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The Resurrection.

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IN the religion of Christendom the Incarnation and Death of Christ are everything. The Virgin's Child, the heaven-sent Teacher, and the Jesus of Calvary, completely fill the spiritual vision of the faithful. But in the cluster of great truths which constitute the Divine revelation of Christianity, the Resurrection holds the central place. Apart from it the incarnation and the ministry would lose all their significance, the crucifixion would be but a martyrdom, and the cross a symbol of the victory of death over life. By the Resurrection it was that the Crucified One was "declared to be the Son of God with power," the great truth on which the Christian's faith is founded, and to which his hope is anchored. That Christ died for our sins is the Gospel of the Christian religion regarded as a human cult. The Gospel of Christianity goes on to declare "That He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (i Cor. xv. 4). And to show the immeasurable importance of the added words, the Holy Spirit testifies that if Christ be not raised, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins.

If this were a mere human utterance it might well be deemed profane, as tending to make little of his death. But the teaching of Scripture is clear. He was "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification" (Rom. iv. 25). And this Gospel brings peace and joy to the sinner who believes—peace and joy as his portion here and now—"peace with God," and joy "in hope of the glory of God." In contrast with this the gospel of the crucifix teaches its votaries to live in uncertainty, depending on the ministry of priests, and to die in fear of purgatorial flames. This is what Roman theology has come to!

"The Christian religion" has yet another aspect. Alexandria was long the rival of Rome, and the Greek school of theology might have gained the ascendancy, had not baptismally-regenerated Pagan Emperors enforced the teaching of the West by penal laws. But neither school had the truth of the New Creation. According to both, the mission of Christ was intended to restore mankind— or, as Augustine taught, a small, favoured section of the race— to the position lost by Adam's sin. While the Cross was the characteristic Truth of the Western Church, the Incarnation loomed great in the teaching of Alexandria. The faults of the rival systems were due, not so much to positive error as to defective truth, and to failure to maintain the balance of truth as Scripture unfolds it. Alexandria was more Christian in spirit than Rome; and while "the historic Church" and "the gospel of the crucifix" are the baneful legacy of the West, from the East we have derived "the gospel of humanity," and "the fatherhood of God."

But in contrast with all this, Christianity not only reveals to us that Heaven is open to the sinner in virtue of the death of Christ, but it also teaches us that that death is the divine judgment upon Adam and his world. Bethlehem and Calvary are not, as some would tell us, a splendid testimony to human worth, but a transcendent manifestation of Divine love to a race hopelessly ruined, depraved, and lost. "The gospel of humanity," like "the gospel of the crucifix," is but a half-truth; and half-truths are sometimes as dangerous as error. "The Gospel of the Grace of God," which is the Gospel of the Resurrection, stands out in contrast with both. "The fact of the resurrection and ascension of our Lord is an evidence of the completion and acceptance of his work, and as a pledge of the resurrection of his people is mentioned in the Epistles alone more than fifty times."

But even this will fail to produce an adequate appreciation of the place these doctrines hold in the teaching of the New Testament, if the typology of the Old Testament is ignored. Every human religion, and the religion of Christendom is no exception to the rule, is designed to propitiate the

Deity, or in some way to gain his favour. But Judaism- the only divine religion the world has ever known, for Christianity is not in that sense a "religion," but a revelation and a faith- was the divinely-ordered service of a redeemed and happy people rejoicing in the blessings of redemption. Human religion is always full of gloom, but the sacred year of the Jews was a calendar of feasts. The divine religion had, indeed, its day of expiation, in which the devout were enjoined to afflict their souls. But even that was made the basis of a festival in which all were bidden to "rejoice before the Lord." But what has all this to do with the truth of the Resurrection? It is in language borrowed from these types that the doctrines of the New Testament are given us. Every Jewish festival was connected with the harvest. And the harvest typified the New Creation, of which the Resurrection is both the expression and the earnest. Just as the Feast of Tabernacles followed, and was based upon, the great national sin-offering, so was it also with the feast of Passover and the Paschal Supper- itself a memorial of the redemption in Egypt. The sacred year began with Passover, which fell at the ripening of their earliest grain crop. The festival lasted for a week, and one of its special features was the offering of the first-fruits. A single sheaf of the ripened grain was to be cut and carried to the Temple, and there to be waved before the Lord. It was the firstfruits of the harvest! When all the grain harvest had been garnered the feast of Pentecost was celebrated; and the Feast of The law enjoined that the first sheaf of the harvest should be cut and carried to the Temple "on the morrow after the Sabbath" in Passover week (see Lev. xxiii. 10, ii, and also Deut. xvi. 10, which proves that the day was intended to be a working day). But in Ezra's revival the Jews, apparently misreading the law, took "the Sabbath" to mean the feast-day. And thus it came about that on the Sabbath Day, during which the Lord was lying in the grave, they were celebrating a rite which typified his resurrection from the dead. The true day of the firstfruits was always the first day of the week, the day of the New Creation.

I have dealt with this in "The Buddha of Christendom" (p. 182), and more fully in "The Coming Prince" (ch. ix.). The matter has entirely escaped the notice of theologians. Tabernacles was the great "harvest home" which crowned the year, when the trees of the field had yielded all the fruits which formed so large a portion of the national wealth. To follow the line of typical teaching which runs throughout all this would lead me far beyond the limits of space allotted to me. Here I can deal only with the sheaf of the Firstfruits.

Its acceptance by Jehovah was a pledge and proof, not only that redemption was accomplished, but that all the harvest was assured and divinely blest. And that sheaf represented Christ in resurrection as the First-begotten of the dead, the Head of the New Creation. For He must have pre-eminence in all things. "Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming "-this is the divine order. Scripture clearly teaches that the words, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee," refer not to the Nativity, but to the Resurrection. The empty tomb, and not the manger of Bethlehem, is the earthly symbol of the great birth upon which Christianity is founded. Were it not for Bethlehem there could be no Calvary; but, apart from the Resurrection, Calvary were but a stupendous disaster, of which the Cross would be for all time the emblem. "If Christ be not raised," Scripture expressly declares, "your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins." And in view of the fact of the Resurrection, we boldly argue that our faith is not vain- we are not in our sins. To attain assurance of this is the goal towards which the great majority of those who profess and call themselves Christians are struggling. Immunity from punishment, deliverance from the penalties of sin - in a word, not going to hell - is the popular conception of salvation.

But the Christian has far higher thoughts of the work of Christ. Not even the doctrine of substitution will satisfy him, for this is but one aspect of a far greater truth. It is his joy to know that he is one with Him who died and rose again. And his acceptance is not in Adam restored in virtue of that death, but in Christ as Head of the New Creation. Old things are passed away; all things are become new. And, "therefore, if any man be in Christ he is a new creature." And the wave-sheaf was but the firstfruits of the harvest. Our oneness with Him begins with his death, but it does not end with his resurrection. The believer shall be like Him who died and rose again. "We know that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

But here let us pause, lest the recoil from the gospel of the crucifix should throw us off the line of truth. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." But let us not forget that the Resurrection lies between the two. "Sudden death, sudden glory," is an epigram which represents a system of doctrine that is always popular. But is it Scriptural? The

reserve which Holy Writ maintains respecting the intermediate state forbids all dogmatism on a subject so full of mystery. But our Lord's words to the dying thief seem to me clearly to warrant the belief that that mysterious sleep is consistent with conscious enjoyment of his presence. And if the inspired apostle did not cherish that belief, his language to the Corinthians and Philippians seems scarcely intelligible. But further than this we may not go.

When we speak of glory, or of the activities of service, before the day of full redemption - the day of the coming of the Lord - we allow our thoughts to be swayed by sentiment in a sphere where Scripture should control them absolutely. The Christian can triumph over death. But it is a triumph of faith achieved in presence of stern facts to the reality of which both our reason and our senses bear signal testimony. In itself death is utterly horrible and hateful; and those who cannot see beyond it may well shrink back in terror, and seek to conceal its loathsomeness beneath bright trappings and wreaths of flowers. But the Christian, in the power of faith in his risen and glorified Lord, can dare to face the facts, and, with full realization of their repulsiveness and horror, calmly to utter the redemption challenge, "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?"

