

<http://www.creationisonline.com/TSK/Immortality.html>

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

BY WILLIAM HANNA, D.D.

NEW YORK:

ROBERT CARTER AND BROTHERS,

530 BROADWAY.

1873.

EXPOSITION OF THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER OF THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

ONE	VERSES 1-11
TWO	VERSES 12-19
THREE	VERSES 20-22
FOUR	VERSES 23-28
FIVE	VERSES 29-34
SIX	VERSES 35-43
SEVEN	VERSES 44-49
EIGHT	VERSES 44-50
NINE	VERSES 50-52
TEN	VERSES 51-57

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

1 CORINTHIANS XV.

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

11 Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

801

15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.

21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

23 But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did

put all things under him.

28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

30 And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?

31 I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

32 If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

34 Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.

35 But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?

36 Thou fool, that which thou sows is not quickened, except it die:

37 And that which thou sows, thou sows not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:

38 But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

39 All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

40 There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differed from another star in glory.

42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

43 It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

46 Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

47 The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.

48 As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

ONE

WHEN we read through this Epistle in the form in which it was first written, without any divisions into chapters and verses, we cannot fail to be struck with the change of tone and style that marks the introduction of that great theme with which this fifteenth chapter is throughout occupied. It is not merely that a new and quite different topic comes to be handled by the writer, but the formality, the solemnity, the emphasis with which the transition is made, all show us how strongly the writer felt that he was passing on to the consideration of a far more sacred subject, one touching far more deeply the vital truths of Christianity than any which he had previously been discussing.

And even so it was. The Apostle had learned that there were some among the Corinthian converts to Christianity who affirmed that there was to be no resurrection of the dead. A belief in that resurrection has so long, so universally, and so strongly been established in the breasts of all calling themselves by the Christian name, it is so thoroughly recognized as an integral part of the Christian faith, that we find some difficulty in conceiving that at any time any who professed themselves to be believers in Christ should have doubted or denied it. Let us remember, however, that even among the Jews, up to the time of the resurrection of our Lord himself, the doctrine of the future and general resurrection of the dead had not been revealed with such plainness as to prevent the whole sect of Sadducees from openly denying it. They accepted the Mosaic revelation; their title to be regarded as holders of the Jewish faith was questioned; and yet they repudiated the belief that the dead were to rise again. Outside Judea the notion of a future resurrection of all the dead was so novel and so startling, that we are not to wonder that a difficulty should have been felt in admitting, or a disposition displayed, even by those who otherwise lent a favorable ear to the first teachers of Christianity, to reject it. In that broad Gentile world which those first evangelists of the cross invaded and sought to win over to Christianity, there were two elements that rose up in strong antagonism to the idea of the resurrection of the dead. There was the materialistic Epicurean form of infidelity, twin sister of the Sadducean spirit among the Jews, which refused to believe in anything beyond what sense or consciousness made known. That spirit was rife at Athens. Paul had already found it there. The men of Athens listened to him patiently enough for a time, till he spoke of the resurrection of the dead, when they turned mockingly and impatiently away: the very notion of a future embodiment of the spirit, which at death passed they knew not whither or into what, being far too gross and too tangible for them to receive. Then there was another and very opposite spirit, begotten in the school of oriental speculation, with which the doctrine of the resurrection came into the sharpest and most direct collision, — the spirit of

those teachers of the Gnostic philosophy, who asserted that the source of all evil lay in matter; the source of all sin in the soul's connection with the body. Liberation from the body with them was emancipation from all evil; reunion with the body would be a reduction of the soul once more into the bondage of corruption. Many who cherished this deep abhorrence of matter joined the Christian ranks, and struggled hard to retain as much as they could of their old impressions and beliefs, in conjunction with their new faith in Jesus Christ. Of such, in all likelihood, were Hymeneus and Philetus, referred to by Paul some years afterwards in his second Epistle to Timothy as having erred concerning the faith, saying that the resurrection was past already. Seeking to spiritualize everything, they said that the only resurrection was the regeneration of the soul, the moral renewal of the inner man of the heart, which was already over with all who were made new men in Jesus Christ.

It is impossible now to tell which of the three leavens — the Jewish Sadducean, the Greek Epicurean, or the oriental Gnostic — first infected at so early a period the church of Corinth. We only have the fact before us, that there were some within that church who said that there was to be no resurrection of the dead; otherwise they had received, in all its simplicity and in all its fulness, the Gospel that Paul taught. He had not to complain of them as having ever felt or expressed any doubt as to that eternal life held out to them in Christ, neither had they questioned the fact of Christ's own resurrection as an incident in his history that had often been recounted to them. But animated by one or other of the tendencies that already have been alluded to, they had put away from them a belief in the general resurrection of the dead. They saw and felt no inconsistency in doing so. They thought that they could be as good Christians as ever, and yet give up that one belief. They did not see how unbelief on that one topic would, if admitted and cherished, spread itself around — how it went to sap and undermine the entire fabric of Christianity, to overturn the very trust and hope that they themselves were clinging to. To convince them of all this, and by working such conviction to eradicate the rising error, is the main object of the Apostle in the fifteenth chapter of this Epistle.

And first, as laying the firmest foundation for that close dealing which he purposes having with them, Paul reminds them of what that Gospel was which he had preached and which they had received. In doing so, he presents us, in the third and fourth verses, with the creed of the Early Church reduced to something like a formula—the first specimen of a confession of faith — short, simple, succinct, compendious. First of all, most prominent of all, as containing within itself the sum and substance of that Gospel which he was commissioned to announce, he had taught them how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. One is struck, in reading this statement, how much it deals in facts, how little comparatively with doctrines. It is not, indeed, a mere dry recital of the death and burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Of itself such recital might form an interesting enough narrative, but could form no Gospel by which men might be saved. A motive, meaning, object, end, must be assigned to the death and resurrection before they can be regarded as constituting such a Gospel. But how simply yet effectively is that done by the declaration, Christ died for our sins! To explain all that lies comprehended in that saying, to exhaust all that the Scriptures have taught, or great thinkers have conceived, of the relations between our sins and the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, would take us hours, and land us here and there in many an obscure and difficult inquiry. Instead of attempting any such laborious task, or offering any dogmatic deliverances on all the various questions that might be raised, let me ask you rather to put yourself in the position of an intelligent, honest, earnest man, deeply convinced of his guilt before God, and as deeply sensible of his manifold moral and spiritual infirmities, when told for the first time that Christ, the Son of God, came down from heaven and died for his sins. What meaning could such a man attach to such an expression before he began to speculate upon it, or deal with it as anything else than a declaration intended to relieve the felt wants and the awakened anxieties of his soul? Should he not at once conclude that whatever obstacle his guilt had raised in the way of his being forgiven and accepted of the Most High had been done away by the death of Jesus Christ that somehow through that death there was for him the free remission of his sins? Would he not think of the death of Jesus thus set forth to him as a death endured by him, not for his own sins, but for the sins of others, that the sinful tendencies out of which they sprang might finally be subdued, but in the first instance, and as a means thereto, in order that they might be forgiven? And if his own faith in that death as so endured were instant, cordial, and entire, would he not rest upon it complacently and confidingly as the good and sufficient, because heaven appointed and have accepted, ground of his pardon and acceptance with God? Such, I take it, was the faith with which the first Christians met the first teachings of the Apostles as to the death of Christ. They rested on that death as having removed all difficulties, met all requirements, making it as honorable and glorious to God as it was needful and blessed for them,—the blotting out of all their transgressions. How exactly, in what way, and to what extent the death of Christ did this—how it vindicated the character of God as a God of holiness and justice—how it sustained the honor of a law whose precepts had been broken, and whose righteous penalty had been incurred —how it protected all the interests of that great spiritual dominion of the Most High which had been so seriously invaded, — they may not have very clearly seen, or very carefully investigated. Enough for them that they had the assurance of the great Lawgiver Himself that an all sufficient atonement had been made. Let that assurance be enough still for each of us. It may conduce to our growing comfort, our growing stability in the faith, that we reach to clearer and fuller notions of the manner in which the death of our Redeemer effected its great ends; but first and above all things let us try to have a simpleminded, simplehearted trust in the entire sufficiency of that death as the ground of forgiveness implanted in our breast.

" Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures. He was buried, and he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures." In such a compendious account of the facts of the Gospel history, it is remarkable that twice over it should have been repeated—that all that took place, and all that was taught about it, took place and was taught in strict accordance with the prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures. It shows how anxious Paul was that this accordance should steadily and continually be kept in view. Nor is this a solitary instance in which such anxiety on his part was manifested. It had characterized the whole currency of his apostolic ministry. " Having therefore obtained help of God "—such was the language he employed before Agrippa —"I continue unto this day, witnessing to both small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets

and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles." In acting so—in keeping so continually before the mind of those addressed the concurrence between the facts he had to tell and the predictions that had long before been uttered —Paul was but copying the great example of our Lord himself, who, on that first day after his own resurrection, began, as it were, in his own person to execute the same office, when, in the journey out to Emmaus, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to the two disciples "in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." What a voucher for the Messianic references of so many of those ancient types and ancient prophecies! Not in vain do we go back to these Old Testament Scriptures to find, in the offerings and sacrifices of the Levitical economy, the shadows of that offering up of himself as the one great sacrifice for sin which Jesus made upon the cross. Not in vain do we go back to the pages of Moses and all the prophets, to read there of one who was to be cut off, but not for himself—who was to finish transgression, make an end of sin, bring in an everlasting righteousness; who was to be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; upon whom the iniquities of all were to be laid; who was to bear the sin of many, and make intercession for the transgressors; and see in him of whom all this had been said, none other than that Savior of mankind whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood — to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past — that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. In the Corinthian Church there were both Jewish and Gentile converts. Let not those Jews, then, who had taken on this new faith in Jesus, think that they were casting aside their ancient Scriptures, or asked to believe anything that was not in strict accordance with that earlier revelation of the Divine will. And let not those Gentiles think that this religion of Jesus Christ was a wholly new religion, as different from Judaism as was their first pagan faith. No; let Jew and Gentile alike take up into their hands these venerable records, in which are preserved the manner of God's dealings with that once favored people whom He selected as the medium of his direct intercourse with mankind, and through whom the world was to be prepared for the advent of the Son of God.

" And that he rose again the third day, and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that he was seen of James, then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also."

This statement is interesting as containing the earliest account extant of the resurrection of Christ, given between twenty and thirty years after that event. At the time when this Epistle to the Corinthians was written none of the four Gospels was yet in existence. An interesting inquiry is thus opened as to the evidence, direct and indirect, furnished by St. Paul to the facts of the Gospel history. The inquiry has an additional interest thrown around it from the separate and independent attitude that St. Paul assumed as compared with the other apostles, as well as from the fact that he declared that he had himself seen the Lord, and derived his knowledge of his history by direct revelation from himself. In the narrative of the institution of the Lord's Supper contained in the eleventh chapter of this Epistle, we have the earliest written account of that event. We notice there the exact and substantial, though not literal agreement of the Apostle's narrative with that of the Evangelists. In the instance now before us this correspondence, though not so precise, is perhaps, from its very diversity, still more instructive.

Nine different appearances of our Lord, after his resurrection, are mentioned in the Gospels. The first, to Mary Magdalene; the second, to the women returning from the sepulcher; the third, to Peter; the fourth, to the two disciples going out to Emmaus; the fifth, to the apostles assembled in the evening in the upper chamber; — these five all occurring on the day of the resurrection; the sixth, to the apostles, Thomas being now with the others, eight days after the resurrection; the seventh, to the apostles and disciples on the shores of the Sea of Galilee; the eighth, to eleven disciples and others on the mountain side in Galilee, where Jesus had appointed to meet them; the ninth, to the apostles collectively, immediately before the ascension. Paul mentions here six appearances of our Lord, four of which we can identify with one or other of those recorded in the Gospels. As he appears to place them in the order of time, the first two—that to Cephas and that to the twelve—we may regard as the same with two of the four recorded by the evangelists as occurring on the resurrection day: the other three — to Mary, to the women, and to the two disciples — he may not have known, or, as happening to persons of comparatively little note, and as less available for the general object he has in view, they may have been intentionally omitted by him, even as he passes by one of the three appearances to the apostles collectively, and that to the seven upon the lake side. Had not Paul told us that there was an appearance to above five hundred brethren at once, we should not have known that there ever had been brought together so many eyewitnesses of the fact of the resurrection. This may have happened in the interview on the Galilean mountain side, or it might have happened at Jerusalem before the dispersion of the people assembled at the Passover, where it is quite as likely that five hundred disciples could have been congregated as on a mountain side of Galilee. There are still two, however, of the appearances mentioned by Paul of which no trace is to be found in the Gospels — that to James and that to himself—the omission of the latter due obviously to the circumstance that with Paul's life and labors the evangelistic narrative had nothing to do; but the omission of the former sufficient to assure us that it was not the design of the evangelists to record every incident in their Master's history, but such only as the divine wisdom under which they acted should deem sufficient for the instruction of the Church.

But why did Paul recite so carefully these proofs of the resurrection of Christ? Why did he, at the opening of that pleading which he meant to have with the Corinthians on the subject of the resurrection of the dead, show such anxiety to have that fact established upon evidence that they could not gainsay? Because it was the fact which authenticated that Gospel which he had preached, and because it was upon that fact, and upon that Gospel—as once received and still not denied by them — he meant to take his stand in the reasoning he was about to institute. The death of Christ of itself proved nothing — threw but little light upon the character or object of his mission. There was no need of adducing evidence to substantiate it. Very different was his resurrection. That, if true, was a supernatural event, the crowning miracle that gave credibility to all the other miracles of his life. That, if true, was the seal of heaven's acceptance and approval put upon that sacrifice which, in dying for our sins, Jesus had

offered up. Paul felt this so strongly, that you find him opening his Epistle to the Romans thus: — " Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead." Paul felt this so strongly, that when, in the course of that same epistle, he puts the question, "Who is he that condemned?" his answer is, "It is Christ that died; yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

It is around the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ that the battle of supernaturalism in Christianity has been so often fought. It is a fact (none can deny) as capable of historical proof as any event of the past. And it is a fact so thoroughly substantiated, upon such competent evidence, that if we are to give up our faith in it, we must consistently give up our faith in all historic records, all the past must be blank to us. It is upon this fact, so securely established, that the entire fabric of our Christian faith reposes. Believing that Jesus rose again from the dead, and that in the body he ascended up to heaven, we are prepared to receive all that the Scriptures have taught us of the glories of his person, of the design of his ministry, of the efficacy of his death. Let us be devoutly grateful for it that our faith in him who has redeemed our souls unto God, in union with whom stands our eternal life, has such a solid historic foundation to rest upon — often assailed, yet never shaken; so firmly imbedded among those other foundations upon which our knowledge of the past reposes, that to overturn it would be to overturn them all.

The last witness for the resurrection cited here by Paul is himself — " Last of all he was seen of me also." " Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" was the question that in a preceding part of this epistle he had put with some degree of indignation to those who were disposed to disparage his title to the apostleship. Perhaps Paul alluded thus to that sight of the risen Savior given him at his conversion, or perhaps — and that would liken it the more to the other manifestations with which it is here ranked — perhaps he alluded to some after interview in which he received from the Lord the Gospel that he taught. He cannot, however, even allude to the honor that was thus conferred on him without a sense of his own unworthiness filling his heart; without alluding at the same time to the humiliating circumstances that distinguished his call to the apostleship from that of the other twelve — " Seen of me as of one born out of due time, for I am the least of the apostles, that am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." A like digression, occasioned by his ranking himself among the holy apostles and prophets to whom the mystery of Christ was revealed, you find in his Epistle to the Ephesians, where he exclaims, " Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Another like digression, occasioned by his reference to that glorious Gospel of the blessed God committed to his trust, occurs in his first Epistle to Timothy, when he says, " And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who bath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." That passage in his bygone life, when beyond measure he had persecuted the Church of God and made havoc of it, he desired never to forget. Most willing was he at all times to magnify the grace so undeserved that had selected one so unworthy and so unlikely to be an apostle of the Lord. But however deeply conscious of his individual demerit, however ready to acknowledge his original personal disqualifications for so high an office, let not those Corinthian cavilers make any improper use of such admissions on his part, for the grace that had conferred the office had fully qualified for its work. "By the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed on me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." In reading his epistles we have often occasion to recognize in Paul one of the rarest unions of the devotional and the practical, the deepest piety and the soundest discretion. Here we recognize almost as rare a union — that of the profoundest humility and the readiest acknowledgment of all that the grace of God had enabled him to be and to do. A humility this, free of all affectation, of all fictitiousness, that laid itself down in the dust, not to grovel there in those pitiful bemoaning and confessions in which so much of self and so much of pride is so often wont in covert disguise to enter, but which laid itself down in the dust to magnify that grace of God which had stooped to lift one even so unworthy, and to make of him an instrument of such great good to his fellowmen.

TWO

WE have a good specimen here of that rapid, condensed, impassioned kind of reasoning in which Paul so frequently indulged. There were some at Corinth, he had been informed, who, having made public profession of their faith in Christ, were nevertheless disposed to deny that there would be a resurrection of the dead. At once the incompatibility of the general faith with the particular denial rises before the Apostle's thoughts. That incompatibility he hastens to expose. Have they thought, these deniers of a resurrection from the dead, of all which that denial fairly and directly involves? Have they thought of the inconsistencies, the absurdities, the incredibilities, that, by necessary and immediate implication, flow out of it? These he presses on their regard, not in the way of labored or lengthened argument, but in brief emphatic declarations, well fitted to confound as well as to convince, to stir the conscience and the heart, too, as by the voice of a trumpet. I am very conscious how much such a series of short, terse statements must suffer by any attempt to expand them. But as some incidental benefits may perhaps accompany the attempt, let us take up, in their order thus, the fatal consequences charged here by Paul upon a denial of the resurrection of the dead. " But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen." " For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised." The resurrection of the dead and the resurrection of Christ are, in the Apostle's judgment, so inseparably connected, that they must stand or fall together. If you believe one, you must believe both; if you reject one, you must reject both. But how is this? What is the link of connection between the two events, that necessitates this common acceptance or common rejection of them both? What is it that makes it anything like a direct and inevitable conclusion, from the dead not rising, that Christ had not risen? One can readily enough see, that if the resurrection of the dead generally were denied upon the ground of its strangeness, its undesirableness, its alleged impossibility, then it must be denied in every instance; to be consistent, you must carry your denial round the whole circle

of humanity, and take in the man Christ Jesus with all the rest. More than this, however, seems to be indicated here. The Apostle points to some other more hidden nexus or bond of union between the two events that he so knits together, than that of their being alike mysterious in their character, alike difficult of accomplishment.

As serving to bring out to view what that nexus is, let us notice it is not of the resurrection of all the dead promiscuously, it is of the resurrection of believers; it is of that resurrection unto life which involves the deliverance of the soul at death from all the fruits and consequences of its transgressions, and its reunion afterwards with the body from which it was to suffer a temporary separation; it is of that kind of resurrection, and of it exclusively, that the Apostle speaks. It was to obtain and secure for all true believers in him the benefits and blessedness of such a resurrection, that Christ both died and rose and revived. He rose from the sepulcher on their account. He rose, not as an isolated member of the human family to whom it might be given to burst the barriers of the tomb, whilst all the others remained within its hold. Were no other connection looked at as existing between Christ and those who were to rise again, than that of their being joint partakers of the same human nature, it would be difficult to perceive any great force in the argument, that if they were not to rise, he could not have risen. There seems no such tie existing between the entire membership of the human family as to shut out the possibility that there might have been that one solitary instance of a resurrection from the dead. But bring in the idea of a vital union between Christ and his own — bring in the idea that he is the resurrection and the life in the sense that he that believeth in him, though he were dead, yet shall he rise again; that whosoever lives, by believing in him shall never die — bring in the idea that Jesus rose not from the dead in his individual capacity, but as the head, and representative of all those whom he was to redeem from death, and ransom from the power of the grave, — and then it is that a meaning and a force is given to the declaration, if they rise not, then is he not risen. His resurrection, in its true significance, in its great design, never can have taken place, if it draw not that other resurrection of all his people in its train.

But "if Christ be not thus risen, then is our preaching vain." 1 It is an idle, empty tale this Gospel that we have been proclaiming. You not only deprive it of its closing, crowning evidence, you take out of it its very pith and marrow, if you cast away from you the truth that Jesus rose again from the dead; for is it not upon that rising of his to God's right hand as the accepted and prevailing Mediator, that faith builds its hope of pardon and acceptance before God? Had our Gospel stopped there, that Christ died for our sins — had we had nothing more to tell you, than that he sank beneath the load of our iniquities that pressed him down to death, — where was there evidence to rebut the allegation, that beneath that load he still was lying — where the proof that that death Ver. 14.

of his for our transgressions, in the Father's judgment, was sufficient, and had by him been accepted as such? It is that rising again of the great Sin bearer; his triumphant enthronement by the side of his Father in heaven, which proclaims the sacrifice complete, the atonement adequate. It is because it embraces this within the glad tidings it proclaims, that this Gospel which we preach is indeed a Gospel whereon all may sincerely stand, and by which the very chief of sinners may be saved. Vain, all powerless as an instrument of comfort would the Gospel be if it pointed only to the death and the burial; the shrouded cross and the sealed sepulcher, leaving the body of the crucified within that grave wherein man had never lain before, but leaving it to share the common fate of all the buried inmates of the tomb. And as vain in that case would be your faith as was our preaching; vain because wanting that solid substantial basis to rest upon which the resurrection of Christ supplies. Take that foundation from under it, and then see how unsettled and insecure your faith in Christ, as the Redeemer of the lost, the Savior of your soul, would be.

"Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God: because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not."

False witnesses — not be duped, mistaken, deceived witnesses — but false witnesses, testifiers to that which was not true, and testifying to its being true while themselves knowing it to be false. There was here, as to that fact of the resurrection, no room for mistake. It was a fact, or it was a falsehood. Peter, James, the twelve, the five hundred, all said that they had seen the Lord; that he spoke with them, ate with them, showed them his hands and his side, had been at pains to prove to them that it was no shadowy form of their own imaginations, that it was his true and real self emerged from Joseph's sepulcher that they looked upon. Either all that was true, or they were willful, intentional deceivers, trying to palm a falsehood upon the world. Twenty years had passed since the alleged event had happened. These twenty years had sifted that testimony, had searched it more thoroughly than the most rigorous cross examination of the courthouse. The witnesses were numerous enough, scattered enough, independent enough; they had repeated their evidence often enough, and in circumstances varied enough to have brought out any inconsistency, to have detected any attempted collusion. Had any signs or token of imposition ever been discovered in any of them? Could any motive for imposition be conceived? What had they made of it, what were they ever likely to make of it, by proclaiming and repeating it, that Jesus had risen from the grave?

Yea, and among these men branded thus as false witnesses, if Christ did not really rise, Paul himself must be reckoned. That he should ever have such a brand affixed to him; that he should ever once be thought of as an impostor or deceiver, is there not something in the very manner of Paul's speech here that tells us how monstrous to himself, and surely as incredible to others, the very supposition seemed? So far as it is, or can be, a mere matter of human testimony, we would be willing to peril the whole fate of Christianity upon the evidence of that one witness, Paul — that evidence, as it lies here before us in these letters of his — written at different times, from different places, in different circumstances, to different persons — so frank, so full, so overflowing — the whole thought, the whole heart of the man so unrestrainedly poured forth. Read these letters, and say is it possible that you could have got a man more thoroughly qualified by his intelligence and his clear-sightedness, and early acquaintance both with the

Jewish and Gentile faiths, to decide upon the matter — his birth, his education, his position, his earthly prospects, all tending to create a bias against, and not in favor of, the new faith? How are you to account for it that there upon the spot there, within so short a time after the crucifixion of our Lord — there, with every means lying open to him of examining into the truth of all the facts and miracles of our Lord's history — such a man became a convert to Christianity? We have his own account of his conversion — an account which, if we accept as true, determines the whole matter. But, even setting that account aside, look at the afterlife and labors, toiling and sufferings of this man — crowned at last with the martyr's death. How are we to account for them on any other supposition than that of the truth of Christianity? If anything that the other apostles testified as to the facts of the Savior's life had been false, Paul must have found it out; and had he found it out would he not have been the first and the loudest in proclaiming it? If ever there was an honest seeker after the truth — if ever there was an ardent lover of the truth — if ever there was a devoted adherent to the truth — a man who would do all and dare all to get at it, and would lose all and sacrifice all rather than part with or deny it — that man was Paul. Can anyone read these letters of his with the shadow of a doubt as to his truthfulness, earnestness, integrity of thought and purpose? Paul a false witness! Do we not now scout the very idea of it as promptly and almost as indignantly as eighteen hundred years ago, when he first penned the fifteenth verse of this chapter, Paul scouted it himself?

" And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain. Ye are yet in your sins." Those sins of yours Jesus took upon him, made them virtually his own, bare them in his own body on the tree. It was for those sins he died — died that he might redeem or deliver you from all their bitter fruits; that he might ransom you from the power of the grave. But if he have not risen, if death still hold him in its stiff and unrelaxed embrace, if the grave still keep in its stern custody that body which was wounded for your transgressions, then, brethren, the sting has not been taken from the last enemy — the victory has ' not been wrested from the grave — that death of Christ has failed in realizing its announced predicted issue. Instead of triumphing in your stead and on your behalf over death, death has triumphed over him, leaving thus your deliverance unaccomplished. And, if so, then are ye yet in your sins, the whole weight of their guilt still lieth upon you, the whole burden of their penalty remains yet to be borne. It is a strange, let us even say an incredible or impossible hypothesis, that Paul puts — that Christ should have taken on him our sins, yet sink beneath the burden thus voluntarily assumed. But do not the very form in which that hypothesis is here presented, and, especially the conclusion drawn from the temporary assumption of its truth, namely, that in that case these Corinthian believers would still be in their sins — do they not necessarily enfold within them the great truth, that Christ's death was designed to be a vicarious atoning sacrifice, whereby the whole guilt of all those sins that we truly repent of and truly lay by faith on him was to be lifted off us — to be removed by him? Refuse that character to the Savior's death, and what meaning do you leave to the language, what force to the reasoning, that the apostle here employs? The whole passage, indeed, here before us is stripped (as it seems to me) of significance, of coherence, of all argumentative weight and power, if such a sacrificial or sin bearing character be not attached to that great deace accomplished at Jerusalem. You may convince yourselves of this by just trying how the passage would read, how the inferences it contains would hold, upon any view of the death of our Redeemer, which rejects the idea of a true and sufficient atonement having been thereby made for the sins of the world.

Paul's object is to overset that unbelief in the resurrection of the dead by heaping one upon another the conclusions to which, if fully and legitimately carried out, that unbelief would lead. It would involve, in the first instance, a rejection of the resurrection of Christ himself; and the denial of that resurrection would in its turn lead us to the conclusion that those who had been looking to the Savior's death for the remission of their sins, had been looking in vain, that they were yet in their sins. But a still further and still sadder inference would follow, " Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." Your dead in Christ, your fathers, your brethren who have fallen asleep, resting for the forgiveness of their sins on the completed and accepted sacrifice — what of them, what of their present state, what of their eternal destiny, if Jesus has not risen from the grave? For them there could be no future resurrection of the body. That you — ye deniers of all such resurrection — may deem no loss; as you desire it not for yourselves, neither may it pain you to think that your departed friends shall not share in it. But have you reflected upon this — that if Jesus be not raised, and if that leave you, the living, who are trusting in him with your sins still on you, their guilt uncanceled — it leaves them, the dead, with their sins still on them in that world into which they have passed; it leaves them lost; it consigns them to perdition; the second death has come upon them, and from it who shall deliver? Such seems to have been the train of thought in the apostle's mind (binding the seventeenth and eighteenth verses together). The imagined perishing at last of those who had fallen asleep in Jesus that Paul here has for the moment in his eye, could not have been their annihilation at death, their ceasing then to exist; for how in any possible way of conceiving of it or employing it, could the fact that Christ had not risen from the tomb be made to draw after it the conclusion, that those who had died trusting in the efficacy of his atoning death, at that death ceased altogether and for ever to have any existence? It is a far worse, far darker fate than that of annihilation that the apostle points to as awaiting those who, though they had fallen asleep in Jesus, yet if he had not risen were yet in their sins even when they so died. Were the Corinthians then ready to harbor or give any countenance to speculations and incredulities which, driven to their last logical issues, would represent their departed brethren as going down into the dark valley with a lie in their right hand, or awakening on the other side of death to the terrible consciousness that they had believed in vain?

And truly, adds the apostle, if it be in this life only that we have hope in Christ, if that hope be doomed at death to perish, then we of all men are most miserable. Not that the apostle is here calmly instituting a comparison between himself and his brother believers in Christ on the one hand, and the rest of mankind on the other, and as the result of such comparison declaring that during this present life he and they were unhappier men than the others, the only thing serving to mitigate their greater misery the hope they had in Jesus. We may say it boldly, that even though it should turn out hereafter that all his present faith and hope in Christ were vain, the true Christian man is not more miserable, but made all the happier by his faith and hope. The utterance of the eighteenth verse we regard not as a didactic statement to be logically analyzed by us, but as a passionate exclamation bursting

from the apostle's lips as the imagination starts up before his thoughts, that for him no Savior had risen triumphant from the grave, for him no satisfying atonement had been offered up on Calvary, that he too and also his fellow believers were yet in their sins, that he too and they must perish. "If that be so," he says, "if after all that I have seen and felt of my great sinfulness before God — after all I have seen and felt of my need of a Redeemer — after all I have seen and felt of the power and preciousness of the death of Christ — after all that I have given up — all that I have done and suffered for him whom I have counted to be my resurrection and my life — you tell me now that it is in this life only that my hope of accept ante and of the divine favor through him can stand, then truly, of all men, I am the most miserable. From that great hope fling me down into that great despair, and you will not find a man on earth so miserable as I. It lightened my labors, it comforted my griefs, it bore me through all my conflicts. I was thrice beaten with rods, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a day and a night I was on the deep; but in all kinds of perils — in weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in watching, in fasting, in cold, in nakedness, so brightly shone that hope within my soul, that I could look back on twenty years so spent, filled up above all common measure with all sorts of suffering, and say, Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; for I reckoned that the sufferings of the present life were not worthy to be compared with the glory that was to be revealed. But now, cut away from me that hope, fling me, a sinful man, adrift on those troubled waters; quench all my lights; put out that opening glory beyond the grave — no cross for me to steer by, no haven of eternal rest to reach — in all the wide ocean was ever mariner in such a wretched plight? "

But, blessed be God, that cannot be done. Christ hath risen. It is not in this life only we have hope in him. Instead of being of all men the most miserable, of all men we Christians are the most blessed. Christ hath risen; and that rising of our Lord seals our hope in him as sure, and points us to the heavenly places that he has entered, as to the regions where, in an eternity of blessedness, that hope shall be fulfilled. Christ hath risen: then they also which have fallen asleep in him have not perished. He was dead, but he is alive again, and they live with him for evermore. Christ hath risen, and ye are no longer in your sins. He has taken them, he has atoned for them, he has buried them far out of sight and reach of the avenger; as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed them from you.

Christ hath risen, and in rising left behind the pledge and token that to them that are in him there is, and shall be, no condemnation — for who is he that condemned? — it is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

The Lord is risen indeed! Such, we are told, were the joy inspiring words with which each Lord's Day morning, as they met for worship, the early Christians were wont to salute one another. And when we count over, as brought out in this wonderful chapter, all the benefits and blessings which that rising of the Lord secured, — could they, we ask ourselves, have fixed upon a fitter phrase to express at once how rich their heritage, how full their joy, how bright their hope, how firm the foundation of their trust?

THREE

ASSUME for the moment — so had the Apostle put it in the preceding verses — that Christ has not risen from the dead, what would be the issue? — An empty preaching, an empty faith, an empty Gospel; out of them their very core and substance taken; the living left in their sin, the dead left to perish. Dark and dismal conclusions these, but conclusions to which one who otherwise is a believer in Christ is shut up if he let go his hold of that great central fact, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But now, continues the Apostle, take hold of that great fact, grasp it firmly as one of the best substantiated events in this world's past history, and then see what opposite conclusions — as bright and comforting as the others were dark and dismal — follow from a belief in that event. That it involves the certain, final, and glorious resurrection unto life of all those found in him — this is what the Apostle proceeds so distinctly and emphatically to declare.

I shall not enter into any speculations, still less shall I offer any dogmatic deliverance upon the question, how far the resurrection of the dead generally is a fruit or consequence of the resurrection of Christ. There are some who tell us that the general resurrection of the dead is no part of the remedial or mediatorial economy — is in no sense the result of the interposition of a Redeemer; that if Christ had not come at all, there would notwithstanding have been a general resurrection of the dead, the raising up of all to receive in the body the sentence of the second death. There are others who tell us that the original curse was a curse of death on the whole man, a curse that so long as it lay unrepealed could not allow of the body's resurrection: that without Christ and apart from the redemption of our nature effected by his death, there would and could have been no resurrection; that if there had been no interposition on behalf of the fallen, whatever had become of the souls of men, their bodies must have remained under the tyranny of death. There is a link, they say, which unites Christ with every individual of the vast family of man, and it is in virtue of this link, and of it alone, that the graves of earth shall at the last day yield up their tenantry. It would not be difficult to suggest considerations grounded upon general conceptions of the nature and designs of the mediatorial economy, which might seem to lend a strong support to one or The other of these two views, and it would be still less difficult perhaps to suggest difficulties which press upon them both.

But are we asked or bound to make our choice between them? Are the materials in our hands to come to any positive conclusion here? Is it of any practical moment to us to be able definitely to say what would have happened to the inhabitants of this earth had no Savior come, no redemption been wrought out? Those who think that they so thoroughly understand the principles of the Divine government, the plans and purposes of the Eternal, as to be able to determine what in such an imagined state of things must have been the result, may pronounce their verdict. For ourselves we are content, on this as on so many other points, to remain in

ignorance or in doubt, confessing that, however clear the light may be that the Scriptures throw upon our present duty and our future destiny, it does not seem to us sufficient, nor do we think that it was ever meant, to let us so far into the secret counsels of the Most High as to enable us to decide.

It might, indeed, at first sight appear that the verses which are now before us deal with that very matter of the connection between the resurrection of our Lord and the general resurrection of the dead. The structure, however, of the entire argument of this chapter, the links by which its reasonings are bound together, its whole drift and issue, tell us that it is with the resurrection of believers, and with it exclusively, that Paul is dealing; and even here, in these verses, however general be the terms that sometimes meet us, we shall find, as we unfold their meaning, that the same holds true.

"But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept." The relation in which his resurrection stands to that of all his people, is like to that in which the first ripe grain, the first ripe fruits of autumn, stand to the whole harvest of which they form a part, and of which they furnish an earnest. You bind up that first cut sheaf of yellow corn, you pluck those first ripe grapes or olives from their richly laden branches, and as you do so you count with confidence — trusting in the stability of the laws of nature — that the ripening process will go on, and the broad fields and vineyards of the land will yield up their full harvest stores. You see the Savior rise, and in that rising you behold the pledge and promise of the rising of all who sleep in him. The whole resurrection of the entire body of his redeemed, is that great harvest home of which his rising from the dead is the first fruit; and trusting in the stability of those laws by which the moral and spiritual government of the world is carried on, you count upon it with confidence, that he who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up them also with him. In truth, the pledge or promise is in this latter case the more secure. Such a thing might happen in nature as there being first fruits with no harvest following; those genial influences of light and warmth beneath which the fields ripen onwards, might at least be so far interfered with or checked that the promise of the first fruits, if not utterly broken, might yet be but imperfectly fulfilled. Not so with the processes of ripening unto that great spiritual harvest; they certainly shall go on; no sequence of nature more uniform or more inviolate than that by and under which the resurrection of Jesus Christ provides for, embraces, and secures the resurrection of all his followers.

Perhaps in using the term "first fruits" here the Apostle had in his eye the Jewish ordinance, "When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest unto the priest; and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it." Before this offering of the first fruits no crops of the land could be reaped; they must not be touched nor turned to use till they were all first consecrated by this presentation of the first fruits by the priest within the temple — before the altar. And this presentation was to take place on the second day of unleavened bread — the day after the Sabbath — the very day of the resurrection of our Lord. Thus it was that in that old rite of Judaism there passed before the eye a symbolic representation of another and higher offering — that made by our Great High Priest, when, within the holy place not made with hands, he presented himself before the throne, the first fruits of the dead, an offering accepted by the Lord for all his people, and consecrating their buried dust as dear in the Lord's sight, to be quickened in due time, and gathered in to be laid up in the heavenly garner.

"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Death and life, the utter ruin, the entire recovery and restoration of our human nature, are here set before us, traced up to their first springs or fountainheads, the one in Adam, the other in Christ; and that parallel, more fully brought out in the closing verses of the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, is compendiously affirmed. First, a general analogy is declared between the way in which the death and the deliverance from it were introduced. For since by a man came death, by a man came also the resurrection of the dead; — a Divine arrangement, the full scope and meaning, benefits and issues of which we may not be able to comprehend, but one nevertheless upon which, in the one broad general feature of similarity between the Fall through Adam and the Redemption through Christ, that in both a man — a single man — is the prime moving agent, one can perceive a congruity, a harmony such as reigns throughout all the other works of the Eternal.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (for until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound: but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin bath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." — Romans v. 12-21.

But still more particularly. Not only was it by a man that death was introduced not only was it through that narrow inlet of a single man's transgression that the devastating flood found ingress into our world — that single man stands in a still closer relation to the death which came by him than that of being simply the opener of the door by which it entered. It is in Adam that all die; it is in some sense as being in him — counted as one with him — that all have to suffer that penalty. But what exactly is the nature of that union of all, his posterity with their first parent that draws after it this result? Here we have, first, the palpable fact, that we all

have derived from him a sinful nature — that strong tendency to waywardness, willfulness, ungodliness, which, sooner or later, in one form or other, has broken out in the character and conduct of every single member of the human family, and given to that family its most peculiar and specific character. In all the domains of life wherein the living creature — be it plant or animal — propagates itself, like always begets like, and does so under this apparently fixed and unchangeable condition, that whatever individual varieties be introduced, the laws and limits of each species are strictly and invariably preserved. One oak may be made to differ from another in many things, but never in that which constitutes it an oak, and not an elm. Neither plant nor animal ever does — we may even say it never can — in any way, or to any extent, throw off the separating and distinguishing characteristics of that species to which, by the fiat of its Creator, it belongs. And when our first parent fell, that overturn of his felt relationship with his Creator — that departure from his heart of love and confidence, unbounded and unbroken — that entrance of alienation, distrust, the spirit of insubordination, the idolatry of self, became no slight or accidental quality of his nature; it became its deepest and most marked feature. The sinful Adam became the head or parent of a new species—a species, one of whose most prominent characteristics was the proneness or tendency to deviate from the strict rule of right — to sin against God. It would seem to be nothing more than the bringing of that species under the universal law by which all propagation of like by like is regulated, that such a proneness or tendency to evil should be found in every individual of our race, this proneness or tendency, wherever existing, bearing the bitter fruit of death. As the first introducer, then, and first propagator of that noxious seed by which that bitter fruit of universal death was born, may it not be said that in Adam all die?

A still closer connection, however, is affirmed in Holy Writ as existing between our first progenitor and the death which has come upon all men, than that of their deriving from him by natural descent a sinful nature and a mortal frame. By that one man sin entered into our world, and death by sin, and so death has passed upon all men, for all have sinned — sinned not only individually, but sinned in him as their head and representative, and so death has reigned, not only over those who sinned themselves, as Adam sinned, but even over infants, over those who, though they had never personally and actually transgressed, were, notwithstanding, and in virtue of their being reckoned with as one with him, involved in the universal doom. A mysterious transaction this! That by the offence of one judgment should come upon all men to condemnation, even unto death; that the whole race should in a sense be held accountable for the deed of their great progenitor — a deed in which they individually took no share. Can we discern the reason, can we have any sympathy with the justness of such a procedure? Disposed as our native, untaught, unbiassed sense of what is fair and right is to revolt at such a mode of dealing with the entire community of mankind, shall we, acting upon the first impulse of our moral nature, at once reject and repudiate it as inconsistent with all the truest and highest ideas we can form of the character of the Supreme? We might do so but for three considerations which here press themselves upon our regard.

1. However difficult of explanation it may seem, however directly it appears to run counter to the first principles of equity, in the actual arrangements of the divine providence, as they lie spread out before our eye in the history of the human family, we see it often happen that the many suffer for the sins of the one. Especially within the family, the tribe, the corporation, the nation where one common bond unites, and the many are naturally and necessarily led and represented by the one, that one's acts entail consequences upon others which descend from generation to generation. The iniquity of the father, how often is it visited upon the children! How widely and for how long has a nation suffered through the misdeeds of a single monarch? Under the divine government as it goes on daily beneath our eyes, men are not dealt with as units, as standing each alone, and quite isolated from others; they are dealt with in groups, in aggregations, a kind of reckoning that frequently involves the consequence of the group or aggregate either benefiting or suffering through the personal conduct of those who stand forth as their natural heads and representatives. It is so, it may be conceded, but is it just? Our answer to that question would be this other. Can a principle that is so widely and so palpably acted upon in God's common ordinances of providence be radically or essentially unjust, whatever it may appear at first sight to us to be? Can even our own natural conscience when fairly tested here be brought to pronounce a verdict of condemnation? Is it wrong that a child should suffer for its parent's guilt? Is it wrong that a community should suffer for the misdeeds of its rulers? We may pity the family or the community upon which the doom descends, but would that be a wiser, better, just arrangement of things, in which no such order was observed, in which the tie of the family or the nation involved no such combined and prolonged responsibility, no such transmission of the penalties of guilt?

2. One great object of the Old Testament is to do for us what our own naked observation of God's providential dealings cannot do, enable us to connect, as cause and consequence, human suffering with human sin. Are there, then, in the instances of this kind laid before us in the Old Testament writings, any cases in which families or tribes or nations are declared to have been punished for the sins of their progenitors, sins in which the sufferers had personally no share? Take the following: "Samuel said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee king over his people Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have." Five hundred years had passed since the base and cowardly, unbrotherly, ungenerous deed of these descendants of Esau had been committed. All who had taken part in it had been long sleeping the sleep of death; yet the Amalekites are treated here by God himself as a community possessing continuously such a moral unity that the guilt contracted by the leaders of that assault in the wilderness is transmitted to and becomes punishable in the persons of their descendants of the fifteenth generation afterwards.

Again we read: "Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year, and David inquired of the Lord. And the Lord answered, It is for Saul and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites." Half a century had elapsed since this slaying of the Gibeonites. Saul, the chief criminal, was dead, yet because of it the land suffered throughout all its borders, and because of it the seven sons of Saul were slain.

The Ammonites and Moabites were guilty of the same offence against the children of Israel as the Amalekites, and their doom was thus pronounced by the Lord: "An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord, even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord forever, because they met you not with bread and water on the way when ye came forth out of Egypt, and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor to curse thee."

Manasseh, we are told, shed innocent blood very much till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin in doing that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. And the Lord spoke by his servants the prophets, saying, "Because Manasseh, king of Judah, hath done these abominations, therefore thus saith 'the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah that whosoever heareth of it both his ears shall tingle, and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wiped a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down." This sentence began to be executed when Manasseh was taken among the thorns and bound with fetters and carried to Babylon. In his affliction he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. And the Lord God said unto him, " Because thine heart was tender and thou didst humble thyself before me, behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers: neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place. So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and his son reigned in his stead." After a short reign of but two years, the good King Josiah ascended the throne of Israel, of whom we read that like unto him there was no king before him that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, neither after him arose there any like him. But notwithstanding (it is added), "the Lord turned not from his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah because of all the provocation that Manasseh had provoked him withal."

Let it be admitted, in surveying such instances as those now quoted, that there was a singular providence exercised by God over the land and the people of Israel; that their sins were dealt with as no other people's were; that they were subjected to a discipline of temporal rewards and punishments peculiar to themselves — training them for their great service to the world — yet who can fail to perceive that the judicial principle upon which such proceedings as those which I have now quoted was based, if not identical with, is at least analogous to that upon which God is said to deal with our entire race, as represented by our first parents?

3. Whatever injustice or hardship we may imagine to be involved in our all dying in Adam, are these not removed and more than compensated by the gracious ordering that now in Christ all of us may be made alive? The opportunity is now given us of regaining in the one man all, and more than all, that we forfeited and lost in the other. Which of us shall complain that by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation — if by the righteousness of one the free gift may come upon us unto justification of life? Which of us shall count himself as harshly used if by one man's disobedience he was made a sinner — if by the obedience of One he may be made righteous before his God? Should we not rather rejoice to have been sharers in the fruits of Adam's sin, seeing that it is that very circumstance which brings within our offer all the privileges and blessedness of our Savior's mediation? Viewed by itself, it may appear to us a singular and inexplicable treatment that we should be reckoned with as bound up with our first progenitor in his act of rebellion against the Most High. But should we complain of it, now that by another ordinance of his grace, equally singular, we may be bound up with Christ and, enjoy, through his obedience, all the surpassing advantages of a complete amnesty and a most ample and glorious restoration? One born in the line of descent from some progenitor who had squandered away a rich inheritance might be disposed, as he wandered over the broad acres and gazed on the stately mansion house that once had belonged to his family, to curse the memory of the man by whom such a splendid estate had been alienated, and to complain bitterly of the lot that doomed him to poverty and, disgrace. But what if some kind friend of his family were to interfere, and offer to him another and a richer inheritance than the one of which he had, been bereft? Would it be a wise proceeding on his part to stand questioning and grumbling about the injustice that had been done him in the one direction, refusing — till all those doubts of his were satisfied, and all the fancied grounds of his grumbling removed — to take advantage of the offer held out to him on the other? Yet such is the position that we take up if, murmuring at that heirship to death to which we have been born, we put away from us that heirship to everlasting life held out to us in Christ our Lord.

FOUR

OUR tainted mortal nature we _derive by inheritance from Adam. In him — as Paul had just said — we all die, his death involving ours. Our spiritual, our eternal life, we derive, not by inheritance, but by voluntary adhesion, by vital union, from Christ. In him we live anew, live in the possession and enjoyment of the forgiveness, the love, the full rich favor of the Most High, coming to us through him. That newer and eternal life of ours flows out of his: it is because he lives that we live also, our life hid with him in God. Of that begetting life of his for us which takes up ours into itself— originating it, sustaining it, and maturing it — the resurrection of his body from the grave was the visible crown and consummation, the proof and pledge that his one great offering of himself unto the death for us had been accepted, was successful, had put away our sins, had redeemed our souls from death. And just as his living unto God embraces and secures the living in like manner unto God of all them that are his, so too does his resurrection from the tomb embrace and secure their resurrection likewise — the entire resurrection unto life being but that of an united, continuous harvest, of which the rising of the Lord was the first fruits.

But though the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of all those that are his be thus indissolubly bound up together — the one drawing the other in its train—yet must there be an order in their occurrence; an order, not of priority in time alone, but of importance, marking off the resurrection of Jesus Christ as that of him who is the beginning, the firstborn, the first begotten from the dead, that in all things he might have the preeminence. It was a right and becoming thing that during the currency of the world's history the Resurrection of Christ should stand alone, without a precedent, without a peer, an unique, unapproached, unparalleled event. Paul, in his great pleading before Agrippa, pointed to the fact that there had been no instance of the kind

before. " Having therefore," said he, " obtained help from God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead." Enoch and Elijah had passed away without tasting death, without tenanting the tomb, leaving the world to wonder at their, escape from the grasp of the last enemy; but leaving no proof behind them that that enemy had been fairly grappled with, and on his own territory had been overcome. Jairus's daughter, the widow's son, Lazarus of Bethany, had been raised by Christ himself from the dead, but raised to die again; the grave at last claiming them and getting them, and laying them up with all the other dead. But Jesus rises, the first full victor of the tomb; the first to throw off its fetters, never to be taken on again; the first to carry a human body raised from the grave up into the heavenly places.

It might have been so ordered that this great victory once achieved, its fruits should have been at once distributed; that one after another of the dead in Christ, after a brief occupancy of the grave, should, like their Lord and Master, rise without having seen corruption, to take their allotted places around his throne. His resurrection might have been followed thus by theirs in one long continuous train. But if so, might it not have been confounded with theirs, had the bare circumstance of its being the first been the only thing left visibly to distinguish it? Still further, then, to mark it off, it must not only stand without a precedent in the ages that went before, but after it the graves of earth must still hold within their keeping generation after generation of the buried, no other single bursting of their barrier suffered till at the close he come who is the resurrection and the life; and in his presence, and at his call, there be a general and simultaneous rising from the dead. "Every man in his own order. Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."

" Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father." The verses beginning thus, from the 24th to the 28th, pointing as they do to a period beyond the close of the present economy, present to us a perspective too remote and too obscure, too sublime and too mysterious for us to attempt anything like a clear and detailed survey. It is but a dim and distant glimpse that we get here of that divine order or arrangement of things by which the passing away of the existing economy is to be followed up; and I should have been inclined to leave it in the dimness which covers it, under a sense of the unfitness of our eyes to look further or more fully into it — the unseemliness of any human effort to delineate or describe, much more to explain and to vindicate, that spiritual and glorious estate of things into which the present reign of the risen Savior is at the end to pass — were it not for the conviction that in the ordinary understanding of this passage there seems to me to be much that throws it out of all connection with the train of the Apostle's reasoning about the resurrection, and that throws it into conflict with the otherwise consenting testimony of Holy Writ. Taking up the passage as the translators of our English Bible obviously understood it, it is regarded as indicating that at the end, when the mysteries of God in the present method of his government of this earth shall be finished, Christ shall deliver up to God — i.e. shall resign — that government with which, as Mediator, he had been invested. Having, during the course of his exercise of that delegated authority wherewith he was clothed, put down all rule and authority and power, having destroyed the last enemy death, he shall give back into the hands which originally bestowed them those mediatorial rights and powers which he had exercised, and when all opposition shall be subdued, shall then himself be subject to him who did put all things under him — the mediatorial reign of Christ shall then be merged and lost in the immediate government of the Most High, that God may be all in all. Understood in this way, the resignation of the reins of government by Christ, his subjection unto God, at that marked epoch in the future, becomes the engrossing, the absorbing topic of these verses. The 24th, 27th, and 28th verses are read as announcing that great coming change in the mode of the divine government; and the 25th and 26th verses come in as a digression by the way, telling us of the intermediate steps by which that wonderful termination is got at. And so accordingly you find that by all who understand the passage thus, the delivering up of the kingdom, the subjection of Christ to God, is the theme that mainly occupies their thoughts.

If that, however, had been indeed the chief idea in the Apostle's thoughts, what had it to do with the subject that he is dealing with so closely and earnestly throughout this chapter? What bearing had it on the resurrection of the dead? What help of any kind did it lend to the particular argument that at the time he was pursuing — that the resurrection of Christ implied, provided for, and secured the resurrection of all them that are his? To carry away our thoughts beyond the resurrection altogether, and to fix them upon a wonderful alteration that was thereafter to take place in the manner of the divine administration — how did this further the end that Paul is here steadily throughout pursuing? Digressions are common enough in the writings of St. Paul, but not such digressions as this.

But is it not enough to make us pause before we admit the idea of so great a revolution in store for the universe at the end of the present dispensation, that in no other passage of Scripture but the one now before us is there any hint or allusion to a future resignation on Christ's part of his mediatorial authority? So far from this, the perpetuity of that very kingdom, which it is thought that he is then to deliver up, is repeatedly asserted. It is to him, as occupying the throne of that kingdom, that the Father saith, " Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." It is of that kingdom, not simply of his kingdom as the second person of the Trinity, but of his kingdom as Christ the Mediator, that it is so often said that there shall be no end, that it shall endure for ever — one of the very names wherewith it is called being this, "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." The very idea of the termination of that reign, wrapped up with whose continuance is the eternal blessedness of the redeemed, this idea of the abdication by Jesus of his mediatorial throne, and that at the very time when all was ripe for the fulfilment of his own promise, " To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I overcame and am set down with my Father on his throne," is repugnant surely to all that the Scriptures teach of the nature of that eternal relationship established between Christ and his people. Shall that very kingdom, given him as the reward of his obedience unto death, be surrendered at that very time when that obedience unto death has realized all its predicted ends? Shall the reward cease when the work is done? Shall the throne be

abdicated at the very time when around him every knee is bowing, and to him every tongue is confessing that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father?

Besides — the subordination or subjection of the Son to the Father, of Christ to God — is it not a characteristic of the entire mediatorial economy throughout the whole currency of its existence? What then can be meant by its being said that then shall the Son also be subject to him that put all things under him? Was it never so till then?

Have we not, then, been attaching too strict, too theological a meaning to the expression "delivering up the kingdom," when we have understood it as implying a surrender, either wholly or in part, of Christ's mediatorial sovereignty? Have we not missed the main object of the Apostle when we have imagined that it was his chief purpose here to be the preannounced of a singular alteration of the governmental relations of the great universe hereafter to take effect? Is there no way of reading this passage which will make it fit most naturally with the train of the apostolic reasoning, and turn it into a fresh contribution to that great argument wherewith the Apostle is engaged? Let me ask you to remember that it is the security which Christ's resurrection yields for the resurrection of his people that is constantly before the Apostle's thoughts. Full of that idea, he looks on to the end, when, in the resurrection of all the dead in Christ, the great spiritual harvest shall be reaped in. That end occurs to him as being accomplished in connection with that unlimited power and authority — that lordship over the quick and the dead — to which, by his own resurrection from the dead, our Lord was elevated, all power being then given him in heaven and earth, the government laid upon his shoulders, the judgment committed to his hands, the great task allotted to him of putting down all adverse rule and authority and power, of reclaiming and recovering for God this lost, revolting province in the domains of the Most High.

In that great task, clothed with all needful authority and power, he must and shall succeed. The ancient oracle, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool," must be verified. Though now we see not yet all things put under him, we see that Son of man, after He had offered that one sacrifice for sins, sitting on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. And when all those old prophecies shall be fulfilled — when that kingdom, fully and finally rescued out of the hand of the enemy, shall be delivered up — i.e. shall be restored, brought back to God; when death, the last of the oppressor's forces, shall be destroyed, not a grave left with a tenant in it, not a token of the presence and power of that last enemy remaining, — then shall it be seen how, in that great enterprise in which our Redeemer is now embarked, the final resurrection of all the dead in Christ shall form the fit and closing incident, the last victory over the last enemy.

The prophecies from the 110th and from the 8th Psalms, to which he had referred, remind the Apostle that it was Jehovah who was to make Christ's enemies his footstool, Jehovah who was to put all things under him, that it was by no power or authority residing separately or independently in him as 'the Messiah, but by that divine power he had originally as one with the Father, his officially as the Christ of God only by delegation, to be exercised always as subject to or subordinate to God, that all his intermediate triumphs were to be accomplished. He runs the same idea on to the completion or close of all things, declaring that even then, when all things shall have been subdued under him, when there shall no longer be any foe to struggle with, any victory to win, when of all kingship there shall remain alone the gracious rule of the Redeemer over that risen, ransomed, glorified community of the redeemed — even then, when God by Christ shall have reconciled all things unto himself, when he shall have gathered together in one all things in Christ, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven — even then, when, amid the jubilations of the wide universe, Christ shall deliver up or hand over to the Father that kingdom far forth from which all adverse conflicting authority and power have been removed — even then, as always before, the Lord himself shall appear as acting subject to him that did put all things under him, that God might be all in all, that it might be made manifest that all things were of God, that of him, through him, to him were all things, God blessed forever.

Such, so far as I can interpret it in harmony with all that the Scriptures elsewhere teach, is the meaning of this remarkable passage. Putting aside all that is of doubtful import, let us dwell for a moment upon one or two of the great truths, or rather facts, which it reveals.

1. We have the present attitude and occupation of our risen Redeemer. He is gone into heaven. He is on the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honor — angels, authorities, and powers made subject unto him. That large investiture of power he is employing in bringing back the kingdom to the Father, in subduing everything that exalted itself here against God. Looked at in its existing condition, this world of ours presents a strange spiritual spectacle — a kingdom of darkness struggling with a kingdom of light; thrones of iniquity fronting and frowning at the throne of righteousness. How great the work which remains yet to be done ere this kingdom be fully restored to God! What principles and institutions, systems and governments, forms and habits — embodying error, or idolatry, or impiety, or injustice, or oppression, or cruelty — have to be resisted, remodeled, or overturned!

In contemplation of all that ignorance and superstition and ungodliness and anarchy and tyranny, that now have such strong force, and that so frequently prevail, it is the sustaining faith of every wise and good and thoughtful man that though these floods may lift up their voice — may lift up their waves — there is a Lord on high that is mightier than the noise of many waters, than the mightiest waves of that stormy sea. But it is the special belief and the special consolation of the true Christian that that Lord who sits in the heavens, to whose guidance and control all these strong and stormy elements are subject, is no other than that same Jesus which was crucified — made now both Lord and Christ, reigning and ruling over this earth, and wielding that supremacy over all things with which, in virtue of his obedience unto death, he has been clothed; with the purpose and high intent of turning at last all these deluded and distracted kingdoms of this world into the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.

"And I saw heaven opened, and beheld a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns, and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself, and he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God, and he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords."

2. We have presented to us the certain and ultimate triumph of the Redeemer in this great undertaking of recovering the lost, subduing the rebellious, quenching all opposition, putting down all rival powers, and restoring the kingdom unto God. What shall this world's future fate be? Shall light or darkness, good or evil triumph? Or is no triumph for either of the conflicting powers coming? Are the ages in store for it to see the same worldwide battle going on, with victory inclining at times to either side — some slow advantage upon the whole gained on the side of truth and righteousness, peace and goodwill among men, but still far off from the condition of a well compacted, loving brotherhood all bound by the silken cords of love to one another, and all tied by the golden chain of a willing and united homage to the Throne of the Eternal? Left to our own conjectures here, it is but a feeble light that hope could kindle — a light that could fling but a few broken, trembling rays into that dark future that lies before. But happily we are not left to our own conjectures here. We have the word of prophecy made sure to us; we have its clear light thrown upon that darkness. Christ must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. All things are progressing, slowly it may be, but surely, to that great end when he shall present the kingdom to the Father, all things subdued unto him. Many may make war with the Lamb, but the Lamb shall overcome them. The heathen may rage, the people imagine a vain thing; the kings of the earth may set themselves, the rulers take counsel against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, let us cast their cords from us. But he, the Lord at Jehovah's right hand, shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He will break them with a rod of iron, he will dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel. He will overturn, overturn, overturn, till lid come whose right it is to reign. "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him; and there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and whose kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

"And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thundering, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigned. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

But in the general triumph of the Redeemer let us not forget that the triumph of his grace in the heart of every true believer is included. What a comfort to the weak and tried, ever struggling, but often' baffled believer, it is to know that greater is he that is with him than all they that can be against him; that Christ executes that kingly office to which he has been elevated in ruling and in defending, in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies; that we so run, therefore, not as uncertainly, so fight, not as those that beat the air; that this is the will of him who sent Jesus into the world, that of all that the Father hath given him he should lose nothing, but should raise him up at the last day. "Fear not, little flock, it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," and that good pleasure of the Father the almighty power of the Son engages to make good.

FIVE

PAUL'S pleading throughout this chapter on behalf of a resurrection from the dead is addressed to Christians; to those who, however they had been induced to doubt on this one tenet of the new faith, had otherwise adopted it, had assumed all the liabilities and exposed themselves to all the perils which then attached to a public profession of Christianity. In the paragraph which is now before us, the special consideration which he urges upon such is the utter sense lessness, the flagrant inconsistency of embracing, professing, defending, and propagating the Christian faith at such constant and imminent hazard, such actual and heavy sacrifice, if there were indeed no life beyond the grave to be consummated at the resurrection.

His first appeal is to a limited number — a small section, it may have been, of the church at Corinth, from whom he, clearly enough by the very form of expression that he employs, separates himself and others, the general community of believers. Otherwise he asks, "What shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?" In that case, what meaning, use, or object would there be in this act? Why are they then baptized for the dead? Whatever the practice may have been to which the Apostle here alludes, it must have been one which would have stood obviously stultified, stripped of all significance, on the supposition that the dead were not to rise again. And such would baptism for the dead undoubtedly be if we take it as meaning the baptism of one person in the room and stead of another, the baptism of the living in place of the dead, the living person stepping in as the substitute or representative of his departed brother, who, though a convert to Christianity, had died unbaptized, and submitting to that ordinance on his behalf in the hope or belief that whatever benefits or privileges the departed might have enjoyed by participation in that rite might thus be still secured for him. If there was to be another afterlife, if the dead were to rise again, and if it were thought by any that baptism was essential to salvation, that it formed the necessary external link by which union with Christ was sealed and ratified, then indeed there might be a reason why those who thought so should resort to that singular expedient in order to secure for the dead but unbaptized believer all the advantages of that rite; but if there were to be no afterlife, no resurrection from the dead, no state or condition in the future wherein the anticipated results of the present baptism were to be made good, then where was the use, or what could be the object, of this baptizing for the dead?

But did ever such a kind of posthumous baptism, baptism by proxy, exist? Is it conceivable that such a practice should have arisen in apostolic times, or, if it had crept in at Corinth, that it should have been referred to in such a way as this by St. Paul without a word of rebuke or condemnation? In answer to the first of these questions, we have the fact authenticated that in the second and third centuries, though it was only in some obscure corners of the Church, such a kind of baptism did prevail. One of the early fathers of the Church (Chrysostom) has thus described it: — "After a catechumen" (a candidate for baptism) "was dead" (who had died unbaptized), "they hid a living man under the bed of the deceased; then coming to the dead man, they spoke to him and asked him whether he desired to receive baptism, and he making no answer, the other replied in his stead, and so they baptized the living for the dead." Here was baptism for the dead in its rudest, most superstitious form — so rude, indeed, and so obviously grounded upon a superstitious estimate of the nature and the need of baptism, that it was generally and strongly discountenanced, and speedily and finally disappeared. (No notice certainly occurs in the New Testament Scriptures—nor is there any trace elsewhere of the existence of such a practice in any of the apostolic churches.) Had any such form of baptism been observed by any considerable number of his converts at Corinth, it may seem reasonable to suppose that Paul would not have reverted to it in the manner he here does. Yet in some shape or other—in some simpler, more rudimental form—vicarious baptism—the baptism of the living for the dead—may have crept in at Corinth. Such early mistake and gross abuse of the rite of baptism should no more surprise us than the mistake and abuse into which we know that the Corinthians fell as to the ordinance of the Supper. It was not more superstitious or more extravagant than the practice which we know had a very early entrance into the Church, of administering the Lord's Supper to infants, and of putting the elements into the hands or mouth of the dead. To the Jewish converts it might have even seemed analogous to the provision of the Levitical code, that if a man died in such a state of ceremonial uncleanness as would have required a personal purification had he survived, this purification might be undergone by another in his stead. And if it were but in its embryo condition, and within a limited circle, that this baptism for the dead was to be found at Corinth, Paul surely might have taken hold of it and turned it, as he here does, into an argumentum ad hominem, a personal appeal to those who had fallen into the practice, without feeling himself called upon to go out of his way to expose or repudiate it. He certainly so severs himself from those who baptized for the dead, as to prevent their pleading anything like a sanction or approval on his part of their practice. Regarded thus, this passage might be taken as a curious reference to a primitive superstition springing up in the apostolic Church, which, taking afterwards a more definite form in the customs of some obscure sects, gradually died out;—a superstition with which Paul could have had no personal sympathy, but to which, nevertheless, he might appeal, as grounded upon a faith in the resurrection, and as inconsistent with its denial.

There is, indeed, another meaning, perhaps the true one, which we might attach to the phrase, "baptism for the dead." In that early age of Christianity, when the work which its first converts undertook was frequently broken off by an untimely or a violent death, one can readily conceive how ardent the longing might be on the part of survivors to take up and to complete work which had thus been interrupted. It was by baptism that the life of self devotion, to which the Christian convert then consecrated himself, was entered on. The baptized for the dead might be those who, on the occurring of a vacancy in the Christian ranks, stepped forward to take the place of the dead—to occupy the deserted post of danger and of duty—to take, in the name of the departed, the baptismal oath—to assume all the baptismal responsibilities—to face all the baptismal perils—to die, if need be, as those who had gone before them had died. I do not know whence the time honored custom sprang of bestowing at baptism the name of some relation or friend upon the baptized. It would be a very old and very honorable pedigree for that custom, could we trace it up to the very first days of Christianity; and could we be sure that it did then sometimes happen that at the baptismal font, the new professor of the persecuted faith assumed the name in order to assume the position and responsibilities of some friend or brother who had just fallen in the conflict.

Those who, from a mingled sentiment of devotion to Christ and love to the departed, entered thus upon the hardships of the Christian life, might most fitly be said to have been baptized for the dead. And of such most strikingly and appropriately might it be said, What will they do who in the face of all the dangers to be braved, all the sacrifices to be incurred, all the sufferings to be endured—have come forward as the representatives and successors of the dead in Christ, professing themselves to be ready to live as they lived, and die as they died, in the service of our risen Lord—what will such men do, what motive to perseverance in the course they have so entered will be left to them, if the dead rise not?

And, most naturally, thus would the two questions be coupled together—the one running into the other. Why are they, then; baptized for the dead standing up thus to face all these risks? and why stand we in jeopardy every hour—we the apostles of the Lord—we whose very position as leaders of the host exposes to the same perils we whom God has sent forth, as it were appointed to death, made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men, reviled, persecuted, defamed, counted as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things unto this day, why do we expose, why should we ever have voluntarily exposed ourselves to such a lot, or why should we continue every hour to stand in such jeopardy, if the dead rise not at all?

Or to take my own case—Why do I, Paul, act as I am doing if there be no resurrection of the dead? "I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily." I protest by those infirmities, reproaches, persecutions, distresses for Christ's sake, in which I take pleasure, in which most gladly do I glory, and in which, as endured for you, ye rejoice and glory also, that the power of Christ may rest upon us both, and your rejoicing over them may be mine—I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily—daily am I delivered unto death—bearing about with me the dying of the Lord Jesus in my mortal body, pressed often out of measure, above strength, so as to despair even of life, in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

Or take my troubled life at Ephesus, the place from which I am now writing to you. If after the manner of men, if merely as a man, according to this world's views — as one without the hope of immortality, I fought with beasts at Ephesus — Had Paul before this time ever literally been thrown among wild beasts—no unusual thing in the time of the first persecutions —it is scarcely conceivable that so remarkable an incident in his life should have been left without any notice of it in the Acts of the Apostles, or any reference to it in those descriptive catalogues of his apostolic endurances which he himself has given in his Epistles. It is to the last degree improbable that had he been so exposed he should have escaped. And it is almost equally improbable that such a punishment of him should ever have been attempted, his Roman citizenship protecting him against it. We must take the expression figuratively, as referring to some collision with hostile and infuriated men, not less painful to him — in some instances scarce less perilous — than if he had been cast among those hungry monsters from the desert, beneath whose bloody fangs so many of the earliest martyrs died. We can fix, however, upon no special' occurrence of his life at Ephesus to which such a description was specially apposite. The scene described in the 19th chapter of the Acts, his danger from Demetrius and his fellow countrymen, had not occurred when these words were written. We must be content, therefore, to take the strong language which the Apostle uses here as indicative of the bitter tumultuous hostility in the midst of which his Christian labors at Ephesus were carried on. But why was all that hostility endured, what use was there in struggling thus with these wild beasts in human form, if the dead rise not, if there be no hope for us, no rest for us, no resurrection beyond the grave? Would it not be far better — more profitable at least, productive of a far easier, happier life — to take up and. act upon the epicurean motto, " Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die?"

This quotation from one of the old Hebrew prophets, does it not naturally remind us of him who, in those Old Testament times, tried upon the amplest scale what the carrying out of that motto could do for him — made the experiment in all its forms, what the kind and amount of happiness is that a man can extract out of this life by exhausting every source of pleasure it supplies, and who in that wonderful Book of Ecclesiastes has left the record of his experiment behind him? Yet even to that conclusion, the conclusion of following Solomon in his many and unsuccessful steps, must he be shut up who would cast away from him the hope of a resurrection of the dead. It is indeed in a tone of irony that Paul says it, that if no resurrection from the dead be left to him, it had been that, casting off all restraint, he should have given free reins to every passion and appetite of his nature, and turned his life into one of voluptuous self indulgence. But quickly he checks himself as he falls into that strain, turning with the utmost seriousness and solemnity to warn the Corinthian disciples against the contamination by which they were beset. " Be not deceived," he says, listen not to those who under the mask of a higher philosophy, a less material, more spiritual faith, would have you to discard the notion of a future resurrection. They may tell you that it is but a small, but a secondary matter, that upon which they would have you to differ from us and your other brethren in Christ. Lend not your ear to such vain babblings, for be assured that they will increase unto more ungodliness — their word will eat as Both a canker, eat in upon your faith till the whole fabric be overthrown.

Be not deceived. They are evil communications which these men make, and remember, as one of your own poets has said (Paul quotes the words from Menander), "Evil communications corrupt good manners."

You live, ye Corinthians, in the midst of an ungodly and licentious population. Sin of every kind prevails around you. In that life of self denial, self sacrifice, to which in Christ you have been called, you need all the strength that the firmest faith in Christ as your risen Lord, and in your future gathering together unto him in the resurrection of the just can give. Let not that faith in anywise be tampered with, for with its weakening there shall come the weakening of all the moral and spiritual supports by which you presently are upborne. And who can tell but that on their weakening you may fall back once more into all those evil courses from which for a time you have been delivered? Nay, must you not already have sunk into a semi torpid, half sleepy state when these dreams about there being no resurrection have got entrance into your mind? Awake then — truly and thoroughly arouse yourselves. Awake and sin not — err not. Learn to look at things as they really are, and to act upon that recognition. The summons is not needless, for, alas that I should have to say it to your shame! There are some at least among you who, with all your advantages, have not the true knowledge of God.

From this passage, as thus interpreted, two things are apparent.

1. How little account Paul makes here of a bare faith in the soul's immortality, as separate from that faith in a future life which springs out of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and embraces within it the resurrection of the believer. Doubtless Paul was familiar with the arguments by which both in Jewish and Gentile schools of philosophy the immateriality and immortality of the human spirit was supported. They are not once alluded to here. He felt what weak instruments of conviction they were for working anything like a real and operative faith in the endless futurity of its being within any human soul. From all such airy, fanciful, elaborate exhibitions of the unseen world, as were common enough in the pages of the Grecian poets and Rabbinical rhetoricians, he turned dissatisfied away. To him within that unseen world there was now a nearer, dearer object, whose living presence there swallowed up all lesser arguments on behalf of its reality, and the brightness of whose glory threw all meaner imaginations of its objects and interests into shade. The Christ who had died for his sins on Calvary — the Christ who had risen triumphant from the grave — the Christ who was then seated upon the Heavenly Throne — that Christ in whom his soul had found its own new and better life — he it was who transfixed, absorbed his thoughts, generating within his soul that faith which was so full of immortality. So is it still, so shall it be with each one of ourselves. We may please ourselves with reasonings about the nature and capacities, the instincts and longings, of the human soul. Out of these we may try to erect a faith, carrying with it no further conclusion than that somewhere and somehow the soul shall survive the dissolution of the body. But the real, the intense, the abiding conviction of our individual immortality we shall then only reach when, having found life for our dead souls in Christ, it is

an immortality of that life that we set before us, looking back to the resurrection of our Lord as the foundation of our hope, and forward to our own resurrection as to the period when that hope shall be fully and gloriously fulfilled.

2. The alarm that Paul evidently felt was, that if his Corinthian converts once let go their faith in the resurrection of Christ, and in their own resurrection unto life as flowing out of it, there was no security against their sinking into utter ungodliness and unrestrained immorality. Surely there were some among them who, even if all faith in anything beyond the grave had been wiped out of their breasts, would have felt, and would have acted upon the feeling, that despite of all consequences, either here or hereafter, to act truly, purely, generously, self-denyingly, is a higher and better thing than to snatch the present joy that the gratification of each passing taste, or appetite, or passion, might bring with it. Surely there were some to whom a life of virtuous self-restraint would not only have been a worthier, but in itself a happier life than that of self-indulgence. Yes; but how many such in such a community as Corinth would there have been? Looking at that community in the mass, was Paul wrong in setting it forth as the alternative that if they ceased to live by faith in a risen Savior, ceased to live under the promise of that world which was to come, the world that then and there was, with all its solicitations, temptations, and fascinations, would grow too strong for them, and the evil overcome the good? And what was true of that community at Corinth, is it not true of the great community of our race? Is it not true of the vast majority of ourselves? How many are there of the millions of the human race who would be good, do good purely and solely for the good's sake, if they knew and believed that they were to die at the last as the dog dies? How many are there among ourselves who would choose the sublime paths of virtue rather than the lower ones of pleasure, if the thought or belief of a futurity, an immortality, a judgment to come, were utterly swept away? We may believe that as things now stand in the best educated community, even if all faith in futurity were obliterated, a large proportion would preserve themselves from sinking into sensualism, but the world would lose by that sad catastrophe all its highest forms of virtue, and its best preservatives against vice. Its evil communications would corrupt its good manners. It would be its many, and not its few, who would cease to have any knowledge of God.

SIX

THE literal meaning of the Greek word *anastasis*, rendered into the English one "resurrection," is the rising up or standing up again, of those who had fallen, or were lying prostrate. Applied generally to the dead, the term might mean no more than their revivification, their restoration to life, without indicating anything of the manner or circumstances of that restoration. The natural and appropriate position of life, of consciousness, activity, is that of standing. When it was said of the dead that, though smitten down by the hand of the great destroyer, yet they should stand up again, no more might have been signified by that expression than that they should awake once more to a conscious, continued, and active existence. Our common usage of the term has almost limited it to the raising of the buried body from the grave — so that whenever the resurrection of the dead is spoken of, it is the raising of the body, and it exclusively, that we think of; but in its Scripture usage the word has a wider sense, and while not excluding, nay, as we shall see presently, while including the idea of a re-embodiment of the spirit, it takes in the broader thought of the reawaking of the dead to life. You meet often in the New Testament with the expression "the resurrection of the dead," but never with the expression the resurrection of the body. More than once you find the resurrection of the dead spoken of in a way that proves the expression to have been at the time employed as equivalent simply to the future existence of the dead; but you never meet with the phrase occurring in such a connection as to show that it is the revivification of the body, and that alone which is meant by it. I am speaking at present merely about the meaning of the phrases "resurrection," and "resurrection of the dead," as they occur in the New Testament, and not about that great fact which to our ear and mind these phrases do almost exclusively suggest—the resurrection of the bodies of all the dead which is to take place at the last day. When Jesus is said to have proved the resurrection of the dead by quoting that saying of Jehovah to Moses, uttered so long after the death of the patriarchs, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," and draws from that declaration the very plain and simple inference that God was the God of the living and not of the dead, it seems obvious that it was not so much the reanimation of the dead body as the continued and conscious existence of the departed spirit that our Lord designed to establish against the Sadducean unbelief. So also, in the course of that pleading which Paul enters on with those who were inclined to deny that there was any resurrection of the dead, when he argues that if Christ had not risen then they who had fallen asleep in him had perished; and "that if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable;" and that if there were no resurrection we might just as well take up the motto and act upon it — "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" — it seems equally obvious that the Apostle counted the denial of the resurrection to be substantially a denial of any future life for man — a holding that death ended his career.

But the life and immortality brought to light by the Gospel pointed to no airy unembodied being beyond the grave — whose shadowy and unsubstantial lineaments left nothing for the eye of faith to fix on, or the hand of faith firmly to grasp and keep hold of. The life to which the believer was to be begotten was to be a present, deep pervading, quickening of the human soul, which is not to reach its culminating point of entire deliverance from all the earthly and sinful elements in midst of which it had its birth — till all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of Jesus and shall come forth, and the sea shall give up the dead which be in it, and death and Hades the dead that be in them, and all the dead, small and great, shall stand up before God for judgment at the last great day.

In this announcement of a future re-embodiment of all the dead — a future rising of all the buried from the long deep sleep of the sepulcher — there was something new and strange that those men of Athens and of Corinth had never dreamt of. Here was something outward and tangible for thought to busy itself about, to pry into curiously. In the very nature of the event, in the certainty with which it was foretold, but in the generality and vagueness of the terms in which it was spoken about and described

—here were inviting openings for incredulity to creep in by, ready handles for positive unbelief to lay hold of. " But some man will say, How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" The imaginary questioner sees something in the event foretold which creates a difficulty on his part as to admitting it to be true. The direct and positive evidence in its favor he overlooks. He overlooks, too, its main and essential characteristics, and, fastening upon what is but a secondary or supplemental incident of the resurrection, he asks, How are the dead raised up — how is it, how can it be, that those bodies, which corruption has fed upon, or the fire has burned into ashes, or the water has utterly dissolved — how is it, how can it be, that these bodies can ever be rebuilt again? It is a thing too strange, too inconceivable, too difficult, if not impossible in execution, for me ever to believe it. Thou fool, says the Apostle in reply, is that which is to set its measure and limit to that which shall be? Are all things for ever to move on just as thou sees them progress before thine eyes? Are the ideas of the creature to set bounds to the doings of the Creator? Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead? Is anything too difficult for that great power of the Omnipotent, by which all things were created, and by which all things have been sustained?

Nor is it, after all, a thing so new and strange, that life should spring out of the arms of death — that the decay and corruption of one form of life should be as it were the cradle in which another and new form of life should be nourished; for look intelligently but at one of the sights you are most familiar with, and do you not see there a type or illustration of the resurrection? Look at what happens to that corn seed thou casts into the ground. "That which thou sows is not quickened except it die; " it is by and through an intervening death that the new life cometh. Beneath the sod that covers it, that buried seed undergoes corruption — it bursts, it rots, it consumes away, till by far the larger portion of it mingles with and becomes assimilated to the soil in which it lies. Yet out of the very bosom of that rottenness, out of the very heart of that death, there rises that little sprout, which, full of the fresh energy of infant being, presses the incumbent clay, and adds a new member to the great family of the vegetable kingdom, with which it is connected. No life for that new plant but through the death of that buried seed. And if it be so with buried seeds, if with them the gate or avenue to all new being be through corruption and dissolution, why may it not be so with the buried bodies of our dead? Does not that which we see happening within one region of the world of nature serve at least to remove any alleged original inherent incredibility attaching to the one idea of the resurrection of the dead?

It is so far and no further that this illustration from the seed goes. It offers no positive proof of the resurrection. It does not even contain within itself a strong presumptive argument in favor of it, as a very strict and unvarying analogy pervading the entire region of animated nature might have supplied; for, in the first place, you will notice that even in that specific instance of the seed the analogy is not perfect. The seed is not dead when we bury it, as the man is when we bury him. In both instances there is decay and dissolution; but in the one case they are but partial, in the other they are entire; the vital principle that the seed had in it when you planted it in the ground never dies. It is quickened into germinating action by the corruption that takes place around it; but it was there before that corruption began its work, it remains there throughout — the living thread that connects the two existences, that of the old plant, which perishes, and that of the new one, which arises out of its rotting seed. You have nothing parallel to this taking place within the grave; no thread of life lies there, so far as we can trace, to bind together the body that molds away with that which is to spring out of its remains. Failing here, the analogy becomes feeble in the way of furnishing any positive evidence in favor of the resurrection. It is an analogy besides that is unsupported in the animal kingdom, that department of animated nature to which man himself belongs. You have no case there of death producing life. The animal creation dies; but where in all the moldering ruins of that empire which life once animated, is there any sign or token of its restoration?

But whilst comparatively powerless to prove that the dead shall rise again, even such a single and imperfect analogy as that which the Apostle here employs is quite sufficient to silence the objector who would hastily and presumptuously affirm that their resurrection is in itself inconceivable and incredible. By showing that something very like it does elsewhere take place, it forbids the affirmation that it would be wholly out of harmony with the creation. Nor is the instance that Paul quotes the only one of the kind that Nature furnishes. The insect world, in the passage of the slow creeping caterpillar into a dull and apparently lifeless condition, out of which, throwing off the integuments that bound it, there bursts forth the gay and gaudy butterfly, floating with light and airy wing over the place where the relics of its former self lie decaying, presents perhaps a still nearer analogy to the resurrection. That and the many other wonderful transformations that the insect world exhibits — the waning away of life only to recover itself and to rise in newer and higher forms — all these are helps to faith. They do nothing to establish it that there must be, but surely they are enough to establish it — if indeed any evidence were needed on that point — that there may be a resurrection. They do not plant faith in the heart of the believer (that faith he draws from a quite different source), but they pluck its foolish and impatient objection out of the mouth of incredulity.

But some man will say, " How are the dead raised? " Thou fool! they are raised up as the seed rises, quickened out of death. "And with what kind of body do they come?" Thou fool "that which thou sows, thou sows not that body which shall be, but bare grain — it may chance of wheat or of some other grain " — but whatever be the grain, it is but a small bare round pile or pickle of it that you lay within the soil. It corrupts; it dies; but not that out of that corruption and that death there may come another pile or pickle of the same grain. The body that shall be is not the same as the body which thou sows. It is connected with it, it springs out of it, is in fact a continuation of its being — but how unlike in form, how different in materials — the blade, the stalk, the flower — from that single seed from which they spring When in answer thus to the question, With what kind of body shall the dead come? Paul answers by an illustration from the planted seed and says, Thou sows not that body that shall be, is not the fair and necessary inference from his words, that the human body which dies and is buried is not the identical body that shall be at and after the resurrection? Had the Apostle said nothing more than that, it should have been sufficient, in our judgment, to prevent our entering upon any curious inquiries as to whether the resurrection body will be composed or reconstructed out of the same material particles which constituted it at death.

But the Apostle does not stop here. Adopting the same kind and line of illustration that he had entered on, to show, not that the resurrection body shall be, but that it may be quite different from the dead and buried one, he refers to the wonderful variety of bodies that we see even in the world that now is, every different seed having its different body given to it by the great Creator; all flesh being not the same flesh—men, beasts, birds, alike in having fleshly bodies, yet differing in the kind of flesh that their bodies are made of; there being also celestial bodies, such as the angels wear, and bodies terrestrial, differing at once in form and substance; differing, too, in the glory that surrounds them, even as the sun, the moon, the stars, the various inanimate bodies that the heavens contain, differ also in brightness from one another. Such in bodies animate and inanimate, in earth and heaven, is the marvelous variety that it has pleased the Creator to exhibit in his works. And are we to imagine, then, that this great power has exhausted itself in that which we now see? that no new form, no differing glory, shall be witnessed when those buried bodies of the saints arise?

Not so, saith the Apostle. In beautiful harmony with all that teeming diversity of earthly organizations, the glorified spirit shall at the resurrection have a glorified body prepared for it, differing not only in outward aspect but in many inward and essential qualities from that which it laid down in the grave. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. The contrast drawn out here is not between the body as it lies moldering in the tomb, but between the body as it now is, and the body as it hereafter is to be. It is sown in corruption, liable now to disease, subject to decay, ready to become the prey of putrefaction, consuming away like the moth, and saying to the worm that feeds on it, "Thou art my brother." It is raised in incorruption, relieved from all assaults of pain and sickness, open no more to decomposition, incorruptible and indestructible as the spirit to which it is to supply its apportioned and eternal home. It is sown in dishonor; vile, degraded, the seat and source of ignoble passions that link us with the brutes that perish, and too often even sink us below their level. It is raised in glory; the shame of all its former vileness buried in the grave, cleansed away by the humiliating processes of the tomb, made like unto that glorious body which sits, not in shadow, but shining with kindred brightness amid the splendors of the throne. It is sown in weakness; feeble of structure, irregular in action, limited in its range of power, easily fatigued, speedily exhausted, subject to continued waste, needing the daily repair and the nightly repose, often a heavy drag upon, at best an ally yielding but a limited assistance to the spirit. It is raised in power. All its powers enlarged, and made capable of unfatigued and uninterrupted exertion, old inlets of knowledge widened, new ones struck out, its range and reach of faculty on every side and in every way so expanded as to be the meet companion of the indwelling spirit, promptly yielding to all its impulses and bearing buoyantly that spirit on and up in its highest and its loftiest flights. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. Natural here, we see at once, cannot be equivalent to material, nor spiritual to immaterial. The one adjective must mean something that is peculiar to and characteristic of the body as it now is, the other of that body as at the resurrection it is to be. You find the substantive from which the first of these two adjectives is derived, and of whose meaning it partakes, in the verse that follows. The first man Adam was made a living soul. Turn that term soul into an adjective, and you have the word translated natural.

According to the notion of the ancients, adopted often in Holy Writ, man is composed of body, soul, and spirit; by the soul, when used in such connection, the lower faculties of his nature being understood, all those faculties, whether animal or intellectual, which link him to the present life, and make him as it were part and parcel of that material world in midst of which he dwells. His present body is one suited to such a soul as his now is — fitted by its senses, its organs, its appetites, its functions, to be the instrument of such a soul. It is — if one could venture upon such a literal rendering of the original word here—it is a soulish or soulical body, flesh and blood its chief constituents, sensuousness one of its prominent and prevailing qualities. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. Besides the body and the soul, there is a spirit in man, a part of him the highest of the whole, which links him with the infinite, the eternal, the future, the unseen, the God that made him, the life divine for which he was made. Of that spirit, lying dead or dormant in our humanity, Jesus is the great quickened, stirring it up to assert and exercise its prerogative of supremacy, giving to it a new object, and inspiring it with a new power. The spirit, quickened thus by the last Adam, has to struggle now with that body of sin and death in which it lodges. Burdened thus, it groans and travails thus in birth, waiting for the adoption, the redemption, the renewal of that body. Nor shall it wait and long in vain; for that which is sown a natural body shall be raised a spiritual body, its entire organization altered to meet a state in which there shall be no sickness, no suffering, no eating, no drinking, no hungering, no thirsting, no sleep, no night, no marrying or giving in marriage, no weakness, no weariness, no waste, no decay, no death; when redeemed spirits, enshrined in redeemed bodies, shall be as the angels of heaven.

What in their essence, in their structure, in their organism, in their functions, the future resurrection bodies of the saints shall be — called spiritual bodies here from their assimilation, their congruousness, their congeniality with the spiritualism within them and without them, the spiritualism of that not immaterial, but pure and holy, heavenly kingdom, over which God and the Lamb forever are to reign — it were vain for us to try to fancy. Even Paul could not describe them without being forced to employ an expression that to our ear savors of self contradiction. Did he himself not feel the large demand that he was making upon human faith when, having used that phrase, he repeated it with emphasis, saying, "There is a natural body — that all of you know; but there is also a spiritual body — that, too, however difficult you may find it to form anything like a definite conception of such a thing, let all of you believe, believe, assuredly, as one among the few things about the future state and future home of the redeemed that the Lord from heaven has been pleased for your encouragement and your comfort to reveal."

SEVEN

IN proof, or rather in illustration, of the statement that there is a natural body, Paul quotes a part of the seventh verse of the second chapter of Genesis, in which it is said, "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." The pertinence or propriety of this quotation (which as we read the passage in our English Bibles is sufficiently obscure) would at once have become apparent had there been in our language any adjective derived from the word soul, corresponding to spiritual derived from the word spirit. There is such an adjective in the language in which Paul wrote this Epistle, and it is it which has been rendered into the word natural as the one nearest to the meaning of the original term that our translators could think of. It is the very use, however, of such an indefinite and ambiguous expression which completely hides from our view the link which binds together the saying of the forty fourth verse with the quotation of the forty fifth. That link at once springs out to view, if we either construct an adjective for ourselves out of soul — such as "soulish" or "soulical" — or keep, in either case, the noun, and use it for the time in an adjective sense, rendering the saying of the forty fourth verse thus: There is a soulish body, and there is a spiritual body; or, There is a soul body and a spirit body; that is, there is a body — the present one — specially adapted to man as having that living soul, that spirit of life and intelligence which was breathed into him originally by his Creator; and there is to be another body—the future, the resurrection one, as specially adapted to man as a possessor of that higher life, that spirit of holiness, breathed into him by the regenerating Spirit. Such use as Paul here makes of the two words soul and spirit, and of the adjectives respectively formed from them, can be understood aright only by remembering that in his day it was the common opinion that man was made up of three different constituent elements, — body, soul, and spirit. Adopting that distinction, you find Paul offering up this petition for the Thessalonians: "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole body, soul, and spirit be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus."

With us now soul and spirit are used quite indiscriminately. Ignoring the distinction that the ancients made, we employ both these terms as equally applicable to the highest, the spiritual part of our nature. It was different with the Apostle. He speaks of the soul as of something different from the spirit,—something lower in its nature, linked now to a body congruous and congenial to itself. He speaks of the spirit as of something injected into this soul, a higher nature superinduced upon it, sinking into it, destined finally to absorb or sublime it into its own better, purer, holier being. As that soul, then, with all those instincts, appetites, impulses, capacities, affections, desires, emotions, which fit it for the present scene of things, has got in this body of flesh and blood an organ or instrument admirably adapted to its uses and ends, so he affirms shall the renewed, regenerated spirit be yet supplied with an organ or instrument of its own, as fully and exquisitely — or, let us say, still more fully and exquisitely adapted — to its higher, future, eternal life. There is the soul body now; there shall be that spirit body hereafter. Our soul being — or dropping that uncouth phrase, used only to let you as fully as possible into the meaning of the apostolic language—our natural being, he traces up to our first parent, derived from him by inheritance; our spiritual being he traces up to Jesus Christ, derived from him in an altogether different way. The first man Adam was made a living soul, and such a living soul as he got from his Creator, and turned it into by transgression, he has transmitted to all our race. The last Adam — the second great head or center of our humanity — is a quickening Spirit. Having life in himself, a life consummated in death, he became through that very death the spring and source of life to us — the life bringer, the life winner, the life partner, the life sustainer, the quickening spirit that touches the dead and inert mass of our earthly and ungodly humanity, and brings it under the law of that spirit of life in him which frees it from the law of sin and of death. •Planted in the likeness of his death, spiritually dead with Christ, in him we live, with him we rise to newness of life. We die with him unto sin, we live with him unto God; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead died no more, death hath no more dominion over him; for in that he died he died unto sin once, but in that he lives he lives unto God. With that new life, to which as the quickening Spirit he now begets us, our Lord himself has taught us closely and inseparably to connect the future resurrection of the body. Three times in that wonderful discourse in which he thrice described himself as the Bread of life, the source and support of our true and eternal life, Jesus alluded to the resurrection as the complement or completion of that life. "This," said he, "is the will of him that sent me, that every one which sees the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." "Whoso eats my flesh and drinks my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." Why this threefold repetition, that he will raise up every true believer in him again at the last day — why, but to assure us that it is the whole man that he hath undertaken to redeem? No part of him is to perish. The redemption of the body, its revivification, its reconstruction, the freeing it from all weakness and human corruptibility, the framing of it anew, the fitting of it to be meet ally and associate of the glorified spirit, the fashioning of it like unto the Lord's own glorious body, is part and parcel of that great work which, as the last Adam, the quickening spirit of our race, he hath undertaken, and which he will perfectly and illustriously accomplish.

Still more closely and still more strikingly were the life and the resurrection linked together in the discourse our Lord had with Martha in the neighborhood of that sepulcher in which his friend Lazarus lay sleeping, before the working of the last and greatest of his miracles. Let us try to enter into the meaning and design of that discourse. The weeping sisters had sent off a • message to Jesus. All that they had told their messenger to say to him was,—"Lord, behold, he whom thou loves is sick." No more they thought was needed to bring him instantly to Bethany. But their brother died, was already four days in the grave, and yet no appearance of their friend. At last, however, after that long and strange delay, his approach is announced. With that quick impetuosity that had before displayed itself in contrast with the deeper and less easily excited disposition of her sister, Martha goes forth to meet him. The sight of Jesus fills her heart with conflicting emotions. In his pitying look she read the same affection he had ever shown, yet had he not kept away from them in their hour of greatest need? She dared not reproach, for her confidence in him was not yet shaken. Yet she could not but feel what appeared to be a neglect. Above all such feelings the thought of her buried brother rose; the hope still lingers in her heart that the love and power of Jesus might find some way of restoring him. In

the tumult of her regret and confidence and grief and hope she gives utterance to her feelings in the simple but expressive language, " Lord, if thou has been here my brother had not died; but I know that even now whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee."

The reply of Jesus to this pathetic appeal seems almost to have been framed for the specific purpose of checking the hopes that were rising in Martha's breast. " Thy brother," he calmly said, "shall rise again" — words which, though they did not preclude the possibility of a present restoration, more naturally directed her expectation forward to the general resurrection of the dead. Such at least was their effect, as is evident from Martha's answer. " I know," she said, "that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." An answer expressive indeed of her full belief in the general resurrection of the dead, yet indicating most unmistakably something like disappointment at what Christ had said. Our Lord's object, however, had now been gained; Martha's thoughts for the moment were drawn away from the present and fixed upon the future, the hope of an immediate, exchanged for that of a distant though certain reunion. That future life, that resurrection of the dead, Jesus wished to teach her to connect with himself in a way that she never yet had done, and so, seizing the favorable opportunity he had created, he said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever lives and believeth in me shall never die." To that declaration the pointed question was annexed, " Believest thou this?" Had no truth been contained in what Christ had said beyond any to which Martha had already testified, no such question would have been put to her. Jesus did not need to ask her whether she believed in the resurrection generally. She had already made a full and unequivocal declaration of her faith therein. But his own personal peculiar connection with that event, its nature and its fruit — in these Martha had not expressed her faith, in them she needed to be instructed, and it was these that Jesus desired to unfold to her, and through her to us and to all men, when he said, " I am the resurrection and the life." To that resurrection and that life of which I speak, I stand in a much closer, more intimate relationship than that of their announcer, their confirmer, the presenter of the evidence in their favor in such a form as to obtain a secure and lasting hold for them upon human faith. "I am the life," in this sense that he who lives and believeth, that is, who lives by believing in me, shall never die, becomes partaker of a life continuous, uninterrupted, everlasting, a life which death cannot touch, over which death has no dominion, which the dissolution of the body affected but to raise, expand, exalt. "I am the resurrection" in this sense, that he that believeth in me, though he were dead, dead as to his body, though it were given up as a prey to corruption, yet even as to that body shall he live again, my resurrection securing his, the groundwork and the model of his; that quickening power which I exert within the soul of every true believer, not only quickening the inner spirit now to a new life of trust and love and holy service, but to be exerted also in the fashioning of that spiritual body, within which that new life is to realize its future growth, its undefined and everlasting expansion.

" Howbeit, that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural." The highest summit line of humanity is not to be attained at once; it would have violated the rule and order of the creation to have arranged it so. All through the past — that long, extended past, which we are but beginning now to survey—there has been progress, a slow but steady march onward and upward. Look at the dim pages which the skill of the geologist is enabling us imperfectly to decipher. What do those pages tell? This much — amidst the obscurity that still rests upon the misty records, this much at least is clear, that there has been all along a progression; first, the formless, lifeless earth, then the green herb springing forth, then the lower types or forms of being, species after species rising still in the scale of being, till at last man appears, the highest, the noblest, the most perfect of them all. But is that slow and orderly progression, which all through those bygone ages of vast incalculable length has been going on, to stop with the existing state of things? Is that great onward, upward movement, to halt there? Is that boundless future which lies before us to witness no carrying of it forward to other and yet higher issues? Apart from revelation, following alone the light that dimly flickers over the past, we might have believed that this race of men was, in its turn, to be deposited among the extinct species, to make room for another and still higher order of inhabitants.

But revelation here steps in to teach us (its teaching not out of harmony with the preceding history of the Creation as now laid bare to us) that the other and higher race for which this earth is to be prepared by its coming baptism of fire, is to be no other than the one which now inhabits it, raised, recast, made after another image, molded after a higher form, its present history the first stage of its development — a stage slowly and painfully described — with much of mixture, much of mystery about it, much of that restlessness and impatience, those groping and yearnings after something farther, higher, better, which betray an infancy at once of feebleness and power; thoughts, hopes, energies, hampered by the swaddling clothes that now confine them, stretching out to something that is beyond, trying to grasp that unknown future as holding in it what shall fill and satisfy. An otherwise well skilled naturalist, we are told, who had never seen a butterfly, from a bare examination of the mere structure of the caterpillar, the finding there the rudiments of another and higher organization, traces of an apparatus as yet unused, from watching its habits and instincts, would have been able to infer that it was not always to occupy that groveling tenement within which it crawls along. Not surely without some like internal tokens of some great resurrection yet awaiting it, is that whole creation which groans and travails in birth, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of the body.

Those deep instinctive longings of our nature which point to a lighter, happier, holier future, Christianity authenticates and confirms. Our state here is one preliminary, preparatory. Now, we all wear the image of the first Adam. A body of flesh and blood, animal in its instincts and organization, corruptible in its nature, doomed to dissolution: a soul sinful, unjust, impure, open to a thousand wayward influences, and as open to suffering as to sin, is what we all derive naturally, and as we may say necessarily, from him. The first man is of the earth, earthy; and as is the earthy, such are they also who are earthy. This worldliness of mind and heart, this clinging to the temporary, the transient, this laboring after the meat that perishes, this greedy feeding upon the husks of time, shows how fully we all bear the image of the earthy. But "the second man is the Lord from heaven," not earthborn or earthy. He came from heaven, bearing heaven's own love and purity and holiness along with him.

Forasmuch, indeed, as the lost children he came to seek and save are partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise himself took part of the same; but he became partaker of our human nature that he might make us partakers of the divine. He bore the image of the earthy, took on him our nature, that out of it he might construct a seal wherewith to stamp upon that nature an image of the divine. Earthy as we all are, earthy none of us need remain. We have but to turn in loving trust to him, the Lord from heaven, who lived and died for us on earth, who lives and reigns for us in heaven, and the veil of earthliness that now hangs thick and heavy upon our heart, which now obscures our vision, shall be taken away, and beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, we shall be " changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord."

This change of the earthy into the heavenly is here only begun. It is but a dim faint image of the Savior that is here impressed upon any human spirit. Two things prevent it being ever here otherwise than most imperfect: the nature of the materials upon which it has to be impressed, and the comparative weakness of that instrumentality by which the impression is to be made. It is not the destruction of one nature in us, nor the creation of another in its stead, that we look for through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus our Lord; it is the renewal of our existing nature after his divine likeness; it is the reformation of our character after that divine model. Now, character is by its very nature a thing that will not, that cannot be forced. A man may undergo an immediate and entire change in his judicial state before his Maker, may have all his sins forgiven, be fully reconciled to God, but an immediate and entire change of character is never effected in a moment, it is a thing of growth. A great, what we may rightly call a radical, revolution in character, may and must accompany that great crisis in his religious history when any one truly and heartily turned to the Lord, and yields himself up in true devotion to his Savior; but that revolution, while involving a change in the government, does not involve the rejection of all the old inhabitants of the soul nor the stripping them of all their ancient power. When we think then how many and how strong those passions of our nature are — its pride, its selfishness, its vanity, its worldliness, upon which, as it were repressed and subdued, that image of the meek and the lowly one, the loving and the dutiful and the holy is to be inscribed, need we wonder that the image is so blurred and broken?

Besides, it is by the adoring, loving, sympathetic contemplation of all the divine excellencies that dwell in Jesus that we imbibe these excellencies and are changed into his image. It is not by taking that portrait of the Redeemer hung up for us in the four Gospels, and trying to copy it, that we succeed. Moral and spiritual virtues are not things that you can copy thus. There is no artistic skill whatever that can gift you with the power of making them in that way your own. The only real and true imitation of Christ is that which springs, not from the attempt to imitate, but from love, from loving communion, from fellowship with him acting insensibly by its own silent unconscious power molding the loving into the likeness of the loved, molding the companion into that of the friend with whom he lives. But such love to, such affectionate intercourse with Christ, depends to a large degree upon the clearness and fulness of our knowledge of him, the power and the vividness of our faith. And these being so imperfect as they are with all of us, correspondingly imperfect must be the transcription of the Lord's image into our souls. But let us not despair. If, liable to all drawbacks, marred by all imperfections, that blessed work be indeed begun; if even upon the rude, rough, turbulent materials which such hearts as ours present, that holy image of Jesus has begun to be formed, then let us be assured that as fully and as perfectly as we ever bore the image of the earthy, the image of the heavenly shall yet be borne by us; for though we know not what we shall be hereafter, we do know this, that when he shall appear we shall then be like him, for we shall see him as he is, body, soul, and spirit, all then transformed, transfigured; this very dull opaque corporeal frame wrought into the same image, radiant with the same glory, the whole man raised up to meet the Lord at his coming, and by that seeing of him as he is, to be translated into his likeness. Our very flesh then may rest in hope, for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him at his coming. And if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in us, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in us.

SEVEN

PHYSIOLOGISTS tell us that during life the human body is undergoing a continued process of waste and of repair — the old material passing away and fresh material coming in its stead. So rapid is this process that it is conjectured — seemingly upon good and sufficient grounds — that a youthful and actively exercised body changes almost its entire substance in the course of a few years. So far, therefore, as the material particles of which it is composed are concerned, the body that we now have is not the same that we had some years before. In the course of an ordinary lifetime we may be said to have had many bodies — the materials of which they were composed, derived from a multitude of external sources, some of them, it may be, from other human bodies of which they once had formed a part — these materials again having served their temporary purpose within our frame, in due time thrown off, passing into the air or earth, becoming the food of plants and animals, to be reappropriated, perhaps reassimilated by our own or other human bodies — a perpetual and endless circulation of the particles which constitute our living bodies thus going on.

After death, again, the body that we bury in the grave, if left there to the natural process of decay, rapidly decomposes, sublimed into the air, or incorporated in the soil — taking new forms, entering into new combinations, slowly or more rapidly; its entire substance finding its way once more into that evermoving, ever circulating tide which, carrying its constituent elements in such different directions, lodges portions, doubtless, in other living frames, which other human spirits in course of time inhabit. Could we look, then, into all the million upon million graves that have closed upon their tenants since this earth first took into its keeping the body of the murdered Abel, we should find many of them utterly empty — not an atom of the dust or ashes there, into which the bones of the buried had crumbled. And could we, gifted with a power enabling us to do so, track the path and mark the history of all the particles that had once belonged to buried human bodies—what strange vicissitudes of fortune should we have to note,

what wide and distant journeyings through the air and over earth have many of them taken — to what curious new homes have many of them been conveyed — what mean or what honorable functions in the great laboratory of nature have many of them been discharging! And where are they all now? and what are they all now doing?

It comes to our remembrance, also, how many bodies of the dead never were entombed. The waters of the deluge swept a whole generation away, giving them up to be devoured by the monsters of the deep, or floating them hither and thither till they melted away amid the dissolving elements that encompassed them. There have been countries and ages in which the dead were burned, not buried. And those consuming fires, which did their work so rapidly, how widely did they at the same time disperse those elements that passed away in smoke and flame out into the circumambient air. Had we been asked, then, as part of our Christian faith, to believe that it shall be literally the very body that we now inhabit which shall be raised again at the resurrection on the last day; the same body — it might be modified or altered in its organization — yet reconstructed from the very same substance of which it had originally been composed; — in that case, how many curious questions, how many grave difficulties might suggest themselves! Of the many bodies which a man has worn in the course of a long lifetime, which of them is it that is to supply the materials out of which the resurrection body is to be framed? The one, let it be said, in which he died; but then there are materials there equally belonging to other bodies, buried before or buried afterwards: which of all the bodies shall have the right to claim them as its own? It is singular to find so great a man as Augustine busying himself with this very question, and determining it by saying that the flesh in question shall be restored to the man in whom it first became human flesh, like borrowed money, as he says, to be returned to him from whom it had been taken. But to effect this — to restore all to the first proprietors — what mutilation would ensue of those fabrics out of which all borrowed materials had to be taken, rendering it literally impossible that it could be the identical body that was buried that should be raised again!

Perplexed and embarrassed with questions and, difficulties of this kind, which will arise and force themselves upon our thoughts so long as we cherish the imagination that it is the identical body which we bury that is to be raised again, we turn to the sacred Scriptures to ascertain from them what it is upon the subject of the resurrection that we are called upon to believe. As it is wholly to that revelation from God which these Scriptures contain that we are indebted for any knowledge of the resurrection of the dead, so ought we to receive implicitly whatever the announcements of that revelation be. Turning, then, to that passage which is now before us, which contains the fullest and most explicit utterance upon this particular topic in the entire Bible, we find the imaginary objector who puts the question, "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" met at the very outset by a stern rebuke — "Thou fool!" — thy question is not of ignorance simply craving enlightenment — an enlightenment that may be given. Thy question is one of folly, and springs out of a false conception of the very nature of the resurrection — as if that resurrection meant the gathering together of all the material substances, consigned by the hand of death to the tomb, and reconstructing them again into the same kind of living bodies of flesh and blood which once they formed. The question is one of folly, too, as springing from a vain endeavor to form a fuller and more distinct conception of the mode and form of that future life into which the resurrection is to introduce us than is at all possible in this present state to do.

Still further to rebuke this folly — the Apostle distinctly states — it is indeed the only piece of positive information that he conveys — that the body which is to be raised is not to be the same body as was buried. It is to be as different from it as the seed which corrupts beneath the sod is from the blade and stem and leaf and flower and fruit which spring out of it. And why should it be thought wonderful that out of death a new life should spring, when we have in nature before our eyes such wonderful transformations in the vegetable and the insect worlds? Why should it be thought a wonderful thing that the new body, with which the soul in its new estate is to be clothed, should be a very different kind of body from what it wore before, when we have before us thus in nature such an endless variety of bodies of all kinds — as if in the exuberance of his creative power, the Almighty delighted to spread out innumerable specimens of diversity, in form and qualities and functions, in the bodies celestial and terrestrial which his hand hath formed. Has that abounding, overflowing energy of the Great Creator expended, exhausted itself in things as they now are? Are no further, no higher, illustrations and exhibitions of itself to be made in that new stage and state of things towards which our present mundane economy is progressing? If so great a change is coming as that these heavens and this earth are to undergo some mighty revolution, and to be transformed into the new heavens and new earth, wherein righteousness is to reign with undivided empire, might we not expect that the redeemed, ennobled, purified spirits that are to dwell upon that new earth and beneath those new heavens shall be wedded to corporeal frames of a constitution very different from that of our earthly bodies? And so the Apostle teaches us it is to be: the weakness, the dishonor, the corruptibility of the present body to be exchanged for the power, the glory, the incorruptibility of a body so very different from the present, that to express that difference the Apostle has to make use of language bordering upon the self contradictory, and to call it, as distinguished from the existing one, a spiritual body.

It were to expose ourselves afresh to that very rebuke which the Apostle has already administered, were we to inquire too curiously what kind of body can that spiritual one be. The Apostle himself has described it chiefly by negatives. It is not to be of flesh and blood; it is not to have that animal organization which fits our present form for its present life. That feebleness, that vileness, that exposure to death and to decomposition which characterize the natural body, the spiritual one is fully and forever to throw off. But in what way its powers, its bodily powers (for still, however refined the materialism, it is to be a body), are to be enhanced, enlarged — in what way its shame is to be changed into such a glory that it shall shine forth as the stars in the firmament — in what way it is to bid an eternal defiance to the assaults of death, the inroads of corruption — this it is impossible for us now to know. Nevertheless, to encourage here our faith, and enlarge and deepen the expectations of those hopes with which our eyes should be turned towards that wonderful future which awaited us, let us take that knowledge of the outward creation which we derive through our existing senses, and just imagine by what slight changes in the senses themselves, or in those

physical arrangements of the external world to which they are adapted, a whole new world of things might burst upon our astonished sight. Regarded as the five gateways, or inlets, through which there is conveyed to the mind within all the knowledge that it possesses of the substance and forms and qualities of all the material objects that lie without, our present senses are subject to obvious limitations, which we may fairly enough conceive shall hereafter either be widened or removed. It is but a partial acquaintance, even with that quality of matter which it is its special function to reveal, that each of our senses conveys to us. It is, for instance, but a limited range of sounds that the human ear takes in and can distinguish. Below the faintest sound that it can catch, what a multitude of sounds there are which, upon a finer and more delicate organ, might fall with perfect distinctness! And above the loudest which it can appreciate — above that point, where that sound becomes mere stunning undistinguishable noise — what full, articulated notes of power and melody may there be which a larger and more vigorous organ might take in! The same is true even to a greater extent with our present sense of sight. How few of the rays of light that pour in upon the body from all directions does the eye admit! How careful it is to guard against too large an admission of them! At this inlet we hold converse with the material world very much as the inhabitants of a besieged city hold converse with those without, opening cautiously the gate, and allowing but few to enter at a time. Give the human eye a wider scope, give it a quicker, keener, more piercing vision, and objects that are now opaque would become transparent — we should be able to see into, to see quite through, substances that now wrap their inner recesses and all that goes on there in thick, impenetrable darkness from our eyes; for wherever light is — and this subtle element penetrates far farther than we now can follow it — the eye might be made to see it, and it is quite incalculable what an addition to our knowledge might come simply and directly out of an enlargement of the power of vision. A simple inspection might reveal to us the structure of many bodies — might explain to us the changes which take place by the intermixture and combination of different bodies, which our imperfect chemistry is yet laboring to unfold.

Suppose, then, our five senses to remain in number and nature as they are, and the world that they connect us with to remain even as it now is, what volumes of new intelligence might be poured in upon the outlooking spirit purely and simply by the widening of each of those five gateways at which it sits! Results still more wonderful might be brought about, at a very slight expense of creative power, by a very slight alteration of the existing structure and laws of the material creation. We communicate with one another here upon this earth by means of speech, and as it is only at present needful and desirable that we should do so at very limited distances, it is but a small circle of the space around it that the human voice can fill so as to be distinctly audible at its outer edge. Beyond that the sound dies away and is lost. This arises, not from the feebleness of an organ alone, but chiefly from the air being comparatively so dull and sluggish a medium for conveying sound. We know at least of other mediums which are far more careful of any movements committed to them, which do not suffer them to be soon dissipated and lost, which transmit them with far greater velocity. The medium or element, for instance, through which that motion which constitutes light passes, is of this nature. Light travels through that medium six hundred and eighty times quicker than sound does. It takes but a few minutes to come to us from the sun. Now, let us only conceive, that instead of having a vehicle which can carry its passengers so short a way and at comparatively so slow a pace, sound had a vehicle as ethereal and elastic as light has — let us conceive that instead of there being a difference between them there were a sameness, that the Almighty so ordered it, as he so easily could, that the sound of a human voice could travel side by side with a sunbeam. Uttered this moment upon earth, it could be heard a few moments afterwards among the stars. Let the Creator of all things make but this single and simple change, then at once within easy reach of each other would the inhabitants of the most distant worlds be placed, and, had they but a common language, could just as easily converse across the vast fields of space as we can here converse across the breadth of a few hundred yards; question and answer might pass to and fro; and one hour's such converse, to how many questions which have occupied the most thoughtful men for centuries would it furnish a reply!

Further still: it is only of some of the qualities of outward things (those that it was most needful or desirable that we should be now acquainted with) that our present senses give us information. That these outward objects, however, are endowed with other qualities that go largely to affect their movements and action upon one another, is made continually evident to the student of physical science. He is constantly falling in with evidence addressed to his existing senses, which goes to prove the presence and agency of influences which he cannot sensibly perceive, but which might at once and patently reveal themselves to some new sense with which he is not yet endowed. Behind all that we now see or can now discover of the material universe, let us believe there lie a whole host of wonders that await the day of revelation, and which, when once unfolded, shall offer at once full and beautiful explanations of difficulties that now perplex, and phenomena that we now fail to interpret. In illustration of what that not only possible but even probable experience is which is in reserve for us when one or more senses are added to those which we already possess, let us conceive that our species had originally been created with all the senses that we now have but one — the sense of sight; that without the faintest conception of the existence of such an element as light, or of the objects that lie without and around us being in any other way perceptible than by their tangible properties, by the sounds and scents and tastes which they emitted, race after race of mankind had grown up to maturity. Upon that world of the blind the sun would rise and set as he now does: his presence or absence marked to them by no other token than an increase or decrease of the warmth of that element in which they lived — alternatives of temperature coming and going they knew not how or why. Of some of those lesser elevations of the earth's surface, which they conveniently could climb and cross in different directions, they might form some accurate enough conception; but of the fair full rounded surface of our globe, with all its lofty mountain peaks and all its widespread oceans, no image could ever enter into their minds, while of all that region, the cloudland and the star land that lies around our globe, they would remain in utter ignorance.

Just conceive, then, what a change it would be to such a world of the blind, all at once and by one fiat of the Almighty, to be invested with that one new sense of vision. What fresh acquaintance would they form with many an object of old familiar but imperfect knowledge! Those stately trees that sheltered their dwellings, up among whose branches they had climbed with an eager

yet baffled curiosity to know how far up they stretched, now stand revealed in their full stature, their topmost branches waving to the breeze. Those hills and valleys that lay around them, of whose full contour and appearance they had formed but a rude conception, now lie open to them, clad in all that many colored mantle which those who looked on it for the first time would know better how to admire than we often do; whilst overhead the deep blue sky, and the glorious sun by day, and the moon and stars by night, would be gazed upon with a rapture of delight. How many an old perplexity would be now at once removed! They had had their speculations about those regular alternations of heat and cold — speculations not less ingenious perhaps, nor less true than many which we now are harboring; but now they have simply to look upon that returning day and night — that appearing and disappearing of the orb of day, and, like a dream of the night, all those old speculations vanish. They had been often troubled about certain sounds whose origin they could not discover, but now the objects from which they issue are laid bare to the perception — the mystery of their birth is at once cleared up.

I have asked you to imagine such a gift bestowed upon a world whose inhabitants had been all born blind, only to help you to a clearer conception and a more vivid anticipation of it, that we ourselves may be on the eve of a transition in regard to our knowledge of the external world as great — it may be a thousandfold greater — than that which I have attempted to describe; and knowing as we do that even now there are inferior tribes of the animal creation endowed with senses that put that within the reach of their discernment of which we are profoundly ignorant — knowing as we do that there are occult agencies that are playing a most important part in the great laboratory of nature which could be just as easily made palpable to us as those which our existing senses grasp — believing, as we do, that the future, the spiritual body of the resurrection shall excel in all needful properties that which we now are tenanted, — is it to be held as without the bounds of a rational conjecture — and we offer it as nothing more — that we, like our fancied race of the blind, are walking in the midst of unknown wonders, more things truly in heaven and earth than our philosophy has ever dreamt of — these waters of the deep — these hills and valleys — these overarching skies, or if it be assumed that these are all to pass away — those new heavens and that new earth with which the new clothed children of the resurrection shall be conversant, having tales to tell us which they but wait the bestowing upon us of the appropriate organ to unfold?

Its clearer, fuller converse with the material universe is but the first and lowest point of distinction and superiority of the body that is yet to be, over the body that now is. That distinction and superiority is to lie mainly and essentially — in the one being what Paul characterizes here as a natural body, a body in which the principle or spirit of the animal or earthly life naturally predominates; and in the other being a spiritual body — that in which the principle and spirit of that higher life to which in Christ the true believer is begotten, reigns and rules.

NINE

THE first of these verses, which is obviously a hinge or turning point in the discourse, may either be taken as a conclusion to the verses which precede, or a preface to those which follow. Regarded in the first of these lights, it states a reason why it is that the natural body must be transmuted into the spiritual — why it is that we who have borne the image of the earthy must bear the image of the heavenly. Regarded in the second of these lights, it states a reason why it is that even those bodies that have never passed through the corrupting, though renewing, processes of death and the grave; must nevertheless undergo a change equivalent to that effected by such passage. It might readily enough have occurred to some, to whom Paul was writing about the great change that death was to work upon the natural body, that there would be those — the generation, namely, living at the time of the resurrection — whose very position would exempt them from the action of death. Would they not carry with them into the future state their present bodies? No. The apostle says such bodies cannot inherit that kingdom. So absolutely necessary is a change, that if the ordinary, the established agency of dissolution and corruption be escaped, the divine power shall find some other way of effecting it. Behold, I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep — not all die, but we shall all — must all be changed.

In asserting as he here does so emphatically the absolute impossibility of bodies such as ours now are inheriting the kingdom of heaven, the apostle could not have in view the sinfulness or moral corruption with which to so large an extent those bodies are now stained. Nothing so obviously true in itself; which no one would or could have disputed, and nothing so entirely irrelevant to the argument which he was conducting, could have been meant by him. It must be to something else than to the defilement which our nature has contracted by transgression, and which extends to the body as well as to the soul, that the apostle alludes as containing and creating the impossibility of which he speaks. That impossibility might have a twofold source. It might either spring from the physical incapacity of bodies constituted as ours now are, being the adequate material mediums or instruments for the soul in the new position, amid the altered condition of the material creation around, in which, after the resurrection, we are to be placed; or it might spring from another and deeper incapacity, their unfitness to bear that spiritual illumination, to bear that light, to sustain that exceeding great and eternal weight of glory with which the heritage of the kingdom is to be accompanied. In other words, it might be either a physical or a spiritual impediment which lay in the way of flesh and blood like ours inheriting that kingdom. Both of them, we have reason to believe, shall exist, and both shall go to make up that obstruction which stands in the way of our existing bodies fulfilling the functions, serving the ends, realizing the full weight and measure of that light, and glory, and blessedness hereafter in store for the redeemed. One of the most easily perceived and apprehended elements of such a physical inaptitude as that affirmed here, is that which the apostle specifies when he says, "Neither can corruption inherit incorruption." It is to be an immutable, an immortal condition upon which at and after the resurrection the spirits of the ransomed are to enter. Not to speak then of its imperfections in other respects, the liability to corruption, which attaches to the earthly house of this fleshly tabernacle that we now inhabit, would of itself utterly unfit it for being the future and eternal mansion of the soul.

What and how much of disqualification beyond that — both natural and spiritual — there may be, rendering our present bodies incompetent for those services that the spirit shall then require at the hands of its bodily ally, we cannot tell. To be able to do so we should require to have the two estates — the present and the future — before our eyes, so that we could mark exactly and fully the differences between them, and see thereby how great the change needing to be effected — how great the difference requiring to be realized between the natural and the spiritual body, to fit the latter for that coming state of things into which it is to fit as a congruous and harmonious part. Here, however, the information which Scripture gives us is very limited: indeed, it will at once upon reflection become apparent that it would not be possible to convey to us beforehand anything like a full or adequate conception of the changes, outward and in ward, that the great day of the resurrection is to bring along with it. Our eye turns, however, with a natural and not blamable curiosity upon such information as the Bible does give us here, in the hope that glimpses may be got of that better land in which the happy and glorified eternity of the redeemed is to be spent. In studying the Scriptures with this view — carefully and impartially — we find ourselves soon forced to give up the idea of a heaven hung up mysteriously in the midair, itself as airy and unsubstantial in its form and structure as the medium in which it is fancied to float — its shadowy inhabitants flitting like thin bright ghosts before our eyes. It is, I apprehend, from those earlier visions of the Apocalypse — from those openings of the door, those sights of the throne, and the four and twenty seats, and the angels, and the elders, and the living creatures, and the white robed, 'palm bearing host, and the harpers with their lofty hymns of praise, that many persons' notions of heaven are chiefly borrowed. Nor are they wrong in taking up the representations given in these visions of the position and services of the redeemed as faithful types and patterns of the destiny in reserve for those who at death do immediately pass into glory — of the adoration and praises which throughout eternity shall be ascending from their lips encompassing the throne.

But it should ever be remembered by us in reading these first chapters of the Book of Revelation that even granting — what few intelligent readers would admit — that the pictures given in these visions of the place and circumstances and outward condition of the redeemed were strictly and literally true, yet still they contain but a description of the state of disembodied spirits during that intermediate period which intervenes between death and the resurrection. They tell us nothing of that state which is to follow upon the resurrection, when, invested once again with a material framework, the spirit shall be fitted to renew its intercourse with material things. Where and under what new external conditions and accompaniments shall that state — the true heaven of our hopes — be realized? Shall it be under these new heavens and upon that new earth which shall spring forth — when that great physical catastrophe which the Bible represents as taking place contemporaneously with the resurrection and the judgment — shall have done its work and having passed through the changes that then await it — this world which is now our home shall have sunk back into quiet and repose? We turn to those passages in the Bible in which that catastrophe and its issues are hinted at or described in hope to find there some answer to such questions. Great caution in examining the Scripture testimony upon this subject is undoubtedly required, for beside that last great day of judgment when the present economy is to be wound up, and the existing order of the visible creation is to terminate, there have been or there are yet to be many other days of judgment — many days of the coming of the Son of Man — many days of the outpouring of the vials of the divine displeasure upon our globe, that have been made the subjects of prophetic announcement in the Bible, and which have been spoken of there in such a way that we are very apt to confound them with that last and closing day of all. These days are described in that figurative language in which so much of prophecy has been wisely veiled. It belongs to the idiom of that language to describe signal changes or revolutions in civil or ecclesiastical affairs by great physical commotions upon the earth or among the heavenly bodies.

Hence a double error may be committed by us — we may apply to the world's last day of judgment a description that properly and alone belongs to some quite different and antecedent event, and we may take as literal that which is purely and entirely figurative. Take, for instance, the following prophetic announcements extracted from the pages of Isaiah, Ch. 13 and 24, and Ezekiel, Ch. 32: — "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and with fierce anger; for the stars of heaven shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place." "The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage: the earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly." — "And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heavens, and make the day thereof dark. I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord."

These three descriptions are taken out of prophecies that refer respectively to the cities of Babylon, and Tyre, and Egypt, — prophecies that have been long since fulfilled in the downfall and ruin of the communities to which they refer. They are good specimens of the figurative style of language in which such prophecies were couched — the shaking 'or dissolving of the earth representing some heavy calamity lighting upon the great mass of the people occupying the ground floor; the darkness and disappearance of the lights of heaven representing the downfall of the princes or rulers who shone as stars in the firmament of society. No one who reads the entire prophecies from which the passages I have quoted are taken ever thinks of interpreting these passages literally, or imagines that there was a literal fulfilment of them. There are others, however, of a precisely similar character which do not so immediately announce their own meaning, or are so, immediately surrounded with safeguards against misunderstanding or misapplication, among which will be found some of those descriptions which have been taken up and are popularly employed as descriptive of what is to take place at the resurrection, when the judgment shall be set and the books shall be opened — passages notwithstanding which belong to prophecies that have no relation to the day of final judgment, and which detail incidents that we have no Scripture warrant whatever for believing shall on that day occur. Such, for instance, as Isaiah 34. 4: "And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falls off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree." Joel: "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come." "Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the

valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining; the heavens and the earth shall shake." Whatever these prophecies allude to, it is quite certain that they do not allude to the incidents of the resurrection day. One other passage of a like kind I shall quote from the sixth chapter of Revelation — one which beyond all doubt, and according to all methods of interpreting that mysterious portion of the sacred Scriptures, refers to some occurrence in the current history of the world, and not at all to the closing scene of that history: — " And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

But are there no passages in the Bible which do undoubtedly refer to the great day of judgment, and which tell us, not in any figurative or ambiguous phrases, but plainly and simply, what the physical changes in the material creation are which are then to be effected? There are a few such passages; by far the clearest and fullest and most explicit of them all being that contained in the third chapter of the second Epistle General of Peter. A careful comparison of those passages with that other set — specimens of which have been already given to you — conducts us to the striking and instructive conclusion that it is in the former alone — i.e. in the prophetic descriptions of judgment to be executed previous to the great closing catastrophe — that allusions are made to changes in the sun and moon and heavenly bodies. In the latter that catastrophe is limited to the heavens and the earth, not necessarily implying more, according to the Jewish usage of the terms, than that it was to affect — this globe and its firmament of air — those atmospheric heavens that encompass it. One experiences something like relief in ascertaining from a diligent examination of the Bible itself, that whatever be the physical changes that are to occur when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall all be raised, it is not in a single instance said that these changes are to extend beyond these limits. We know now how small, how insignificant an orb our planet is as compared even with many of the companion planets that roll with it around the sun. We know that all these planets would need to be brought together and multiplied manifold to make up a mass equal in magnitude to our sun. We know that the sun of our system is but one of that vast host of equal or immensely larger orbs, wherewith the space around us, even to the utmost range of its visible limits, is peopled. It might have seemed somewhat strange to us to have been told that at that time, upon that day when all the inhabitants of the earth are to be summoned before the judgment throne of the Eternal, and when as a consequence or accompaniment thereof this solid globe was to be burnt up and destroyed, that a like desolating ruin was to sweep across those thickly peopled fields of space above and around us; that the kindling of the consuming blaze in this small and distant orb was to be, as it were, the signal at which star after star was to be lighted, and far and wide the conflagration was to spread, till the desolating flames wrapped the whole existing universe in their embrace. The revelation given us in the Bible asks us to believe in no such catastrophe as signaling the resurrection day. It does tell us, indeed, that all things shall not continue as they have been — that this heaven and this earth of ours shall wax old like a garment, and as a vesture they shall be changed; it tells us that from the face of him who is to sit upon the great white throne, the earth and the heaven are to flee away and no place to be found for them; it tells us that the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.

Strong as such expressions are, they do not imply that this world is to be annihilated — blotted out of the map of the creation. That of itself would have been no great event. In these thick strewed fields of space the disappearance of a world like ours would be no more than the fall of a single leaf in the widest, densest forest of our globe. Old stars, we know, have already disappeared, and new ones have shone forth, going and coming we know not how. But neither are we asked to believe in the Bible that such a going out into nothingness awaits our earth. The strongest expression employed there is that in which it is said that the heavens and the earth shall perish, yet that is the very word employed by the Apostle to describe the past catastrophe of the flood when comparing it with the future catastrophe of the judgment day; the world that then was, he says, being overflowed with water, perished. It is only in like manner that the world that now is to perish by fire. As of old, after all the changes that the overlapping waters made, this earth came forth — with altered face indeed, but of materials and general organization the same; even so, after all the changes that the all-enwrapping flames may effect, it may once more emerge, the same but different, — its old materials all wrought up into that new structure which is to survive the conflagration. We may well believe, indeed, that its future baptism with fire shall make some inner deeper changes than the baptism with water did. The one only cleansed the old polluted surface of the globe, the other may cleanse the very elements themselves of which it is made, and fit them for other combinations and other ends. The laver of water only cut the outer surface into other forms, but that broad strong tongue of flame, having its root in those vast hidden magazines of heat that we know the earth already holds within its bowels, may seize upon the outer material framework of our earth, altering it and molding it at will.

Who shall tell us, then, what these new heavens and that new earth shall be which may thus be constructed? Who shall say that they shall not be fashioned so as to furnish the fit and suitable abodes of the blessed — of the raised, the reembodyed, the glorified spirits of our race? It is not its materialism which unfits this world, even as it now is, from becoming the eternal home of the redeemed. What we want in order to turn earth into heaven, is not to have brighter skies above us, or lovelier landscapes around us; the skies are bright enough, the landscapes lovely enough, for beings a thousand times holier and a thousand times happier than we. Nor would any outward change whatever bring the unforgiven, the unaccepted, the unredeemed sinners of our race a step nearer to the true heaven. That heaven we desire ever to remember is a condition rather than a place, an inner state of the soul rather than an outward habitation for the body. Nevertheless a correspondence shall exist between the sinless, purified, exalted estate of the redeemed hereafter and that material habitation which shall be prepared for them.

And if— while not greatly different from what it now is — even this very world on which we tread was once looked upon by God himself and declared to be so good, deemed no unfit abode for one made in the Divine image — if, even as it is now, it has been visited by the Eternal Son of the Father, who deigned to walk across its fields and sail across its lakes, and to lay him down to slumber upon its mountain sides — may it not be made the most becoming theatre for that great consummation, when — the dead all raised again and the living changed — that multitude which no man can number shall enter upon the full possession of that kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of this earth!

Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness! Seeing that we look for those new heavens and that new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, let us be diligent that we may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.

TEN

BEHOLD, I show you a mystery — not a mystery in the sense in which we now ordinarily use that term — not a thing obscure, perplexing, hard to be understood, but a mystery in the sense in which the word is so often used in the New Testament, a thing that had previously been kept secret, that lay hidden from human eyes, which man could not have discovered, but which God.

has been pleased to reveal. Such is the information which Paul here gives as to the world's last day. That information he neither received from man, nor could have gotten otherwise than by direct revelation from God. He only, the author of that future, can tell us what that future is to be. What and how much about that Judgment Day we are now to know, it lies with him wholly to decide, for not a single ray of light can fall upon that event but what comes immediately from himself. And looking at the kind and amount of the information that it has pleased him to convey to us in the Holy Scriptures, we are struck with the absence of anything like extended or detailed description. Of all the topics within the range of revelation, none could have presented more materials for exciting and gratifying the wonder and curiosity of mankind. Imposture could have found no difficulty in framing a full length picture out of these materials, enthusiasm could scarcely have escaped the attempt to do so. The passages in the Bible, however, are but few in which anything like a detailed description of the incidents of the Judgment Day is given us. Of the great fact itself, that the Lord hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, we are frequently and earnestly reminded. But of the mode or outer circumstances of the event comparatively little is revealed. Nearly all that is told us in the Scriptures is comprised in four passages: Matt. 25. 31-46; 1 Thess. 4. 13-18; Rev. 20. 11-15; and 2 Peter 3 — a chapter to which we are inclined to attach the greater importance, as it is so purely didactical in its character, so devoid of all figures and symbols, the introduction of which into the language of the prophetic Scriptures makes them necessarily, as they are designedly, obscure.

One leading feature of the great day of reckoning — the one perhaps more than any other pressed upon our regard in Holy Writ — shall be its suddenness, its unexpectedness, the world's unpreparedness for it. It is to come as a thief in the night. It is to take the world by surprise. One cannot help often fancying to what a sharp, abrupt, and awful close the busy movements of the busy world shall then be brought. The day before its last shall see them all going on as usual. Over one half the globe its inhabitants shall be eating and drinking, buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage; the merchant in the marketplace calculating his gains; the scholar at his desk poring over the ancient page; the reapers in the field plying their harvest task. And there in the quiet churchyard a group shall have gathered round the last grave, the coffin shall have been lowered down into it, and the sexton have grasped the shovel to cover up the dead. Over the other half of the globe its inhabitants shall have laid themselves down to rest; and the merchant shall be dreaming there of the gains that tomorrow's sales are to realize; and the politician shall be dreaming of the measure that tomorrow, in the senate house, he is to propose, of the oration that tomorrow he is to deliver; and bright visions of many happy days to come shall be haunting many a youthful slumberer's fancy; and the ballroom and the banquet room shall have hung out their glittering lights, and spread their inviting tables, and the smile, and the dance, the ringing laugh, and the jovial song, shall all be there. Just then, without a herald sent, or note of warning given, the Son of Man shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God. That trumpet call of heaven shall span at once the globe, and be heard the same moment at either pole. At its summons the million sleepers of the earth shall all start up from their last repose, their dreaming of earthly tomorrows all cut short. A shivering terror, like that which filled Belshazzar's hall, shall run through the ballroom and the banquet room, and the jest half uttered, the song half sung, they shall stare upon one another there in pale affright. In the busy marketplace the buyer shall forget the price he offered — the seller the price he asked. At his desk the pen shall drop from the writer's hand. The reapers shall fling the gathered sheaves from their hands. And in that quiet churchyard the group around the grave shall be convulsed with wonder, as the coffin bursts and the dead man springs to life and stands up by their side.

For that trumpet call of heaven shall do more than waken all the sleeping and arrest all the living inhabitants of the globe. It shall go where sound never went before — it shall do what sound never did. It shall pierce the stony monument; it shall penetrate the grassy mound — far down through many a fathom of the ebbing waters shall it make its way — over the deep bed of ocean shall it roll — and the sea shall give up at once the dead that are in it, and the earth the dead that are there. And all the dead, small and great, shall arise. And in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, by the forthgoing of one fiat of the Omnipotent, over all the vast congregation of the living with which that still vaster congregation of the dead is to mingle — over all the bodies of the living a change shall pass that shall make them like to those new bodies of the raised. And all shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, temporarily uplifted above those fires by which the world that now is, and all these its present works, are

to be burnt up. And the vast company as it rises from the earth shall meet another, perhaps vaster company descending from the skies. For he who shall that day come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, shall come with all his holy angels with him; and there too shall be those angels that lost their first estate, and who had been reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day: heaven, earth, hell — coming thus for once together — that out of that intervening earth, heaven and hell might gather all that each could claim as its own, and then, with a contrast heightened by that one meeting, part for ever.

We might follow this description the few steps further that the Scripture statements enable us to take; but already we have passed beyond the point at which the Apostle in this fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians stops. The trumpet, he says, shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we, the living, shall be changed, for as flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. And so when universally — as to the entire innumerable hosts of the Lord's redeemed, whether by the slow process of the sepulcher, or by one momentous change — this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory." Then shall the ancient prophecy of Isaiah, "He will swallow up death in victory," be fulfilled. Then, but not till then — till then, the swallowing up in victory lies all on the other side — death devouring all — greedily, pitilessly, promiscuously, implacably, insatiably — nor tender infancy, nor budding youth, nor rank, nor beauty, nor the bonds of love, nor the ties of friendship, having any charm to touch his relentless heart or turn him from his prey. What a gluttonous, ever craving, never satisfied appetite the monster has! Truly now it is he who swallows up all in victory. Sooner or later all of us must become his prey. But such widespread universal conquest is not to follow for ever upon the steps of the king of terrors: over this world of ours he is not for ever to go forth conquering and to conquer. Such triumph as he now enjoys is not always to crown his rule. Already upon the walls of time the mystic hand hath written the words of doom. That kingdom is to be taken from him. It is to be given to another.

Nor is it a simple stoppage of his sway, an overturning of his throne that awaited him. The day is yet to dawn upon our globe, when at his hands his bygone conquests all shall be reclaimed. All that the devourer had devoured he shall be forced to disgorge, and he that swallowed us all up in that great victory of his over our race, shall in a still greater victory achieved over himself, be swallowed up — the spoiler spoiled, the destroyer in his turn destroyed.

The sight of these millions of the changed and the raised of that resurrection day, standing up clothed with incorruption and immortality, rescued fully and rescued forever from the dominion of sin and death; the thought that he too and all those who already were one with him in Christ should be sharers in the triumph of that day, swells the Apostle's breast with the present sense of victory. With brightening eye, elastic tread, and tones that tell of triumph, he turns upon the grim tyrant death, and exclaims, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" No idle challenge this; no empty vaunt; no making light of death by one who knows not what death truly is, what makes it not only a sad thing, but a terrible thing to die. A kind of victory over death, a meeting it at least unmoved, is no uncommon thing. Mere brute courage lifts many above all fear of death; fired by the passion of the battlefield, thousands will meet their fate without shadow of a fear. Fatalism and infidelity have their own way of meeting death sometimes calmly enough, though most mournful that very calmness — the calmness of a dumb submission to an inevitable lot. Not thus is death contemplated by Paul. In the very height and rapture of his triumph over the last enemy, he is calm enough between the challenge and the thanksgiving to interject the statement, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." The deep consciousness of transgression — not simply the remembrance of individual distinct acts of guilt — but the agonizing, overwhelming consciousness of an unclean heart, an ungodly life, the going into the Divine presence with all that accumulated weight of a lifetime's iniquity upon the soul — this it was that in Paul's judgment gave its true sting to death, made it an appalling thing to die — not the pains of dissolution, not the tearing away from all the well known and familiar things of life, not the darkness and the loneliness of dying. The barbed and venomous dart which death holds in his hand, and which he is ready, if the poison be not beforehand taken out of it, to thrust stingingly, witheringly, consumingly, into the soul, is sin. And the strength of sin is the law. Were it only here and there that that sting of death came appropriately and legitimately to be inflicted, had death the option to use that sting at his own discretion, the sight of him armed with it might not be so terrible; but behind the arm that grasps that dart there is a power—the power of calm unimpassioned inexorable law — commanding that arm to strike and driving home the blow.

"But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul speaks here in the name of all true believers; he takes in as companions with him in his thanksgiving the whole company of the faithful. And the victory for which in their name he renders this high praise to God is not a victory of theirs over death in the act of dying. Such rapturous triumph in the hour of dissolution is given to but few of the soldiers of the cross. Humbled, solemn, subdued, full of awe, while full of hope, such generally is the temper and spirit in which the best of Christians approach the hour of death. As brave men in battle die without word of boast or triumph on their lips, so Christian bravery in dying is not tested by the words the lips may utter, but by the deep, calm, humble hope that lies within the breast — Christ's own true triumph in their hearts. We know not how the great Apostle bore himself when the time of his own departure came — how he looked or what he said as he bowed his head to the stroke of the Roman executioner; but it suits our notion of him better to believe that he met that solemn hour serenely, triumphantly, yet silently, meekly, than that he met his doom chanting a hymn of victory. And so — modestly, peacefully, silently — are the Lord's true servants daily passing to the great account. One of them who had long and faithfully and successfully served his Master, being asked in dying how he felt, gently and modestly replied, "I feel like a feeble insect creeping into the sunshine of the Almighty."

But, again, it is a victory not won by the believer himself, not achieved by the strength of his own will or the power of his own faith — for which Paul here gives thanks — it is a victory given, won by another, won by our great Lord and Master for us over death and the grave — when, by becoming sin for us, he drew its poison out of that sting of death, and stripped it of its power to inflict the second death upon the soul — when, by putting himself under the law, magnifying it both in its precept and in its penalty, he made it to be a just thing in God to justify all who believe in him, and turned the very law that gave its strength to sin into a bulwark of defense securing the safety of the redeemed— won by him when he burst the barriers of the tomb, writing deliverance for our race upon his empty sepulcher, and in his own resurrection securing that of all his followers.

It is both a present and a future victory the one thus won for us by Christ, whose fruits and spoils he shares out among the meekest and humblest of his disciples. A present victory — Paul speaks of it as such when he thanks God for the gift of it even here and now — yet a victory to be then only consummated when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality. It is a present living, acting, reigning faith in Christ that alone gives the true victory over death and the grave. That faith has its great facts to lean upon — the past resurrection of Christ, the future resurrection unto life of all who in dying sleep in Jesus: No other faith than that which firmly grasps these facts, and grounds upon them its hope, can lift you to that elevation from which you can look down upon your Own coming death, your burial, the grave, not as the great end of all, but only as something coming between you and that end — one from which you can look forward to your immortality, your eternity, as to a real and abiding home, where, free from sin and death, you shall be forever with the Lord. Animated by such a faith, struggle on against self and sin and doubt and fear, glad and grateful for it that it is upon no dreamy uncertain struggle that you have embarked. Often and often may there have to burst from your lips the same agonizing cry that Paul himself lifted in the midst of the conflict, — "O wretched man that I am I who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But ever, too, with him will you be enabled to add, "I thank. God there is deliverance through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory though our Lord Jesus Christ."

<http://www.creationisonline.com/TSK/Immortality.html>