus and the Gospel they proclaimed. Remove that foundation, and, in St. Paul's judgment, their message was gone. "If Christ hath not been raised," he says, "then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain. . . . If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."¹ To "modern" thought, on the other hand, the Resurrection of Jesus, in any other sense, at least, than that of spiritual survival, has no essential importance for Christianity. The belief in a bodily Resurrection is rather an excrescence on Christianity, that can be dropped without affecting it in any vital way. Is this really so? It may aid faith if it can be shown that, so far from being a non-essential of Christianity, the Resurrection of Jesus is, as the Apostles believed, in the strictest sense, a *constitutive* part of the Christian Gospel.

1. In the older mode of treatment of the Resurrection, peculiar stress was laid upon its *evidential* value. It was the culminating proof of Christ's claim to be "a Teacher come from God,"² or, from a higher point of view, the crowning demonstration of His divine Sonship and Messiahship. It was also the supreme attestation of the fact of immortality. The angle of vision is now considerably changed, and it has rightly become more customary to view the Resurrection in the light of Christ's claims and manifested glory as the Son of God, than to regard the latter as deriving credibility from the former. But care must be taken that the element of truth in the older view is likewise conserved.

(1) With respect to the *divine Sonship*. It is doubtless the case that faith in the Resurrection is connected with, and in part depends on, the degree of faith in Jesus Himself.

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 14.

² John iii. 2.

It is the belief that Jesus is such an One as the Gospels represent Him to be—"holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners,"¹ divinely great in the prerogatives He claims as Son of God and Saviour of the world, yet in His submission to rejection and death at the hands of sinful men the perfect example of suffering obedience—which above all sustains the conviction that He, the Prince and Lord of life, cannot have succumbed to the power of death, and prepares the mind to receive the evidence that He actually *did* rise, as the Gospels declare.

This connexion of faith in the Resurrection with faith in Jesus, however, it must now be remarked, in no way deprives the Resurrection of Jesus of the apologetic or evidential value which justly belongs to it as a fact of the first moment, amply attested on its own account, in its bearings on the Lord's Person and claims. The attempt to set faith and historical evidence in opposition to each other, witnessed specially in the Ritschlian school, must to the general Christian intelligence, always fail. Since, as is above remarked, it is implied in Christ's whole claim that He, the Holy One, should not be holden of death²—not merely that He has a spiritual life with God—faith would be involved in insoluble contradictions if it could be shown that Christ has not risen, or, what comes to the same thing, that there is no historical evidence that He has risen. It may be, and is, involved in faith that He should rise from the dead, but this faith would not of itself be a sufficient ground for asserting that He had risen, if all historical evidence for the statement were wanting. Faith cherishes the just expectation that, if Christ has risen, there will be historical evidence for the fact; and were such evidence not forthcoming, it would be driven back upon itself in

¹ Heb. vii. 26.

² Acts ii. 24. This is further illustrated below.

questioning whether its confidence was not self-delusion.

In harmony with this view is the place which the Resurrection of Jesus holds in Scripture, and the stress there laid upon its historical attestation. "Declared," the Apostle says, "to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the Resurrection of the dead."¹ It is undeniable that, if historically real, the Resurrection of Jesus is a confirmation of His entire claim. No mind can believe in that transcendent fact, and in the exaltation that followed it, and continue to apply to Christ a mere humanitarian standard. The older Socinians attempted this, but the logic of the case proved too strong for them. Both assertions hold good: Christ's Personality and claims demand a Resurrection, and, conversely, the Resurrection is a retrospective attestation that Jesus was indeed the exalted and divinely-sent Person He claimed to be.

(2) Not very dissimilar is the position to be taken as to the evidential value of the Resurrection with regard to *immortality*. The relation here is, indeed, more vital than at first appears. The Christian hope, it will immediately be seen, is not merely that of an "immortality of the soul," nor is "eternal life" simply the indefinite prolongation of existence in a future state of being. Keeping, however, at present to the general question of the possibility and reality of a life beyond the grave, it is to be asked what bearing the Resurrection of Jesus has as evidence on this. None whatever, a writer like Professor Lake will reply, for the physical Resurrection is an incredibility, and can prove nothing. Apparitional manifestations are possible, but even these can only be admitted if, first of all, proof is given of the survival of the soul by the help of such phenomena as the Society for Psychical Research furnishes.²

¹ Rom. i. 4.

² *Res. of Jesus Christ*, pp. 245, 272-3.

Others base on the natural grounds for belief in a future life supplied by the constitution of the human soul, eked out, in the case of recent able writers, by appeal to the same class of psychical phenomena.¹ On a more spiritual plane, Herrmann and Harnack would argue that immortality is given as a "thought of faith" in the direct contemplation of Christ's life in God. A soul of such purity, elevation, and devotion to the Father as was Christ's cannot be thought of as extinguished in death.²

It seems evident that, if man is really a being destined for life hereafter, indications of this vast destiny cannot be absent from the make and constitution of his nature. Capacities will reveal themselves in him proportionate to the immortality that awaits him. It is not denied, therefore—at least here—that there are grounds in man's nature abundantly warranting a reasonable faith in a life beyond death, and awakening the craving for more light regarding that future state of being. History and literature, however, are witnesses how little these "natural intimations of immortality" can of themselves do to sustain an assured confidence in a future conscious existence, or to give comfort and hope at the thought of entrance into it. Browning may be styled a poet of immortality, but a long distance is traversed between the early optimism of a *Pauline*,³ and the soul-racking doubts of a *La Saisiaz*, when the question has to be faced and answered in the light of reason, "Does the soul survive the body? Is there God's self, no or yes?"⁴

¹ Cf. the interesting paper on Immortality by Sir Oliver Lodge in the *Hibbert Journal* for April, 1908. The persistence of the soul (which damage or destruction of the brain is held not to disprove) is argued from the "priority in essence of the spiritual to the material" and from such facts as telepathy (pp. 570 ff.), præter-normal psychology (pp. 572 ff.), automatism (pp. 574 ff.), subliminal faculty (pp. 547 ff.), genius (pp. 580 ff.), mental pathology (pp. 582 ff.).

² Cf. Herrmann, *Communion with God* (E. T.), pp. 221-2.

³ Cf. Browning, *Works*, i. pp. 27, 29. ⁴ *Works*, xiv. p. 168.

The spiritual faith that roots itself in Christ's unbroken communion with the Father has, indeed, an irrefragable basis. But is it adequate, if it does not advance to its own natural completion in belief in the Resurrection? For Christ's earthly history does not end as an optimistic faith would expect. Rather, it closes in seeming defeat and disaster. The forces of evil—the powers of dissolution that devour on every side—seem to have prevailed over Him also. Is this the last word? If so, how shall faith support itself? "We hoped that it was He which should redeem Israel."¹ Is not the darkness deeper than before when even He seems to go down in the struggle?

Will it be doubted that, as for the first disciples, so for myriads since, the Resurrection has dispelled these doubts, and given them an assurance which nothing can overthrow that death is conquered,² and that, because Jesus lives, they shall live also?³ Jesus, who came from God and went to God, has shed a flood of light into that unseen world which has vanquished its terrors, and made it the bright home of every spiritual and eternal hope. It is open to any one to reject this consolation, grounded in sure historical fact, or to prefer to it the starlight—if even such it can be named—of dubious psychical phenomena. But will it be denied that for those who, on what they judge the best of grounds, *believe* the Resurrection, there is opened up a "sure and certain hope" of immortality which nothing else in time can give?

2. The Resurrection is an evidential fact, and its importance in this relation is not to be minimized. But this, as a little consideration may show, after all, only touches the exterior of the subject. The core of the matter is not reached till it is perceived that the Resurrection of Jesus is not simply an external seal or evidential appendage to

¹ Luke xxiv. 21.

² 1 Cor. xv. 54-7.

³ John xiv. 19.

the Christian Gospel, but enters as a *constitutive element* into the very essence of that Gospel. Its denial or removal would be the mutilation of the Christian doctrine of Redemption, of which it is an integral part. An opposite view is that of Herrmann, who lays the whole stress on the impression produced by Christ's earthly life. Such a view has no means of incorporating the Resurrection into itself as a constitutive part of its Christianity. The Resurrection remains at most a deduction of faith without inner relation to salvation. It is apt to be felt, therefore, to be a superfluous appendage. In a full Scriptural presentation it is not so. It might almost be said to be a test of the adequacy of the view of Christ and His work taken by any school, whether it is able to take in the Resurrection of Christ as a constitutive part of it.

In New Testament Scripture, it will not be disputed that these two things are always taken together—the Death and the Resurrection of Christ—the one as essentially connected with, and completed in, the other. “It is Christ Jesus that died,” says St. Paul, “yea, rather, that was raised from the dead.”¹ “Who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification.”² “Who through Him,” says St. Peter, “are believers in God, which raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory; so that your faith and hope might be in God.”³ “The God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep, with the blood of the everlasting covenant,”⁴ we read in Hebrews. “I am the Living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore,”⁵ says the Lord in the Apocalypse.

What is the nature of this connexion? The answer to

¹ Rom. viii. 34.

² Rom. iv. 25.

³ 1 Pet. i. 21; cf. iii. 18–22.

⁴ Heb. xiii. 20.

⁵ Rev. i. 18.

this question turns on the manner in which the death of Christ itself is conceived, and on this point the teaching of the New Testament is again sufficiently explicit. The Cross is the decisive meeting-place between man's sin and God's grace. It is the point of reconciliation between man and God. *There* was accomplished—at least consummated—the great work of Atonement for human sin! Christ, as the Epistle to the Hebrews declares, “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”¹

It seems superfluous to quote passages in illustration of a truth of which the Apostolic writings are literally full. Jesus Himself laid stress on His death as a means of salvation to the world,² and, theories apart, every principal writer in the New Testament reiterates the idea in every form of expression which the vocabulary of Redemption can yield. But, if this is the true light in which the death of Jesus through and for the sin of man is to be conceived, how does the Resurrection of Jesus stand related to it? Is it an accident? Or is there not connexion of the most vital kind? Manifestly there is, and that in various respects.³

(1) The connexion at the outset is an essential one with *Christ's own work* as Redeemer. One need only follow here the familiar lines of Apostolic teaching, in which the Resurrection is represented under such aspects as the following:—

i. As the natural and necessary *completion* of the work of Redemption itself. Accepting the above interpretation of Christ's death, it seems evident that, if Christ died for men—in Atonement for their sins—it could not be that He should remain permanently in the state of death. That,

¹ Heb. ix. 26. ² Matt. xx. 28; xxvi. 26–28; John iii. 14–16, etc.

³ For an interesting treatment of this whole subject, cf. Milligan, *The Resurrection of Our Lord*, Lects. IV., V. and VI.

had it been possible, would have been the frustration of the very end of His dying, for if He remained Himself a prey to death, how could He redeem others? Jesus Himself seldom spoke of His death without coupling it with the prediction of His Resurrection.¹ St. Peter in Acts assumes it as self-evident that it was not possible that death should hold Him.² St. Paul constantly speaks of the Resurrection as the necessary sequel of the Crucifixion, and directly connects it with justification.³ The further point—that a complete Redemption of man includes the redemption of the body—is dwelt upon below.

ii. *As the Father's seal* on Christ's completed work, and public declaration of its *acceptance*. Had Christ remained a prey to death, where would have been the knowledge, the certainty, the assurance that full Atonement had indeed been made, that the Father had accepted that holy work on behalf of our sinful race, that the foundation of perfect reconciliation between God and man had indeed been laid? With the Resurrection a public demonstration was given, not only, as before, of Christ's divine Sonship and Messiahship, but of the Father's perfect satisfaction with, and full acceptance of the whole work of Christ as man's Saviour, but peculiarly His work as Atoner for sin, expressed in such words as "Christ died for the ungodly,"⁴ "Who His own self bare our sins in His body upon the tree."⁵ It is this which leads St. Paul to connect the assurance of justification—of forgiveness, of freedom from all condemnation—with faith in the Resurrection.⁶ The ground of acceptance was the obedience unto death upon the Cross, but it was the Resurrection which gave the joyful confidence that the work had accomplished its result.

¹ Matt. xvi. 21; xvii. 23; xx. 19; John x. 17, 18, etc.

² Acts ii. 24.

³ Rom. iv. 25.

⁴ Rom. v. 6.

⁵ 1 Pet. ii. 24.

⁶ Rom. iv. 24, 25; viii. 35; x. 9.

iii. As the entrance of Christ on a new life as the *risen and exalted Head* of His Church and *universal Lord*. The Resurrection of Jesus is everywhere viewed as the commencement of His Exaltation. Resurrection, Ascension, Exaltation to the throne of universal dominion go together as parts of the same transaction.¹ St. Paul, in Acts, connects the Resurrection with the words of the second Psalm, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee."² But the Resurrection, as the New Testament writers likewise testify, was a change of *state*—from the temporal to the eternal, from humiliation to glory, above all, from a condition which had to do with sin, and the taking away of sin, to one which is "apart from sin" (*χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας*),³ and is marked by the plenitude of spiritual power. This is a prevailing view in St. Paul and in the Epistle to the Hebrews. "The death that He died," says the former, "He died unto sin once: but the life that He liveth, He liveth unto God."⁴ "The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit."⁵ "When He had made purification of sins," says the latter, He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."⁶ "Having been made perfect, He became unto all them that obey Him the author of eternal salvation."⁷ "He, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made the footstool of His feet."⁸ A priest "after the power of an endless life."⁹ With His Exaltation is connected the gift of the Spirit. "Being

¹ Cf. e.g. Rom. viii. 34; Eph. i. 20–22; iii. 9, 10; Heb. iv. 14; x. 12; 1 Pet. iii. 21–2. On this ground Harnack argues against the separation of the Ascension from the Resurrection in the Creed (*Das Apost. Glaubensbekenntnis*, p. 25). But cf. Swete, *The Apostles' Creed*, pp. 64 ff.).

² Acts xiii. 33.

³ Heb. ix. 28.

⁴ Rom. vi. 10.

⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 45.

⁶ Heb. i. 3.

⁷ Heb. v. 9.

⁸ Heb. x. 12, 13.

⁹ Heb. vii. 16.

therefore," said St. Peter, "by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear."¹ On this view of Jesus as having died to sin, and risen in power to a new life with God, and having become the principle of spiritual quickening to His people, is based what is sometimes spoken of as St. Paul's "mystical" doctrine of the union of believers with Christ. Through faith, and symbolically in baptism, the Christian dies with Christ to sin—is thenceforth done with it as something put away and belonging to the past—and rises with Him in spiritual power to newness of life.² Christ lives in him by His Spirit.³ He is risen with Christ, and shares a life the spring of which is hid with Christ in God.⁴ Is it possible to review such testimonies without realizing how tremendous is the significance attached in Apostolic Christianity to this fact of the Resurrection?

(2) A further aspect of the doctrinal significance of the Resurrection is opened when it is observed that the Resurrection is not simply the completion of Christ's redemptive work, but, in one important particular, itself sheds light on the *nature* of that redemption. It does so inasmuch as it gives its due place to the *body* of man in the constitution of his total personality. Man is a compound being. The body as well as the soul enters into the complete conception of his nature. The redemption of the whole man, therefore, includes, as St. Paul phrases it, "the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body."⁵ From this point of view it may be said that the Resurrection was essential in that the redemption of man meant the redemption of

¹ Acts ii. 33. Cf. Christ's own promises, John xiv. 16, 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7.

² Rom. vi. 3-11.

³ Rom. viii. 9-11; Gal. i. 20.

⁴ Col. iii. 1-3.

⁵ Rom. viii. 23.

his whole personality, body and soul together. A mere *spiritual* survival of Christ—an “immortality of the soul” only—would not have been sufficient. This is a consideration which has its roots deep in the Scripture doctrine of man, and has important bearings on the subject of resurrection.

It was remarked earlier that the Christian doctrine of immortality is not simply that of a survival of death, and future state of existence of the *soul*. The spiritual part of man is indeed that in which his God-like qualities reveal themselves—in which he bears the stamp of the divine image. It is the seat of his rational, moral, self-conscious, personal life. It is that which proves him to be more than a being of nature—a transient bubble on the heaving sea of physical change, and proclaims his affinity with the Eternal. Idealism emphasizes this side of man's nature, and almost forgets that there is another equally real. For, if man is a spiritual existence, he appears not less as the crown of nature's development, and as bound by a thousand ties through a finely-adjusted bodily organization to the physical and animal world from which he has emerged. Naturalism, in turn, lays stress on the latter side of his being, and is tempted to ignore the former. It explains man as a product of physical forces, and treats immortality as a chimera. A true view of man's nature will embrace both sides. It will acknowledge the spiritual dignity of man, but will recognize that he is not, and was never intended to be, pure spirit; that he is likewise a denizen of the natural world endowed with corporeity, residing in, and acting through a body which is as truly a part of *himself* as life or soul itself is. He is, in short, the preordained link between two worlds—the natural and the spiritual; and has relation in his personality to both. He is not spirit simply, but incorporated spirit.

If this is a true view to take of man's nature—and it is held here to be the Biblical view,¹ it directly affects the ideas to be formed of death and immortality. Death, in the case of such a being, however it may be with the animal, can never be a merely natural event. Body and soul—integral elements in man's personality—cannot be sundered without mutilation and loss to the spiritual part. The dream that death is an emancipation of the spiritual essence from a body that imprisons and clogs it, and is in itself the entrance on a freer, larger life, belongs to the schools, not to Christianity. The disembodied state is never presented in Scripture—Old Testament or New—as other than one of incomplete being—of enfeebled life, diminished powers, restricted capacities of action. "Sheol," "Hades," is not the abode of true immortality. It follows that salvation from a state of sin which has brought man under the law of death must include deliverance from this incomplete condition. It must include deliverance from Sheol—"the redemption of the body." The Redeemer must be One who holds "the keys of death and of Hades."² It must embrace resurrection.

In a previous chapter it was hinted that this is probably the proper direction in which to look for the origin of the Biblical idea of resurrection, and of the form which the hope of immortality assumed in the Old Testament. The believing relation to God is felt to carry in it the pledge of deliverance even from Sheol, and of a restored and perfected life in God's presence. It is significant that Jesus quotes the declaration, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"³ in proof, not

¹ The subject is more fully treated by the present writer in his *Christian View of God and the World*, Lect. V., with Appendix, and *God's Image in Man*, Lect. VI.

² Rev. i. 18.

³ Matt. xxii. 23.

simply of the continued subsistence of the patriarchs in some state of being, but of the resurrection of the dead. The late Dr. A. B. Davidson unexceptionably states the point in the following words of his *Commentary on Job*. "The human spirit," he says, "is conscious of fellowship with God, and this fellowship, from the nature of God, is a thing imperishable, and, in spite of obscurations, it must yet be fully manifested by God. This principle, grasped with convulsive earnestness in the prospect of death, became the Hebrew doctrine of immortality. This doctrine was but the necessary corollary of religion. In this life the true relations of men to God were felt to be realized; and the Hebrew faith of immortality—never a belief in the mere existence of the soul after death, for the lowest superstition assumed this—was a faith that the dark and mysterious event of death would not interrupt the life of the person with God, enjoyed in this world. . . . The doctrine of immortality in the book [of Job] is the same as that of other parts of the Old Testament. Immortality is the corollary of religion. If there be religion—that is, if God be—there is immortality, not of the soul, but of the whole personal being of man (Ps. xvi. 9). This teaching of the whole Old Testament is expressed by our Lord with a surprising incisiveness in two sentences, 'I am the *God* of Abraham, God is not the God of the dead but the God of the *living*.'"¹

How essential the Resurrection of Jesus is as an integral part of a doctrine of Redemption will appear from such considerations without further comment.

(3) A last aspect, intimately connected with the foregoing, in which the doctrinal significance of the Resurrection is perceived, is in its relation to the *believer's own hope* of resurrection. This is the point of view from which the

¹ *Com. on Job*, Appendix, pp. 293-5.

Resurrection is treated in that great pæan of resurrection hope—the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. Christ's Resurrection is the ground and pledge of the resurrection of believers. If Christ has not risen, neither can they rise. The Christian dead have perished.¹ So completely does St. Paul bind up survival after death with the hope of resurrection that, in the denial of the latter, he apparently feels the ground to be taken from the former as well. Immortality, with him, for the Christian, is "incorruption"²—victory over death in body as in soul. In Christ's Resurrection, the assurance of that victory is given. "But now hath Christ been raised, the firstfruits of them that are asleep . . . Christ the firstfruits: then they that are Christ's, at His coming."³ This sheds again a broad, clear light on the nature of the Christian's hope of immortality. It is no mere futurity of existence—no mere ghostly persistence after death. It is an immortality of positive life, of holiness, of blessedness, of glory, of perfected likeness to Christ in body, soul and spirit.⁴ It is here that the thought of resurrection helps, for once more the Redemption of Christ is seen to be a redemption of the whole man—body and soul together.

The difficulties which present themselves on the subject of the resurrection of the body are, of course, manifold, and cannot be ignored. The difficulty is greater even than in the case of Jesus, for there Resurrection took place within three days, in a body which had not seen corruption. But the bodies of the generations of the Christian dead have utterly perished. How is resurrection possible for them? The Apostle does indeed speak of the bodies of those who are alive at the Parousia being "changed."⁵

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 18.

² 1 Cor. xv. 42, 52-4; 2 Tim. i. 10.

³ 1 Cor. xv. 20, 23.

⁴ Phil. iii. 20-21; cf. 1 John iii. 2.

⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 51-2; 1 Thess. iv. 15-18.

But this obviously leaves untouched the case of the vast majority who have died "in faith" in the interval.

The subject is full of mystery. The error lies in conceiving of the resurrection of the body of the Christian as necessarily the raising again of the very material form that was deposited in the grave. This, though the notion has been defended, loads the doctrine of the resurrection with a needless weight, and is not required by anything contained in Scripture. St. Paul, indeed, using the analogy of the seed-corn, says expressly: "Thou sowest not the body that shall be. . . . But God giveth it a body as it pleased Him."¹ There is here identity between the old self and the new even as regards the body. But it is not identity of the same material substance. In truth, as has often been pointed out, the identity of our bodies, even on earth, does not consist in sameness of material particles. The matter in our bodies is continually changing: in the course of a few years has entirely changed. The bond of identity is in something deeper, in the abiding organizing principle which serves as the thread of connexion amidst all changes. That endures, is not allowed to be destroyed at death; and stamps its individuality and all it inherits from the old body upon the new.

Questions innumerable doubtless may be asked which it is not possible to answer. How, for example, can a body so transformed as to be called "spiritual" yet retain the true character of a "body"? What place is there for "body" in a spiritual realm at all? No place, assuredly, for the body of "flesh" (*σάρξ*); but for a body (*σῶμα*) of another kind, there not only may be, but, if Jesus has passed into the heavens, there *is*, place. "There are also," the Apostle says, "celestial bodies, and bodies terres-

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 37-8.

trial.”¹ Such a body, adapted to celestial conditions, will be the resurrection body of the believer. Even already a hidden tie connects this future resurrection-body with the Resurrection life of the Redeemer. For the production of this body the possession of the Spirit of the Risen Lord is necessary. On the other hand, where that Spirit is present, the forces for the production of the resurrection-body are at work—conceivably the basis of it is being already laid within the body that now is. Hardly less seems to be the meaning of the Apostle’s words: “If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwelleth in you.”²

In conclusion, the Resurrection of Jesus stands fast as a fact, unaffected by the boastful waves of scepticism that ceaselessly through the ages beat themselves against it; retains its significance as a corner-stone in the edifice of human redemption; and holds within it the vastest hope for time and for eternity that humanity can ever know.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His great mercy, begat us again unto a living hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”³

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¹ 1 Cor. xv. 40. The remarks on this subject in Stewart and Tait’s book, *The Unseen Universe*, are worth consulting as coming from men of scientific eminence. Cf. pp. 26–7, but specially pp. 157–163.

² Rom. viii. 10, 11.

³ 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.