

VII The Theology of the Resurrection

The intrusion of so strange an event as the resurrection into the customarily regular order of nature demands an explanation. Any deviation from uniformity in a living complex is significant when it can easily be explained, and doubly so when no rational cause can be found for it. The normal trend of the universe is from complexity to simplicity, from diversity to monotony, from order to chaos. Death is the state of equilibrium into which life lapses. A reversal of the process presupposes the intervention of a power great enough to arrest decay and to inject a new creative principle into the world.

Such a power can be explained only by acknowledging the existence of deity. God is inescapable for anyone who has endeavored to comprehend in one reasoned system the varied complex of ideas, forces, and objects that compose the universe.

God, however, is not discoverable by any ordinary means of scientific investigation. The telescope does not reveal His location in space; the spectroscope does not detect any light rays that are peculiar to deity; and the microscope does not disclose any substance invisible to the naked eye that possesses His attributes. God is not a compound to be analyzed chemically, nor is He a physical law to be determined by experimentation. He cannot be weighed, measured, or photographed. His being eludes the usual tests for reality, yet without Him the universe has neither meaning nor purpose, and its organization is a greater puzzle than if His existence is predicated.

The failure to discover God by ordinary means of research is caused by the inadequacy of the instruments employed. The dissecting knife and the microscope of the biologist can reveal many facts about the substance and organization of man's anatomy, but they cannot afford the slightest clue to his temperament and attitude. His thought processes and purpose of life can be apprehended only by observing him in action, which presupposes contact with a living being through conscious communication, not simply a laboratory experiment on an inert specimen. If God exists, man can realize His person only as He freely chooses to convey His mind and purpose through agencies of His own selection.

Such media of communication must be adequate to carry the content and meaning of the divine revelation and must express its message in comprehensible terms. Like an alphabet, which requires a sufficient number of symbols to represent the sounds of the language it conveys, the media should be familiar to those for whom the message is intended. The only medium that can transmit the knowledge of God to man is personality, for purely mechanical means cannot fully communicate one personality to another. The print in this book may impart the meaning of the author's thought, but it cannot convey the tone of voice or the feeling that the living presence would give to the reader.

The Resurrection and the Nature of God

God's revelation is transmitted by His Word (Greek: *Logos*) which embodies His thought and expression in human terms. As the Gospel of John states, "In the beginning was the Word [an external revelation], and the Word was with God [an approved revelation], and the Word was God [an adequate revelation]. . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his

glory [an understandable revelation]" (John 1:1,14). Christ, the eternal Word, is the vehicle of revelation because He embodies in personality the nature and message of God for man.

The communication through Christ brought the revelation of God into the totality of human experience. He did not speak of only one aspect of God's character, nor solely on one occasion, but represented God's person in every situation of human life. "In him was life," the fullness of the divine vitality, "and the life was the light of men," the application of that vitality to all phases of human existence (1:4). The completeness of this revelation manifests itself in the most adverse circumstances, as the perfection of a flower is best viewed against the background of a ruined wall, or like a sweet strain of music remembered longest when it pierces the rumble of gunfire or the wailing of mourners.

This totality of experience includes the mysterious and tragic episode of death, the common fate of all men, who irrespective of social station, mental capacity, or physical strength ultimately pass to the grave. Death is the point at which even the semblance of certainty ends; for while life is unpredictable, death is a sealed book. If the revelation of God is inadequate, the real problem of human destiny will remain forever insoluble.

The revelation of the Word must therefore include the experience of death to demonstrate how God can grapple with it and remove its terrors. Only in this way can salvation be achieved; the Son of God must by tasting death for every man bring the fullness of God's resources to the rescue of human frailty. God's nature is disclosed chiefly through the redemptive process because the salvation of men is His most compelling motive for revealing Himself intimately. The revelation in creation exhibits His power and godhead through the magnificence of His works. The order and intricacy of nature, whether in the vast galaxies of space or in the ultramicroscopic structure of the atom, bespeak a designer of infinite intelligence and power. The processes of the created world may also intimate His providence and general goodness. The heart of God is manifested by His answer to the crisis confronting humanity in spiritual disaster and death. If God responds to this problem by the exercise of His omnipotence, His reaction will constitute the best possible key to His true nature.

The tension between the living God and death may be protracted, but its resolution comes in the moment when God acts decisively. Such an act need not be repeated, for a single occurrence is enough to prove God's disposition and ability to save. Furthermore, God's act must take place within the framework of recorded history if men are to build upon His intervention the reality of a secure hope. The logical conclusion of an a priori argument may be sound in its reasoning, but the abstract principles on which it is founded are never so convincing as an act which embodies the truth related to existing need. The resurrection of Christ is such an event, and is so characterized in the Scriptures.

Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1, which concentrates into a few words the meditation and experience of a lifetime, describes the redemptive character of God by the resurrection.

For this cause I also . . . cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to that working

of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places . . . (Eph. 1:15-20).

The epistle to the Ephesian Christians was designed to explain the implications of the gospel to a church that was beginning to be self-conscious theologically and to ponder upon the meaning of the revelation that had been vouchsafed to it. Contrasting sharply with the heathen concepts in which the members of the church had been nurtured, the gospel provided an entirely new characterization of God. Paul prayed that the Ephesians might realize its significance, expressed in the *hope* that God offered, the *glory* that believers could attain, and the *power* which He could impart. These qualities, said Paul, were exemplified in the resurrection of Christ.

"The *hope* of his calling" depicts the purposefulness of God. He plans the cosmic process to eventuate in victory for righteousness in spite of the prevalence of evil. To those who receive His revelation He gives the prospect of sharing in that victory when they shall have discharged the responsibilities that He has laid upon them. By this knowledge of God's purposeful action, life is liberated from overshadowing futility and despair. By raising Jesus from the dead God proved that human existence need not end in the tragedy of death.

God is, therefore, an active factor in the historical existence of man. By the resurrection of Christ the ceaseless cycle of birth and death is broken. The monotonous uniformity of the cosmos cannot become an imprisoning process, endless and devoid of progress or meaning. God has reversed the trend to oblivion and has shown that decadence is not a true reflection of His being. The resurrection is a flash of eternity in the darkness of time that illuminates, if only briefly, the real outline of God's personality.

"The glory of his inheritance in the saints" speaks of the pleasure that God derives from His redemptive work. The impartation of life to men who were "dead through . . . trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1), and the culmination of that life in a new society related to God and devoted to Him, creates an "inheritance" peculiarly His. The church will stand as an abiding memorial to the divine triumph over the corrosion of sin, and is a significant exception to the reign of death.

Insofar as the resurrection of Christ foreshadows the destiny of believers, it exhibits the delight of God in the effectiveness of His salvation and reflects His personal interest in the development of individuals and in the growth of the church as a whole. In accordance with the pattern set by Christ men will reach the highest potentialities that God has designed for them. Through the transformation of their character they become the perfected products of grace, a collective manifestation of God's creative and redemptive power. Just as an artist's paintings constitute an "inheritance" that witnesses to his vision, technique, and ability, so the varied personalities transformed by the resurrection life are the eternal exhibit of God's artistry in the church. Paul caught this concept when he said, "For we are his workmanship [*poiema*, 'poems'], created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

The resurrection is the fullest disclosure of God's power to man because it has overcome his greatest obstacle. The perfection of life is frustrated by the presence of death, for when man attains the maturity and strength that would enable him to accomplish his finest work, decay and death overtake him. Rarely does anyone retain to old age sufficient vigor to execute the plans conceived in youth. The resurrection is the antithesis of human weakness, for it concentrates in one act the vastness of the divine strength. All four words for power commonly

used in the New Testament (*dunamis*, reserve power; *energeia*, applied power; *kratos*, mastery or control; *ischus*, physical strength) are employed by Paul to describe the magnitude of God's resources employed in raising Christ from the grave. *Dunamis* is latent power, such as resides in water impounded by a dam or in the electrical charge in a battery. God is the great potential of the universe, the fount of all energy from which the processes of time and space derive their initial and continuing impulse. This potential lifts man out of the dominion of death and sets him on a new plane of hope. *Energeia* is the applied power that enables him, having once been released from the fear and hopelessness of death, to manifest the vitality of a new life. *Kratos* is the mastery of power, which energizes the human vehicle as the electric current activates a motor or lights a bulb by permeating the inert metal with its force. *Ischus* usually denotes physical strength, or the endowment of power constituting the vigor that any individual utilizes in work. The resurrection is the proof of God's omnipotence, for it demonstrates that His nature is power, and that He can re-create a world paralyzed by sin and devastated by death. Life is the natural expression of His being, neutralizing and reversing the law of entropy, by which the forces of the world ultimately subside into complete stagnation. God is mobile, active, creative, constantly intervening to arrest the trend to death, and vigorously assertive of His presence.

Our knowledge of the fatherhood of God is enriched by the resurrection. Paul, in characterizing God for the Galatian Christians, whose first concepts of deity had been drawn from their pagan training, spoke of Him as "God the Father, who raised him [Jesus] from the dead" (Gal. 1:1). Ancient literature called Zeus "the father of gods and men,"¹ but the term "father" meant "progenitor" rather than a guardian. The pagan gods were believed to be immortal, but they cared nothing for men, except, perhaps, a few favorites. The pagan view of the fatherhood of God implied only an antecedent existence, genetic origin, or superiority on the part of a god remote from men and only casually interested in them. The Christian concept is a picture of sacrificial love and of active intervention on behalf of those doomed to death. God through Christ has brought into the circle of His family those who had been alienated from Him, and He has made available a new source of life through the living Christ.

The resurrection speaks of the eternity of God. Death belongs to time, for as part of time's decay extended to man, it limits him to the three-score years and ten of which the Scriptures speak (Ps. 90:10) and terminates his activities. Death is a constant reminder of the transient frailty of existence. By contrast, "Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death no more has dominion over him" (Rom. 6:9). Christ, the image of God, is eternal and therefore the God whom He represents must be eternal.

The resurrection is the inevitable reaction of God's eternal nature when brought into contact with the decadence of time, rather than a single miraculous act performed to meet a crisis. As the ocean tides fill an empty harbor or as an electrical charge will set the idle motors of a factory in motion, so the power of God reanimates the deadness of the world. Christ's return from death is an abiding witness to a living God, who intervenes in His created order when necessity demands drastic action.

Acceptance of the witness of the resurrection is saving faith, the true foundation of spiritual life. To define faith Paul used the example of Abraham, whose bold trust in God made him the spiritual ancestor of all believers (Rom. 4:16). Perplexed by the promise of a child when such an event seemed a biological impossibility (Gen. 17:15-17), and later by the dilemma of sacrificing the son on whom the fulfillment of his hopes depended (22:2), Abraham placed unswerving faith

1 *Iliad*, I, 544.

in "[the] God, who gives life to the dead, and calls the things that are not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17). His faith became the standard for his successors. Paul asseverated that God was still able to fulfill His promises, for the Scripture "was not written for his [Abraham's] sake alone . . . but for our sake also, unto whom it shall be reckoned, who believe on him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead . . ." (4:23,24).

A similar expression of confidence occurs in Paul's rehearsal of his physical hardships in Asia. Some misfortune, whether illness or persecution, overtook him while preaching in Ephesus. He wrote the Corinthian church that he was crushed by its pressure, so that his very life was endangered; he felt that a sentence of death had been passed on him (II Cor. 1:8-10). In spite of the menacing circumstances he put full trust in "God who raises the dead," and because of the outcome of this experience he exulted over God's past deliverance and guarantee of future protection.

Peter used the same phrase, "God, who raised him [Christ] from the dead" (I Pet. 1:21), in writing to Christians who were threatened with persecution. He reminded them that in spite of "manifold trials" (1:6) they possessed the assurance of God's mercy and power.

The resurrection, then, is the supreme declaration of God's true being. By this single act He has announced His purpose, His power, and His attitude toward man. Scripture records numerous events of great spiritual significance, but none other attests so completely or so convincingly the being of a living God.

The Resurrection and Salvation

The various creeds of Christendom, following the lead of the New Testament writers, have incorporated the resurrection among the distinctive doctrines of the faith. The Apostles' Creed, reputedly the oldest, includes it in summarizing the life of Christ, "he suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. The third day he arose from the dead. . . ." A second reference marks the conclusion, "I believe . . . in the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting."

Neither this nor any of the more recent codes of Christian faith deals adequately with the connection of resurrection and salvation. Belief in the historical fact may be affirmed, but its relevance to one's personal relationship with God is ignored. By contrast, the Scriptures are explicit, for they treat the resurrection as a power to be applied as well as a fact to be acknowledged.

The figure of rising from the dead is a peculiarly fitting emblem of the regenerative process by which God reclaims sinners. Paul, speaking of the future salvation of Israel, says, "For if the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (Rom. 11:15). The same imagery describes the present state of Gentile Christians who were "dead through . . . trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1), but have been "raised . . . up with him, and made . . . to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus" (2:6). In both instances the metaphor describing salvation is drawn from the historic event; it is not an artificial product of imagination.

Christ's glorious victory marks His death with unusual significance. Jesus was not the only one

who died for His ideals or sacrificed Himself for His friends. Socrates was falsely accused of corrupting Athenian youth and sentenced to death by his judge. Refusing to escape, he drank without protest the poisonous hemlock administered by the jailer. In spite of the obvious miscarriage of justice, he maintained unswerving loyalty to the principles by which the Athenian state was governed. The readiness to forfeit life rather than to abandon principles places Socrates among the moral leaders of antiquity, but his death did not differ in character and finality from that of his contemporaries and could not remove the sins of the Athenians. At best it was only a prime example of calm fortitude and heroic courage.

Jesus insisted that His death had more than exemplary significance; it was redemptive. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom in exchange for many" (Mark 10:45; original translation). To a reader of the first century the term "ransom" always meant the price for the manumission of slaves. Even though these words may not have conveyed to Jesus' hearers the full implications of an organized soteriology, they predicated a voluntary substitution of Himself in the place of others in order that they might receive freedom and blessing.

In the discourse which precedes the above quotation, Jesus had discussed His approaching death and had inquired whether or not the disciples could drink the "cup" which He must drink or participate in the "baptism" which awaited Him. The impending crisis weighed upon Him heavily, for the humiliation of the cross would involve an apparent frustration of His designs and hopes, inexplicable to the disciples and to the world. The suffering would be almost unendurable and would inflict grief on all those related to Him. Why should He choose deliberately to accept this fate if it were a purposeless calamity? Obviously He regarded the apparent failure as a necessary step in the accomplishment of His mission and expected that the suffering of the cross would be validated by His resurrection.

While the Gospels state the principle of vicarious death only incidentally, the Epistles offer more explicit teaching. Paul, writing to the Galatian churches, stated that Christ gave Himself for our sins that He might free us from this present evil age (Gal. 1:4). He summarized the essence of the gospel for the Corinthian Christians by saying, "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; . . . he was buried; . . . he has been raised on the third day according to the scriptures; and . . . he appeared . . ." (I Cor. 15:3-5). The apostle emphasized the theological significance of Christ's death, stating that He "who knew no sin he [God] made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21). Paul's last allusion virtually repeated Jesus' words by declaring that He gave Himself "a ransom for all" (I Tim. 2:6).

The Petrine writings substantiate this interpretation in almost identical language. "[He] bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness" (I Pet. 2:24). "Christ also suffered for sins once for all, a righteous man in the place of unrighteous men, that He might lead us into the presence of God" (I Pet. 3:18, original translation).

The First Epistle of John affirms the same truth. Christ, the living advocate in the presence of God, is the "righteous one" whose blood is the propitiation for sins (I John 2:2; 4:10). Christ's sacrifice in past time is inextricably linked to the church's life in the present. The Apocalypse continues the same thought saying, "[He] loves us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood" (Rev. 1:5). "Loves," in the present tense, implies current and continuous action; "loosed," in the past tense, refers to an accomplished event.

In the major texts dealing with the doctrine of atonement for sin through the death of Christ, the resurrection is either expressed or implied. Sparrow-Simpson² raises the question whether it is simply an aid to faith, or whether it is the direct cause of justification. Since the death of Christ is the basis of forgiveness, does the resurrection possess more than the auxiliary value of corroborative evidence?

In alluding to the atonement the writers make clear that without continuing life the death would be ineffective. Not the inert sacrifice, but the sacrifice presented and applied by the living Lord is the assurance that the record of past sins has been erased and that forgiveness is available daily for spiritual aid. Christ, raised from the dead, died to sin once for all, and His present life is the pledge of a new relationship to God for those whom He has rescued (Rom. 8:34).

The pattern of thought outlined in the Pauline and Johannine writings is reinforced by the argument of the book of Hebrews. Following principles embodied in the sacrificial laws of the Old Testament, the author explained the death of Christ in terms of an offering. If, he reasoned, the blood of animals can avail to remove ceremonially the defilement of the flesh, the sacrifice of Christ can clear the burdened conscience of guilt and prepare believers to receive the heritage of God's blessings (Heb. 9:14,15). The shedding of blood was necessary to the just forgiveness of sin.

The finality of this offering and its permanent efficacy are assured by the living presence of Christ before the Father. He need not repeat His sacrifice as the high priest annually re-enacted the ceremonial offerings on the Day of Atonement. "Now once [for all] at the end of the ages has he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26). No further offering is necessary, because His return to life is God's seal of approval which assures the perpetuation of its efficacy. "He, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God" (10:12). The resurrection thus unites the sacrifice and the priest into one person whose constant ministration assures the perpetuity of forgiveness of sin and of deliverance from death. It guarantees the competence of the Saviour to protect and to nurture those whom He has reconciled to God.

At the conclusion of Paul's great discourse on salvation in the first eight chapters of Romans, he deals with the future of the Christians. Will the atonement afford assurance that neither the unforeseen tests of life nor the rigors of final judgment can shake their confidence? To the rhetorical question "Who is he that condemns?" Paul replies by another: "Shall Christ Jesus that died [condemn us], yea, rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also is making intercession for us?" (Rom. 8:34, original translation). The performance of the believer is not dependent upon his resolution or righteousness in itself but is the result of the direct ministration and intercession of the unchanging Christ who has risen from the dead to make His salvation effectual.

By the continuing work of Christ the permanence of salvation is assured. Dogmas may become irrelevant when the setting to which they apply changes; arguments for a doctrinal position may become antiquated; experience may grow dim and meaningless; but a living personality always exercises an impact on its environment and upon the other personalities with whom it interacts. The fact that Christ arose to fulfill His promises and to perfect His purpose prevents Christian

² W. J. Sparrow-Simpson, *The Resurrection and Modern Thought* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1911), p. 301.

theology from fading into the limbo of outworn myth. Its truth is unalterable because He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

The resurrection is thus basic to the salvation of the entire body of believers. The corporate exercise and enjoyment of divine grace is as essential to spiritual development as the individual perfection of each believer. By association the members of this new body learn from each other, and support each other in Christian living. These mutual endeavors were never intended to be haphazard, for they were to be directed by the living Lord of the church. As the group expanded by multiplying adherents and by extending evangelistic activities, it depended increasingly on the guidance of the risen Head. The resurrection was a constant reality to the Christians because they were observing its effects in their daily growth.

When the church sought to reach others with the message of the gospel, it found that repentance and revival were the gifts of the living Christ (Acts 5:31). The martyrdom of Stephen, the most promising apologist of the infant community, seemed a harbinger of defeat and of possible extinction, but Christ intervened to receive Stephen to Himself (7:59). By the conversion of Paul of Tarsus, He transformed the chief persecutor into a more potent evangelist than Stephen had been (9:20-22). He guided the apostles in numerous decisions of missionary policy, making their strategy effective in planting churches throughout the Roman world. The vision of the Apocalypse depicts Him as the protector of the churches, supporting their leaders by His right hand and walking among them to encourage or reprove as circumstances might necessitate (Rev. 1:17-20).

The church, therefore, is not completely autonomous, adjusting its theology and policies to shifting contemporary standards at its own discretion. Far from being mementos of a bygone day which must be distorted from their original framework to fit the new age, the person and ethic of Christ are the expression of the Lord, who is living and accessible. Insofar as He is unchanging, the historic revelation of His incarnation remains valid; to the extent that He interacts with the church, through the Holy Spirit, the message is new and fresh. As the church receives and obeys the message, it enjoys the fullness of corporate salvation.

The active principle in perfecting the individual believer is the resurrection of Christ. "It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me," said Paul to the Galatians (2:20). The apostle Paul was not speaking only of adopting the ideals of Christ, but of definite control by the risen Lord (1:1). The entrance of Christ into one's life introduces reviving and renewing power.

Paul uses another figure to make plain his meaning. "Awake, you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon you" (Eph. 5:14), a fragment of an early Christian poem, is similar in thought. The unbeliever, "dead in trespasses and sins" (2:1 KJ), is brought to life by the power of Christ and is elevated to a state of victory. The victory, to be constant, must be maintained by the same power that produced it. If salvation applies only to ultimate release from the penalty of sin, and not to the present problem, it becomes meaningless for everyday emergencies.

The necessity for a constant internal moral dynamic to resist the attacks of temptation and to check natural impulses to evil was felt keenly by the apostolic writers. Undoubtedly they believed in a complete salvation through Christ, but how could it be realized? Their concept of salvation had broadened from the political reconstitution of Israel and from forgiveness of its national sins to an act of God including the Gentiles within its blessings. The formation of a

body composed of both Jews and Gentiles, confronting the pagan world with a message of supernatural deliverance, demanded that a new kind of life be manifested. Convincing demonstration of this claim could be realized only through those who made it. The objective reality of salvation contingent upon Christ's triumph over death must be exemplified morally and spiritually by an analogous inward experience.

The parallel of Christian experience with the resurrection begins with baptism. Paul discussed the incompatibility of sin and grace in his letter to the Christians in Rome.

Are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; for he that has died is justified from sin. But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death no more has dominion over him. For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he lives, he lives unto God. Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:3-11).

Paul takes for granted the initial confessional act of baptism, which was the normal gateway to a professed faith. The author's chief concern was not the possibility of forgiveness of sins, but continuation in a life of holiness. Since a believer has accepted the baptism which unites him with Christ in death, he is obligated to accept also the new kind of life which that death introduces. He can no longer rightfully engage in the practices that evoked God's wrath and that necessitated the cross. Only the negative aspect, however, is insufficient. If death marks the cessation of indulgence in evil, the resurrection is emblematic of positive righteousness, a life lived in harmony with God. Christ, having passed through death, has emerged into a glory which He desires to share with men. Sanctification is assent to the death that separates from sin, and appropriation of the vitality that empowers for righteousness.

By this practical analogy the resurrection becomes the pattern for spiritual life, embracing both the realism of human sin and struggle, and the idealism of the divine plan and purpose. The resultant theology affords an adequate integration of what exists and of what ought to be, for no other unites in historic action the ideal concepts of truth with the harsh realities of this world. Paul warned the Colossian Christians against permitting anyone to rob them of their faith by specious reasoning or by mystic wiles in accord with the prevailing cults of their day, since truth had been revealed to them in the person of Christ. In words which parallel Romans 6 he reminded them that they had been "buried with [Christ] in baptism" and "raised with him through faith in the working of God" (Col. 2:12). Because they had been representatively raised with Christ, he urged them to "seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God" (3:1).

The spiritual aspect is obviously figurative. The Christian remains for the present in a material body, without any change in its composition or location. Morally and spiritually he has been transformed and transferred to a different environment. His interests are centered in Christ, his perspective is now from the heavenly scene rather than from the earthly, and his criteria of

ethical behavior are changed completely.

The numerous practical injunctions in the epistles are founded upon the historical fact. On the assumption that Christians have "risen" with Christ, Paul urged his readers to put to death all manifestations of evil such as "fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col. 3:5). Such indulgences would be utterly incongruous with the new life. On the contrary, he commanded that Christians shall cultivate "a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering" and a forgiving spirit (3:12,13). In both positive and negative commands, the active verb is followed by "therefore," making it the logical sequel to the new spiritual vitality and position that Christ has imparted.

The Petrine teaching resembles Paul's closely. "[You] through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory; so that your faith and hope might be in God. . . . Putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk . . . , that ye may grow thereby unto salvation" (I Pet. 1:21; 2:1-2). Peter's introduction of the final clause by "therefore" corresponds to Paul's conclusion in Colossians that the new life established by revelation and redemption in Christ involves a higher standard of conduct for Christians. The interim between initial conversion and ultimate glorification is not a parenthesis but a progressive realization of the immediacy of the new life in Christ.

Within the scope of resurrection life lies also the provision for present physical needs. If the Lord Jesus Christ is as much alive today as when He walked on earth, He is still able to heal the sick and to strengthen the weak. His power is undiminished, and His good will has not been withdrawn.

The first miracle recorded in the book of Acts concerns a man who, because he was born with ankles that would not support his weight, was doomed to a life of beggary. While he sat by the Beautiful Gate of the Temple waiting for some kindly person to fling him a coin, one day he saw Peter and Jon approaching. Awaiting their arrival, the lame man kept hoping for a generous donation. His disappointment at Peter's salutation, "Silver and gold have I none" (Acts 3:6), turned to amazement as the apostle continued, "What I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." A new vitality surged through him, and jumping to his feet he began to run, and leap, and praise God.

To the queries of the crowd who wondered how this miracle had been effected, Peter replied: "God . . . raised [Christ] from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And by faith in his name has his name made this man strong, whom ye behold and know: yea, the faith which is through him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all" (3:15-16). The apostle ascribed the healing directly to faith in a risen Christ, whose response to faith had cured the beggar.

A hint that the same power can be applied to present physical need appears in Pauline teaching. "If the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his spirit that dwells in you" (Rom. 8:11). A well-attested variant of this text would alter the final words to read, ". . . because of his Spirit that dwells in you," which suggests that the Spirit's indwelling is the guarantee rather than the medium of resurrection power.³ The crux of the interpretation lies in

³ Greek: *dia to enoikoun autou pneuma*. The reading is supported by the following New Testament manuscripts: B, D, G, the old Latin and Syriac, and the majority of the Byzantine manuscripts.

the words "mortal bodies," which mean literally "bodies subject to death." The adjective could scarcely be applied to a body already dead, for only a live body could be "subject" or "liable" to death. If, then, Paul refers to the living body, he declares that it can be refreshed or strengthened by the continuous impartation of the life of Christ. Immortality of the present body is never promised, but the power of the resurrection may be appropriated to meet the recurrent strain of daily activity. Since the Holy Spirit inhabits the body as His temple, He can be trusted to keep His dwelling in good repair as long as He needs it in His service.

Paul's epigram, "The body is . . . for the Lord; and the Lord for the body: and God both raised the Lord, and will raise up us through his power" (I Cor. 6:13-14), corroborates the teaching of Romans. Although the theme of I Corinthians does not relate primarily to physical health, the phrase "the Lord for the body" implies by reciprocity that if the body is devoted to God, He will be concerned for its welfare and will ultimately transform it by raising it from the dead. The Christian's well-being is a prelude to the resurrection, and is maintained by the same vital force that will ultimately recall him from death.

The Resurrection and Eschatology

The application of the resurrection to the believer involves a state not yet realized. Eschatology, which deals with events to come, is highly important because the future determines the value of the present. Adversities may be quickly forgotten if they are explained as the inevitable prelude to success; prosperity may become a haunting memory if it is followed by disaster. Only the final outcome can show whether present events are truly good or evil in their ultimate effect, and only the judgment of God can be decisive.

For Christians the resurrection determines their final status. It is, therefore, pivotal in eschatological teaching and essential to a complete understanding of the process of redemption. Paul, defending his position before the Jewish Sanhedrin in the framework of the Old Testament revelation, said, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees: touching the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question" (Acts 23:6). Although his allusion was admittedly a subterfuge to divide the council (24:21), he did not repudiate the truth of the statement. On the contrary, he re-emphasized it, affirming that he believed "all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets; having hope toward God . . . that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust" (24:14-15). Paul aligned himself with the Pharisees, who believed in ultimate bodily renewal, as the Sadducees did not (23:8), and thus he declared the continuity of the New Testament faith with the Old Testament revelation. In each of his epistles, from the salutation of the letter to the Galatians (1:1) to the farewell in II Timothy (2:8), Paul maintained an unbroken testimony to this consummation of God's redemptive action.

Apart from an objective, redemption is futile. Salvation ending in death or extinction would be no salvation at all, since God's greatest effort would be doomed to failure. The historical process of divine revelation which has disclosed God's power and purpose through the slow unfolding of the ages will inevitably be consummated in the defeat of sin and death. Such a consummation must be a definite event in time, for a true climax must terminate one action and inaugurate another. Just as Christ's resurrection took place on a given day in history, so the completion of God's plan for men will be an event as truly historical as Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown.

Christian eschatology is the systematic definition of the future redemptive purpose to be accomplished in Christ. The church has always looked forward to the establishment of a new creation from which sin and death will be forever outlawed. Whether it be the broad initiation of the Messianic kingdom, or whether it be the particular destiny of an individual, the resurrection is equally involved. The last great act of God's saving grace will be the defeat and reversal of death.

This victory implies the raising of the body, for the reconstitution of man's natural being transcends mere survival of personality. Biblical revelation differs from the philosophical concept of immortality widely current among the thinkers of antiquity, many of whom believed in the immortality of the soul, but few of whom entertained the concept of a physical life beyond death. Paul was ridiculed at Athens for preaching that the dead could be raised. As soon as he announced that the power of Jesus to judge the world was confirmed by His resurrection, the audience politely informed him that they would hear him again at some other time, and quickly withdrew (Acts 17:32).

To the Greek philosophers perpetuation of corporeal existence was neither credible nor desirable. The body was a prison which hindered spiritual progress, an obstacle in the path to the knowledge of God. The idealism which they espoused regarded matter as the seat of evil. The highest good could be attained only through liberation from the appetites and drives of the body, and by finding freedom in pure spiritual being. In such a philosophy death would not be an enemy but a benefactor. If death is a release, there would be no advantage in returning to the limitations of flesh.

Life for the Christian is not an escape but a conquest. Corporeal limitations are not abolished by death but are overcome by new powers which the resurrection can confer. The body is not a hindrance to the spirit because it is material; it is rather an imperfect instrument which needs only a vitalizing touch to make it an acceptable medium for the expression of the highest life. Even with its present defects and weaknesses it is an intricate mechanism, so highly organized that no machine can equal its potential for usefulness or its adaptability to surroundings. It operates in the cold of the Antarctic and in the heat of the tropics; it can provide its own locomotion in water or on land; the cells of its nervous system are more numerous than the units of a telephone exchange and will respond more quickly to stimuli. As the Psalmist said, man is fearfully and wonderfully made. To abandon the body to decay would be defeat, the dereliction of man's material being. If salvation is the renewal of the whole person, the body is just as much a candidate for regeneration as the spirit.

Resurrection is the consummation of hope and the completion of redemption. The New Testament does not portray the future life as the ethereal survival of a disembodied ghost, nor is its viewpoint crassly materialistic. It resists exact definition because it is not analogous to any existing state and consequently cannot be expressed in ordinary terminology.

Perhaps the best way to understand this truth is to examine the metaphors used to describe it, such as the figure of the grain. Jesus said, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abides by itself alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24). Although He stressed the fruitfulness of sacrifice rather than the certainty of resurrection, the latter concept is latent in the words. The Pauline usage is plainer. "That which you yourself sow is not quickened, except it die: and that which you sow, you sow not the body that shall be, but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other kind . . ." (I Cor. 15:36-37). The living plant that springs from

the inert kernel is a renewal of life from death.

Continuity without exact similarity is also implied by this metaphor. The change from one body to another is not so radical that no connection between the two is discernible. Just as the plant cannot exist without the seed, there must be some persisting element that begins the new life. Even though the nature of the future body may be different from that of the present body, there must be some continuing link relating the one to the other and providing a basis for identification.

The paradoxical principle of concomitant change of appearance and identity of person is observable in the normal process of aging. In five years features and size may be so altered that recognition is difficult; nevertheless, the identity of the person persists. In similar fashion a restored body expressing the being of the same person who died will naturally bear the imprint of the personality even though the powers of the organism may be enhanced.

A second metaphor emphasizes the difference between the two bodies. "All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes" (I Cor. 15:39). Within the animate creation are various kinds of bodies which are tangible and visible, and which can make contact with each other. They are not identical in material, for the texture of chicken is not like that of beef, not is beef like that of fish. The differences are not considered miraculous; they are normal features of nature. It is not incredible that God might produce another type of body which would be as different from man's as flesh from fowl, and which would yet be capable of maintaining human contacts. Just as birds and animals may exist in the same general environment and be adapted to different living conditions, so it may be possible for the resurrection body to inhabit the human plane of existence and to rise above it at will.

A third metaphor is taken from astronomy. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory" (I Cor. 15:41). The observation was not made from the viewpoint of an astronomer, but by a man who had often watched the stars and planets wheel overhead as he traveled across the Mediterranean by boat, or along the Roman roads under the brilliant unclouded skies of the Middle East. He was impressed by the varying radiance of the heavenly bodies, some of which were so bright that they seemed like small suns, while others were mere pinpoints of light. As these differ in glory, so do the material body and the resurrection body. Perhaps Paul was thinking of the radiant Person who confronted him on the road to Damascus, blinding him with light and convincing him that the Jesus whom Stephen preached had really risen.

With these metaphors to aid description, the Biblical revelation predicates four characteristics of the resurrection body. First, it is *incorruptible*. Although the present body is a marvel of mechanical precision and intricacy, it is still subject to deterioration. Infection can reduce it to a putrid mass; disease can cripple or destroy it; and once life has gone from it, the body decays and disintegrates into dust. It may resist the attacks of time and tension for many years, but sooner or later its strength diminishes, the organs lose their elasticity and keenness of sense, and the entire mechanism collapses. At best it is a shabby housing for an eternal spirit.

There is no inherent reason why the body could not be immune to decay. The fact that the present corporeal structure can withstand disease and accident for seventy years, more or less, favors the possibility. The principle of resurrection makes this possibility an actuality. Removal

of the tensions of guilt and doubt, and the impartation of a new divine energy will liberate men from the slow dissolution which is the inevitable consequence of sin. Eternal vigor is an accompaniment of the new life.

A second characteristic of the resurrection body is *glory*, contrasted with dishonor. The present physical body perishes in disgrace. Burial is necessary in order to prevent its decay from becoming nauseous and injurious to the public. In the famous gravedigging scene of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*,⁴ the hero philosophized over a skull which one of the gravediggers had exhumed. It belonged to the court jester whom Hamlet had known in his childhood, and who had provided him with many a happy frolic. He held the skull in his hand long enough to say, "Alas, poor Yorick!" and then quickly cast it away in disgust because of its stench. The man who had been his playmate in bygone years had become a ghastly offense because of death. Mortality can end only in despair, but the resurrection body, freed from decay, will be radiant with the light of God. As the Transfiguration temporarily gave to the body of Jesus the glory of celestial life, so the final transformation of the Christian will occur when Christ shall "fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:21). The perfection of bodily health and the heightening of physical powers will be part of all believers' future physical heritage.

Power is another quality of the resurrection body, contrasted with present impotence. For its size the human body is surprisingly weak. If a man could carry in his hands a load as heavy in proportion to his weight as an ant can carry in its jaws, he would be able to handle half a ton. If he could jump like a grasshopper he could clear thirty feet in a single bound. A dog can detect sounds that the human ear never hears. Man has not the endurance of a bird, nor the muscle of a bear, nor the fleetness of an antelope. In physical abilities he is outstripped by almost every member of the animal creation.

Furthermore, man is susceptible to the invasion of the unseen enemies of disease and pestilences. Germs so tiny that they are invisible can ruin his physique and bring it down to the grave. A microbe that has neither consciousness nor intelligence can undermine vitality and destroy the intricate frame that has taken years to build. The natural body is weak and perishable, susceptible to every kind of illness and injury.

By contrast, the resurrection body will possess power. Speculation concerning its qualities is futile, since there is no definite scriptural statement defining its properties. Jesus seemed to have the ability to appear and disappear at will, to penetrate solid obstacles such as walls, and to exercise the ordinary bodily senses in a higher and sharper degree. He may well have exemplified the restoration of God's original design for man's physique, which would have been fulfilled had he progressed in obedience and righteousness. The first man had access to the "tree of life," the opposite of death, which was planted in Eden and was not withheld (Gen. 2:9). Instead he chose the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (3:6) and was consequently prevented from participating in the full benefit of everlasting life (3:22). Adam's disobedience severed him from God, the source of power, and gradually nullified the development of the faculties with which God had originally endowed him.

Paul drew a final contrast between the "natural" and the "spiritual" bodies. These words are the adjectives drawn from the nouns "soul" (*psyche*) and "spirit" (*pneuma*). "Soul" relates to the

4 *Hamlet*, Act V, Scene 1.

conscious life of animate beings. By creation man became a living soul, self-motivating and capable of communicating with other beings equal or inferior to himself. In this respect he is like the animals, whom he resembles in physiological structure and functions. The "natural" man lives on a purely animal level; he is dominated by his sensory and material desires. His outlook is bounded by the present. His philosophy is "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (I Cor. 15:32). "Spirit" relates to the aspect of man's nature which can communicate with God. Unlike the animal, man has a capacity for worship and for fellowship with his Maker. The "spiritual" man receives the revelation of the Spirit of God and begins to understand the mind of God (2:11-16). As he matures under the direction of the Holy Spirit, he attains a new level of thought and conduct.

The present body, although it is marvelously organized, is incapable of expressing adequately the life of the spirit. In order that the redeemed and transformed spirit of man may have a proper channel for the expression of the new life, there must be an outward transformation corresponding to the inward change. The new understanding that accompanies fellowship with God requires a keener sensitivity to the whole of creation if the wonders of God's person and of His works are to be fully comprehended. Furthermore, a better instrument than the present body will be necessary for the eternal service which the redeemed man will offer to God.

The relation of mind and body is a mystery, but there is an undoubted interaction between the two. Glandular action and physical development or injury modify personality, and, conversely, mental and spiritual states affect the body. Lack of sleep produces tension and depression; worry may induce ulcers. Hereditary weakness may predispose some men toward one temptation, others toward another. Neither sin nor righteousness is a direct result of bodily states; they are the outcome of the will. But the defects of the present body may prove a handicap to spiritual and moral life.

The resurrection body will be a new instrument and dwelling for the redeemed spirit. Nowhere does the New Testament catalog its properties, but it does say, "we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is" (I John 3:2). Jesus' body was that of a man in the prime of life, fully matured and seasoned, and yet unaffected by the slow decline of middle age. He could transcend the ordinary physical limitations to which men are subject. Though He conformed to physical laws, He was not bound by them. His body was not subject to decay but was eternal in nature. As Adam was the progenitor of the human race, and transmitted by procreation the mechanism of the body which possessed derived life, so Christ is the head of the new race, which draws its life from Him and will ultimately feel the power of that life in physical transformation.

How can this transformation be effected when a body has completely dissolved into dust, and when its chemical components have been absorbed into other organisms?

What connection is there, if any, between the corpse that is laid in the grave and the body that shall be raised? At the raising of Jesus, decay had not commenced; the flesh and bones of the crucified body remained intact. The return to life was miraculous, but the materials had not disintegrated. The situation is different with the vast majority of His followers who have passed away during the last nineteen centuries.

When the body of Roger Williams, founder of the Rhode Island colony, was exhumed for reburial, it was found that the root of an apple tree had penetrated the head of the coffin and had followed down Williams' spine, dividing into a fork at the legs. The tree had absorbed the chemicals of

the decaying body and had transmuted them into its wood and fruit. The apples, in turn, had been eaten by people, quite unconscious of the fact that they were indirectly taking into their systems part of the long-dead Williams. The objection may therefore be raised: How, out of the complex sequence of decay, absorption, and new formation, will it be possible to resurrect believers of past ages, and to reconstitute them as separate entities?

The answer to this quandary is contained in Paul's analogy of the seed. When a grain of wheat is dropped into the ground, its husk quickly decays, and even the live core disintegrates. The life of the seed, rather than its material substance, provides the continuity of existence. As the rootlets begin to grow they draw nourishment from the earth, and by the chemistry of sun and rain the small seed soon becomes a large plant. The plant bears no external resemblance to the seed, nor is the bulk of its tissue drawn from the seed; nevertheless, the continuity is undeniable. There is persistence of type, because a given seed will always produce its own kind. Identity of type is not incompatible with discontinuity of substance.

Continuity of individuality is assured by the persistence of the personality, which God will reclothe with a body. Jesus' statement, "all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29), assumes the preservation of individuality, since those who have been buried will be restored to life. The restoration, however, is not a reconstitution of the original body that was interred, but a new structure patterned on the resurrection body of Christ. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (I Cor. 15:49).

If the foregoing concept seems to be based wholly on a biological model, not allowing for a "spiritual" or nonmaterial view of the resurrection, one should remember that the continuity of human personality does not depend upon matter. While speaking one night, the author noticed a stranger who seemed unusually attentive. He was totally unfamiliar, however, for the speaker could not identify him. After the service the stranger introduced himself, and he proved to be a classmate of thirty-five years before. A second look established unquestionable identity with the friend of past days, but the change was great enough to keep him from being recognized immediately. Many tissues of the body change completely every seven years, some more often, a few not at all. A man fifty years of age will have in his body only a fraction of the cells with which he began life; but despite the variations in appearance and material, the identity persists in continuity of consciousness and in the general form and habits of the body. If, then, in the resurrection there be continued memory of the past and a form that preserves recognizable characteristics in features and in movement, the fact of chemical and physical disintegration should be no obstacle to faith.

Although the present body is mortal and corruptible, and therefore temporary, the bodily state is not to be despised as inferior or shameful. God's redemption affects the total being--body, soul, and spirit. Since man is a unit, he cannot experience a complete salvation unless the body is affected as well as his spiritual nature. Full redemption involves being "clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven" in order that life may be perfectly triumphant (II Cor. 5:2,4). The fulfillment of creative purpose necessitates the manifestation of the divine glory in every aspect of human existence.

Although the foretaste of resurrection power is imparted to every believer through the Holy Spirit (II Cor. 5:5), the consummation has not yet occurred. Indeed, without the future event the

present work of the Spirit would be meaningless, for His promises and ministry now are preparatory for a goal yet to be attained. Paul describes the tensions of the present life occasioned by the struggles of the created world against the corrupting elements of sin. He prophesies a coming manifestation of "the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21), adding, "And not only so, but ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (8:23).

Redemption of the body constitutes the outward evidence of completed salvation. Although the inward work of God's grace may be manifested through the behavior and expression of the present body, there is no fixed visible distinction between a believer and an unbeliever that can be discerned by a casual glance. The plan of God includes a transformation that will effect such a distinction, "the revealing of the sons of God" (8:19).

"Glory" is the term applied to the destiny of God's children. "Whom he justified," says Paul, "them he also glorified" (8:30). Jesus Himself implied this prospect when He declared that the righteous would "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43), sharing the likeness of the Lord whose "countenance was as the sun shining in his strength" (Rev. 1:16). Acknowledged by God as His family, they will bear His image, not in a broken and marred form, but in the perfection of a new creation. All believers are now children of God through the new birth (John 1:12), but the full manifestation of that sonship awaits the revelation of Christ. "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is" (I John 3:2). In His present state Christ is "glorified," and if believers become like Him, they also shall be "glorified."

The moment of crisis at which this transformation will occur will be the return of Christ. At an indeterminate time in the course of human history, unknown except to the mind of God, He will reappear "to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all them who believed" (II Thess. 1:10). His coming will be a logical parallel and a sequel to His own resurrection. Jesus left the earth visibly and bodily after the forty days of intermittent appearances to the disciples, and, with the possible exception of His appearances to Stephen (Acts 7:55,56) and to Paul (I Cor. 15:8), he was never seen again by human eyes. His return will be correspondingly real, for the witnesses of the ascension predicted that "this Jesus [the risen Lord], who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

Although the eschatological calendar cannot be plotted by specific dates, the succession of its main events is determined by the resurrection. "Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ's, at his coming. Then comes the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God" (I Cor. 15:23-24) gives the sequence. The new age which was introduced when Christ rose from the dead, asserting His transcendent authority over sin and death, will conclude with the resurrection of His church. The adverb "then," which occurs twice, is consequently chronological and marks definite intervals in the execution of the divine plan.

A distinction is drawn between the resurrection of the righteous and of the wicked, for the clause "then they that are Christ's, at his coming" (15:23) conveys the implication that those who are not Christ's will not be raised at the same moment. The resurrection of the wicked is separate from that of the righteous, yet subsequent to it and prior to the surrender of the perfected kingdom to the Father.

A more positive clue to the chronological sequence is provided by the book of Revelation, which asserts that the faithful who refused to renounce their faith and who consequently suffered martyrdom were raised at the beginning of Christ's reign, whereas "the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years should be finished" (Rev. 20:5, original translation). The judgment of the remaining dead follows the kingdom and concludes Christ's judicial action.

The distinctive character of the resurrection of the righteous is supported by Paul's allusion in Philippians 3:11 to "the out-resurrection from among the dead" (a literal rendering of the Greek text: *ten exanastasin ek ton nekron*). The term which Paul used occurs only once and has been a puzzle to commentators. The unique nature of this expression, coupled with Paul's silence elsewhere concerning any special resurrection for believers, leaves some doubt whether he was speaking of a general hope or a particular reward. H.A.A. Kennedy says: "We are disposed to believe that Paul is thinking only of the resurrection of believers. . . . This is his usual standpoint. In the famous passage I Corinthians 15:12ff., it is exclusively of Christians that he speaks. We have no information as to what he taught regarding a general resurrection. But considering that it is with spontaneous artless letters we have to do, and not with theoretical discussions, it would be hazardous to say that he ignored or denied a general resurrection."⁵

Paul did not deny a resurrection for all men; on the contrary, he had declared that all men must finally stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the reward of their deeds (II Cor. 5:10). The question is not *whether* they will be affected by the resurrection but *when*, and *in what order*. Whether this initial resurrection will include all believers in Christ or only a special group who are thus rewarded for outstanding service may be debatable. If Paul anticipated resurrection as a normal outcome of faith, he seemed unduly concerned about attaining it, but if he meant that it was bestowed as a prize for sacrifice or endurance, the meaning would be more easily understood.

A parallel in Hebrews illustrates the same principle: ". . . others were tortured, not accepting their deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection" (Heb. 11:35). The reference concerns the Maccabean martyrs, who chose to die rather than to transgress the law by partaking of unclean food. They esteemed the resurrection of the righteous better than that of compromisers and consequently refused to relinquish their convictions. The conclusion seems inevitable that the resurrection of the righteous will be different from that of the wicked.

The nature of the resurrection of the wicked is not described in detail. Scripture supplies hints which imply that it will be the negative counterpart of the resurrection of the righteous. For both believers and unbelievers some mode of existence will be created by which they will realize the full consequences of their deeds in the present life.

The two resurrections are mentioned in contrasting parallels. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2). If the prospect of the believer is glory, the destiny of the unbeliever is gloom. The body with which he is clothed will suffer eternal defeat, frustration, and weakness. Because it bears forever the stamp of crooked character, the scars of conflicts, and the disfigurements of debauchery, it will be a painful reminder of his sins.

Jesus predicted that "the hour comes in which all who are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and

5 H. A. A. Kennedy, "Philippians" in *Expositor's Greek Testament* (New York: George H. Doran Company, n.d.), III, 457.

shall come forth; they who have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they who have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29). The pronouncement involves the added element of a retributive sentence pronounced upon the offender. Eternally fixed in a condition corresponding to their own sinful past, they will find their society both unendurable and inescapable. Their destiny may be the permanent crystallization of character in bodily form rather than the arbitrary infliction of an external penalty.

Paul spoke similarly of a resurrection "of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:15). As surely as there will be a resurrection for the one, there will be for the other. If salvation is brought to perfection by the endowment of a body which will express the highest experiences and aspirations, condemnation can be effected by a corresponding process. If the body of a righteous man will possess heightened beauty and efficiency, the body of a wicked man will comprise the sum of evil and depravity. If the righteous will be freed from debasing appetites, the wicked will be enslaved by them. The body could become a prison, confining its owner to the narrow and depressing consequences of his own sins, or it could be so keyed that its response to the character and presence of God would be painful. Hell need not be the gratuitous infliction of torture; it need only be the overpowering awareness of the existence of God to one who hated Him and whose every nerve would be set on edge by that consciousness.

R. McCheyne Edgar has suggested that the resurrection body of the wicked, being a gift of Christ, will serve as a check upon sin. "Will any reverential thinker imagine that a Risen Saviour will summon from the sepulchre the old bodies of the godless, filled with the sins of their youth? Is it not more consonant with all we know of Jesus, to believe that He will endow the wicked with bodies immortal, and exactly suited to the souls they are to enshrine?"⁶

To possess a body forever incapable of achieving the glories for which God made its owner, and to be reminded constantly of the sins of one's past might be a restraint against further wickedness, but it would certainly be an unspeakable humiliation and shame.

Over the resurrection of the wicked, Scripture mercifully draws a curtain of silence. One can only speculate by contrast with the destiny of the righteous what the fate of the unbelieving will be. The main thrust of revelation is concerned with salvation, not with damnation, for it was not God's prime choice that men should be condemned, but rather that they should enjoy Him and His provisions for them eternally. If they persistently reject His love, they can expect no other alternative than to continue existence apart from Him in a progressive alienation from His goodness and fellowship. The resurrection would be for them the point of fixation of their final doom, as it will be the ultimate reward for the righteous.

6 R. McCheyne Edgar, *The Gospel of a Risen Saviour* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1892), p. 330.