

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

By VINCENT McNABB, O.P.

Unigenitus Dei Filius Jesus Christus venturus in fine saeculi, iudicaturus vivos et mortuos et redditurus singulis secundum opera sua, tam reprobis quam electis, qui omnes cum suis propriis resurgent corporibus, quae nunc gestant ut recipiant secundum opera sua, sive bona fuerint sive mala.

“THE only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, who will come at the end of time to judge the Living and the dead, and to reward each according to their deeds both the reprobate and the elect; all of whom will rise with their own proper bodies which they now bear, so that they may receive according to their deeds, whether good or evil.”

1.—MEANING OF THE DOCTRINE

This dogmatic decision of the Fourth Lateran Council held in the year 1215 A.D., will serve as the authority and guide in what we shall say about the Resurrection of the Body.

1. We must begin by saying that the doctrine of the Resurrection is an object of faith. Natural reason can neither prove nor disprove it. St Thomas says (4 Dist. 43 Qu. i Art. Qua. 3), “The Resurrection, simply speaking, is miraculous, and only relatively natural.” Therefore, as natural Reason deals only with the series of natural causes and effects, whereas Faith deals also with the series of miraculous causes and effects, the Resurrection of the Body can be accepted with certitude only by those who accept the authority of the Teaching Church.

2. We have given the dogmatic decision of the Lateran Council, because it is the fullest expression of the doctrine which is now of divine faith. The Apostles’ Creed contained the words, “the resurrection of the flesh”. In the Nicene Creed (drawn up by the Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381) this was changed into the phrase “the resurrection of the dead”.

The two phrases denote the same doctrine. But the change of the phrase “Resurrection of the Flesh “ into the “Resurrection of the Dead” had two advantages. First it was more Scriptural: the phrase “Resurrection of the Flesh “ is nowhere to be found in the New Testament, but the phrase “Resurrection of the Dead” is found again and again, either incidentally or equivalently.

The second advantage was that the phrase “Resurrection of the Flesh “ did not satisfactorily silence those who thought that there need be no physical death antecedent to the glorification of the body. Milleniarists, who dreamt of a heaven on earth, were not inclined to believe that they could enter this heaven only through the gate of death. This wrong view was more directly countered by the phrase “Resurrection of the Dead” than by the phrase “Resurrection of the Flesh.” Yet both Creeds meant to define the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Flesh or Body from death to everlasting life.

3. The Lateran dogma includes two doctrines: (a) The Resurrection of all mankind, and (b) the Resurrection of the identical body of each person.

The full doctrine of the Resurrection contains these two points; but as the General Resurrection is not commonly denied, and, moreover, may be taken to be included in the resurrection of the identical body, we shall explain and discuss the latter doctrine alone.

4. It is then the *de fide* doctrine of the Catholic Church that all men shall not only rise again with a body, but shall rise again with the same body they have had on earth.

For the moment we may remark that, according to this doctrine, the good and wicked will alike arise with their bodies. To be committed again to a body will not be either a supernatural punishment or a supernatural reward, but will be the supernatural accomplishment of a natural desire and state.

5. Moreover, the body which each human being will possess for ever will be his own body which he now has; it will not be his own merely because after the Resurrection it will belong to him and to no one else; it will not be a body that is given to him; it will be his own present body which will be given back to him.

So much is *de fide* for a Roman Catholic. But it is not yet *de fide* how much is meant by the phrase “their own proper bodies which they bear.” Catholic theologians here are found to differ. (a) There is a group who hold that the Resurrection of the Body does not mean that the soul will be reunited to any particle of matter which belonged to its former body. The body which the human being will possess will be called “the same body,” because it will be quickened by the same soul. For these theologians, identity of the soul suffices for identity of the body.

(b) The larger group of theologians, following St Thomas, declare that mere identity of soul is not sufficient for identity of body. The soul must be reunited to at least some of the matter that once essentially belonged to it. The chief reason for holding this opinion is the phrase of the Creeds “resurrection”. If any matter could be formed by the soul, then the Church’s Creed need not be, “I believe in the Resurrection of the body,” but “I believe in the formation of the body.” The theological discussion between these two groups of thinkers is, however, of so intricate a nature that we can leave it with this brief indication of its outline.

11.—THE WITNESS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

6. Having explained the meaning of the Lateran decision, we may now presume to analyse the *New Testament* basis of the doctrine.

(a) We shall not deal with the proofs that may be adduced from the Old Testament. If it is true, as it seems to be true, that the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body, like the doctrine of the Trinity or the Incarnation, is foreshadowed and foretold rather than revealed in the Old Testament, we may be content to refer to these foreshadowings which were differently interpreted by such loyal groups of Jewish thinkers as the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The Book of Job has summed up these dim shadows in its poignant hope:

I know that my Redeemer liveth
And in the last day I shall rise out of the earth
And I shall be clothed again with my skin,
And in my flesh I shall see my God. (Job xix, 25, 26).

(b) If we hold that the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body is revealed in the New Testament—that is, if we hold that Jesus Christ clearly revealed the Resurrection of the Body—we must look for this revelation primarily in the Gospels. But in this matter, as elsewhere, the Gospel texts must not be dealt with merely mechanically, and, as it were, by a show of hands. This is a valid as well as a valuable way of investigating an alleged doctrine but the New Testament, and especially the Four Gospels, is too organic to be fully expressed by a mere mechanical interpretation. If history is but a mode of psychology, no sufficient valuation of its contents can be other than psychological. To interpret the four Gospels needs a certain knowledge of the four gospels.

(c) Let us begin the interpretation of the four Gospels by the principle that the Revelation granted to mankind by Jesus Christ was primarily Jesus Christ. The Word was Himself the revealed Word. He was the Light that needed no further light to make Him manifest. He was the ultimate Truth, who could be identified and recognised rather than proved. The essential revelation of Jesus Christ was something that He was and did rather than something that He said.

(d) We may go a step further, and say that Jesus Christ’s essential revelation of the Resurrection of the Body was the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was not so much any previous or subsequent word He had spoken about it, as the very resurrection itself. St Thomas completes this thought by the profound principle that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the efficient and exemplar cause of our resurrection* (III Pars., Qu. 56, Art. I, ad 3m).

(e) With these principles in mind let us deal with the witness of St Mark’s Gospel: in other words, with the witness of St. Peter.

7. There is a detailed account of the Resurrection of the identical body of Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday (ch. xvi).

* *A further motive of the Church’s doctrine may perhaps be found in the traditional belief in the Assumption of our Blessed Lady’s incorrupt, and therefore identical, body into heaven.*

The *fact* of the Resurrection is supplemented by the *mode*. “And after that He appeared in another shape” i.e. His body could now change its shape. The account St Mark gives of the Resurrection is so succinct as to be chosen in the Liturgy for the Gospel of Easter Sunday.

The additional traces of the Resurrection are significant.

(a) There is the saying of Herod recorded by the three Synoptists, “John the Baptist is risen again from the dead” (Mk. V, 4; Matt. XIV, 2; Lk. IX, 7).

(b) There is our Blessed Lord’s prophecy of the Resurrection. This was made after the Transfiguration, and is recorded by St Mark and St Matthew alone (Mk. ix, 9 Matt. xvii, 9).

(c) There is the answer to the Sadducees, who said, “there was no resurrection.” To them our Blessed Lord replied, “Do ye not therefore err because you know not the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they shall rise again from the dead they shall neither marry nor be married, but are as the angels of God” (Mk. xii, 4). This episode is common to the three Synoptists (Mk. xii, 24-26; Matt, xx, 25-33; Lk. xx, 29-38).

(d) A further element in our Blessed Lord’s revelation of the Resurrection is the miracle of raising from the dead. St Mark, St Matthew and St Luke all record the raising of the child—daughter of Jairus; all record that death had touched her, so lightly that Jesus called it sleep (Mk. v, 39; Matt. ix, 24).

We may synthesise this sufficient doctrine of St Mark’s Gospel. We are given the essential revelation of the fact and mode of the Resurrection of our Blessed Lord’s body—together with a preliminary prophecy of it—and the common Jewish doctrine, together with a defence of this against a carnal interpretation and all this entailed by the miracle of raising a child from the dead.

8. St Matthew has all that St Mark has, together with some characteristic matter of his own.

(a) He alone gives our Blessed Lord’s commission to the Apostles . . . “raise the dead “ (x, 8).

(b) With St Luke, he gives in the message to St John the Baptist . . . “the dead rise again” (xi. 5; Lk. vii, 22).

9. St Luke, the physician, could not fail to be interested in the ultimates of human life. It is characteristic of him that he has given us the fullest identifications of Jesus Christ’s birth and resurrection to life.

(a) It is therefore to be expected that the medical man has given us something like the fullness of a medical diagnosis in describing the identification and signs of Christ’s risen body. The last chapter (xxiv) of his Gospel is a minute study not only of the fact and mode of Jesus Christ’s risen life, but of the various signs of this life which Jesus Christ gave his Apostles.

We must especially notice the scene where Jesus says, “See, my hands and feet, that it is I myself. Handle and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me to have” (Lk. xxiv, 39).

Again, “They offered Him a piece of a broiled fish and a honeycomb. And when He had eaten . . .” (*ibid.* 42).

(b) A slender addition to the Resurrection doctrine, peculiar to St Luke, is the parable of Dives and Lazarus. “And he said to him, ‘If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead” (Lk. xvi, 31).

(c) St Luke is unique in recording two confirmatory miracles. He gives the raising of the daughter of Jairus from a death so recent as to resemble sleep, but he further gives the raising of the son of the widow of Nain from death so undeniable that already the body was on its way to the tomb (Lk. vii, 12, 15).

10. St John’s characteristic resolve to complete rather than to repeat the work of the Synoptists has led him to give us valuable supplements to the Resurrection doctrine.

(a) The Resurrection of our Blessed Lord in *fact* and *mode* is described by St John with extraordinary detail—one might almost see in it the cherished memories of an old man standing on the brink of the tomb. St John alone has recorded the piercing of the *side* of our Blessed Lord (John XIX, 34) on the cross, and not without a purpose. Where St Luke records that the risen Saviour invited the disciples to *see* His hands and His feet, St John records that “He showed them His hands and His *side*.” The disciples, therefore, were “glad when they *saw* the Lord” (John xx, 20). But sight was to be confirmed by touch, in order that identification might be complete. “Then he saith to Thomas, ‘Put in thy finger hither and

see my hands, and bring hither thy hand and put it into my side” (*Ibid.* 27).

(b) St Mark and St Matthew substantially agree in giving the testimony of the false witnesses before Caiphas, the High Priest. These witnesses accused our Blessed Lord of having said that He would “destroy this Temple made with hands, and within three days, I will build another not made with hands” (Mk. xiv, 58). But St Mark added, “Their witnesses did not agree” (59).

In this disagreement of the witnesses, it might have been doubted whether the so-called prophecy was not a mere invention of the false witness. St John, with his constant desire to support the value of St Mark’s Gospel, assures us that the prophecy was not a perjury of false witness, but a prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus Christ’s *Body*. “He spoke of the temple of His *body*. When therefore He was risen again from the dead, His disciples remembered that he had said this” (John ii, 21, 22).

(c) St John, who has not recorded our Blessed Lord’s apologetic references to the Resurrection against the false views of the Sadducees, has been careful to record His direct references. The fifth chapter, with its cure of the man at the pool of Bethesda and its heated discussion, might be looked upon as a sermon to Jerusalem on the Resurrection of the Body. The whole chapter should be read: “For as the Father raiseth up the dead and giveth life, so the Son also giveth life to whom He will . . .” (25) “Amen, amen, I say unto you that the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live . . . (58) . . . the hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. (29) And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgement.” These two chapters are a unique contribution to the doctrine of the Resurrection.

(d) Moreover, St John has made us all his debtors by recording that our Blessed Lord connected the raising and glorification of our dead bodies with His own condescension and humiliation in the Blessed Sacrament. The sixth chapter of St John’s Gospel might almost be called a second sermon on the Resurrection of the Body preached not to Jerusalem and Judea, but to Capharnaum and Galilee. Again this chapter, as the preceding chapter, should be studied in full, especially 39, “Now this is the will of the Father who sent me; that of all that He hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again in the last day.” (44) “I will raise him up in the last day.” (52) “If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever.” (55) “He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day.”

Our Blessed Lord has here pointed out the mystic connection between His own Body, which He assumed in time, and our bodies, which will last to eternity. (1) The Resurrection of the *body* unto life everlasting will depend on the reception of the Sacramental Body of Jesus in the Church. In other words, the Holy Eucharist is supremely the “Sacrament of the Living.” (2) The difficulties which the human mind sees in the resurrection of the identical body from the ashes of death are paralleled and indeed outdone by the difficulties of the body of Jesus Christ in its sacramental existence. It would seem that if reason can accept the dogma of the body of Jesus Christ existing with all its accidents under the accidents of bread, there is no great mental hardship in accepting the resurrection of our identical body.

(e) Like the Synoptists, St John records a confirmatory miracle, the rising of Lazarus (John xi). It was well chosen for its purpose of confirmation. The miracle of giving back life to a dead body was not wrought on one so recently dead that death seemed but sleep; nor yet on one who, dead a few hours, was on his way to the grave; but on one whose body after three days’ burial under a tropical sun was already undeniably corrupt. It is this stench of Lazarus’s tomb that “smells sweet and blossoms in the dust” which reminds us that though corruption of the flesh has taken away from our body something that once belonged to it, God will undo this corruption and give us back the body that was once ours. Thus St John has reminded us that one of the greatest of his Master’s miracles was a victory over that corruption which seems to make the resurrection of the identical body impossible.

II. This manifold witness of the Gospels to the resurrection of the body prepares us to see how largely the preaching of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ entered into the apologetics of the early Apostles.

(a) St Peter in his first defence of the Church before the people boldly said (Acts iii, 15); “But the Author of Life you

killed; whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.”

(b) St Peter’s first defence of the Church before the High Priest repeated this doctrine (Acts iv, 10). “Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead, even by Him this man standeth here before you whole.”

(c) The first official apologetic to the Gentile world in the person of Cornelius is but a repetition of the resurrection formula (Acts x, 39-43). “We are witnesses of all things that He did in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed hanging Him upon a tree. Him God raised up the third day, and gave Him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but to witnesses, pre-ordained by God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him, after He arose again from the dead.”

(d) St Paul’s apostolic sermon at Antioch in Pisidia follows the lines of St Peter’s discourse at least in the matter of the Resurrection (Acts xiii, 30). “God raised Him up from the dead the third day. (31) Who was seen for many days. . . (34). And to show that He raised Him up from the dead not to return now any more to corruption . . .

(e) But as St Paul stood at Athens before the Aeropagus, the spirit of Greek philosophy was dead, when it could be said of the kinsmen of Plato and Aristotle (Acts xvii, 31) “God hath appointed a day wherein He will judge the world in equity by the man whom He hath appointed giving faith to all, by raising Him up from the dead. (32) And when they had heard of the resurrection of the dead some indeed mocked; but others said: We will hear thee again concerning this matter.”

Small wonder that henceforth no little of St Paul’s zeal and genius was to be taken up by proving Jesus Christ’s resurrection from the tomb as the fact of the resurrection of the dead.

(f) The Pharisee-Sadducee dispute on the resurrection of the dead finally sent him a prisoner to Rome. (Acts xxiii, 6—xxiv, 15—xxvi, i, 32).

Thus the discussion opened by the Greek news-seekers of Athens had its re-echo in the long philosophical appeal to the Greek mind of Corinth (1 Cor. xv).

Other explicit references, not to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, but to the general Resurrection of the Dead, are to be found in Rom. viii, 23; Cor. iv, 16, showing that at the time when the Apostle wrote this second group of epistles the thought of the Resurrection was habitual with him. Already in Thess. iv, 16, he had tried to comfort the Greek mind of the Macedonians with the example of Christ’s risen body. Later on, the same conviction of Christ’s Resurrection being the cause and exemplar of our Resurrection found its expression in the last group of Epistles written from his prison in Rome, where he was awaiting trial and perhaps death. It is this circumstance which gives a peculiar power to the texts, Eph. i, 20; ii, 4, 6; Phil. iii, ii, 21; Col. i, 18; ii, 12. Already the writer of the Epistle could write . . . “Of the doctrine of baptisms and impositions of hands, and of the *resurrection of the dead*, and of eternal judgement” (Heb. vi, 2). In this final fragment of the New Testament the doctrine had received a formulation which was to pass bodily into the Catholic Creed.

111.—THE WITNESS OF REASON

We have said that the Resurrection of the Body, being a revealed mystery, is not provable by reason, but is acceptable only on authority. As a preface to “the Witness of Reason,” we set down the principle of St Thomas:

Whoever tries to prove” (a mystery of faith) “by natural reason derogates from faith in two ways:

First, as regards the dignity of faith itself, which consists in its being concerned with the invisible things that exceed human reason: wherefore the Apostle says that *faith is of things that appear not* (Heb. xi, 1).

Secondly, as regards the utility of drawing others to the faith. For when anyone in the endeavour to prove the faith brings forward reasons which are not cogent, he falls under the ridicule of unbelievers; since they suppose that we stand upon such reasons, and that we believe on such grounds.

“Therefore we must not attempt to prove what is of faith except by authority alone, to those who receive the authority; while as regards others it suffices to prove that what faith teaches is not impossible” (1a Qu. 32, Art. 1, English translation).

Since faith rests upon infallible truth, and since the contrary of faith can never be demonstrated, it is clear that the arguments against faith cannot be demonstrations but are difficulties that can be answered” (1a Qu. 1, Art. 8, English

translation).

With these words of wisdom, which should not be forgotten, we now pass from the Witness of Scripture to the Witness of Reason to the Resurrection of the Body. It is significant that in replying to the Sadducees Our Lord said: “You err not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matt. xxii, 29). In other words, the revelation of Scripture is helped out by what our reason tells us of the omnipotent power of God. Here more explicitly than elsewhere St Thomas will be our guide.

(a) The first principle of reason is that the soul, as an intellectual and therefore simple substance, is naturally incorruptible and immortal (Ia Qu. 75, Art. 6).

(b) The second principle of reason is that the soul is not man (Ia Qu. 75, Art. 4). Even in the common speech of the people, that quarry of sound thinking, man is not said to be a soul, but to have a soul.

(c) The third principle of reason is that as man is not a soul, man is a soul and body. In other words, the body belongs essentially and not accidentally to the personality of man. It is well nigh incredible how common is a certain mild form of Manicheism, which seems to depreciate the human body as almost the sole source of sin, instead of being but a joint source and perhaps the lesser source in union with the soul.

It must have been forgetfulness of the essential goodness of the body and of its essential union with the soul that indicated such words as the following:

“As long as we suppose the mystery of death to be the division of soul and body, so long we must cling with a deep love to those remains which yet we are forced to regard with a kind of loathing.

We shall be ready to believe stories of miracles wrought by them; we shall be half-inclined to worship them. Or if we reject this temptation—because Romanists have fallen into it—we shall take our own Protestant way of asserting the sanctity of relics by maintaining that at a certain day they will be gathered together, and that the very body to which they once belonged will be reconstructed out of them. . . . If we did attach any meaning to that expression upon which St Peter at Jerusalem, St Paul at Antioch, dwelt so earnestly, that Christ’s body saw no corruption—we *should not dare, I think, any longer to make the corrupt, degrading, shameful accidents which necessarily belong to that body in each of us*, because we have sinned, the rule by which we judge of it here. How much less should we suppose these to be the elements out of which its high and restored and spiritual estate can ever be fashioned” (F. D. Maurice, *Theological Essays*, 5th Ed., pp. 143, 151). quoted by H. D. A. Major, *A Resurrection of Relics* (Blackwell, 1922, pp. 49, 50).

1. It is difficult to find the exact meaning behind these words. The phrase “corrupt, degrading, shameful accidents which necessarily belong to that body,” etc., seems to suggest either that sin has changed the substance of the body or that the body is the creation of some Manichean principle of evil.

2. It is evident that if from these “corrupt, degrading, shameful accidents” there can be no fashioning of a spiritual estate for the body, still less can there be such a fashioning for the soul. It is clear that the qualifications, “corrupt, degrading, shameful,” which are largely metaphorical when applied to the dying or dead body, are literal when applied to the sin-dead soul. It is therefore evident that the incorrect doctrine of the death and resurrection of the body will lead to the denial of the spiritual resurrection and death of the soul.

3. It is astonishing that men such as Maurice are found to belittle the human body as if it was no part, or no essential part, of our being, when it is a question of the resurrection. But in other matters, as, for example, in the matter of asceticism, they are found to exalt the human body as if it were a great arid even a noble part of our being. Indeed, how otherwise could they retain a high opinion of human beings whose activities and pleasures are for the most part concerned with the body? How, too, could it be said, as it has been said by some, that the bodily procreative act is man’s highest act?

From these exaggerations, and consequent contradiction, we are spared by the Catholic doctrine that the body is essentially good and is essentially joined to the soul as part of the human personality. St Thomas has summed up the value of this in these words:

“If the resurrection of the body is scorned, it is not easy, nay, it is hard, to hold the immortality of the soul. For it is evident that the soul is joined to the body naturally: since to be separated from it is against nature and is accidental (*per*

accidens). Hence the soul separated, from the body is imperfect as long as it is without the body. But it is impossible that what is natural and essential (*per Se*) should be finite, as it were, nothing, whereas what is unnatural and accidental should be infinite. This would be the case if the soul were to endure without the body. Hence the Neo-Platonists who admitted immortality supposed reincarnation: but this is heretical. Hence if the dead do not rise again our only hope would be in this life” (In 1Cor. XV).

(d) The fourth principle of reason is the goodness not only of the body, but of matter. Those who, in order to deny the resurrection of the body, are obliged to deny the goodness of matter, must find themselves in opposition to modern science, on two counts:

First, modern science, by its own definition, is mostly, if not wholly, concerned with what it perceives by the five senses; in other words, with matter. Now unless matter is essentially good, then modern science is mostly evil!

Secondly, if science is the knowledge of what comes to us through our bodily senses and in the next world we have no bodily senses because we have not a body, then the next world will have no science!

(e) Sometimes it is urged that modern science, with its new views of matter, has made it impossible to believe the Resurrection of the Body.

Mr. H. D. A. Major, in *A Resurrection of Relics*, quotes the following authorities:

Bishop Goodwin of Carlisle: “This view of the possibilities of the future resurrection is one *which our present knowledge of matter* and its laws renders it imperative on all wise men to discard. Matter which appertains to one body at one time appertains another body at another. The notion of particle being joined to particle, so as to reform a certain body, involves an impossibility. (*The Foundations of the Creed*, 2nd ed., p. 384).

“.....it is the enunciation of a theory which a knowledge of the laws of matter shows to be untenable” (*Ibid*, 390).

Canon C. H. Robinson, D.D.: “The belief was widespread in early times that the material bodies of Christians would one day be literally resuscitated and would rise from their graves in a form visible to material eyesight. . . . Modern science by showing that the particles of matter of which our present bodies are composed have previously formed part of the bodies of other beings, has rendered such a belief impossible” (*Studies in the Resurrection of Christ*, 1911, pp. 13—17).

The most unscholarly, not to say uncharitable, quotation made by Mr. Major is from the same Canon Robinson, D.D.:

In an age when physical science had hardly come to the birth, and when a man would have been excommunicated or put to death as heretic had he ventured to suggest that the particle of matter of which his body was composed might already have formed part of the bodies of others who had lived and died before him, the only way by which a belief in the preservation of human identity could be expressed in unambiguous terms was by the use of the language which was adopted in the Creed” (*sic!*) *Ibid*.

On this we may say four things.

Firstly, this view of the constant flux of matter in the human body is so old that in the thirteenth century it has been elaborated by St Thomas in a manner that almost defies the untrained thought of our day. If excommunication and death awaited the daring thinker who would have propounded the “modern” theory, then through some miscarriage of justice the Angelic Doctor died a natural death in full communion with the Holy See!

It is almost incredible that a Doctor of Divinity should have made any such statement as that made by Canon Robinson, and still more incredible that it should be quoted by one who holds an influential place in the University of Oxford. It will go far to discredit the Modernist claim to scholarship, which we have hitherto admitted on the recognised right of the Rev. Dr. Rashdall.

Secondly, if the physical theory that the body is a passing flux of material particles disproves the survival of the body, then a kindred theory would seem to disprove the survival of the soul. For it is argued by very subtle thinkers that what we call the soul is but a series of states of consciousness— indeed, of states of present consciousness which as such are not sufficient to guarantee us the certitude of their being in organic unity with past consciousness.

If it be urged that although there is a succession of States of Consciousness, yet there is an abiding unity, it may be

urged in reply that *mutatis mutandis* the same applies to the body. The patent empiric fact is the persistent unity, the scientific deduction is the flux of elements.

Thirdly, granted the fact—which personally I cannot call a verified fact—of the constant flux of particles in matter, it would seem that this does not disprove, but rather seems to prove the possibility of bodily resurrection. The alleged fact is that every particle in a body changes, and yet that the body remains the same.

Now consider the opposite theory, that no particle ever changes in a body. If this theory were true, there would be no evidence that a body can remain the same with change of matter. But as death does make a change of matter, the evidence for this theory would go to prove that a change of matter betokened a change of soul; in other words, that death makes it impossible that the same body should rise again.

Fourthly, the modern recent theories of matter are almost overwhelmingly on the side of the resurrection of the body. A writer in *The Times* summed up the present views of the nature of matter:

“On the physical side the phenomena of light, electricity, and magnetism are all being explained in terms of the electron. On the chemical side the properties and qualities of the arrangements of identical electrons are being explained in terms of the arrangements of identical electrons in different systems. There is, in fact, one unit of matter, the electron. And this unit of matter is itself immaterial” (*The Times*, March 7, 1922, “The Progress of Science”)

“Modern Science,” by saying that the unit of matter is itself immaterial, can hardly be taken to deny the possibility of the resurrection of the body; unless indeed it denies the immortality of mind, *i.e.* of the soul.

(e) The fifth principle of reason is that the soul is the *Causa Efficiens* of the body from the moment of its union to the body (Supp. Qu. 8o, Art.1).

When the soul is reunited to such a part of its body as will allow us to call it the same body, we may well see an instantaneous recapitulation of the formative process. Cytology seems to tell us that the really living essential of the unit-cell is almost infinitesimally small. Yet that microcosm has within it the power to form the macrocosm of the finished organism. If it is only acceleration of motion that we need for the full acceptance of the resurrection or re-formation of the body in modes akin to the formation of the body, science has now given us that almost frictionless multiplying gear which has no limit save the adhesive power of the gear metal.

(f) Perhaps in this hard matter of the bodily resurrection some hope of recalling men to unity may be found in the condition of the risen body. Theology lays it down that not the substance of the body, but only its condition shall be changed. Body will not become spirit; but whilst remaining body, it will become pliant and obedient to the spirit. Time and space will still remain. Some of the soul’s supremacy over time and space will be given by the soul as a dowry to the body.

One last thought may end this defence of the Immortality of man in terms of the Resurrection of man’s body. The Church, in thus seeming to cherish the lesser doctrine more than the greater, is keeping her own customary way. When once the doctrine of the Divinity of the Son and thus of Jesus Christ was officially defined, the Church was almost more intent on safeguarding His humanity than His divinity. The Oriental disregard for human freedom and personality made little account of denying the human will, and therefore the human freedom of Christ. But the Church understood that the sacred humanity could not be kept with the denial of a human will and freedom; and that ultimately, though the divinity of Jesus Christ did not rest on His humanity, man’s belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ did and does rest on the belief in His humanity.

In a kindred way the Church is certain that, whilst the immortality of the soul does not rest on the resurrection of the body, yet man’s belief in one may be imperilled by his disbelief of the other. For this reason the Church seems more concerned for the lesser than for the greater, for the sheath than for the sword, for the husk than for the kernel. Yet it is not in any mistaken view of the scale of values; but in a consciousness that what is of less importance may be in greater danger of being overlooked; and that the whole orb of truth, which the Church is commissioned to teach, must find a place not for what is most and best, but for what is all.
