

"The Lord is risen indeed."

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THE FACT ITSELF.

The Patriarch Job propounded two questions of far-reaching importance in the course of his discussions with his friends: the first — "How should man be just with God?" (Job 9: 2); the second — "If a man die shall he live again?" (Job 14: 14); but to neither of them could a clear and conclusive answer be given. If Job 9 be read, we may see Job's attempts at answering the former question, and how he discards his attempts one by one as worthless, and ends with a cry for a "daysman," or mediator; a cry that was not to be satisfied for perhaps two thousand years. If Job 10 be read, we find him reasoning in favour of resurrection by the analogy of a cut-down tree, which in after years springs to life at "the scent of water." He believed that there *would be* a resurrection, as the fruit of spiritual intuition coupled with reason, for he could not fall back upon any definite word from God as settling the point. A strain of great pathos runs through both chapters.

Today we occupy a far more privileged position than he, for the Lord Jesus has appeared and has "brought life and immortality [incorruptibility] to light through the Gospel." (2 Tim. 1: 10). His death and resurrection supplies us with the answer to both questions. If He is risen, we may be justified, and *the fact of resurrection is put beyond all question.*

When the Apostles preached the Gospel at the outset, they used the resurrection of Christ as the spear-head of the thrust which it makes at the consciences and hearts of men. The priestly caste in Jerusalem at that time were Sadducees in doctrine, and hence the impact was felt most keenly by them. They were stirred to fury when the Apostles "preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead." What did they do in their efforts to counteract the apostolic witness?

They imprisoned them, they beat them, they cajoled and commanded them not to preach in the Name of Jesus, they threatened them, they even martyred Stephen. One thing however, and that the one conclusive thing, they did not do. They did not meet them with bold and flat denials, giving conclusive proof that Christ was not risen, and that the Apostles were tricky impostors. They did not do it, *because they could not do it: it was not possible.*

As we read the opening chapters of the Acts, and note this, we find it the more significant as we remember what is recorded in Matthew 28: 11-15. These same Sadduceean priests had stooped to a big

act of bribery in connection with the soldiers deputed to watch the grave — and committed themselves to an even more expensive act of bribery, if necessary, in connection with the Governor — in order to pervert their witness to His resurrection. Yet it is evident that, when only a few months had passed, the lie they had winged on its way had proved itself too fragile to be depended on. They dared not take their stand upon it.

"With great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus," and signs and wonders were wrought by God in confirmation of their testimony. A notable sign was the cure of the lame man that for many years had lain at the beautiful gate of the temple. This specially raised the ire of the chief priests because the whole episode was a notable ratification of the resurrection, and in Acts 4 three things are emphasized in connection with it. Much as they longed to invalidate its witness, (1) "they could say nothing against it" (Acts 4: 14): (2) they had to confess, "we cannot deny it" (Acts 4: 16): (3) they found "nothing how they might punish them" (Acts 4: 21).

We all know that when men are confronted with a fact which they hate, they will deny it if they can, and if they cannot deny it, they will speak against it; criticizing the mode or the method of the thing, when they cannot refute the substance of the thing. Lastly, as a more desperate expedient, they will attack and persecute those who witness to the fact, if they furnish them with the smallest pretext for it. All three devices failed in connection with this miracle; and it would be equally true to say that they failed against the truth of the resurrection of Christ, to which the miracle bore witness.

Had there been no resurrection, the first few years, when the assertion of it was fresh in everybody's mind, was the time when the imposture would have been easily exposed. The attempt that was made, and supported by bribery, obtained a certain currency among the Jews, but evidently they never dared to produce it in public as evidence, where sifting and examination of it could take place. This is most significant.

What we have been pointing out is in the nature of negative evidence in favour of the truth of the resurrection. It is strong, but the positive evidence is even stronger.

In the early verses of 1 Corinthians 15, Paul cites six witnesses, or groups of witnesses, all of whom vouch for it that they actually saw Christ risen from the dead — Peter; the Twelve; five hundred brethren at once; James; all the Apostles; Paul himself. The list of witnesses is by no means exhaustive, for he might have cited the occasions on which He was seen, recorded in Matthew 28: 16; Luke 24: 13 - 31; John 21: 1-14; and other occasions alluded to in Acts 1: 1-11; to say nothing of the occasions when He showed Himself to some of the women who believed. The six cases he does cite were however quite sufficient witness: three individuals, and three groups.

Look at the three individuals. Their epistles show us the kind of men they were, and of Peter we know something, and of Paul a great deal, beside. Peter was warm-hearted and impetuous, yet a broken-hearted man, when he saw the Lord in resurrection. James was evidently a calm man of judicial and even critical mind. Paul was a bitter opponent up to the moment in which he saw the Lord in His risen glory, and the sight transformed him utterly. Very different were they in upbringing and temperament, yet their very differences render their agreeing witness the more impressive.

Add to this the witness of the three groups. Of a solitary individual it might be alleged that he was impressionable by nature, a bit of a visionary; but this could not be said of the Twelve, nor of all the Apostles. An alleged appearance to an individual might have been something very secret, a kind of hole-and-corner affair; but it would be impossible to say this about the occasion when He appeared to five hundred brethren at once. No fact of history is better attested than the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Two men, living about the middle of the eighteenth century, Lord Lyttleton and Gilbert West, wrote books which became famous; the former on the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the latter on the resurrection of Christ. Both were unbelievers, and swayed by the type of infidelity popular in their time, they felt the time had come to administer a death-blow to Christianity. They selected these two themes believing them to be the most vital points in the line of Christian defence. If the resurrection could be proved a myth, and Saul's conversion a delusion, then the defeat of Christianity was assured. They agreed upon their tasks, separated to study their themes and write their books; and when they met with their completed works, they discovered that they each had written in exactly the opposite sense to that which they had intended. Both had been convinced of the reality of that which they had disbelieved. Saul's conversion had about it every mark of reality. The evidence for the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was complete and convincing.

We may indeed say, "The Lord is risen indeed!" with confidence and exultation. In the earlier days of the Soviet regime in Russia a certain "comrade" name Lunatcharsky lectured for an hour and a half in Moscow against Christianity. He aimed at proving it to be a superstition without any basis in fact. Having finished he proposed a discussion, but stipulated that no speaker should occupy more than five minutes. A young man in the audience, deeply moved, mounted the platform, saying he would not require so long a period as that. Standing in front of the throng, he gazed at them and then in loud tones gave the well-known Russian Easter-greeting, "Brothers and sisters, *Christ IS risen.*" The whole audience rose as one man and thundered out the response, "*He is risen indeed.*"

The young man turned to the lecturer and said, "I have nothing more to say."

And in truth on that point nothing more needed to be said. The evidence for the resurrection had long before been tested to the utmost. The truth of it remains unshaken.

THE KEY TO THE POSITION.

WHEN the Apostle Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, he was about to depart from the field of action and enter upon the bliss of being with Christ. He had been in the thickest of the fight, and now the tide of conflict was beginning to run against him: the adversaries were growing bolder, and many a deserter was leaving the ranks; yet his words breathe forth a dauntless courage and supreme confidence in the great Captain, who will ultimately lead His forces to victory.

But the very fact of the aged warrior laying down his armour, must only make the young man, Timothy, gird his the more tightly on, and prepare himself to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2: 3). He is to "stir up the gift of God" which is in him. He is not to be "ashamed of the testimony of our Lord," but rather to be a "partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God" (2 Tim. 1: 6, 8).

The mighty adversary in the conflict is a foe of sleepless vigilance and consummate skill. Every military commander of outstanding genius has been marked by two things: first, he was able to locate quickly the exact spot in the enemy's defence which was the key to his position: second, he was able so to manipulate his own forces as to make that point his objective, and sooner or later deliver a crushing blow there. We may be sure, therefore, that Satan, the secret energizer of all man's opposition to God, has from the beginning, and all along the line, been aiming his blows at that which is at the very heart of the truth of Christianity.

Let us glance at the early part of the epistle, that like Paul we may not be "ignorant of his devices."

2 Timothy 1: 1-10. The Apostle encourages Timothy by lifting the eye of his mind from himself, and even from the field of conflict below, to God, and to those purposes of His which shall never fall to the ground, since they find their place of undisturbed repose "in *Christ Jesus*;" and further by reminding him that in spite of apparent defeat, victory is sure, for the great Commander Himself, "our Saviour Jesus Christ," has already, single-handed, achieved it. He "hath abolished [annulled] death, and hath brought life and immortality [incorruptibility] to light through the Gospel" (verse 10).

This is a great inspiration to start with!

2 Timothy 1: 11-18. Having breathed in fresh life and energy, Timothy is bidden calmly to view the actual position of the conflict, as committed to the saints of God below. How dark the picture! Paul, lying in a Roman dungeon with martyrdom before him; "all they which are in Asia" — his own converts, including those at Ephesus, the capital of that province, where much of his finest work was done — had turned away from him: it may have been to run eagerly after new teachers, who were already developing the deadly theories known afterwards as "gnosticism," so that even the "form of sound words" was in danger of being given up.

2 Timothy 2: 1-6. Here are given the qualities required in the good soldier of Jesus Christ. Danger and the rolling tide of disaster must only stiffen his back. "Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." He needs the faithfulness of a witness, the endurance and devotion of a soldier, the obedience of the athlete, the patience of the farmer.

2 Timothy 2: 7 - 19. Having brought Timothy thus far, the Apostle now discloses to him the great key to the Christian position, against which the enemy's assaults are sure to be delivered. Verse 7 is a preface showing the deep importance of it. Verse 8, containing the disclosure, is poorly translated in the A.V. The R.V. is better — "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my Gospel."

The key to the position, then, is *Christ risen from the dead*.

If we may paraphrase the Apostle's inspired words, it was as though he said, "My Gospel presents to you Jesus Christ in two ways, as incarnate upon earth, come of the seed of David, and as risen from the dead. Maintain both; but since you are not Israelites but Christians, 'risen from the dead' comes first as of paramount importance to you; let that go and the day is lost."

Already Satan was launching an attack through Hymenaeus and Philetus against this truth (2 Timothy 2: 17, 18). Not that it can be really touched. Christ IS risen. The foundation of God stands sure. Yet, if forgotten or denied, the key to the position is left in the enemy's hands, and disaster *to our faith* is certain.

The Corinthian believers illustrated this. They had in their midst grave immorality unrebuked (1 Cor. 5); party spirit was rampant amongst them (1 Cor. 1); and disorder marked their coming together to partake of the Lord's supper (1 Cor. 11); but it is not until we reach 1 Cor. 15, that we find what lay at the root — the resurrection was being questioned, and even denied, In their midst. That was the "evil communication" that was corrupting their "good manners."

Moreover, Paul immediately shows them the effect of this, not only on Christian behaviour, but Christian doctrine. Read 1 Cor. 15: 13 - 19, and learn that if resurrection be denied the resurrection of Christ cannot be maintained; and if Christ be not risen, Christianity is dissolved like the unsubstantial fabric of a dream.

Has not all this a loud voice for us, who live towards the end of the Church's conflict upon earth?

Instead of being, as in her first years, "comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners," she has become in her responsibility on earth an outward wreck, torn in every direction, alike the prey of enemy without and traitor within, till the poet had to write —

*"Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore oppress,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distress."*

Early in her history "Jesus Christ, risen from the dead," faded in her memory. The thought of Him as a risen, heavenly Man was almost lost; if He was remembered it was as a Babe in the arms of His virgin mother, and that only in a carnal way. Hence the Church lost her heavenly hope, and settled down into the corruptions of the world around.

If any revival in these last days has visited us from on high, it has been as He, the risen One, has shone as the Morning Star into our hearts.

His appearance in the midst of His disciples on the resurrection day transformed them, so that instead of huddling together like a flock of frightened sheep, they stood forth on the day of Pentecost, filled with the Holy Spirit, as bold as lions. The faith of Himself as the risen One will do all this for us today.

Christian men and women, may this faith be ours! To have His resurrection as an article of our creed is not enough — it was an article of the Church's creed all through the dark ages. It is Jesus Christ Himself, raised from the dead, shining before the faith of our hearts, that we need.

Then hope will burn brightly, and the fort of true, God-given Christianity will be held, till those words come true with which the poet closed his verse —

*"Yet saints their watch are keeping,
Their cry goes up, How long?
And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song."*

THE BELIEVER'S PEACE.

A GREAT DEAL can be compressed into few words. We have the Apostle's statement "I had rather speak five words with my understanding . . . than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue" (1 Cor. 14: 19), and in keeping therewith it is worthy of note how many of the most pregnant sentences of Scripture contain only five words.

For an instance take these words: — "*We have peace with God*" (Rom 5: 1), and think into them as you would gaze down into some clear lake whose still waters run deep. Can you see the bottom? No! There are depths in those words unexplored yet by the believer of ripest experience, though "peace with God" is not something to be *attained* at the close of a Christian career, but something to be *received* at the beginning. It is the choice birthright of every child of God.

In spite of it being so, however, we may safely affirm without fear of exaggeration that there are today thousands of believers who cannot say "we have peace with God," as a matter of personal

experience. That Jesus made peace "through the blood of His cross" (Col. 1: 20), they do not doubt: to say "I have peace" is, however, a different matter. Truth would remind them that they should say "I have many a doubt and fear in my heart."

Let us clearly recognize that this is a very abnormal state of things. Sincere souls may think it becomes them to remain to the end of their days in humble uncertainty as to their exact relations with God, and consider doubts and fears to be an especial sign of grace, but Scripture lends no countenance to such an idea. Indeed, it teaches the very opposite. To the "little children," *i.e.*, the babes of God's great family of the redeemed, John says "I write unto you, little children, because your sins *are* forgiven you for His Name's sake" (1 John 2: 12); and again: — "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5: 13)

Why then the uncertainty which darkens so many hearts, and prevents the bold and happy utterance of those words "I have peace with God"?

Cases differ, especially in details of a secondary nature, but the primary cause lying at the root of the whole matter is the failure to grasp in the soul the meaning and bearing of the resurrection of Christ.

In Romans 5: 1 there is a much overlooked word: — "Therefore . . ." That word refers us back to that which immediately precedes.

Let us then ask "wherefore?" — and for answer we must read "Jesus our Lord . . . who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. *Therefore* being justified by faith we have peace with God."

Two important facts lie upon the surface of this text.

Firstly: *Our peace with God depends upon our being justified by faith*; and hence, since to be "justified" is to be "righted," and thus to be right with God, we may say that to be right with God is the only basis for peace with God. Peace on any other basis must be but a delusion and a snare.

Secondly: *Our justification by faith depends upon the death and resurrection of Christ*. We are "righted" altogether by the work of Another, and that work altogether apart from us. But "righted" by *faith*.

The Puritans used to speak of faith as a recumbency, a leaning; the soul reposing itself upon an outside object. How simple this is! and how completely it exposes the folly of the oft-repeated saying of anxious souls, "Oh, but *I can't* believe." Indeed! Is believing then so great a load? Nay. It is but to cease from doing, and to lean on that which is done, and the One who did it. Let no man say he *cannot* lean.

But faith not only reposes upon an outside object; it also sees, apprehends, and grasps the meaning of that upon which it leans. Here it is that the break-down comes. The death and resurrection of Christ are believed in as historic facts, reposed upon as the basis of salvation, but inasmuch as many do not grasp in faith their meaning and bearing upon the question of their own justification, they dwell in uncertainty instead of in peace.

Ponder Romans 4: 25. Let us go over it slowly, and in faith, that some light may dawn upon us.

"*Who*": *i.e.*, Jesus our Lord, the Son of God. No one less than He!

"*Was delivered*": He was given up to death and judgment. Who delivered Him? God. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God . . ." (Acts 2: 23). It was an act of God on our behalf.

"For our offences": Not as a martyr merely, but as a sacrificial victim, He stood in our stead. He took upon Himself the awful load of our guilt. He charged Himself upon Calvary's tree with the full weight of our broken responsibilities, and the dread liabilities resulting therefrom. He stood there *representatively* for us. Each believer may say "He went into death as my Representative beneath the load of my offences."

"*And was raised again*": This great truth is as much part of the Gospel as is the death of Christ. It speaks of victory over every adverse power, and of the complete settlement of every claim of the righteous throne of God. Death and the grave could not hold Him. He arose.

"*For our justification*": These words give the bearing of His resurrection upon us who believe. Keep in mind that He represents us, if you would seize their meaning. Has He come forth free from the dominion of death? Then we are free. Is He triumphantly cleared from the burden of our offences? Then we are clear: as clear as He is. We stand or fall by our Representative. His position is our position. If death and judgment are behind Him, they are behind us.

This is strikingly illustrated by that well known scene in the valley of Elah (1 Samuel 17). The conflict lay between the champions of Israel and Philistia, David and Goliath. Upon either side of the valley stood the two armies in battle array, yet the battle wholly lay between their respective representatives.

What a tempest of conflicting emotions must have raged in many an Israelite's breast as they watched David walking down into the valley to meet the giant. If reason prevailed, and they estimated David's chances by the laws of probability, doubts and fears must have held undisputed sway. And if faith raised its voice, and brought Israel's God before them, hope must have been kindled in their hearts. But so long as it was only David going *down into* the valley, it was a case of hoping for the best.

A few more moments and the victory was won. The smooth stone crashed into the Philistine's skull, the big man lay prone on the ground, slain with his own sword, his head in David's hand; and the stripling commenced his triumphant walk up *from* the valley to the hilltop.

"And the men of Israel and of Judah arose and shouted." Every doubt and fear vanished before the return of their victorious representative. His victory was their victory. They were as clear and as free from the Philistine oppressor as he was.

The application of this lies plainly before us. Our Lord Jesus, the greater than David, has been into death's dark valley "delivered for our offences." Many a Christian stops there, and consequently gets no further than hoping for the best. The Gospel does not stop there however. Having vanquished the foe, our great Representative has come up out of the valley "raised again for our justification." His victory is our victory. His freedom is our freedom. This is the meaning for us of His resurrection.

Remember then "Jesus Christ . . . *raised from the dead* according to my Gospel," and, with peace in your heart, rise up with the true Israel of God to shout His praise.

GOD'S VICTORY.

We are apt to forget that a fact may have more than one signification, and that its bearing may be felt in many directions.

The resurrection of Christ is a great and glorious fact which cannot be overthrown. Men have flung against it their wit and strength, but like waves dashing against a cliff, only to recoil shattered upon themselves. It has stood through the years and will stand. Its bearing on the question of *our*

justification and peace with God we have seen. We should be great losers, however, if while rejoicing in that, we overlooked its value and bearing *Godward*.

Roman 4: 23 - 5: 2, sets before us the former, and 1 Corinthians 15 treats of the latter aspect of this great subject.

Some amongst the professed disciples at Corinth had intellectual doubts and difficulties as to the resurrection of the body, and reasoned, "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" (1 Cor. 15: 35). They considered it apparently too gross and materialistic a conception; and posed as pioneers of a more spiritual idea of the subject. They were, in reality, fools (1 Cor. 15: 36).

But the apostle Paul did not content himself with merely answering their foolish questions. He disproved their whole position by establishing, beyond doubt, the great fact of Christ's resurrection (see 1 Cor. 15: 3-11), and then 1 Cor. 15: 12-28 he shows how this great truth bears upon *everything*: not only upon our safety and happiness, but upon God's purposes and glory.

We have our souls, infinitely precious to us; if we lose them we lose our *all*. Their safety *then*, their happiness *now*, is rightly therefore a matter of absorbing interest to us. Until everything is settled, and the last flicker of doubt has died away, we have neither ears nor mind for anything else. But when once we grasp, by faith, the bearing of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus upon ourselves, and see that we are as clear of judgment as He is, then we do well to remember that God's rights were outraged by sin. He has His own sovereign will and purposes concerning the putting away of sin, and the bringing in of peace, blessing, and glory upon this sin-cursed earth. He has counselled a heavenly region of bliss, and to reveal Himself in such a way that men may be recovered to Himself, and brought in the place of sons to know Him and enjoy Him, and to give Him His right place of supremacy In love for ever and ever.

All the power of darkness was arrayed against the accomplishment of these things. In the death of Jesus we see divine love grappling with the power of evil. In His resurrection we see its victory declared.

It may help us to perceive the greatness of this victory if we get some idea of the divine stake in the death and resurrection of Christ, by seeing what God's thoughts and purposes were. We need not go outside 1 Corinthians 15 for this, though other scriptures unfold these purposes more fully.

The resurrection of the saints was one great thought which God had before Him (1 Cor. 15: 20-23). His character and glory were intimately bound up with it. All through the ages, here and there — often enough in the humblest individuals — the light of faith had shone. Before Christ came, when as yet there was only the starlight of type and promise to cheer the watcher, saints' of whom the world was not worthy, lived, and suffered, and died. Out of the scene of their sorrows, they gazed into the realms of God's purpose.

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11: 13).

And what then? They went down, like to the wicked to all appearance, into the silence of the grave.

Further there were the early disciples. They, even while Paul was writing, were the objects of fierce persecution from a hostile world. Gaps appeared in their ranks as one after another was smitten. And yet for every man that fell two stepped into the ranks eager to be baptized for the dead, and

themselves become a target for the foe (1 Cor. 15: 29). Why was this? They looked on to a glorious recompense in the coming day.

And they were right, for resurrection was God's thought for them. Yet if ever it was to be, the power of death must be broken and the bars of the grave, gates and all, must, Samson-like, be carried away.

The establishment of a kingdom in this world was another purpose of God (1 Cor. 15: 24, 25, 50). It might be thought that this would be a very simple matter, an end which could be easily reached by the simple exercise of Divine power. It was not so. Man was in rebellion, and in league with the power of Satan. There was opposing rule and authority and power, there were enemies to be subdued (1 Cor. 15: 24, 25). True it is that if God makes bare His arm, every enemy is swept before Him like chaff before a tempest, but what about the enmity and the sin which had ruined everything? This must be met. It was met when once at the end of the age Christ appeared "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9: 26). His death and resurrection therefore was the shattering of the very foundations of Satan's empire, and in the risen Christ we have not only the firstfruits of the great resurrection harvest of the saints (1 Cor. 15: 23), but the pledge of the establishment of God's will and authority here upon earth "He will judge [or administer] the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in *that He hath raised Him from the dead*" (Acts 17: 31).

Then again at the close of the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, it is God's purpose to *receive everything into His own hands and to be all in all* (1 Cor. 15: 28). He will be "in all" for He will pervade the whole of the realms of light, and each and all who dwell therein, whether in heaven or on earth. He will be "all" for He will be the supreme and exclusive Object of every soul that He fills. All this too hinges on the resurrection of Christ. Established in the power of *that*, all is permanent; without it all would be passing away.

If we turn to the epistle to the Ephesians, we find the fullest unfolding of the thoughts and purposes of God, especially in connection with believers of this dispensation: unto Him there is to be glory in the Assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages (Eph. 3: 21). Here too the resurrection of Christ is the great essential (Eph. 1: 19 - 23). But for the moment we confine ourselves to 1 Corinthians 15, and note the way in which the Lord Jesus is presented to us in connection with all this.

"For since by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15: 21).

The victory has been achieved by *Man* in the person of Jesus, just as the ruin came in by man in the person of Adam. Instead of shifting the contest on to an entirely fresh plane, and settling everything by one stroke of Deity pure and simple, God has — if one may so put it — met the foe on the old battle ground originally chosen by him in the garden of Eden, and there reversed everything. Man comes out of the contest in resurrection, covered with glory, and not the shame of defeat.

But this Man is of an entirely new kind or order. "The first man, Adam, was made a living soul;" the last Adam "a quickening spirit" . . . "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second Man is the Lord from Heaven" (1 Cor. 15: 45, 47).

One thing more. Though the victory is God's victory, He gives it to us who believe, as it is written: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15: 57, 58)

Let us only go through this valley of the shadow of death with the light of Christ Risen in our souls, and we shall possess the deep and sweet consciousness that the resurrection world established in Him abides for ever, and that no labour in view of that world is lost: it too abides and will all be manifested in the resurrection day. This will give stability to our souls, and our Christian character, and prove an abiding incentive to spend ourselves in the service of the Lord. The shadow of defeat no longer rests upon us, for Christ is risen and the victory is God's.

THE TEST CASE.

The consideration of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus as being the demonstration of God's victory, naturally leads to another aspect of the same great truth, very closely connected therewith. What, it may well be asked, is the bearing of this victory? Is anything involved in it beyond the display of His supreme power and the personal vindication of the Lord Jesus?

That it was the personal vindication of Jesus is evident from Acts 2. His resurrection was the great theme of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, and the conviction was borne irresistibly in upon three thousand men that God had intervened in the great controversy between the leaders of Israel and Jesus — between the builders and the Stone which they rejected - and the decision of Heaven's final court of appeal was in favour of Jesus. He was triumphantly vindicated. "The Stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner" (Luke 20: 17).

Every one who loves our Lord Jesus Christ must greatly rejoice at this thought; yet we must not overlook the fact that there was involved in His resurrection much more even than this. It was *the great test case* upon which infinite and eternal issues hung.

Occasionally the Law Courts witness a great fight over a seemingly trivial matter. There is a great array of legal talent on both sides, many witnesses are called, much money is expended, a large amount of valuable time consumed, and court and spectators alike treated to brilliant displays of oratory, wit, and legal acumen, and all over what to the uninitiated appears so small that they are inclined to turn away saying, "much ado about nothing"!

But it is not so; they are mistaken, all this effort is quite justified by the importance of the occasion. The case under trial, though nothing great in itself is a representative one. There are many other cases like it in their underlying principle, and this one has been selected as a test case. The decision given, whichever way it is, will establish principles and interpretations of law which will instantly bear in scores of different directions. Possibly hundreds or even thousands of cases are really being tried and decided in this one, and this fact instantly raises it right out of the common rut and invests it with great importance.

Scripture plainly indicates that the resurrection of Jesus had this character. Not that it was an insignificant thing in itself — there our illustration fails of course. *No event ever had more importance in itself*, and yet its importance is enhanced by the fact of its being the great test case of the ages by which everything - ourselves included — must stand or fall. In Ephesians 1: 17 - 23, we get recorded one of those wonderful prayers which were continually ascending to God from the heart of the great apostle Paul. He prayed: —

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding [or heart, R.V.] being enlightened; that ye may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised

Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places."

Here clearly resurrection comes before us in this light: His resurrection is the test case, and we learn the greatness of God's power toward us according to that. Small wonder therefore that the apostle uses the forcible language he does. God's power towards us — His people — is *exceeding (or surpassing) great* because measured according to the working of the *might of His power* (margin) which He wrought in Christ.

All this is surely intended by the Spirit to convey to our minds that God's power in a surpassing and wholly extraordinary degree was exerted in the raising of Jesus. No such strong expressions are used when it is a question of raising the millions who shall share the bliss of the first resurrection, for the reason, doubtless, that that is a simple matter uncomplicated by all those tremendous questions of sin, death and Satan's power, which were in evidence in the case of Jesus. Then it was that the real battle was fought; then that every adverse power, whether human or Satanic, rose to its highest expression, and combined in one last effort to hold the Saviour in the dominion of death; then that the might of God's power rose up, flung back every assault, confounded the full power of the enemy, and raised Him *from* the dead, and up until, seated at His own right hand, He is above, and not only above, but "*far above* all principality and power" (Eph. 1: 21).

Majestic language, this! The Spirit of God is evidently rejoicing in the triumphant ending of the great test case.

And our little cases are settled in His great one. Hence Ephesians 2 begins "And you." Pick up the thread of the argument, and it runs thus: "The working of the might of His power which He wrought in *Christ* when He raised Him from the dead . . . *and you* . . . who were dead in trespasses and sins." *In Christ*, the controversy was settled, and when the power of God is displayed in us it works in exact keeping therewith; we are quickened, and raised up and seated in heavenly places in Him (Eph. 2: 5, 6). But further, His resurrection not only has its bearing upon us in this spiritual way now, but it is also the certain pledge of the actual resurrection of all that are His at His coming. This is plainly indicated in these words:

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept, . . . Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Cor. 15: 20 - 23).

Death can, in the long run, no more retain its hold upon us than it could upon Him. Once see this clearly, and the well-worn phrase "In sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection" — so often quoted by the gravesides of believers — becomes illuminated with a fuller meaning than ever. Our hope is sure and certain, not only because we have God's word for it (though that were sufficient) but we have in the risen Christ the ever abiding pledge of it for our souls. It was with this before him that Paul could say "Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you" (2 Cor. 4: 14)

To raise us up only a word is needed, — one word of power.

"The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth" (John 5: 28, 29).

This too it was, that made the Sadducees such bitter opponents of the apostles as recorded in the Acts. The Pharisees were the great adversaries during the lifetime of the Lord Jesus, for being Himself the truth He exposed at every step their hypocrisy; but immediately He was gone and the apostolic testimony to His resurrection became the prominent thing, we find the Sadducees springing into activity.

"The priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached *through Jesus* [in Jesus, R.V.] the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4: 1, 2).

These ardent advocates of "no resurrection" theories were keenly alive to the fact that the resurrection of Jesus was destructive of their whole position. Had it been a mere isolated or accidental event they might have passed it by in silence, or even claimed it as the exception which proved the rule of no resurrection, but it was not so. "In Jesus" the resurrection from the dead was in principle established, hence they left no stone unturned in their efforts to silence the preachers and crush their testimony.

Thank God! that testimony was not crushed, and never will be. Who can rightly estimate its practical value in ministering comfort and vigour to the souls of believers? Listen to Peter when he says:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively [living R.V.] hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1: 3).

We can perhaps but faintly understand the desolation which must have swept into the hearts of those who loved the Lord Jesus Christ when they saw Him die. Not only did it outrage their personal affections for Him, but at one blow it destroyed all their hopes which centred in Him as their heaven-sent Messiah. We may gain some idea of it by considering the two disciples going to Emmaus (Luke 24) and marking their spirit and demeanour. Hope in their hearts was dead.

But the Risen One revealed Himself to them. What a change! They were "begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." It was as though they were born into a new world where new hopes reigned, and those hopes *living*, because all centred in the *living* One, who in resurrection life would never die again. Well might praise and blessing ascend from the Apostle's heart to God!

Good it is for our souls if we have had an experience after this sort and learned to centre our hopes and expectations in the Risen One. It was just when everything was, to all appearance, lost, that the day was really won, and it remains for us who through grace believe, to quietly watch and wait till the power that fully expressed itself in the great test case shall exert itself toward us, lifting us out of the reach of death and the grave for ever, and crowning our hopes with the glory of God.

THE PATTERN FOR BELIEVERS.

Bearing in mind that, as we have seen, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was the great test case in which all that concerns us was settled, we shall readily perceive that since He stands as the great Pattern or Representative for us, His place and position before God must be ours, both as regards our actual resurrection by and by, and as regards our souls now in this present time of faith.

This is indeed just what we find explicitly stated in Scripture. "Risen with Him" (Col. 2: 12) gives us in three words the new place or status of the believer upon earth whilst waiting either for translation or actual resurrection at the resurrection day; and Romans 8: 11 clearly teaches that His resurrection is the pattern for us: "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you."

Let us seek to get some idea of this side of our vast subject.

His resurrection is seen to be the pattern of ours in several different connections.

1. *As to the power of it.* The Holy Spirit dwelling in the believer is this (see, Rom. 8: 11, already quoted).

2. *As to the manner of it.* He rose *from among* the dead as the first-fruits. We too shall rise, not as the first-fruits, but out *from among* the dead even as He did. The first resurrection, that of the saints, will leave the multitude of those who died in their sins, untouched. They will remain in the grip of death while the saints come forth (see, Rev. 20: 5).

3. *As to the character of it.* There was a marked difference, for instance, between the raising of Lazarus and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Lazarus was raised up to live a little longer under the ordinary conditions of life in this world. He moved amongst men after it just as he did before (John 12: 2). In keeping with this, Jesus ordered that the stone be removed from the tomb before He spoke the lifegiving word (John 11: 39-41), for Lazarus was raised a natural body, subject to earthly limitations, fitted for earth, and not for heaven.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus carried Him as Man into a new region and order of life altogether. An angel descended from heaven and rolled back the stone from His tomb, but it was in order that there might be no doubt on the part of His disciples as to His resurrection, but that they might see and believe (John 20: 8). The first words of the angel were: "He is not here, He is risen." It was not needed in order that Jesus might come out, as was plainly proved on the evening of the very day (see, John 20: 19). He had come forth from the dead clothed in a spiritual body, fitted for the heavenly, resurrection sphere into which now He had entered, and the great stone presented no greater hindrance to His movements very early in the morning than the shut door did at the evening of the day.

Now the resurrection of the saints will agree in character with that of their Lord. Lazarus evidently died again, else he would be on earth to-day: but "Christ being raised from the death, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him" (Rom. 6: 9); and of the saints it is said, "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: *neither can they die any more*" (Luke 20: 35, 36).

Resurrection involves then — and it is important fully to recognize it — our entering upon a totally new order of life, under new conditions and with changed bodies. We have all of us borne the image of the earthly man — Adam; we shall bear the image of the heavenly Man — Christ. And inasmuch as flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor corruption inherit incorruption, in the great day of God's triumph over the last enemy, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we — the living — shall be changed (see 1 Corinthians 15: 48-54)

The change which will be needful in the case of the living saints when the Lord comes will find its counterpart in the resurrection of the dead. Both classes will reach the same blessed goal — a body of glory like Christ's (Phil. 3: 21), though by a somewhat different route in detail.

It is impossible in this connection to separate between the resurrection of Christ, and His ascension and glorification in heaven. In Him, risen and glorified, we see expressed God's full thought for the saints of this church dispensation. We must of course make one reservation, viz., that in this as in all else, He has the pre-eminence. He is glorified *at God's right hand*. We shall know the fulness of joy which dwells in the presence of God, though there be "pleasures for evermore" at His right hand which will be the special portion of the Saviour alone (*cf.* Psalm 16: 11 and Heb. 1: 9). This special place we gladly yield Him, with eternal homage to His blessed Name!

Allowing fully for this, however, we may truly say as we gaze in faith at the risen and glorified

Jesus, "His place is the pattern of ours." "As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4: 17), as to the love into which we are brought, and our position before God, and with regard to judgment; and what He is so shall we be as to our bodies at the resurrection day. "It doth 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).

In all this future glory every true lover of Christ will assuredly rejoice, yet we must not fail to dwell upon the way in which His resurrection bears upon our *present* state. This however demands a chapter to itself.

ITS PRESENT BEARING AND APPLICATION.

The epistle to the Colossians deals with the privileges and responsibilities of Christians while still on earth. We are "risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised Him from the dead" (Col. 2: 12). In His resurrection, faith already sees ours in association with Him. Inasmuch as we are circumcised, or cut off, in His "cutting off" (Col. 2: 11), we have lost the old status or position we once held before God as men in the flesh connected with Adam. In being "risen with Christ," we have obtained through grace a new status in connection with Him, altogether different from the old, and the bearing and character of that new position is all expressed in Him as the risen One.

Forty days elapsed between the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus, and a very remarkable and peculiar position was His during that time. He had not left the earth in bodily presence for heaven, yet He was no more of the earth than He was of the great world-system which had crucified Him, and which then as now dominated the earth and held it in subjection. He never had been of the world, and though He had been on earth and moved in earthly surroundings and relationships, He was always a heavenly Man, but these earthly links were now snapped. Mary, His mother after the flesh, was committed to the keeping of John (John 19: 26, 27), and Mary Magdalene was not allowed to touch Him as the One in whom earthly hopes were centred (John 20: 17). He is no more known after the flesh (2 Cor. 5: 16). In the list of His appearances during those forty days recorded in 1 Cor. 15: 5 - 8 and elsewhere, there is no mention of His ever having been seen by the world or any who were of the world, but only by His own. He was "otherworldly" indeed. His interests were not *here* but *there*, and all His conversations with His disciples during that time were "pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1: 3).

We are "risen with Him," yet we are still here upon earth. We walk through the old surroundings and find ourselves subject to adverse circumstances as much as ever. We are still in our *natural* condition, with bodies subject to death and decay, but our souls have been quickened into the life of the risen Christ, and we can enter in spirit into the new region where Christ actually is. The Christian, properly speaking, is a man whose thoughts, interests, and affections are outside the vain show of this world and lifted above the plane of earthly things. His politics are in heaven (Phil. 3: 20).

With this truth before us, let us survey the actual condition of things in the church of God. How lamentable it appears. The whole effort of many, who take the place of being Christian teachers and preachers, seems to be to drag Christianity down to an earthly level, to lop off every branch which stretches itself forth heavenward, to pare down — if not to falsify — its truth, so that it shall be palatable to unclean and unregenerate man, altogether apart from new birth. The Saviour may indeed have said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God"; they mean, however, so to shape their teachings that a man shall "see" them without any such change!

The result of this is equally sad. Multitudes live to-day who, deceived by these teachings, go on complacently in the world and in their sins, with vague hopes and expectations that all will be right, and that eventually an improved world system will be evolved, wherein they will be perfectly happy without God and without Christ. *Man* (written by them with large capitals), *world* and *earth*, are the centre and circumference of their religion.

But what about true Christians? Alas! the leaven of all this has spread. Once having been inserted in the three measures of meal, the whole has been leavened (see Matthew 8: 33). We are none of us altogether free from it. We very easily drop in our thoughts and ways from a heavenly to an earthly level.

The thought is all too common even amongst true believers that the mission of the Christian is to improve, and in this way, if possible, convert the world; hence they fling themselves, often with great ardour, into all sorts of schemes for the betterment of humanity, and plunge earnestly into political controversy, endeavouring to further the cause which they deem to be right.

If we could draw such aside from their busy endeavours for a moment, and bid them take time to gaze in faith upon the risen One whom they call Saviour and Lord, and breathe into their ears those words, "*Ye are risen with Him,*" what would they say?

Some would say — almost shout at us — "Unpractical!" They would adopt those ancient words from Genesis, "Behold this dreamer cometh!" and accuse us of diverting attention from positive works of charity and civic righteousness to visionary ideas which nobody quite understands.

Others would admit the truth of what we say, for there it stands on the page of Scripture, and they accept the Scripture, but they would tell us, it is a beautiful theory set before us for contemplation and admiration, but not intended to practically affect us, to be woven into the fabric of daily living.

Colossians 3 & 4 completely answer all such. In Colossians 2 we *are* risen, and Colossians 3 begins, "If ye then be risen with Christ." It is the "if" of argument introducing the consequences and results flowing from this fact. As risen with Christ we are bidden to "seek those things which are above" and to set our "affection [mind] on things above, not on things on the earth."

It is noticeable that even when on earth the Lord Jesus refused to touch, or interfere with, men's social inequalities (see Luke 12: 13 - 15) or their political affairs (see Luke 20: 20 - 26). As risen He is entirely apart from the course of this world — "hid in God." As risen with Him, our life "is hid with Christ in God," and our attitude towards these matters should be the same as His.

Let not anybody say that to speak thus is to put an extinguisher upon all Christian sympathy and effort, and upon all zeal in evangelization. It does nothing of the kind. Nothing that is of God is extinguished if the light of God's truth fall upon it. Indeed, to get hold of God's thoughts acts as a great incentive to well-doing, while it saves one from running unsent and wasting valuable time.

Read Colossians 3 and 4. Mark the kind of life lived upon earth by the saint who is risen with Christ, and whose mind is set on things above.

First of all, *he is marked by intense personal holiness* (Col. 3: 5-12). He puts to death his members upon the earth — certain grosser forms of evil are mentioned; but inasmuch as the risen man is a new kind of man in nature, he puts off many other things, not so often branded as sin amongst men, and he puts on the very graces and features which marked the blessed Lord.

His relations with his fellow believers are of a gracious and heavenly order (Col. 3: 13-17). The divisions, the endless contentions and bickerings of Christendom are the direct products of our *not*

having retained this truth in our souls.

He carries out all the relationships of life with the Lord before him (Col. 3: 18 — Col. 4: 1). He is no fanatic. He quietly goes on through life, and carries out his responsibilities in a very much better way than he otherwise would. Domestic relationships — wives, husbands, children, fathers — and business relationships — servants and masters, are mentioned. Nothing is said as to any other. No directions are given as to how to behave when trying to help govern this world's affairs, or how to conduct one's self becomingly while involved in political agitation. The silence of Scripture is eloquent! It does not suppose evidently that the risen man will put himself in either of these positions. He is a pilgrim and a stranger, and does not undertake to meddle with the noisy affairs of "Vanity Fair," though he passes through it.

But though that be so, *he earnestly labours, both by prayer and preaching, to declare the truth and the grace of the Gospel*, so as to rescue men out of the world on the one hand, and establish them in the truth on the other (Col. 4: 2-6). Does then the truth of "risen with Christ" slacken our zeal in the Gospel. No! It takes a man whose heart is already outside the world to rescue people from the world, and to show, even to the worst, the grace of God.

These are some of the results flowing from the practical acceptance of this great truth. Who would not desire to enter a little more into its power and blessedness? For this we must turn our eyes not in upon ourselves, but up to Christ, and learn our new place as risen, in the contemplation of Him.

THE TRUE BEGINNING.

More than one beginning is spoken of in Scripture. Its opening words go back to the start of all created things; "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1: 1). In the first verse of John's Gospel we travel into a yet more remote past. "In the beginning was the Word," *i.e.*, He existed before creation began. Go back in thought to the farthest conceivable point which could possibly be called a beginning — He was there.

Then in John's first Epistle we read, "That which was from the beginning." There it is the commencement of the manifestation of eternal life in the person of Christ in this world, carrying us back to His incarnation.

Again in Matthew 19: 4-8. The Lord Jesus speaks of "the beginning," referring evidently not to the actual beginning of Genesis 1: 1 but to the creation of man and woman as recorded in the close of Genesis 2 and the setting them in their respective places in regard to each other, and the creation beneath them.

Adam, however, is "the figure of Him that was to come" (Rom. 5: 14) and his deep sleep and awaking, out of which sprang the woman, was a type of the death and resurrection of Christ, out of which has sprung the Church which is His body and His bride. As the Risen One, He is *the* beginning.

"He is the Head of the body, the Church; who is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence" (Col. 1: 18). The glorious Head of the body is the centre. Here we find Him as Man come forth in resurrection. He is "the firstborn from the dead," and, as such, "the beginning." All and every thing that forms part of that new creation finds its origin and takes its character from Him.

In whichever sphere we look, whether *creation* in verse 16 or *redemption* in verse 18 He stands absolutely alone. The pre-eminence is His in *all things*.

The great fact, however, with which we are immediately concerned is that in Christ risen we see the beginning of the vast new creation system, even as it was in His death that its foundations were laid.

Ephesians 3: 15 indicates that in the coming day there will be various "families," various circles of relationship and privilege, some heavenly and some earthly in character, "The Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every [R. V.] family in heaven and earth is named."

In keeping with this the Lord Himself said, "In My Father's house are many mansions [or *abiding-places* R.V.] . . . I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14: 2).

We get a glimpse of some of these various families in Hebrews 12: 22-24. The heavenly Jerusalem is mentioned, angels, the church of the first-born, and also the spirits of just men made perfect; while in Revelation 21 and 22 the veil is drawn aside from the future, and we are permitted to see in detail a little of that creation of which Christ is the beginning in resurrection. It is worthy of note that twice in these two chapters we get the words, "I am Alpha and Omega, the *beginning* and the end" (Rev. 21: 6 and Rev. 22: 13), and in both cases the speaker is our Lord Jesus Christ. He it is who in John's vision sits upon the throne and makes all things new (Rev. 21: 5), and He is the coming One whose reward is with Him (Rev. 22: 12).

In the first case the setting is that of *God's sovereign purpose*. The end of man's little fevered day has been reached. The ragings of the heathen, the vain imaginings of the kings of the earth, have been hushed in judgment. Evil has been dealt with in Satan its source, as well as in its outworkings in the self-destroyed children of men. The last enemies — death and hades — have been destroyed. Then the eternal thoughts of God find their accomplishment. The very heavens and earth are new. The Church, as the bride of Christ, the holy city, New Jerusalem, is set in her appointed place; men on the new earth find their place and portion with God. Every dark result of sin disappears. The former things are passed away, and God's new creation system is launched forth upon a radiant sea of endless life and light and love, where He Himself is all in all.

But there is One — well known through grace — who sits enthroned at the centre. He it is who in sovereign might brings all this to pass, and says, "It is done." He is the great end of all things. He is also the beginning. It is even as if He directed every eye, filled with the glory of that new creation world, back through the centuries, the changing scenes of time, to that moment when, as risen Man, He stepped forth from the lonely sepulchre by the side of Golgotha's hill, and said, "There you see the beginning." In that Man and His resurrection from the dead there abode potentially the glory of that eternal day.

In the second case *our responsibility* is the setting. He again emphasizes His speedy coming, and this time not so much in connection with the affections of His bride, leading her to say "Come" as with the responsibility of His servants. He says, "My reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." It is in connection with this that He again presents Himself as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. Every man's work will be greatly coloured by the measure of recognition given to this great fact. That service is most acceptable to God which not only has Christ as its end, but Christ as its beginning; taking its rise and source in Him.

The real value and importance of this part of the truth cannot be easily over-estimated, especially in view of the actual condition of Christendom to-day. There is an extraordinary indifference as to Christ, though everywhere there are to be found those who love and reverence His blessed Name. In many quarters anything is tolerated in the way of doctrines, so long as the man is intellectual, cultured, and likely to add influence and lustre to his denomination. Men can call themselves ministers of Christ

and yet teach from the pulpit practically nothing but the old heathen philosophies, using Christian phraseology to express their terms, and do so with impunity.

Viewing the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 as a prophetic outline of the history of the professing Church upon earth, we have evidently reached the Laodicean stage where these features are exactly described. Outwardly "rich and increased with goods" and having "need of nothing," really "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," because neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm when Christ is in question.

It is to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans that the Lord presents Himself as "the Amen, the faithful and true witness, *the beginning of the creation of God*" (Rev. 3: 14). This is surely very significant, and gives us in few words the antidote to the poison at work. Let us take good heed to it.

Laodicean doctrine has *man* as the beginning — if it does not go back to the ape, or even the protoplasm — and it certainly has man, deified man, as its end; and if Christ is brought in, it is as an example, an incentive and helper to man in his struggle on the upward road of progress.

In contrast to this, the truth of God, as revealed in the Scripture, declares man to be lost because hopelessly defiled and corrupted by sin. It brings in the cross of Christ as that whereby sins have been atoned for, and man — the corrupt sinner — judicially dealt with and crucified in the death of the One who took up man's place and state before God. It sets forth Christ in resurrection as the beginning of all those things summed up in "the creation of God." Once let the truth get possession of the heart and the self-complacency of Laodicea is destroyed. May its preserving power be known to every one of us!

One thing more. Apart altogether from this preserving power, and its great importance for that reason in the present day of departure from truth and incipient apostasy, there is the blessing that flows to the soul from thinking the thoughts of God, and viewing things from His standpoint.

Man in his unconverted state is an absolutely self-centred creature; beyond his own very limited horizon his thoughts never rise. Even after conversion it is natural for us to dwell a good deal upon ourselves, our forgiveness, our deliverance, our blessing — and the beginning from which we reckon everything is the hour of our own conversion: that is the great red-letter day for us. We would not wholly condemn this. The moment when, turning to God, we first learned the value of the precious blood of Christ to shelter us was indeed a beginning. It was typically fore-shadowed with Israel in Egypt. When the first-born was smitten and Israel sheltered by the blood of the passover lamb, the Lord said, "This month shall be *unto you* the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you" (Ex. 12: 2). It is well that we should recognize that all the days that went before the hour of our turning to God are lost days to us. Until then we never had a beginning. But then it was *our* beginning: notice the words twice repeated, "to you." Having made our beginning we should advance and begin to learn things as *God* sees them.

When we do not make advance in the things of God we become stunted, and lapse even as Christians into a self-centred condition, which is always deplorable, because leading to unhappiness and lack of spiritual understanding. We are like the old astronomers who formed many conflicting theories to account for the motions of the heavenly bodies, none of them very illuminating or satisfying, and it was not until, breaking away from the traditions of the ancients, it was discovered that not our earth, but the sun, was the centre of the system, around which the planets were revolving, that every thing was explained, and that which appeared to be complex and chaotic was seen to be simple and harmonious.

Who can measure then the blessing of travelling in thought out of one's own littleness into the

immensity of the thoughts of God? Be it ours to view things, not with the eye of a caterpillar whose horizon is bounded by the green leaf on which it feeds, but, with the eye of an eagle soaring into the blue dome above the mountain tops. This we shall do if we start forth with the risen Christ as the beginning and centre. Every thought of God in connection with Him is imperishable, and will find its full consummation in the coming day of glory.

We have thus surveyed in these papers — though imperfectly — a little of the wealth of spiritual meaning which must have been conveyed to the ears of heaven when the angel said, "He is not here, for He is risen," on the dawn of that never-to-be-forgotten day.

"He is not here! Hushed are our woes for ever;

The Victor's shout hath made the welkin ring.

All heaven rejoices, for again shall never

The creature suffer from the serpent's sting.

The keys of death and hell are in the keeping

Of Him, who from the foe my soul hath freed,

With exultation great my soul is leaping —

HE IS NOT HERE! THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED!"