

## **“The Last Resurrection”**

### *And the importance of meditating on the heavenly life*

From John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, Book III, 25:1-11, English updated and emphasis added.

1. Although Christ, the Sun of righteousness, shining upon us through the gospel, has, as Paul declares, after conquering death, given us the light of life; and hence on believing we are said to have passed from “death unto life,” being no longer strangers and pilgrims, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, who has made us sit with His only begotten Son in heavenly places, so that nothing is lacking to our complete felicity; yet, lest we should feel it grievous to be exercised under a hard warfare, as if the victory obtained by Christ had produced no fruit, we must attend to what is elsewhere taught concerning the nature of hope.

For since we hope for what we do not see, and faith, as is said in another passage, is “the evidence of things not seen,” so long as we are imprisoned in the body we are absent from the Lord. For which reason Paul says, “Ye are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” Our present condition, therefore, requires us to “live soberly, righteously, and godly;” “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.”

Here there is need of no ordinary patience, lest, worn out with fatigue, we either turn backwards or abandon our post. Wherefore, all that has up until now been said of our salvation calls on us to raise our minds towards heaven, that, as Peter exhorts, though we now do not see Christ, “yet believing,” we may “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,” receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls. (2 Tim. 1:10; John 5:24; Eph. 2:6, 19; Rom. 8:16-18; Heb. 11:1; 2 Cor. 5:6; Col. 3:3; Titus 2:12).

For this reason Paul says, that the faith and charity of the saints have respect to the faith and hope which is laid up for them in heaven (Colossians 1:5). When we thus keep our eyes fixed upon Christ in heaven, and nothing on earth prevents us from directing them to the promised blessedness, there is a true fulfillment of the saying, “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21). Hence the reason why faith is so rare in the world; nothing being more difficult for our sluggishness than to surmount innumerable obstacles in striving for the prize of our high calling.

To the immense load of miseries which almost overwhelm us, are added the jeers of profane men, who assail us for our simplicity, when spontaneously renouncing the allurements of the present life we seem, in seeking a happiness which lies hid from us, to catch at a fleeting shadow. In short, we are beset above and below, behind and before, with violent temptations, which our minds would be altogether unable to withstand, were they not set free from earthly objects and devoted to the heavenly life, though apparently remote from us.

Wherefore, **he alone has made solid progress in the Gospel who has acquired the habit of meditating continually on a blessed resurrection.**

2. In ancient times philosophers discoursed, and even debated with each other, concerning the chief good: none, however, except Plato acknowledged that it consisted in union with God. He could not, however, form even an imperfect idea of its true nature;

nor is this strange, as he had learned nothing of the sacred bond of that union. We even in this our earthly pilgrimage know wherein our perfect and only felicity [happiness] consists—a felicity which, while we long for it, daily inflames our hearts more and more, until we attain to full fruition. Therefore I said, that none participate in the benefits of Christ except those who raise their minds to the resurrection.

This, accordingly, is the mark which Paul sets before believers, and at which he says they are to aim, forgetting everything until they reach it (Philippians 3:8). The more strenuously, therefore, must we contend for it, lest if the world engross us we be severely punished for our sloth.

Accordingly, he in another passage distinguishes believers by this mark, that their conversation [citizenship] is in heaven, from where they look for the Savior (Philippians 3:20).

And that they may not faint in their course, he associates all the other creatures with them. As shapeless ruins are everywhere seen, he says, that all things in heaven and earth struggle for renovation. For since Adam by his fall destroyed the proper order of nature, the creatures groan under the servitude to which they have been subjected through his sin; not that they are at all endued with sense, but that they naturally long for the state of perfection from which they have fallen. Paul therefore describes them as groaning and travailing in pain (Romans 8:19); so that we who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit may be ashamed to grovel in our corruption, instead of at least imitating the inanimate elements which are bearing the punishment of another's sin.

And in order that he may stimulate us the more powerfully, he terms the final advent of Christ our redemption. It is true, indeed, that all the parts of our redemption are already accomplished; but as Christ was once offered for sins (Hebrews 9:28), so He shall again appear without sin unto salvation. Whatever, then, be the afflictions by which we are pressed, let this redemption sustain us until its final accomplishment.

3. The very importance of the subject ought to increase our ardor. Paul justly contends, that if Christ did not rise the whole gospel is delusive and vain (1 Corinthians 15:13-17); for our condition would be more miserable than that of other mortals, because we are exposed to much hatred and insult, and incur danger every hour; no, we are like sheep destined for slaughter; and hence the authority of the gospel would fail, not in one part merely, but in its very essence, including both our adoption and the accomplishment of our salvation. Let us, therefore, give heed to a matter of all others the most serious, so that no length of time may produce weariness.

I have deferred the brief consideration to be given of it to this place, that my readers may learn, when they have received Christ, the author of perfect salvation, to rise higher, and know that He is clothed with heavenly immortality and glory in order that the whole body may be rendered conformable to the Head. For thus the Holy Spirit is ever setting before us in His person an example of the resurrection.

It is difficult to believe that after our bodies have been consumed with rottenness, they will rise again at their appointed time. **And hence, while many of the philosophers maintained the immortality of the soul, few of them assented to the resurrection of the body.** Although in this they were inexcusable, we are thereby reminded that the subject is too difficult for human apprehension to reach it.

To enable faith to surmount the great difficulty, Scripture furnishes two auxiliary proofs, the one the likeness of Christ's resurrection, and the other the omnipotence of God. Therefore, whenever the subject of the resurrection is considered, let us think of the case of **our Savior**, who, having completed His mortal course in our nature which He had assumed, obtained immortality, and **is now the pledge of our future resurrection**. For in the miseries by which we are beset, we always bear "about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:10). It is not lawful, it is not even possible, to separate Him from us, without dividing Him. Hence Paul's argument, "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen" (1 Corinthians 15:13); for he assumes it as an acknowledged principle, that **when Christ was subjected to death, and by rising gained a victory over death, it was not on His own account, but in the Head was begun what must necessarily be fulfilled in all the members**, according to the degree and order of each. For it would not be proper to be made equal to Him in all respects. It is said in the psalm, "Neither will You suffer [allow] Your Holy One to see corruption" (Psalm 16:10).

Although a portion of this confidence belongs to us according to the measure bestowed on us, yet the full effect appeared only in Christ, who, free from all corruption, resumed a spotless body. Then, that there may be no doubt as to our fellowship with Christ in a blessed resurrection, and that we may be contented with this pledge, Paul distinctly affirms that He sits in the heavens, and will come as a judge on the last day for the express purpose of changing our vile body, "that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Philippians 3:21). For he elsewhere says that God did not raise up His Son from death to give an isolated specimen of His mighty power, but that the Spirit exerts the same efficacy in regard to them that believe; and accordingly he says, that the Spirit when He dwells in us is life, because the end for which He was given is to quicken [give life to] our mortal body (Romans 8:10, 11; Colossians 3:4).

I briefly glance at subjects which might be treated more copiously, and deserve to be adorned more splendidly, and yet in the little I have said I trust pious readers will find sufficient materials for building up their faith. Christ rose again that He might have us as partakers with Him of future life. He was raised up by the Father, inasmuch as He was the Head of the Church, from which He cannot possibly be dissevered. He was raised up by the power of the Spirit, who also in us performs the office of quickening [making alive]. In short, He was raised up to be the resurrection and the life.

But as we have said, that in this mirror we behold a living image of the resurrection, so it furnishes a sure evidence to support our minds, provided we do not faint, nor grow weary at the long delay, because it is not ours to measure the periods of time at our own pleasure; but to rest patiently until God in His own time renew His kingdom. To this Paul refers when he says, "But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Corinthians 15:23).

But lest any question should be raised as to the resurrection of Christ on which ours is founded, we see how often and in what various ways He has born testimony to it. Scoffing men will deride the narrative which is given by the Evangelist as a childish fable. For what importance will they attach to a message which timid women bring and the disciples almost dead with fear, afterwards confirm? Why does not Christ rather place the illustrious trophies of His victory in the midst of the temple and the forum? Why does He not come forth, and in the presence of Pilate strike terror? Why does He not show Himself alive again to the priests and all Jerusalem? Profane men will scarcely admit that the witnesses whom He selects are well qualified. I answer, that though at the commencement their infirmity was contemptible, yet the whole was directed by the

admirable providence of God, so that partly from love to Christ and religious zeal, partly from incredulity, those who were lately overcome with fear now hurry to the sepulcher, not only that they might be eye-witnesses of the fact, but that they might hear angels announce what they actually saw. How can we question the veracity of those who regarded what the women told them as a fable, until they saw the reality? It is not strange that the whole people and also the governor, after they were furnished with sufficient evidence for conviction, were not allowed to see Christ or the other signs, (Matthew 27:66; 28:11). The sepulcher is sealed, sentinels keep watch, on the third day the body is not found. The soldiers are bribed to spread the report that His disciples had stolen the body. As if they had had the means of deforcing a band of soldiers, or been supplied with weapons, or been trained so as to make such a daring attempt. But if the soldiers had not courage enough to repel them, why did they not follow and apprehend some of them by the aid of the populace?

Pilate, therefore, in fact, put his signet to the resurrection of Christ, and the guards who were placed at the sepulcher by their silence or falsehood also became heralds of His resurrection. Meanwhile, the voice of angels was heard, "He is not here, but is risen" (Luke 24:6). The celestial splendor plainly shows that they were not men but angels.

Afterwards, if any doubt still remained, Christ Himself removed it. The disciples saw Him frequently; they even touched His hands and His feet, and their unbelief is of no little avail in confirming our faith. He discoursed to them of the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and at length, while they beheld, ascended to heaven. This spectacle was exhibited not to eleven apostles only, but was seen by more than five hundred brethren at once (1 Corinthians 15:6). Then by sending the Holy Spirit He gave a proof not only of life but also of supreme power, as He had foretold, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come unto you" (John 16:7).

Paul was not thrown down on the way by the power of a dead man, but felt that He whom he was opposing was possessed of sovereign authority. To Stephen He appeared for another purpose, namely, that He might overcome the fear of death by the certainty of life. To refuse assent to these numerous and authentic proofs is not diffidence, but depraved and therefore infatuated obstinacy.

4. We have said that in proving the resurrection our thoughts must be directed to the immense power of God. This Paul briefly teaches, when he says that the Lord Jesus Christ "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power by which He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Philippians 3:21). Wherefore, nothing can be more incongruous than to look here at what can be done naturally when the subject presented to us is an inestimable miracle, which by its magnitude absorbs our senses. Paul, however, by producing a proof from nature, confutes the senselessness of those who deny the resurrection. "You fool, that which you sow is not made alive unless it dies," etc., (1 Corinthians 15:36). He says that in seed there is a species of resurrection, because the crop is produced from corruption. Nor would the thing be so difficult to believe were we as attentive as we ought to be to the wonders which meet our eye in every quarter of the world. But let us remember that none is truly persuaded of the future resurrection except he who, carried away with admiration gives God the glory.

Elated with this conviction, Isaiah exclaims, "Your dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust" (Isaiah 26:19). In desperate circumstances he rises to God, the author of life, in whose hand are "the escapes from death" (Psalm 68:20). Job also, when more like a dead body than a living

being, trusting to the power of God, does not hesitate as if in full vigor to rise to that day: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He will stand at the latter day upon the earth"; (that is, that He will there exert His power): "and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another" (Job 19:25-27). For though some have recourse to a more subtle interpretation, by which they wrest these passages, as if they were not to be understood of the resurrection, they only confirm what they are desirous to overthrow; for holy men, in seeking consolation in their misfortunes, have recourse for alleviation merely to the similitude of a resurrection.

This is better learned from a passage in Ezekiel. When the Jews scouted the promise of return, and objected that the probability of it was not greater than that of the dead coming forth from the tomb, there is presented to the prophet in vision a field covered with dry bones, which at the command of God recover sinews and flesh. Though under that figure he encourages the people to hope for return, yet the ground of hope is taken from the resurrection, as it is the special type of all the deliverances which believers experience in this world. Thus Christ declares that the voice of the Gospel gives life; but because the Jews did not receive it, He immediately adds, "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in which all that are in the grave shall hear His voice, and shall come forth" (John 5:28, 29). Wherefore, amid all our conflicts let us exult after the example of Paul, that He who has promised us future life "is able to keep that" which "is committed unto Him," and thus glory that there is laid up for us "a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give" (2 Timothy 1:12; 4:8).

Thus all the hardships which we may endure will be a demonstration of our future life, "seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire" (2 Thessalonians 1:6-8). But we must attend to what he shortly after adds, namely, that He "shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe," by receiving the Gospel.

5. Although the minds of men ought to be perpetually occupied with this pursuit, yet as if they actually resolved to banish all remembrance of the resurrection, they have called death the end of all things, the extinction of man.

For Solomon certainly expresses the commonly received opinion when he says "A living dog is better than a dead lion," (Ecclesiastes 9:4). And again, "Who knows the spirit of man that goes upward, and the spirit of the beast that goes downward to the earth?"

In all ages a brutish stupor has prevailed, and, accordingly, it has made its way into the very Church; for the Sadducees had the hardihood openly to profess that there was no resurrection, no, that the soul was mortal (Mark 12:18; Luke 20:27). But that this gross ignorance might be no excuse, unbelievers have always by natural instinct had an image of the resurrection before their eyes. **For why the sacred and inviolable custom of burying, but that it might be the earnest of a new life?** Nor can it be said that it had its origin in error, for the solemnity of sepulture always prevailed among the holy patriarchs, and God was pleased that the same custom should continue among the Gentiles, in order that the image of the resurrection thus presented might shake off their torpor.

But although that ceremony was without profit, yet it is useful to us if we prudently consider its end; because it is no feeble refutation of infidelity that all men agreed in

professing what none of them believed. But not only did Satan stupefy the senses of mankind, so that with their bodies they buried the remembrance of the resurrection; but he also managed by various fictions so to corrupt this branch of doctrine that it at length was lost. Not to mention that even in the days of Paul he began to assail it (1 Corinthians 15), shortly after **the Chiliasts [a premillennialist group] arose, who limited the reign of Christ to a thousand years.** This fiction is too puerile to need or to deserve refutation. Nor do they receive any countenance from the Apocalypse, from which it is known that they extracted a gloss for their error (Revelation 20:4), since the thousand years there mentioned refer not to the eternal blessedness of the Church, but only to the various troubles which await the Church militant in this world.

**The whole Scripture proclaims that there will be no end either to the happiness of the elect, or the punishment of the reprobate.** Moreover, in regard to all things which lie beyond our sight, and far transcend the reach of our intellect, **belief must either be founded on the sure oracles of God, or altogether renounced.**

Those who assign only a thousand years to the children of God to enjoy the inheritance of future life, observe not how great an insult they offer to Christ and His kingdom. If they are not to be clothed with immortality, then Christ Himself, into whose glory they shall be transformed, has not been received into immortal glory; if their blessedness is to have an end, the kingdom of Christ, on whose solid structure it rests, is temporary. In short, they are either most ignorant of all divine things or they maliciously aim at subverting the whole grace of God and power of Christ, which cannot have their full effects unless sin is obliterated, death swallowed up, and eternal life fully renewed. How stupid and frivolous their fear that too much severity will be ascribed to God, if the reprobate are doomed to eternal punishment, even the blind may see. The Lord, indeed, [they claim] will be unjust if He exclude from His kingdom those who, by their ingratitude shall have rendered themselves unworthy of it. But their sins are temporary (see Bernard, Epist. 254). I admit it; but then the majesty of God, and also the justice which they have violated by their sins, are eternal. Justly, therefore, the memory of their iniquity does not perish. But in this way the punishment will exceed the measure of the fault.

It is intolerable blasphemy to hold the majesty of God in so little estimation, as not to regard the contempt of it as of greater consequence than the destruction of a single soul. But let us be done with these triflers, that we may not seem (contrary to what we first observed) to think their dreams deserving of refutation.

6. Besides these, other two dreams have been invented by men who indulge a wicked curiosity. Some, under the idea that the whole man perishes, have thought that the soul will rise again with the body; while others, admitting that spirits are immortal, hold that they will be clothed with new bodies, and thus deny the resurrection of the flesh.

Having already adverted to the former point when speaking of the creation of man, it will be sufficient again to remind the reader how groveling an error it is to convert a spirit, formed after the image of God, into an evanescent breath, which animates the body only during this fading life, and to reduce the temple of the Holy Spirit to nothing; in short, to rob of the badge of immortality that part of ourselves in which the divinity is most refulgent, and the marks of immortality conspicuous, so as to make the condition of the body better and more excellent than that of the soul.

Very different is the course taken by Scripture, which compares the body to a tabernacle, from which it describes us as migrating when we die, because it estimates

us by that part which distinguishes us from the lower animals. Thus Peter, in reference to his approaching death, says, "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle," (2 Peter 1:14). Paul, again, speaking of believers, after saying, "If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building from God," adds, "While we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:1, 6). Did not the soul survive the body, how could it be present with the Lord on being separated from the body? But an Apostle removes all doubt when he says that we go "to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Hebrews 12:23); by these words meaning, that we are associated with the holy patriarchs, who, even when dead, cultivate the same piety, so that we cannot be the members of Christ unless we unite with them. And did not the soul, when unclothed from the body, retain its essence, and be capable of beatific glory, our Savior would not have said to the thief, "Today you shall be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

Trusting to these clear proofs, let us doubt not, after the example of our Savior, to commend our spirits to God when we come to die, or after the example of Stephen, to commit ourselves to the protection of Christ, who, with good reason, is called "The Shepherd and Bishop" of our souls (Acts 7:59; 1 Peter 2:25).

Moreover, to pry curiously into their intermediate state is neither lawful nor expedient, (see Calv. *Psychopannychia*). Many greatly torment themselves with discussing what place they occupy, and whether or not they already enjoy celestial glory. It is foolish and rash to inquire into hidden things, farther than God permits us to know. Scripture, after telling that Christ is present with them, and receives them into paradise (John 12:32), and that they are comforted, while the souls of the reprobate suffer the torments which they have merited goes no farther. What teacher or doctor will reveal to us what God has concealed?

As to the place of abode, the question is not less futile and inept, since we know that the dimension of the soul is not the same as that of the body. When the abode of blessed spirits is designated as the bosom of Abraham, it is plain that, on quitting this pilgrimage, they are received by the common father of the faithful, who imparts to them the fruit of his faith. Still, since Scripture uniformly enjoins us to look with expectation to the advent of Christ, and delays the crown of glory till that period, **let us be contented with the limits divinely prescribed to us, namely, that the souls of the righteous, after their warfare is ended, obtain blessed rest where in joy they wait for the fruition of promised glory, and that thus the final result is suspended till Christ the Redeemer appear.**

There can be no doubt that the reprobate have the same doom as that which Jude assigns to the devils, they are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude ver. 6.).

7. Equally monstrous is the error of those who imagine that the soul, instead of resuming the body with which it is now clothed, will obtain a new and different body. Nothing can be more futile than the reason given by the Manichees, namely, that it were incongruous for impure flesh to rise again: as if there were no impurity in the soul; and yet this does not exclude it from the hope of heavenly life. It is just as if they were to say, that what is infected by the taint of sin cannot be divinely purified; for I now say nothing to the delirious dream that flesh is naturally impure as having been created by the devil. I only maintain, that nothing in us at present, which is unworthy of heaven, is any obstacle to the resurrection.

But, first, Paul enjoins believers to purify themselves from “all filthiness of the flesh and spirit” (2 Corinthians 7:1); and then denounces the judgment which is to follow, that everyone shall “receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10). With this accords what he says to the Corinthians, “That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body” (2 Corinthians 4:10). For which reason he elsewhere says, “I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). He says “body” as well as “spirit and soul,” and no wonder; for it were most absurd that bodies which God has dedicated to Himself as temples should fall into corruption without hope of resurrection. What? are they not also the members of Christ? Does he not pray that God would sanctify every part of them, and enjoin them to celebrate His name with their tongues, lift up pure hands, and offer sacrifices? That part of man, therefore, which the heavenly Judge so highly honors, what madness is it for any mortal man to reduce to dust without hope of revival?

In like manner, when Paul exhorts, “glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s”; he certainly does not allow that that which he claims for God as sacred is to be adjudged to eternal corruption. Nor, indeed, on any subject does Scripture furnish clearer explanation than on the resurrection of our flesh. “This corruptible (says Paul) must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:53). If God formed new bodies, where would be this change of quality? If it were said that we must be renewed, the ambiguity of the expression might, perhaps, afford room for cavil; but here pointing with the finger to the bodies with which we are clothed, and promising that they shall be incorruptible, he very plainly affirms that no new bodies are to be fabricated.

“No,” as Tertullian says, “he could not have spoken more expressly, if he had held his skin in his hands,” (Tertull. *De resurrectione carnis*). Nor can any cavil enable them to evade the force of another passage, in which saying that Christ will be the Judge of the world, he quotes from Isaiah, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me” (Romans 14:11; Isaiah 45:23); since He openly declares that those whom He was addressing will have to give an account of their lives. This could not be true if new bodies were to be sisted to the tribunal. Moreover, there is no ambiguity in the words of Daniel, “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2); since he does not bring new matter from the four elements to compose men, but calls forth the dead from their graves.

And the reason which dictates this is plain. For if death, which originated in the fall of man, is adventitious, the renewal produced by Christ must be in the same body which began to be mortal. And, certainly, since the Athenians mocked Paul for asserting the resurrection (Acts 17:32), we may infer what his preaching was: their derision is of no small force to confirm our faith. The saying of our Savior also is worthy of observation, “Fear not those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). Here there would be no ground for fear; were not the body which we now have liable to punishment.

Nor is another saying of our Savior less obscure, “The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves 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 damnation” (John 5:28, 29). Shall we say that the soul rests in the grave, that it may there hear the voice of Christ, and not rather that the body shall at His command resume the vigor which it had lost? Moreover, if we are to receive new bodies, where will be



the conformity of the Head and the members? Christ rose again. Was it by forming for Himself a new body? No, he had foretold, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). The mortal body which he had formerly carried he again received; for it would not have availed us much if a new body had been substituted, and that which had been offered in expiatory sacrifice been destroyed. We must, therefore, attend to that connection which the Apostle celebrates, that we rise because Christ rose, (1 Corinthians 15:12); nothing being less probable than that the flesh in which we bear about the dying of Christ, shall have no share in the resurrection of Christ.

This was even manifested by a striking example, when, at the resurrection of Christ, many bodies of the saints came forth from their graves. For it cannot be denied that this was a prelude, or rather earnest, of the final resurrection for which we hope, such as already existed in Enoch and Elijah, whom Tertullian calls candidates for resurrection, because, exempted from corruption, both in body and soul, they were received into the custody of God.

8. I am ashamed to waste so many words on so clear a matter; but my readers will kindly submit to the annoyance, in order that perverse and presumptuous minds may not be able to avail themselves of any flaw to deceive the simple. The volatile spirits with whom I now dispute adduce the fiction of their own brain, that in the resurrection there will be a creation of new bodies. Their only reason for thinking so is, that it seems to them incredible that a dead body, long wasted by corruption, should return to its former state. Therefore, mere unbelief is the parent of their opinion. The Spirit of God, on the contrary, uniformly exhorts us in Scripture to hope for the resurrection of our flesh.

For this reason Baptism is, according to Paul, a seal of our future resurrection; and in like manner the holy Supper invites us confidently to expect it, when with our mouths we receive the symbols of spiritual grace. And certainly the whole exhortation of Paul, "Yield your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Romans 6:13), would be frigid, did he not add, as he does in another passage, "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies," (Romans 8:11). For what would it avail to apply feet, hands, eyes, and tongues, to the service of God, did not these afterwards participate in the benefit and reward? This Paul expressly confirms when he says, "The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. And God has both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by His own power" (1 Corinthians 6:13, 14). The words which follow are still clearer, "Do you not know that your bodies are the members of Christ?" "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?" (1 Corinthians 6:15, 19). Meanwhile, we see how he connects the resurrection with chastity and holiness, as he shortly after includes our bodies in the purchase of redemption. It would be inconsistent with reason, that the body, in which Paul bore the marks of his Savior, and in which he magnificently extolled Him (Galatians 6:17), should lose the reward of the crown. Hence he glories thus, "Our conversation [or, citizenship] is in heaven; from where also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Philippians 3:20, 21). As it is true, "That we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22); so it were unreasonable that this entrance should be denied to the bodies which God exercises under the banner of the cross and adorns with the palm of victory.

### ***The rite of burial***

Accordingly, the saints never entertained any doubt that they would one day be the companions of Christ, who transfers to His own person all the afflictions by which we are

tried, that He may show their quickening [life-giving] power. No, under the law, God trained the holy patriarch in this belief, by means of an external ceremony. **For to what end was the rite of burial, as we have already seen, unless to teach that new life was prepared for the bodies thus deposited?** Hence, also, the spices and other symbols of immortality, by which under the law the obscurity of the doctrine was illustrated in the same way as by sacrifices. That custom was not the offspring of superstition, since we see that the Spirit is not less careful in narrating burials than in stating the principal mysteries of the faith. **Christ commends these last offices as of no trivial importance (Matthew 16:10)**, and that, certainly, for no other reason than just that they raise our eyes from the view of the tombs which corrupts and destroys all things, to the prospect of renovation. Besides, that careful observance of the ceremony for which the patriarchs are praised, sufficiently proves that they found in it a special and valuable help to their faith.

Nor would Abraham have been so anxious about the burial of his wife (Genesis 23:4, 19) had not the religious views and something superior to any worldly advantage, been present to his mind; in other words, by adorning her dead body with the insignia of the resurrection, he confirmed his own faith, and that of his family.

A clearer proof of this appears in the example of Jacob, who, to testify to his posterity [descendants] that even death did not destroy the hope of the promised land, orders his bones to be carried there. Had he been [or, since he was] to be clothed with a new body, would it not have been ridiculous in him to give commands concerning a dust which was to be reduced to nothing? Wherefore, if Scripture has any authority with us, we cannot desire a clearer or stronger proof of any doctrine.

Even tyros [beginning learners] understand this to be the meaning of the words, *resurrection*, and *raising up*. A thing which is created for the first time cannot be said to rise again; nor could our Savior have said, "This is the Father's will who has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:39). The same is implied in the word sleeping, which is applicable only to the body. Hence, too, **the name of cemetery [literally, "to put to sleep"], applied to burying-grounds.**

It remains to make a passing remark on the mode of resurrection. I speak thus because Paul, by styling it a mystery, exhorts us to soberness, in order that he may curb a licentious indulgence in free and subtle speculation. First, we must hold, as has already been observed, that **the body in which we shall rise will be the same as at present in respect of substance, but that the quality will be different**; just as the body of Christ which was raised up was the same as that which had been offered in sacrifice, and yet excelled in other qualities, as if it had been altogether different. This Paul declares by familiar examples (1 Corinthians 15:39).

For as the flesh of man and of beasts [animals] is the same in substance, but not in quality: as all the stars are made of the same matter, but have different degrees of brightness: so he shows, **that though we shall retain the substance of the body, there will be a change, by which its condition will become much more excellent. The corruptible body, therefore, in order that we may be raised, will not perish or vanish away, but, divested of corruption, will be clothed with incorruption.** Since God has all the elements at His disposal, no difficulty can prevent Him from commanding the earth, the fire, and the water, to give up what they seem to have destroyed. This, also, though not without figure, Isaiah testifies, "Behold, the LORD comes out of His

place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain" (Isaiah 26:21).

But a distinction must be made between those who died long ago, and those who on that day shall be found alive. For as Paul declares, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51); that is, it will not be necessary that a period should elapse between death and the beginning of the second life, for in a moment of time, in the twinkling of an eye, the trumpet shall sound, raising up the dead incorruptible, and, by a sudden change, fitting those who are alive for the same glory. So, in another passage, he comforts believers who were to undergo death, telling them that those who are then alive shall not take precedence of the dead, because those who have fallen asleep in Christ shall rise first (1 Thessalonians 4:15). Should anyone urge the Apostle's declaration, "It is appointed unto all men once to die" (Hebrews 9:27), the solution is easy, that when the natural state is changed there is an appearance of death, which is fitly so denominated, and, therefore, there is no inconsistency in the two things, namely, that all when divested of their mortal body shall be renewed by death; and yet that where the change is sudden, there will be no necessary separation between the soul and the body.

9. But a more difficult question here arises, How can the resurrection, which is a special benefit of Christ, be common to the ungodly, who are lying under the curse of God? We know that in Adam all died. Christ has come to be the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). Is it to revive the whole human race indiscriminately? But what more incongruous than that the ungodly in their obstinate blindness should obtain what the pious worshipers of God receive by faith only?

It is certain, therefore, that there will be one resurrection to judgment, and another to life, and that Christ will come to separate the kids from the goats (Matthew 25:32). I observe, that this ought not to seem very strange, seeing something resembling it occurs every day. We know that in Adam we were deprived of the inheritance of the whole world, and that the same reason which excludes us from eating of the tree of life excludes us also from common food. How does it happen, then, that God not only makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, but that, in regard to the uses of the present life, His inestimable liberality is constantly flowing forth in rich abundance? Hence we certainly perceive, that things which are proper to Christ and His members, abound to the wicked also; not that their possession is legitimate, but that they may thus be rendered more inexcusable. Thus the wicked often experience the beneficence of God, not in ordinary measures, but such as sometimes throw all the blessings of the godly into the shade, though they eventually lead to greater damnation.

Should it be objected, that the resurrection is not properly compared to fading and earthly blessings, I again answer, that when the devils were first alienated from God, the fountain of life, they deserved to be utterly destroyed; yet, by the admirable counsel of God, an intermediate state was prepared, where without life they might live in death. It ought not to seem in any respect more absurd that there is to be an adventitious [additional] resurrection of the ungodly which will drag them against their will before the tribunal of Christ, whom they now refuse to receive as their master and teacher. To be consumed by death would be a light punishment were they not, in order to the punishment of their rebellion, to be sisted before the Judge whom they have provoked to a vengeance without measure and without end.

But although we are to hold, as already observed and as is contained in the celebrated confession of Paul to Felix, "That there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:15); yet Scripture more frequently sets forth the resurrection as intended, along with celestial glory, for the children of God only: because, properly speaking, Christ comes not for the destruction, but for the salvation of the world: and, therefore, in the creed the life of blessedness only is mentioned.

10. But since the prophecy that death shall be swallowed up in victory (Hosea 13:14) will then only be completed, let us always remember that **the end of the resurrection is eternal happiness, of whose excellence scarcely the minutest part can be described by all that human tongues can say.**

For though we are truly told that the kingdom of God will be full of light, and gladness, and felicity, and glory, yet the things meant by these words remain most remote from sense, and as it were involved in enigma, until the day arrive on which He will manifest His glory to us face to face (1 Corinthians 15:54). "Now" says John, "are we the sons of God; and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). Hence, as the prophets were unable to give a verbal description of that spiritual blessedness, they usually delineated it by corporeal objects. On the other hand, because the fervor of desire must be kindled in us by some taste of its sweetness, let us specially dwell upon this thought, If God contains in Himself as an inexhaustible fountain all fullness of blessing, those who aspire to the supreme good and perfect happiness must not long for anything beyond Him.

This we are taught in several passages, "Fear not, Abraham; I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward" (Genesis 15:1). With this accords David's sentiment, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance, and of my cup: You maintain my lot. The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places" (Psalm 16:5, 6). Again, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness" (Psalm 17:15). Peter declares that the purpose for which believers are called is, that they may be "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). How so? Because "He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all those who believe" (2 Thessalonians 1:10).

If our Lord will share His glory, power, and righteousness, with the elect, no, will give Himself to be enjoyed by them; and what is better still, will, in a manner, become one with them, let us remember that every kind of happiness is herein included. But when we have made great progress in thus meditating, let us understand that if the conceptions of our minds be contrasted with the sublimity of the mystery, we are still halting at the very entrance.

The more necessary is it for us to cultivate sobriety in this matter, lest unmindful of our feeble capacity we presume to take too lofty a flight, and be overwhelmed by the brightness of the celestial glory. We feel how much we are stimulated by an excessive desire of knowing more than is given us to know, and hence frivolous and noxious questions are ever and anon [presently] springing forth: by frivolous, I mean questions from which no advantage can be extracted. But there is a second class which is worse than frivolous; because those who indulge in them involve themselves in hurtful speculations. Hence I call them noxious. The doctrine of Scripture on the subject ought not to be made the ground of any controversy, and it is that as God, in the varied distribution of gifts to His saints in this world, gives them unequal degrees of light, so when He shall crown His gifts, their degrees of glory in heaven will also be unequal.

When Paul says, "You are our glory and our joy" (2 Thessalonians 2:19) his words do not apply indiscriminately to all; nor do those of our Savior to His apostles, "Ye also shall sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28).

But Paul, who knew that as God enriches the saints with spiritual gifts in this world, He will in like manner adorn them with glory in heaven, does not hesitate to say, that a special crown is laid up for him in proportion to his labors.

Our Savior, also, to commend the dignity of the office which He had conferred on the apostles, reminds them that the fruit of it is laid up in heaven. This, too, Daniel says, "They who are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they who turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3). Anyone who attentively considers the Scriptures will see not only that they promise eternal life to believers, but also a special reward to each. Hence the expression of Paul, "The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day" (2 Timothy 1:18; 4:14). This is confirmed by our Savior's promise, that they "shall receive an hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life," (Matthew 19:29). In short, as Christ, by the manifold variety of His gifts, begins the glory of His body in this world, and gradually increases it, so He will complete it in heaven.

11. While all the godly with one consent will admit this, because it is sufficiently attested by the word of God, they will, on the other hand, avoid perplexing questions which they feel to be a hindrance in their way, and thus keep within the prescribed limits. In regard to myself, I not only individually refrain from a superfluous investigation of useless matters, but also think myself bound to take care that I do not encourage the levity of others by answering them.

Men puffed up with vain science are often inquiring how great the difference will be between prophets and apostles, and again, between apostles and martyrs; by how many degrees virgins will surpass those who are married; in short, they leave not a corner of heaven untouched by their speculations. Next it occurs to them to inquire to what end the world is to be repaired, since the children of God will not be in want [lack] of any part of this great and incomparable abundance, but will be like the angels, whose abstinence from food is a symbol of eternal blessedness. I answer, that independent of use, there will be so much pleasantness in the very sight, so much delight in the very knowledge, that this happiness will far surpass all the means of enjoyment which are now afforded.

Let us suppose ourselves placed in the richest quarter of the globe, where no kind of pleasure is lacking, who is there that is not ever and anon [presently] hindered and excluded by disease from enjoying the gifts of God? who does not oftentimes interrupt the course of enjoyment by intemperance? Hence it follows, that fruition, pure and free from all defect, though it be of no use to a corruptible life, is the summit of happiness.

Others go further, and ask whether dross and other impurities in metals will have no existence at the restitution, and are inconsistent with it. Though I should go so far as concede this to them, yet I expect with Paul a reparation of those defects which first began with sin, and on account of which the whole creation groans and travails with pain (Romans 8:22). Others go a step further, and ask, What better condition can await the human race, since the blessing of offspring shall then have an end? The solution of this difficulty also is easy. When Scripture so highly extols the blessing of offspring, it refers to the progress by which God is constantly urging nature forward to its goal; in perfection itself we know that the case is different. But as such alluring speculations instantly captivate the unwary, who are afterwards led farther into the labyrinth, until at

length, everyone becoming pleased with his own views there is no limit to disputation, the best and shortest course for us will be to rest contented with seeing through a glass darkly until we shall see face to face. Few out of the vast multitude of mankind feel concerned how they are to get to heaven; all would fain know before the time what is done in heaven. Almost all, while slow and sluggish in entering upon the contest, are already depicting to themselves imaginary triumphs.

12. Moreover, as language cannot describe the severity of the divine vengeance on the reprobate, their pains and torments are figured to us by corporeal things, such as darkness, wailing and gnashing of teeth, inextinguishable fire, the ever-gnawing worm, (Matthew 8:12; 22:13; Mark 9:43; Isaiah 66:24). It is certain that by such modes of expression the Holy Spirit designed to impress all our senses with dread, as when it is said, "Tophet is ordained of old; yes, for the king it is prepared: He has made it deep and large; the pile of it is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, does kindle it" (Isaiah 30:33). As we thus require to be assisted to conceive the miserable doom of the reprobate, so the consideration on which we ought chiefly to dwell is the fearful consequence of being estranged from all fellowship with God, and not only so, but of feeling that His majesty is adverse to us, while we cannot possibly escape from it.

For, first, his indignation is like a raging fire, by whose touch all things are devoured and annihilated. Next, all the creatures are the instruments of His judgment, so that those to whom the Lord will thus publicly manifest His anger will feel that heaven, and earth, and sea, all beings, animate and inanimate, are, as it were, inflamed with dire indignation against them, and armed for their destruction.

Wherefore, the Apostle made no trivial declaration, when he said that unbelievers shall be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (2 Thessalonians 1:9). And whenever the prophets strike terror by means of corporeal [bodily] figures, although in respect of our dull understanding there is no extravagance in their language, yet they give preludes of the future judgment in the sun and the moon, and the whole fabric of the world. Hence unhappy consciences find no rest, but are vexed and driven about by a dire whirlwind, feeling as if torn by an angry God, pierced through with deadly darts, terrified by His thunderbolts and crushed by the weight of His hand; so that it were easier to plunge into abysses and whirlpools than endure these terrors for a moment. How fearful, then, must it be to be thus beset throughout eternity! On this subject there is a memorable passage in the ninetieth Psalm: Although God by a mere look scatters all mortals, and brings them to nothing, yet as His worshippers are more timid in this world, He urges them the more, that He may stimulate them, while burdened with the cross to press onward until He Himself shall be all in all.

-- End of the THIRD Book --