

OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

“Christ did truly rise again from death; and took again His body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man’s nature; wherewith He ascended into Heaven, and there sitteth, until He returns to judge all men at the last day.” (*T.B.S. Laws and Regulations, Appendix, Article 4*).

A question has been asked regarding the words - “and *all things* appertaining to the perfection of man’s nature” - in view of the fact that the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ was shed upon the cross. In considering the important truths expressed in this article it must be remembered that its purpose is to state the truly Scriptural doctrine and to exclude a number of unscriptural errors.

For instance, the Sadducees and their modern counterparts would deny all resurrection and particularly the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Essenes believed in the immortality of the soul, but denied the resurrection of the body. Paul records in *1 Cor. 15. 12* that heretics had crept into the church saying that “there is no resurrection of the dead” and that “the resurrection is past already” (*2 Tim. 2. 18*). Not long afterwards the Docetae denied the reality of Christ’s body and the literal resurrection and ascension of Christ. The Cerinthians held that Christ, whom they regarded as merely man, was yet to rise.

Some of the Marcionites, especially Apelles, taught that Christ formed for Himself at His incarnation an airy and sidereal flesh which He dispersed at His ascension so that His spirit alone returned to heaven. All kinds of strange fables circulated at different times regarding the risen Body of the Divine Redeemer. Hermogenes taught that our Lord’s Body was in the sun. Tertullian recorded that some heretics believed that the flesh of the risen Saviour was in heaven, devoid of sense, like a scabbard from which the sword is withdrawn, Christ having withdrawn from it. The Manicheans and Gnostics also denied the resurrection while Eutyches denied the true humanity of the incarnate Son of God and implied that only the Godhead rose from the tomb.

In the middle ages this latter error was developed in the Roman Church by some who contended that after His ascension Christ’s human nature lost the attributes of humanity and became transubstantiated into His Divinity. When this article on the Resurrection was formulated in the 16th century it was worded so as to exclude all of these errors.

Since that time some have objected to the statement that “flesh and bones” went into heaven, on the grounds that His body at the ascension, if not before, became “a spiritual body” and therefore

could not have "flesh and bones" which pertain to a natural body. To this objection, which was also raised in much earlier times, an able defender of the faith replied - "He ascended into Heaven, not divesting Himself of His holy Body, but uniting it to a spiritual one". Christ's Body remained a truly human body after His resurrection, and was not changed into a spirit or "absorbed" into God. His risen Body was nevertheless divested of all that was mortal, carnal and corruptible and became a Spiritual Body, incorruptible and unchangeable. Theophylact wrote - "Did He lay aside His flesh? God forbid: for as He was taken up, so shall He come. But He was taken up in the flesh, and with a Body..."

The faith of the Apostles and evangelists who were "eye witnesses of His Majesty" rested in the knowledge that our Lord rose from the grave in the same Body in which He was buried, and that the same Body with flesh and bones, which had been placed lifeless in the sepulchre, rose again to life on the third day. Thomas declared that he would be convinced only by the evidence of his eyes and hands. He required proof that our Lord's Risen Body was the same Body which had been crucified, and our Lord gave him this proof, causing him to exclaim - "My Lord, and my God". (*John 20. 25-28*).

When He appeared to the assembled disciples and saw them terrified and frightened, supposing that they had seen a spirit, He said to them "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have". (*Luke 24. 36-40*). It is thus made clear that the Body which they saw and handled after the Resurrection was the same Body that was nailed to the cross and laid in the tomb. It is also evident that His Risen Body ascended into heaven, (*Luke 24. 36-51, Acts 1. 4-9*). The disciples were assured that, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven". (*Acts 1. 11*). They saw Him ascend in the Body in which He suffered, and were assured that He would so return.

This truth is acknowledged side by side with the teaching of the Scriptures that His risen Body is now a glorified and spiritual Body. He appeared among the disciples "when the doors were shut" (*John 20. 19*); "He vanished out of their sight" (*Luke 24. 31*); "He appeared in another form unto two of them" (*Mark 16. 12*). His Body had not ceased to be the same Body which it was before His death, but was invested with the supernatural and spiritual qualities and attributes of a spiritual body, as distinguished by the inspired Apostle from a natural body (*1 Cor. 15*). The bodies of believers are one day to be "fashioned like unto His glorious Body" (*Phil. 3. 21*).

The Scriptures encourage us to maintain that our Divine Saviour continues in Heaven as our Mediator, perfect in His nature as God, and perfect in His nature as Man, but with His human nature raised to glory and immortality, no longer subject to death.

It is true that our Lord shed His blood upon the cross, and the Scriptures do not teach that His shed blood was restored to His body

at the resurrection. Neither is this taught in the Article quoted above, for what is asserted there is that He took again "all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature". His resurrection was a physical reality and His risen Body was truly alive. This being so, it is evident that His heart was beating in His living Body and fulfilling its normal function of circulating blood throughout His frame - "For the life of the flesh is in the blood" (*Leviticus 17. 11*). When He spoke to His disciples the organs of speech were shown to be alive and active. When He listened to their conversation on the road to Emmaus the organs of hearing were shown to be alive, and when He greeted them in *Matthew 28. 9* the faculty of sight is shown to be alive. When He partakes of food in their presence He is demonstrating the living reality of His risen Body. In all these ways He showed that the "flesh and bones" which they saw and felt were not those of a corpse or phantom but of a truly living Body. Breathing "appertains to the perfection of man's nature" - and the Risen Saviour breathed and spoke. Sight, hearing and the sense of touch "appertain to the perfection of man's nature" - and the Risen Christ shows these in exercise. The Scriptures assert that "the life of the flesh is in the blood", and the Risen Lord was truly alive in the flesh. The Scriptures do not teach that there was some imperfection or something lacking in the risen Body of the Crucified One. The miracle of the Incarnation was that "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" and that He Who was equal with God was "found in fashion as a man" and thus lived upon the earth. The miracle of the Resurrection was that having been crucified and slain, He was raised from death unto life in the body of His flesh - "with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature". He did not cease to be man -

"For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the MAN Christ Jesus" (*1 Timothy 2. 5*).

This is the great mystery revealed in the Scriptures. Christ is indeed "God our Saviour" - "God with us" - "God manifest in the flesh". To accomplish His purpose He "took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name . . ." (*Phil. 2. 7-9*). He is truly God. He is truly Man - and the truth of His Manhood includes "all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature."

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