

OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION AND HIMSELF.

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Every life possesses a unity and a constant movement all its own. All we know combines to assure us that however long a life may be, however varying may be the incidents entering into it, that life continues to be the same life and persistently shows motion in some direction. Consequently no incident in a life can be altogether unimportant to that life or to other lives.

This truth which so certainly holds with respect to life prior to what we call death, doubtless holds, also, with respect to that life which follows death. Then, too, every life will be a unity and a progression, and every incident will be significant to the individual himself and to those associated with him.

The Man Christ Jesus was not exempt from the great laws which govern all men. He grew "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."¹ He became weary and hungry, waxed indignant, shed tears, marvelled, suffered and died as other men. His life was one and progressive. Incidents in life signified something to Him as they do to us. In Him, however, there occurred no backward step as so often happens with us. In His life movement was always a progression and never a retrogression. In Him humanity developed along right lines.

In this article we shall seek to discover as far as possible what the resurrection accomplished with respect to the Lord Himself. The task is, of course, beset with difficulties, but there need not be failure to glean truth. And if we have in any real sense grasped the emphasis laid upon this event in the New Testament writings, it will occasion no surprise if we find that the consequences of the resurrection for our Lord Himself were far-reaching

¹Lk. 2:52.

and of the greatest importance, although but little recognized in general Christian thought.

1. Clearing the Way.

But first of all it seems necessary to clear the way a little. Just what happened when the "Word became flesh" and the Son of God began His life among men? What all was included in that "emptying" of Himself which Paul tells us marked His coming into the world? Evidently we can never be sure that we have reached a correct reply to these questions. The process lies entirely outside the region of present human experience. Yet it is hardly possible for us to think with satisfaction concerning many other things without formulating for ourselves some view as to what was involved for Christ in the incarnation. The resurrection and the incarnation are so closely related that regard for the truth and fairness to the reader seem to demand at this point a brief statement of the view of this divine process which obtains in this discussion.

The incarnation is here understood to mean such an emptying on the part of God's Son of all that belonged to Him in the preincarnate state as made it possible for Him to become perfectly identified with humanity, and to share as a man in all the stages of ordinary human development. He did not surrender His deity, but He did become man, and grew into the consciousness of His power and of His life work as other men. Christ was not both God and man, an inconceivable being with two personalities within Him, but the God-man, with one personality in which was included in perfect union essential deity and essential humanity. He was not a man developing into God, but rather God developing as a man. "In Christ's life and work," says Forsyth, "we have that divine mobility in which the living Son eternally was—we have that coming historically, and psychologically, and ethically to be. He came to be what He always vitally was

...He moved by His history to a supernal world that He moved in by His nature. We have that divine Son, by whose agency the world of souls was made, not now creating another soul for His purpose, but Himself becoming such a soul. Surely...if He had it in Him to make souls in the divine image it was in Him to become one."²

Again, another matter of considerable importance throughout this discussion, and especially requiring a word just here, is the relation of the resurrection to the ascension and the exaltation of our Lord. It is a noticeable fact that the ascension does not bulk large in the New Testament as an independent event. In Matthew's Gospel it is not mentioned at all. In Mark's it is barely mentioned in the 19th verse of the last chapter—a part of those closing verses which many scholars insist are not a part of the original Gospel. If Westcott and Hort are right in regarding the last five words of Luke 24:51 as an early interpolation, then the third Gospel contains no certain reference to the ascension. In the fourth Gospel there are explicit references to the ascension but no narrative of the event. The opening verses of the Acts present the event in detail. In the Epistles Christ is thought of as "seated at the right hand of God," and while they certainly involve the ascension they rarely refer directly to it. Thus it becomes evident that this event "is not separately emphasized in the New Testament as distinct from the resurrection, or from that state of exaltation to which it was the solemn entrance." And yet it would be entirely incorrect to say that the ascension is identified with either the resurrection or that state of exaltation in which the Christ now is. Resurrection, ascension and sitting at God's right hand are not interchangeable terms. In short, the ascension appears to be regarded in the New Testament as "no more than a point of transition," with no theological significance distinguishable from that of the resurrection and the exaltation of Christ.

²"The Person and Place of Jesus Christ," p. 338.

The exalted state of our Lord is one step further removed from the resurrection than the ascension. As noted above the writers of the Epistles thought of Him as "seated at the right hand of God." But while His exaltation was unmistakably set forth in apostolic preaching, it did not receive the stress laid upon the resurrection. Nor does it seem to have been looked upon as of equal theological import. Ellicott says, "The preaching of the apostles was preeminently the **resurrection** of Christ, as that which included in it everything besides."³ In fact, the stress is laid so constantly and so almost exclusively throughout the New Testament upon the resurrection that we can hardly fall short of regarding it as "that one great victory over sin and death that made every minor conquest over earthly relations a matter of certain and inevitable sequence."⁴

Now having reached a common level of thought concerning Him who was raised up, and concerning the relation of the ascension and the exaltation of Christ to His resurrection, we are ready to consider the effect of this last event upon our Lord's person and work.

2. The Resurrection and Christ's Person.

Considered with respect to our Lord's person, the resurrection is seen to have contributed (1) to the **perfecting of His humanity**. We have already noted that when the Lord came to redeem the world a union was effected between humanity and deity. The Christ was born "of the seed of David according to the flesh."⁵ Because "the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same."⁶ And the union thus formed between the human and the divine was not for a time only. It still continues, and will continue at least until the close of this present dispensation. Other-

³"Life of Christ," p. 338, note 1.

⁴Id. p. 338.

⁵Rom. 1:3.

⁶Heb. 2:14.

wise Paul's statement could not be true that God "hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." Nor does revelation afford any ground for believing this union of humanity with deity in the person of the Son will ever cease. It has evidently become "indissoluble and eternal," His humanity now being "coeternal to His divinity." The resurrection, then, cannot be regarded as the casting off of Christ's humanity, but must be looked upon as the entrance of that humanity upon a new stage of existence.

The chief source of knowledge concerning the resurrection body of our Lord is the history of the forty days intervening between His resurrection and the ascension. Study of this source has led to the presentation of four different views. Some hold that He rose with His natural body simply reanimated like the body of Jairus' daughter, or the widow of Nain's son, all change towards a spiritual body being effected at the ascension. Others insist upon a modification of this view, believing that while He rose with His "natural body," this gradually underwent during the forty days a process of transformation into His spiritual body with which He ascended. A third view is that His resurrection body, while the same as that laid in the tomb, was from the moment of His rising "endued with new powers, properties, and attributes." Still others believe that the resurrection body was ethereal, something between matter and spirit.

The first of these views is manifestly unable to include all the facts revealed, and it would seem a combination of the compatible elements of the second and third would harmonize better with the strange phenomena of the forty days than any one view taken separately. But such a state of change is impossible of proof. It lies beyond our experience, and the voice of revelation is silent except as to facts from which inference should never be dogmatic.

⁷Acts 17:31.

But while admitting that the precise state of Christ's body during the forty days must remain undetermined, the sphere of that indeterminateness should not pass unrecognized. There are doubtless very few indeed today who believe that the body with which our Lord rose was in no wise different from that laid in the tomb three days before. Practically all admit that it was different, and that this difference raised it far above the latter. The exact point which cannot be determined is the degree of difference.

But a man is more than a mere body. If Christ continues in any real sense a "man," His humanity must include more than simply a body, however refined that may be. We must go on, therefore, to ask this further question, what effect had the resurrection on these other elements essential to a real humanity? To this no trustworthy reply can be given except in a limited and general way. Conjecture would be easy and might be interesting, but could hardly be profitable. Plain statements in the Scriptures are wanting.. We must be content to remain in ignorance here except as inference may safely be made from what is revealed concerning Christ's present state. What we know of this is sufficient to assure us that, as to the body, so also to all that was essential to His humanity, the resurrection of Christ contributed somewhat towards perfection. While, therefore, we cannot say with Prof. Milligan, that "His resurrection was the perfecting in His person of a humanity which even our first parents had received only in rudimentary and initial, not its ultimate stage,"⁸ we can say that it contributed richly to the perfecting of such humanity.

"Then first humanity
Triumphant passed the crystal ports of light,
(Stupendous guest!) and seized eternal youth."

The man in Him became thenceforth better fitted to be the medium of an adequate manifestation of Himself,⁹

⁸"The Resurrection of Our Lord," p. 133.

⁹Jno. 21:1-14.

because it had moved forward in accordance with the universal law (for man), "Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual."¹⁰

But the resurrection did more for Christ's person than contribute to the perfecting of His humanity; it also (2) contributed to the **full investing of our Lord with Messianic dignity and divine glory**. Godet maintains that at the resurrection "Jesus was restored and restored wholly to the position of the Son of God, which He had renounced on becoming incarnate." But in what sense, it may be asked, did the Word renounce His sonship with the Father on becoming incarnate? Was not Jesus truly God's Son even during His humiliation, as truly so as at any subsequent period of His existence? We dare not regard the resurrection as adding anything to the reality of His sonship, or as adding anything to the reality of His humanity. It must be regarded, however, as contributing to the full taking on of all that pertained to His sonship as it contributed to the full development of His humanity. Peter declares this on the day of Pentecost: "This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses. Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath poured forth this which ye see and hear. . . . Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified."¹¹ And lest the force of these words be underrated, attention should be called to the fact that emphasis is not here laid upon the ascension or exaltation, but upon the resurrection. The "therefore" of verse 33 makes it clear that the exaltation of Christ is thought of not as in itself of prime importance, but "as a necessary consequent of the resurrection." Paul's testimony is to the same effect. In Romans 1:4 he declares that "Jesus was instated as the Son of God

¹⁰1 Cor. 15:46.

¹¹Acts 2:32, 33, 36.

with power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the resurrection of the dead." Paul does not mean, of course, that the resurrection made Jesus the Son of God. He was already God's Son before the foundations of the world were laid. It was as such that He was sent into the world.¹² When He became a man, however, He "emptied Himself" of much that had been His.¹³ And as a consequence of this humiliation there was needed some fact by means of which he should receive "instating into the rank and dignity of His divine Sonship; whereby also, as its necessary consequence with a view to the knowledge and conviction of men" he should be "legitimately established as the Son."¹⁴ Such fact, accomplishing in full the mighty purposes of God, was the resurrection. Wrought through the majesty of the Father, it "was the actual introduction of Christ into the full possession of divine Sonship so far as thereto belonged, not only the **inner** of a holy, spiritual essence, but also the **outer** of an existence in power and heavenly glory."¹⁵

Whatever, therefore, may be the opinion held as to Christ's state during the forty days, or as to what was accomplished for Him by the ascension and the exaltation, the very least that can be said must include the admission that the resurrection was at least a mighty step forward in the removal of those limitations which pertained to the state of His "kenosis," and of the taking on of those privileges which pertain to His state as "Lord of all." But it is very difficult to believe that the untrammelled mind can be satisfied with this minimum admission. Ordinary spiritual discernment will hardly suffer one to stop short of the firm conviction that the resurrection, wrought through the majesty of the Father, was "the great divine act, which . . . powerfully instated the Son in the Son's positions and dignities," that the rising from the dead

¹²Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:4.

¹³Phil. 2:7.

¹⁴Meyer, *Commentary*, in loco.

¹⁵Bruce, "Apologetics," p. 404.

was above all other events that which perfected our Lord in dignity and divine glory.

3. The Resurrection and Christ's Work.

Passing now from the consideration of the bearing of the resurrection upon our Lord's person to ascertain its relation to His work, we notice that (1) it **made possible the completion of His work**. Our Lord indeed cried upon the cross, "It is finished." But evidently this was not spoken of all His work for the salvation of men. In fact, it can be understood only of "His groans and tears, and agonies and cries; His submission to the pains and sufferings and death appointed for Him; His struggle with the world and its prince."¹⁶ These were finished, but not all of that mighty work which He had covenanted with the Father to perform for men.

No analysis of our Lord's work is likely to prove uniformly acceptable. One of the most comprehensive and satisfactory, however, is that which recognizes Him as exercising the functions of prophet, priest and king. As prophet He spoke forth the truth of God to men. As priest, through the eternal Spirit, He offered Himself to, and intercedes with, God for men. As king He rules over, and ministers to, men in the Father's stead. And whether we trace His work as prophet, priest or king we shall find its completion lying after the resurrection and made possible by it.

In His last discourse Christ taught plainly that His work as prophet was to be continued and completed after His death.¹⁷ "These things have I spoken unto you in dark sayings: the hour cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in dark sayings, but shall tell you plainly of the Father."¹⁸ It may be possible, with a little show of reason, to contend that these words must be limited to the period between the resurrection and the ascension,

¹⁶Milligan, "The Resurrection of Our Lord," p. 141.

¹⁷Jno. 14-16.

¹⁸Jno. 16:25.

during which the risen Lord was from time to time "appearing to His disciples" and "speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God." Yet it is almost uniformly held that Christ had in mind the period which began with the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and will continue till His return at the last day, and that He means to claim the teaching of the Holy Spirit as in every sense His own teaching. For present purposes, however, we need not contend for either view. To accept the one or the other is to admit that our Lord's work as prophet was to be continued and completed after His death, and such continuance and completion were made possible only by His triumph over death and the grave.

But the resurrection did more towards the completion of Christ's work as prophet than simply make possible further activity as teacher. It also added to the completeness of His prophetic message. This included not only His death but also His resurrection. And while this last event had been foretold, few details had been given as to its attendant circumstances or as to its significance. So far as the resurrection entered, Christ's message had doubtless never been clothed with such completeness as when reviewed on the way to Emmaus¹⁹ or in the Jerusalem chamber.²⁰ Then the facts were all in, and the message could be made clear and complete. Certain it is that under the tutelage of the Spirit, whom most will rightly regard as continuing in Christ's stead the work of teaching which He had begun, the significance of the resurrection was broadened vastly beyond the apparent meaning of any declaration concerning it recorded in the Gospels.

The resurrection also made possible the completion of Christ's priestly work. A very essential part of this is that blessed intercession, which, while begun upon the earth,²¹ is continued in all its fullness at the right hand of the Father in heaven and constitutes an eternal guaranty of our salvation. It is "because he abideth forever, hath

¹⁹Lk. 24:26.

²⁰Id. 24:44.

²¹Id. 22:32.

his priesthood unchangeable," "ever liveth to make intercession" for us, that "he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him."²² And He thus "abideth forever" through the resurrection from the dead.

Moreover, our Lord's expiatory work was not finished until after the resurrection. This is unmistakably set forth in the Epistle to the Hebrews.²³ According to the ancient ritual, the ceremonies of the great day of Atonement culminated with the entrance of the highpriest within the veil, and the sprinkling of the blood upon the mercy-seat. Likewise, also, in the real work of the atonement, of which this was the type, "Christ, having come as the high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, (that is, not of this creation), and not through the blood of goats and calves but through his own blood, entered once for all into the holy places, obtaining eternal redemption."²⁴ And thus, "having offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down at the right hand of God; from henceforth waiting until His enemies be made His footstool."²⁵

Again, similar remarks apply to our Lord's kingly work. Remarkable indications of His kingly character occasionally gleamed forth in His earthly career. Wind, sea, disease, demons obeyed His voice, and before Pontius Pilate He plainly owned His royalty. Yet even the present time does not behold the completeness of His kingship. All things are to be put "in subjection under His feet," "but now we see not yet all things subjected to Him."²⁶ The complete manifestation of the Lord's authority is yet future, and it is only as He passed through death to life by the resurrection that this consummation of His kingly power is to be attained.

²²Heb. 7:24, 25.

²³Chapters 9 and 10.

²⁴9:11, 12.

²⁵10:12, 13. A fuller discussion of the relation of the resurrection to Christ's work of expiation will appear later.

²⁶Heb. 2:8.

(2) It is the **crowning manifestation of the divine approbation of our Lord's earthly career.** Olshausen observes that the entire Christology of Paul is to be found in Eph. 1:20-23, Phil. 2:6-11 and Col. 1:14-19. In the second of these passages the high exaltation of Christ is declared to be a consequence of His willing acceptance of humiliation and suffering. "Who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore²⁷ also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name." That is, the whole career of the Son is so well pleasing in the Father's sight as to call forth this striking seal of His approval. In the first, the resurrection is at least co-ordinately associated with the seating at God's right hand as a manifestation of that "might of his strength" which placed Christ "far above" all else. Paul prayed that the Ephesians might know "the exceeding greatness of his power to usward 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, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." And in the third, this pre-eminence in all things is declared to be the divine purpose accomplished in making Him "the beginning", "the first born from the dead". "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence."²⁸ These latter passages, considered in connection with Rom. 1:4, can leave no doubt that in the approbative exaltation of Phil. 2:6-11 the resurrection held the chief place. Nor may it be forgotten that the tenor of the whole New Testament is to present this conquest

²⁷Greek *διό* ²⁸Greek *ἰνά*

of death and the grave as the chief element of that divine justification²⁹ of Jesus, that omnipotent reversal of human judgment, which gave Him whom the world had scorned, placed at its bar as a malefactor and blasphemer, and nailed to the cross, to be head over all things. According to the counsels of eternity, the third morning after the crucifixion brought the supreme moment for the expression of the Father's approval of the earthly ministrations of His Son. All had been done in harmony with His will, and the heavenly messenger left in the open tomb an open declaration that He was satisfied.

Perhaps yet another step should be taken here. This divine approval of our Lord's career of which the resurrection is the crowning manifestation, while at first hand an approval of the manner in which the work was done, is in essence also an approval of the object of that work. And if the resurrection attests the Father's approval both of the object of the Son's work and of the manner in which it was accomplished, it constitutes also a testimony to its adequacy. That is, the fact that God raised Christ from the dead is a proof that the Son's work so far had fully met the Father's requirements.

A writer of profound spiritual insight has said, "Christianity in its last analysis consists of two elements, a person and a fact—Jesus and the resurrection."³⁰ His words are in perfect accord with the New Testament conception. But how inseparable are the two. The person may be central, but just as the fact could not have been apart from the unique person, so the person could not be apart from the unique fact. Whether considered as to being, or as to outcome of being, work, the Christ of Christianity is impossible without the aid of the resurrection. A Christology which does not recognize the bearing of this fact upon our Lord is thereby not only emasculated but falsified. The message of the Church must ever be that of Paul, the good news of "Jesus and the resurrection".³¹

²⁹1 Tim. 3:16.

³⁰Henry G. Weston, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, October, 1900, p. 696.

³¹Acts 17:18.