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A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

A Study in 1 Corinthians xv.

BY THE REVEREND CANON BINDLEY, D.D., DENTON, NORFOLK.

THIS doctrinal section, nearly at the close of St. Paul's letter, was not written, so far as appears, in answer to any question propounded in the letter brought to the Apostle by the Corinthian delegates, such as called forth the passages in chapters 7-14. It was evoked most probably by some reports that had reached St. Paul about the doubts that were felt by some of the Corinthian Christians as to a general resurrection—doubts arising apparently from grossly materialistic views as to the nature of the resurrection body.

I. The first seven verses give us a glimpse into the customary course of teaching which the Apostle pursued in his missionary labours. The atoning death of Christ, followed by His Resurrection on the third day, formed some of the essentials of his preaching; and these keystones of doctrine the Corinthian Christians all held. Belief in *Christ's* resurrection was their firm faith. And so, the opening phrases, which are so often wrongly taken to be formal proofs of Christ's resurrection, are merely reminders of the ABC of the Christian faith which St. Paul had impressed upon his converts. He was not in the least concerned to prove to them that Christ had risen: that was unnecessary. His object was to convict the dubious ones of an absurd fallacy in their logic. They believed that Christ had risen, and yet maintained, in opposition to this particular affirmative, the universal negative proposition that 'a resurrection of dead men is impossible.' They admitted the resurrection of Christ, but looked upon it as of such unique character as to yield no basis for deduction as to other resurrections.

In a series of short terse dilemmas the Apostle points out the miserable position into which their logical fallacy led them and left them. It robbed them of their foundation belief and of all the benefits of the salvation that Christ had brought; and it rendered nugatory such practices as 'baptism for the dead,' and cut at the root of all Christian self-sacrifice. How could they be so short-sighted as to allow the first-fruits but deny the harvest which the first-fruits implied? They forgot that everything, including death, was to be subdued by Christ; and that in Him were incorporated His followers, the members of His Body. Let them beware of being led astray, by those who denied a future resurrection, into a maze of corrupt

or careless living. Doctrinal error would certainly issue in moral decline.

This brief summary, I think, covers the first thirty-four verses of the chapter. But a few points in the course of the argument need a little closer notice.

Vv.^{3, 4, 5} have all the appearance of being a quotation from an early official formula of what the Apostle calls the 'first or foundation principles' of Christian belief:

'Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
And was buried,
And was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,
And he appeared to Kephias, then to the twelve . . .'

Now what Scriptures are referred to in accordance with which Christ died for our sins and rose again the third day? Would that St. Luke had preserved for us the Lord's own exegesis of the Sacred Writings when, beginning from Moses, and from all the Prophets, He interpreted (*διερμήνευσεν*) to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself (Lk 24²⁷). We should have had the deepest of all 'hermeneutics' for our enlightenment and guidance. Our Lord is apparently made to include 'the third day' in O.T. prophecy (Lk 24⁴⁶), and it is remarkable that so slight a detail should have been noted and have riveted itself into the Creeds.

The question arises, Ought we to restrict the phrase 'according to the Scriptures' to the fact of the Resurrection only, or extend it to the exact day of the event—the third day? In the first case, if we restrict it only to the *fact* of the Resurrection, we can supply Scripture proof from that employed by St. Peter on the Day of Pentecost from Ps 16—'Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, nor suffer thy holy one to see corruption.' And he may have used this text on the authority of the Risen Lord Himself. But if Scripture proof is demanded for 'the third day,' it may be possible to elicit some light from those details of the Passover ceremonial which were at the moment engrossing the mind of the Apostle.

It was just before the Passover of the year 56

when St. Paul at Ephesus received the Corinthian letter and deputation. When he replied, the Passover had come, with its accompanying presentation of the first-fruits 'on the morrow after the sabbath' (Lv 23⁹⁻²¹); and the Apostle's heart and thoughts were full of the Scriptures which dealt with that festival, and were concentrated on the True Paschal Lamb, who, as the First-fruits, had fulfilled in every particular all that was foreshadowed in the ancient ritual. References palpable and patent, as well as allusive and inferentially latent, abound throughout the Epistle. 'Our Passover is sacrificed for us—Christ.' 'A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.' 'Purge out the old leaven, and keep festival with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.' He refers to the Passage of the Red Sea, which was a Passover theme; and, above all, names Christ as the 'First-fruits.' And there, I think, we arrive at the point of the emphasis laid upon 'the third day'; for the passage in Leviticus particularizes the importance of the first-fruits being presented 'on the morrow after the sabbath,' that is, on the third day after the Passover, and therefore on the first day of the week. (So Professor Bacon, *Expositor*, December 1923.)

Is it not curious that in the list of Resurrection appearances there is no reference to the appearances to the women on Easter morning? We are accustomed to envisage the story of the Resurrection from the women's statements in the Synoptists, whereas we probably ought to take it from the official account communicated to St. Paul, reproduced by him in his preaching to the Corinthians, and again reiterated in this—the very first documentary evidence of the Resurrection that we possess—where we see that he did not adduce the women's testimony at all. His list of appearances is not perhaps meant to be exhaustive, but he mentions six important cases, perhaps as being more easily verified and of unimpeachable trustworthiness, or perhaps because the women's various stories were not known or not officially recorded. At any rate his story is not the Jerusalem story, but probably the Antiochene.

In v.²² the phrase 'as in Adam all die, so also in the Christ shall all be made alive,' implies that St. Paul believed the 'Adam' in the Creation stories in Genesis to be an historical personage; but the ambiguous meaning of the Hebrew word, which may be either a proper or a common noun, leaves it open for us to understand the 'Adam' as denoting man in his lower physical nature as one of the animal creation upon whom death passes, as distinct from the spiritual side of man's personality

which constitutes the higher supernatural aspect of man as a child of God.

In vv.²³⁻²⁶ we get the Pauline view of a Millennium, which approximates closely to some of the current Jewish apocalyptic beliefs. A universal resurrection is contemplated; but there are various stages in its accomplishment. Each rises in his own order or troop (*τάγμα*). First, there is the resurrection of Christ. That was a matter of history. He was the first-fruits of a harvest to follow, the 'firstborn from the dead' (Col 1¹⁸). Then, after an interval of uncertain length, the resurrection of those who are Christ's at His coming. Then, finally, after the reign of Christ on earth which is occupied with the destruction of all that is opposed to God, the abolition of death. The future age begins at the close of this reign of Christ, when the kingdom is delivered over to the Father.

Three points emerge here. First, a question of translation. Is τὸ τέλος a noun or an adverb? It cannot be a noun. 'Then cometh the end,' as A.V. and R.V. take it, supplying the verb 'cometh.' It was not even the beginning of the end, for the beginning of the end is Christ's Coming, the Parousia. Nor is it the absolute end, for St. Paul goes on to speak of a further event after the abolition of death, namely, the subjection of the Son to the Father—an idea which finds only occasional expression in the New Testament. τὸ τέλος must therefore be an adverb, as in 1 P 3⁸, and be translated 'finally.' Then the passage will run quite intelligibly like this:

'Every one in his own order: Christ as first-fruits: next, those who are Christ's at his coming: then, finally . . . the last enemy shall be destroyed, Death.'

It is one long sentence with two parentheses in the middle of it, quite in Pauline style. All that is necessary is to alter the punctuation, and to substitute 'at' for the supposititious 'cometh' in our versions. [So Professor Burkitt, *J.T.S.*, July 1916.] Then the whole would now run in our versions: 'Christ the first-fruits: then they that are Christ's at his coming: then at the end—when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power—for he must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet—the last enemy shall be abolished, Death.'

The second point is this. If a universal resurrection is implied in v.²³, and if the Resurrection at Christ's Coming is limited to those who are His,

then there must be a later resurrection in *their* order of those who are *not* His, the unbelievers, before the final consummation of all things. St. Paul did believe in a resurrection of the wicked as well as of the righteous, if his speech before Felix is correctly reported in Ac 24¹⁵—‘that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust.’ But the ordinary Jewish belief was that resurrection was a privilege reserved for the righteous. And that belief is perhaps reflected in the phrase which St. Paul uses in Ph 3¹¹, ‘If by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead’—it was a reward, not a necessity.

The third point is this. The reign of the Messiah was not itself the future age, but the introduction to it, and the resurrection of the just takes place at the beginning of this reign. In 2 Es 7²⁸ the duration of this reign is put at 400 years; in other accounts it is fixed at 40 or 600, or 1000 or 2000 years. The period of 1000 is adopted by St. John in the Apocalypse (20^{4f.}), where we find again exactly the same three stages: first, the Millennium of 1000 years; then, the second resurrection, that is, of the wicked; and thirdly, the destruction of death.

In v.²⁹ we come to the *crux interpretum*—‘those who are baptized for the dead.’ The point of the argument is quite plain. Baptism presupposes a resurrection. If the future resurrection is a mistake, then the sacrament is a farce. But if the argument is clear and unequivocal, the exact custom referred to is most obscure. The early Greek Fathers understood it of ordinary Christian baptism. Others, mostly Western and modern commentators, explain it either of vicarious Christian baptism of living proxies for deceased relatives, or of converts led to baptism out of affection for deceased Christian friends. That the idea of vicarious lustrations for the dead was not alien to Jewish thought is proved by the action of Judas Maccabæus recorded in 2 Mac 12^{39f.} where a sacrifice or sin-offering was offered on behalf of those who had died when ceremonially unclean, with a view to their resurrection. ‘For if he were not expecting that they that had fallen would rise again, it were superfluous and idle to pray for the dead.’ The whole passage is worth study.

And then in v.³² comes the surprising suggestion that if the Apostle exposed himself to an almost certain death by becoming a beast-fighter in the arena at Ephesus, there would be nothing to be gained by his doing so, if there were no future life. This, I take it, is an imaginary supposition, for as a Roman citizen St. Paul could not be subjected

to such an ordeal. That is the objection to taking the illustration literally; though we all know the charming story of St. Paul and the baptized lion in the arena at Ephesus—a bit of second-century fanciful embroidery on this very passage. But there is just the possibility that there had really been some incident, to which we have no further clue, which gave point to this particular illustration. Κατὰ ἀνθρώπων means ‘as men do,’ with merely human motives, seeking applause, money, or release from incarceration.

II. Let us now turn to the second part of the chapter, which deals with the nature of the resurrection body. Obviously the objectors whom St. Paul answers had been led to their denial of the general resurrection by a curious materialism in their view of the resurrection body. Two points puzzled them—the manner of the resurrection, and the kind of body the raised ones would bear. ‘How are the dead raised, and with what manner of body do they come?’ St. Paul’s answer is drawn from simple analogies in Nature. The seed, which even the objector himself sows, perishes as to its outward husk, in order to let the germ of life within it clothe itself with a new organism, which retains a principle of identity with, even though it differs externally from, the original seed. The πῶς, the ‘How,’ is thus answered by every analogy that we see around us. But what manner of body? ποίῳ σώματι; St. Paul reminds them that there are diversities of bodies of every kind already existing, in form and rank and quality and beauty and glory, in things terrestrial and things celestial, and the immense variety of these is accepted as quite natural because each is determined by God in its own order and proper sphere. Why, then, should there be any difficulty in the conception of a *spiritual* body fitted for a spiritual sphere? God will give to the raised ones spiritual organisms adapted to their new environment. ‘What manner of body?’ Certainly not a perishable body of flesh and blood. The psychic body which we wear here will be exchanged for the pneumatic body which we shall wear hereafter. But the psychic body comes first: it is, as it were, the scaffolding by means of which the pneumatic body is built. And as assuredly there is a psychic body, so equally assuredly is there a pneumatic body for each of us. The one is of the earth, the other is of heaven. And as we have borne the *eikon* or outward semblance of the earthy, so shall we hereafter bear the *eikon* of the heavenly.

Personality as we know it consists in a union of soul and body; and, if that personality is to

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

It is essential for the understanding of St. Paul's argument to grasp the fact that he is not speaking of a dead corpse and its quasi-material revival or resuscitation. That is the very error that he was combating. He is speaking of the resurrection of those whom we call the dead. And he does not say, 'The dead body is sown in corruption and raised in glory.' He is not thinking of burial at all : burial is not within the purview of his argument. The verbs are impersonal. He says *σπείρεται*, 'There is a sowing in corruption,' and *ἐγείρεται*, 'there is a raising in glory.' And the sowing is not the burial of the dead body, but the planting of our individual lives here on earth. This is absolutely clear : because the order in St. Paul's mind is sowing, death, resurrection ; whereas the common view that he is thinking of burial would demand the order death, sowing, resurrection. The sowing, as in the case of the seed, must precede the death, not follow it. There would be no use in sowing dead seed : it is living seeds that must be sown. The analogy demands that we should be sown living, not dead ; and that implies our being sown on this earth. Neither seeds sown *in* the earth, nor we sown *on* the earth perish in the dissolution of death. The idea of our life on this earth being a sowing was a familiar one. It underlies the commonest expression of a man's posterity as his seed, and finds explicit statement in 2 Es 5⁴⁸, where God says, 'I have given the womb of the earth to those that be sown therein in their several generations.'

The corruption, dishonour, weakness, *φθορά*, *ἀτιμία*, *ἀσθενεία*, in which our individual lives are sown, represent our subjection to corruption, sufferings, and death—the weakness of our mortal nature, and correspond with the Apostle's phrase in Ph 3²⁸, 'the body of our humiliation.' Further, it would be incongruous to speak of a dead corpse, *πτῶμα*, as a *σῶμα ψυχικόν* ; yet he says 'there is a sowing of a psychic body.' Nor should we speak of a corpse as 'weak.'

A few subsidiary matters remain.

In vv.^{51, 52} (as in 1 Th 4¹⁵) St. Paul contemplates himself as amongst those who will be alive at Christ's Coming. 'We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.' That is to say, he believed that the *ἐπιφανεία* or *παρουσία* would come in his own lifetime, and in that of the majority of his readers. Hence, to meet any possible objection or question as to what kind of bodies those still living on earth at that solemn crisis would wear when the dead were raised, he asserts that *all* must undergo the same change—the dissolution of what is mortal, and the assumption of the body of glory. He describes this change from the body of our humiliation to the body of glory in Ph 3²¹ as a 'refashioning' or change of the outer *σχῆμα* ; but how this transformation is effected, he does not tell us, any more than he attempts a description of the pneumatic body. It is probably beyond our present comprehension.

We notice that this conception of the necessity for a transformation of the earthly body before it can inherit immortality is a new element in Pauline thought. In 1 Th 4¹⁷ no change in the body was contemplated. Apparently those who were alive at the Parousia would, *just as they were*, join the Lord in the air. This idea finds no place here. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. This corruptible *must* put on incorruption.

Again, nowhere does St. Paul define what he understood by the dead 'sleeping.' It was a purely Jewish idea, yet apparently the O.T. notion of a realm of the dead in Sheol finds no echo in St. Paul's writings. He never uses the word Hades. Did he sometimes think of the dead as awaiting in sleep the summons to awake and undergo the necessary change ? In 2 Co 5²¹ he expresses the belief that the dead pass immediately into the presence of Christ ; and also that the spiritual body is actually existent now and ready to be assumed at the moment of death. I imagine that the fact is that no symbolic language can fully and completely portray the spiritual world. Now one aspect of the change is dwelt upon, and now another, and these are not consistent or rationally coherent. Whatever our views may be of death and of the future life, we may be sure that they are utterly inadequate. We cannot fix even the main characteristics of the life of the world to come.

I have one other remark to make. St. Paul does not appeal to the Appearances of the Risen Christ as helping his readers to form an idea of the nature of the resurrection body. And the reason, I think, is this. The accounts in the Gospels are so mysteri-

ously difficult to harmonize that it is almost impossible to form any coherent view of the nature of our Lord's Body after His Resurrection. We cannot envisage in what kind of a body He chose to appear and disappear, and disguise His form, and eat material food 'before' and 'with' His disciples. So that the appearances of the Risen Lord as depicted in the Gospels are least helpful in aiding us to think of our own future spiritual bodies. But suppose that our Lord, instead of being buried as a Jew, had been cremated as a Roman or a Greek—and very many of the bodies of martyrs of all ages have been burned before or after death without involving the smallest doubt as to their future resurrection—there could have arisen no disputes about the empty tomb or the nature of His resurrection body. Yet His resurrection, His victory over death, His continued life in exaltation, would

have been equally assured, at any rate to St. Paul, by the revelation that came to him on the Damascene road, and which turned the superbly orthodox Pharisee into a captive slave at the chariot wheels of His Lord and Master. That the flesh and blood material of our Lord's body evanesced, evaporated, sublimated, without undergoing corruption in the tomb is an old theory which was revived some time ago by Latham in his book called *The Risen Master*. This thought may possibly throw light upon St. Paul's statement about all undergoing change, whether dead or alive, at the Coming. But in our case the body does undergo dissolution and corruption; and that shows that the outer husk of our personal individuality here is only an *instrumentum* or temporary mode of expression of our true self, which lives on through and after the experience of death.

National Contributions to Biblical Science.

IV. The Contribution of Germany to Church History: Ancient Church and Reformation.

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II.

NEXT to the history of the Ancient Church, German scholars have eminently contributed to the knowledge of that of the Reformation. The Germans, indeed, claim the Reformation as a German product, and this claim, though not above criticism, is substantially justified by the dominating influence exercised by Luther on the initiation and early development of the movement in Germany and other lands. One is almost snowed under by the mass of the historical literature which has appeared during the last half-century and continues to appear in endless volume, and in which the Germans give unstinted scope to their rage for literary production (*Arbeitswut*). For anything like an adequate account of it in English I may refer the student to the footnotes of my *Luther and the Reformation*, or to the extensive German bibliography of Wolf (*Quellenkunde der deutschen Reformationsgeschichte*, 1915-23).¹ Corporations and indi-

viduals have alike contributed to elucidate this complex movement. As the result of this activity the number of publications in the form of editions of sources or of monographs can only be described as legion. This productivity has been fostered by the *Verein für Reformationsgeschichte*, whose organ is the *Archiv für Ref. geschichte*. Very meritorious is the interest shown in this historic research by the Prussian Government through its Commission for the investigation of the history of the Reformation and the Counter Reformation, whose foundation is a valuable fruit of the Quatercentenary of the Reformation in 1917. To this celebration the Luther Society (*Luthergesellschaft*), whose organs are the *Lutherjahrbuch* and the *Luther Quarterly*, also owes its existence. For the study of the subject from the Roman Catholic point of view there is the *Historical Studies and Texts* series since 1906, which are supplemented by the numerous publications of the *Görresgesellschaft*.

Among general collections of the utmost value it must suffice to mention the *Deutsche Reichstagsakten* still in course of publication; the series of

¹ Kawerau has published a chronological list of Luther's works in particular, *Verein für Reformationsgeschichte*, No. 129, 2nd ed., 1929. See also Albrecht, *Theol. Stud. u. Krit.*, 1926.