

A STUDY IN I CORINTHIANS XV.¹

WHAT I have to say is a very imperfect attempt to express what I have learnt to hold. I do not wish to be in the least dogmatic : discussion will help us towards that which we all seek, the truth ; and sometimes it is better to put down, however crudely, what one's own thoughts are, than to condense or combine the opinions of those commentators whose works are in the hands of us all.

This doctrinal section, nearly at the close of St. Paul's letter, was not written, so far as appears, in answer to any question propounded in the letter brought to the Apostle by the Corinthian delegates, such as called forth the passages in chapters vii.-xiv. It was evoked most probably by some reports that had reached St. Paul about the doubts that were felt by some of the Corinthian Christians as to a general resurrection—doubts arising apparently from grossly materialistic views as to the nature of the resurrection body.

I. One great value of this section of the letter lies in the glimpse which it gives us of the customary course of teaching which the Apostle pursued in his missionary labours. The atoning death of Christ, followed by His Resurrection on the third day, formed the essential of his preaching, and this keynote of doctrine the Corinthian Christians all held. The belief in Christ's Resurrection was their firm faith and belief. And so the opening phrases, which are so often mistaken to be formal teaching and proofs of Christ's Resurrection, are merely reminders of the Creed which St. Paul had left with his converts—much as in our own preaching, we find it convenient and fitting some-

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times to quote articles from the Roman or Constantinopolitan Creed. He was not in the least concerned to prove to them that Christ had risen : that was unnecessary. His object was to convict these dubious ones of an absurd fallacy in their logic. They believed that Christ had risen, and yet maintained in opposition to this particular affirmative the general negative proposition that " a resurrection of dead men is impossible." They admitted the Resurrection of Christ, but objected to the principle of any resurrection at all. We may note in passing that modern views reverse the Corinthian error. There is little objection now to the principle of resurrection, but the actual resurrection of Jesus is sometimes denied. Both errors are the result of a false spiritualism which by an ironical nemesis develops into an unhappy materialism.

In a series of short terse dilemmas the Apostle points out the ridiculously miserable position into which their logical fallacy led them and left them. It robbed them of their foundation belief and of all the benefits of the salvation that Christ had brought, and it rendered nugatory such practices as " baptism for the dead," and cut at the root of all Christian self-sacrifice. How could they be so short-sighted as to allow the firstfruits but deny the harvest which the firstfruits implied? They forgot that everything, including death, was to be subdued by Christ ; and that in Him were included His followers, the members of His Body. Let them beware of being led astray, by those who denied a future resurrection, into a maze of corrupt or careless living. Doctrinal error would certainly issue in moral decline, while the greatest incentive to right conduct would be found in right belief.

This brief *résumé* covers, I think, the first 34 verses of the chapter. But a few points in the course of the argument need a little closer notice.

(a) Verses 3, 4, 5 have all the appearance of being a quotation from an early form of Creed—at least they shew us a Creed in embryo. He calls the articles “first or foundation principles.”

“Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures,
And was buried,

And was raised on the third day, according to the scriptures,

And He appeared to Kephias, and the Twelve. . . .”

But what “scriptures” are referred to in accordance with which Christ died for our sins and rose again the third day? Would that St. Luke had preserved for us the Lord’s own exegesis of the Sacred Writings when, “beginning from Moses, and from all the prophets, He interpreted (*διερμήνευσεν*) to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke xxiv. 27). We should have had the deepest of all “hermeneutics” for our enlightenment and guidance. Our Lord is apparently made to include “the third day” in Old Testament prophecy (*ib.* 46); and it is remarkable that so slight a detail should have been noted and have riveted itself into the Creeds. There is the passage in Hosea (vi. 2 “After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before him”); and even 2 Kings xx. 5 has been pressed into service, where Hezekiah was assured of his recovery, and that on the third day he should go up unto the house of the Lord. But I believe that the expression “two or three days” was merely a common formula for a very short time; much as the round figure 40, whether used of days or years, denoted a good length of time without preciseness of accurate measurement. And I am not sure that it is not better to restrict the phrase *κατὰ τὰς γραφάς* to the prediction and fact of the Resurrection only, and not extend it to the exact day of the event. Readers of

Athanasius will remember his three reasons for the particular interval of three days between the death and resurrection :—“ Not on the same day, lest the real death should be denied : not on the second day lest His incorruption should not be clearly manifested : and not later than the third day, lest the identity of His Body should be questioned, His disciples be kept too long in suspense, and the events forgotten ” (*de incarn. V. Dei*, 26).

(b) In verse 22 the phrase “ as in the Adam all die, so also in the Christ shall all be made alive ” very probably implies that St. Paul believed the Adam in the Creation stories in Genesis to be a historical personage ; but the ambiguous meaning of the Hebrew word, which may be either a proper or a common noun, leaves it open for us to understand “ the Adam ” as denoting man in his lower physical nature as one of the animal creation upon whom death passes, as distinct from the spiritual side of man’s personality which constitutes the higher supernatural aspect of man as a child of God. At any rate we all can feel that “ Adam,” literal or metaphorical, stands for the twin mystery of sin and death.

(c) Of the surrender of the Kingdom at “ the end ” by the Son to the Father, and of the reconciliation of this passage with the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary which are incorporated in our liturgical creed, and which caused much disquietude to Marcellus, I venture to remark only, that we know too little of the interrelations of the Three-in-One either to understand or to criticise. St. Paul’s ideal conception of $\acute{\omicron}$ θεός being πάντα ἐν πασί in the one far off divine event meets us more than once in his epistles. The “ subordination ” of the Son to the Father in their eternal absolute relation finds a place also in the Gospel—“ My Father is greater than I ” (John xiv. 28).

(d) I pass to the *cruz interpretum* of “ those who are

baptized for the dead" (verse 29). The point of the argument is obvious. The mere fact of Baptism presupposes a Resurrection. If the future resurrection of us all is a mistake then the sacrament is a farce. But if the point of the argument is clear and unequivocal, the exact custom referred to is most obscure. The early Greek Fathers understood it of ordinary Christian Baptism. Others, mostly Western and modern commentators, explain it either of vicarious Christian baptism of living proxies for deceased relatives, or of converts led to baptism out of affection for deceased Christian friends. That the idea of vicarious lustrations for the dead was not alien to Jewish thought is proved by the action of Judas Maccabaeus recorded in 2 Maccabees xii. 38 ff., where a sacrifice or sin-offering was offered on behalf of those who had died when ceremonially unclean, with a view to their resurrection. "For if he were not expecting that they that had fallen would rise again, it were superfluous and idle to pray for the dead." (The whole passage is worth study.)

I do not think that the Apostle would be referring in an argument like this to the ritual of the "mysteries," Mithraic or other; but I confess that I cannot satisfy myself as to which interpretation is best; and I never cease to regret that something so ambiguous is read in the Lesson in our Burial service, striking no note of real consolation or of warning.

II. Let us turn now to the second part of the chapter which deals with the nature of the resurrection body. I imagine that the objectors whom St. Paul answers had been led to their denial of the general resurrection by a curious materialism in their view of the resurrection body. Two points puzzled them. The manner of the resurrection, and the kind of body the raised ones would bear. *How*, are the dead raised, and *with what manner of body* do they

come ? ” St. Paul’s answer is drawn from simple analogies in nature. The seed that even the objector himself sows perishes as to its outward husk in order to let the germ of life within it clothe itself with a new organism, which retains a principle of identity with, even though it differs externally from, the original seed.

We know how in our own bodies identity is only preserved by constant change. In fact personal identity would be lost without change of the outward body. The $\pi\acute{\omega}\varsigma$, the “how,” is thus answered by every analogy that we see around us. There are diversities of bodies of every kind already existing, in form and rank and quality and beauty and glory, in things terrestrial and things celestial, and yet the immense variety of these differences does not cause difficulty to anyone. They are accepted as quite natural, because each is determined by God in its own order and proper sphere. Then why should there be any difficulty in the conception of a spiritual body fitted for a spiritual sphere ? God will give to the raised ones spiritual organisms adapted to their new environment.

But *what manner* of body ? Certainly not a perishable body of flesh and blood. The psychic body which we wear here will be exchanged for the pneumatic body which we shall wear hereafter. But the psychic body comes first : it is, as it were, the scaffolding by means of which the pneumatic body is built. And as assuredly there is a psychic body, so equally assuredly is there a pneumatic body for each of us. The “Adam,” mortal man, is a living psyche : the Christ is a life-creating pneuma, and in Him and by Him alone Christians exist. The one is of the earth ; the other is of heaven. And as we have borne the *eikon* or outward semblance of the earthy, so shall we hereafter bear the *eikon* of the heavenly.

Personality as we know it consists in a union of soul and

body, and if that personality is to continue through death, it must still consist of soul and body; for the body is an essential element of human personality. But the spiritual body will differ from the natural body as much as the butterfly differs from the grub: it will be more glorious—a “body of glory”—because adapted to its environment of glory. The *σῶμα* in St. Paul’s view is the organ of personal consciousness which survives the change or dissolution of the outward fashion or *σχήμα*. The *σῶμα*, for instance, (one might say) of the insect is preserved through the three changes of its *σχήμα* or *εἰκόν* as grub, chrysalis, butterfly.

And here I particularly want to point out that the verses 42–44 must not be referred to the dead corpse and its quasi-material revival or resuscitation. That is the very error that St. Paul was combating. He is speaking of the resurrection of those whom we call the dead, *ἡ ἀνάστασις τῶν νεκρῶν*. And he does *not* say “The *dead body* is sown in corruption and raised in glory.” That would be a ridiculous statement, untrue to fact and to experience. He is not thinking of *burial* at all: burial is not within the purview of his argument. The verbs are impersonal. He says *σπείρεται*, “there is a sowing in corruption, and *ἐγείρεται*, there is a raising in glory,” And the “sowing,” is not the burial of the dead body, but the planting of our individual lives here on earth. This is absolutely clear; because the order in St. Paul’s mind is sowing, death, resurrection (verse 36); whereas the common view makes the order death, sowing, resurrection. The sowing, as in the case of the seed, must *precede* the death, not follow it. Moreover, could one speak of a dead corpse, *πτῶμα*, as a *σῶμα ψυχικόν*? Yet he says we are sown—“there is a sowing of a psychic body and a raising of a pneumatic body.” Nor should we speak of a corpse as “weak.” The corruption, dishonour, weakness *ἰ(φθορά, ἀτιμία,*

ἀσθενεία) in which our individual lives are sown, represent our subjection to corruption, sufferings and death—"the weakness of our mortal nature"; and answer to the Apostle's phrase in Philippians, τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν. This phrasing, coupled with the analogy of the seed, settles once and for all, to my own mind, the interpretation which we must give to the Apostle's words.

A few subsidiary matters remain.

(a) In verses 51, 52 (as in 1 Thess. iv. 15) St Paul contemplates himself as amongst those who will be alive at the last day. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." That is to say, when he was writing, he believed the *ἐπιφανεῖα* or *παρουσία* would come in his own lifetime, and in that of the majority of his readers. Hence, to meet any possible objection or question as to what kind of bodies those still living on earth at that solemn crisis would wear when the dead were raised, he asserts that *all* must undergo the same change,—the dissolution of what is mortal, and the assumption of the body of glory. He describes this change from the body of our humiliation to the body of glory in Philippians iii. 21 as a "refashioning" or change of the outer *εξωτερικῆς*; but *how* this transformation is effected he does not tell us, any more than he gives a description of the pneumatic body. It is probably beyond our present comprehension. "The last trumpet" is, of course, an apocalyptic symbol emphasising the fact that the transmutation of dead and living will be a simultaneous response to the same signal.

(b) In verse 55 we have an instance of what Paley called "accommodations,"—language borrowed from the Old Testament and used in a sense very different or even opposed to that of the original writer. In Hosea, Yahweh calls aloud for the terrors of Death to work their worst on the impenitent people of the Northern Kingdom. Here St.

Paul derides Death and Sheol as robbed of their power and bitterness.

(c) I have one other remark to make. St. Paul does not appeal to the appearances of the Risen Christ as helping his readers to form an idea of the nature of the resurrection body. And the reason, I think, is this. The accounts in the Gospels are so mysteriously difficult to harmonise that it is almost impossible to form any coherent view of the nature of our Lord's Body after His Resurrection. That He "rose again" is certain; but in what kind of a body He chose to appear and disappear, and disguise His form, and eat material food "before" and "with" His disciples, we cannot say. So that the appearances of the Risen Lord are *least* helpful in aiding us to think of our own future spiritual bodies. His Body "saw no corruption": our bodies do see corruption. But suppose, for example, that our Lord, instead of being buried as a Jew, had been cremated as a Roman or a Greek,—and very many of the bodies of martyrs of all ages have been burned before or after death without the smallest hesitation as to their future resurrection being felt—there could have arisen no disputes about the empty tomb or the nature of His Resurrection Body. Yet His Resurrection, His victory over death, His continued Life in exaltation, would have been equally assured, at any rate to St. Paul, by the revelation that came to him on the Damascene road, and which turned the superbly orthodox Pharisee into a captive slave at the chariot wheels of his Lord and Master.

That the flesh and blood material of our Lord's Body evanesced, evaporated, sublimated, without undergoing corruption in the tomb between the burial and resurrection, is an older theory not long ago revived by Latham in his book called *The Risen Master*. And this thought may possibly throw light upon St. Paul's statement about all

undergoing *change*, whether dead or alive, at the Coming. But in our case the body does undergo dissolution and corruption ; and that shews that the outer husk of our personal individuality here is only an *instrumentum* or temporary mode of expression of our truer self, which lives on through and after the experience of death.

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THE EARLY DATE OF " GALATIANS " : A REPLY.

As one whose mind has been for some years unsettled regarding the date of the Epistle to the Galatians, and for some months has been settling towards a date anterior to the Council of Jerusalem, I have read Mr. Maurice Jones' article in the September (1913) number of the EXPOSITOR with interest not unmingled with embarrassment. It is not that any of his arguments are exactly novel, but when massed together in this way, with the inferences to be drawn from them marshalled with considerable rhetorical force, they undoubtedly leave the impression after a first reading that he has good grounds for the confidence with which he rejects the early date. His presentation of the case gains further plausibility from the fact that as a holder of the south Galatian theory the early date has become a possibility for him, and as a champion of Luke as a credible historian it must have attractions for him on general grounds. Mr. Jones may therefore fairly be regarded as an impartial critic of the early date, and for that reason also his arguments deserve careful consideration. I may say at once that such consideration has convinced me that no one of Mr. Jones' objections to the early date is really cogent. It will be convenient to discuss them seriatim.

(a) "The question of time."