

A Query respecting the Translation of 1 Cor. XV. 42-44.

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THAT the New Testament gives no warrant for the doctrine of the resurrection of the *flesh*, is clear enough from the absence of any such expression in it, and from Paul's positive declaration in 1 Cor. xv. 50. It is not quite so clear whether it favors the doctrine of the resurrection of the *body*. Most of the passages bearing upon the subject are indecisive on the point in question; the *person* is commonly that which is said to be raised; as, *e.g.*, John vi. 54, "I will raise *him* up at the last day." In two instances, however, Paul seems to indicate his belief in a raising of the body — Rom. viii. 11 and Phil. iii. 21. In the first of these passages the prominent thought, as the context shows, is concerning ethical transformation; but the declaration that our "mortal bodies" are to be "quicken'd" seems to point to the final resurrection. In the second, where it is said that the body of our humiliation is to be "fashioned anew" and conformed to the body of Christ's glory, the reference to the resurrection is unmistakable. And the inference from it may seem to be warranted, if not necessary, that Paul held to the raising of the identical body which dies and is buried.

But these allusions to the topic are incidental. Whether they are to be taken in all the strictness of their apparent meaning, may well be made to depend on that portion of Paul's writings (1 Cor. xv.) in which he expressly treats the subject. But here, too, according to the English version (both A. V. and R. V.), the opinion that the earthly body is to be raised seems to be unequivocally expressed in xv. 42-44. The pronoun "it" in these verses, though there is no antecedent in the context to which it can be referred, yet, as the verses read in our Bible, can be understood of nothing else than the natural body; and the declaration, "it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body," is an explicit affirmation of the identity of the two bodies. Whether, however, Paul meant to make such an

affirmation is to be determined by the decision of the question whether verses 42-44 are correctly translated. That the translation is misleading may be easily shown by two considerations.

(1) At the outset of his reply to the caviler (verse 37) Paul insists that, as is illustrated by the case of the seed and the plant, what is buried in the ground is *not* the same as that which springs from it. Difference, rather than sameness, is what he emphasizes as regards the natural and the spiritual body. To be sure, some sort of *relation* between the two is assumed, just as there is a relation between the seed and the plant. The seed dies and decays and mingles with the earth. If any of it reappears in the plant, it is the infinitesimal impalpable vital germ. What is the analogous germ in the human being? According to Paul's conception, beyond a doubt, it is the human *soul*, which inhabits and animates "the earthly house of our tabernacle" here, but in the future life is to be invested with "a building from God" (2 Cor. v. 1). In other words, the identity between the present and the future body consists simply in the fact that it is the same personal spirit which dwells in the two. With this conception it is not strange that Paul should sometimes speak as if the resurrection involved a transformation of the earthly body. Accordingly in Phil. iii. 21, where probably, as in 1 Thess. iv. 17, reference is made to those who are alive at Christ's coming, and where the body is said to be "fashioned anew," the meaning is the same as in 1 Cor. xv. 51, where it is said, with reference to the same event, "*we* shall be changed."

(2) More decisive still is the fact that the pronoun "it" in verses 42-44 is entirely unwarranted. It is unintelligible unless it refers to the natural body; yet such an antecedent for it is not to be found without going back to verse 35; and even there the "body" spoken of is the future, not the present, one. The simple fact is that at first the Greek verb has *no* subject; and, as the preceding context supplies none, we must regard the subject as *indefinite*. It is true that Paul does certainly have the body in mind as he here speaks of sowing and raising; but what he *says* is simply *σπείρεται*, "there is sown"; and in verse 44, where *σῶμα* is expressed, no one would ever think, except for the biasing effect of the preceding translation, of rendering the clauses otherwise than: "there is sown a natural body, there is raised a spiritual body" — which gives us manifestly a different conception from that of the English version, which makes *σῶμα* a predicate nominative instead of the subject of the verb, and, by supplying the definite pronoun "it," involves a positive affirmation that the

same thing which is sown is afterwards raised. Paul makes here no such statement. He simply tells us that one kind of body is sown, and another kind is raised. In verses 42 and 43, where no subject is expressed, one may, if he please, supply $\sigma\hat{\omega}\mu\alpha$ from verse 44 ; but then the result simply is that we get the affirmation, "A body is sown in corruption ; a body is raised in incorruption." This in no way implies that the identical body which is sown is also raised. Thus we see that these three verses which, as given in the English Bible, explicitly affirm the raising of the buried body, really make no such affirmation at all. How they should be translated so as to preserve the indefiniteness of the original, is not so clear. If, like the Greek, Latin, German, and other languages, the English would allow us simply to use the passive verb without expressing any subject, the case would be simple. As it is, we must choose between reading "A body is sown . . . a body is raised," and, "There is a sowing . . . there is a raising."