

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE V.

THE TWO BODIES.

BY GEORGE DANA BOARDMAN, D.D., LL.D.

ACCORDING to St. Paul the Christian has two bodies : First, a present body, which the apostle calls a psychical body,—that is, a body suited to the *psyche*; secondly, a future body, which the apostle calls a pneumatic body,—that is, a body suited to the *pneuma*. It is a profound distinction, and deserves profound study: it is St. Paul's contribution to the philosophy of the hereafter.

St. Paul is discussing the resurrection problem: "But some one will say, How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?" (I Cor. xv. 35.)

Baffling as these questions were in our apostle's day, they are still more baffling in these days of physical science. When we remember how death disintegrates the body into its constituent elements, decomposing the corpse into dust and gases, recomposing these constituent elements into air, water, plants, new kinds of flesh, and so on, we may ask with an emphasis to which the Corinthian doubter was a stranger, How is it possible for the dead to be raised?¹

¹ How grim Hamlet's comment on poor Yorick's skull in the churchyard of Elsinore:—

"To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bunghole? . . . As thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam: and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?"

"Imperious Caesar, dead, and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away;
Oh, that that earth, which kept the world in awe,
Should patch a wall t' expel the winter's flaw!"

—HAMLET, v. i.

Again, assuming that the constituents of which the dead body is composed, but scattered here and there, could be re-collected, another question arises: With what kind of body will the dead rise? What will be their shape, their size, their organs, their functions, their appearance? Will the future body be so much like the present that we shall know each other in heaven? Such are some of the many questions which make the problem of the future body among the most fascinating of riddles. And so we turn to St. Paul's answer (1 Cor. xv. 36-49). It is a magnificent answer. Let us ponder it in detail.

I. THE THREEFOLD ANALOGY.

And, first, the threefold analogy (1 Cor. xv. 36-41). Not that these analogies from nature prove the doctrine of the resurrection. They are only illustrations, or metaphorical arguments, strongly hinting from admitted facts in nature the possibility and the manner of the resurrection. Let us glance at some of these analogies.

1. *Death the Condition of Life.*—From the first analogy we learn this: Death is the condition of life: "Thou fool, what thou thyself sowest is not made alive, except it die" (1 Cor. xv. 36).

Disorganization is the condition of reorganization. Death is the key to life. Indeed, it may be truly said, at least of God's children,—

"There is no death. What seems so is transition.
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life Elysian
Whose portal we call death."

--H. W. LONGFELLOW.

2. *Change Consistent with Identity.*—From the second analogy we learn this: Change is consistent with identity: "And what thou sowest, not the body that will be sowest thou, but a bare grain, it may be of wheat, or of

some other kind. But God gave it a body just as he will-
ed, and to each of the seeds a body of its own" (1 Cor.
xv. 37, 38). That is to say, God in the original act of
creating gave, as it pleased him, to each kind of seed its
own body, its own characteristic organism. And that
characteristic organism each kind of seed retains to this
day; men do not gather figs from thorns, nor grapes from
brambles. Nevertheless, when you sow, you do not sow
the matured plant; you sow only the kernel. Yet how
different the full-grown stalk from the buried germ! How
different the mighty oak from the tiny acorn! Let, then,
agriculture teach you in this matter of the resurrection.
Alike in the case of the plant and in the case of the human
body, change of constituent is consistent with preserva-
tion of identity. Nevertheless, although the future body
will probably be as different from the present body as the
tasselled cornstalk is from the kernel, or the oak from the
acorn, yet the future body will certainly be identical with
the present body. Remember that the man does not live
who knows what that precise thing is which constitutes
identity. Where is the philosopher who can tell me
wherein consists the identity of the full-grown oak and
the buried acorn? Yet both oak and acorn are one and
the same individual organism. It is sown an acorn; it is
raised an oak. Chemists tell us that certain substances
are capable of assuming entirely different aspects, which
capacity they call allotropy; for example, carbon as coal
is hard and black, carbon as graphite is soft and iron-gray,
carbon as diamond is adamantine and dazzling; yet the
substance, whether coal, graphite, or diamond, is one and
the same substance—namely, carbon. So, also, is the resur-
rection of the dead. It is a splendid instance of allotro-
py. The dead body is, if you please, God's diamond in
the guise of coal; the future body will be, if you please,
God's coal in the guise of diamond. Whether buried or

raised, the "body" is the same. It is the personality, the *ego*, which is the basis of the identity; and the *ego* is indestructible. The future body is a sublime instance of what philosophers call "Conservation of Energy," or "Principle of Continuity." The buried body and the risen body, like the acorn and the oak, are phenomenally different, yet essentially identical.

3. *Matter Capable of Endless Diversities.*—From the third analogy we learn this: Matter is capable of an endless diversity of aspects: "All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another flesh of birds, another of fishes. There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies; but the glory of the heavenly is one, and that of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory" (1 Cor. xv. 39-41). That is to say, it is not for finite man to limit the diversity of conditions and aspects which matter in the hands of an infinite God may assume. Suppose that you had never seen a star, or a plant, or an animal; suppose that you had never had even a conception of them. Suppose that on the morning of the third day of the creative week you had stood with the inspired seer on his mount of panoramic vision. The created yet chaotic elements of the universe, the organizing breath of God, the nebulous light, the separating expanse, the grouping seas and lands,—all these have glided before you. Beholding these wonders, you might have supposed that the Creator's versatility was exhausted. But lo! there burst into view every variety of plant from daisy to cedar; every variety of animal from snail to elephant; every variety of heavenly body from meteor to star. You had no conception of these possibilities; yet these possibilities have been actually realized before your eyes in space and in time. Are we to suppose that the Infinite One has exhausted all his

resources of versatility? He who has wrought such a various past can most surely work a future as various. Let us beware lest we incur in this matter of the resurrection our King's rebuke of the Sadducees touching this very point; "Ye err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matt. xxii. 29).

II. APPLICATION OF THE THREEFOLD ANALOGY.

And now we pass to our apostle's application of his threefold analogy (1 Cor. xv. 42-44).

The analogy from the vegetable world seems to take special hold of our apostle, and so it colors his whole application,—"*It is sown.*" But what is it that is sown? The body that will be? No. But the bare seed, the germinal principle, the *Vis Formativa*, that mysterious something—whatever you please to call it—which is the basis of the identity. And the changes which that sown germ undergoes are radical. For example: "*It is sown in corruption.*" Decomposition is the very reason why we are forced to put away our loved ones out of our sight. "*It is raised in incorruption.*" He that believes on him who is himself the resurrection and the life, though he die, yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes on him shall never die. "*It is sown in dishonor.*" However much we love our departed friends, however elaborate and costly the sepulchral honors we pay them, the very fact that we are forced to hide them amid the gloom and the worms of the grave is a brand of dishonor. "*It is raised in glory.*" Our citizenship is in heaven, whence we also wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humiliation into conformity to the body of his glory. "*It is sown in weakness.*" The mute, motionless corpse, unable to resist decomposition and coffin-lid and funeral procession and grave-sod, is the very symbol of weakness. "*It is raised in power.*" Re-

call the apparently supernatural capacities of Christ's risen body; and we are to be fashioned like him, he being the first-fruit of those that sleep, alike their pledge-sheaf and their prophetic type. Death, then, is the very opposite of calamity to those who fall asleep in Jesus. To bury our loved ones is really to plant them for a nobler life.

III. THE TWO BODIES.

Again the two bodies: "It is sown a psychical body, it is raised a pneumatic body" (I Cor. xv. 44). Observe, the contrast is not, as the Authorized Version seems to imply, between what is "natural" or what is "spiritual," between what is material or what is immaterial,—the contrast is between the two sides of man's inner nature; the lower, which St. Paul call the "psychical," and the higher, which St. Paul calls the "pneumatic."

The assertion which our apostle makes is this: There is a psychical body, or a body suited to the psyche, the lower part of our nature; and there is a pneumatic body, or body suited to the pneuma, the higher part of our nature. And his argument is this: As certainly as we have a body suited to our lower psychical nature, just so certainly shall we have a body suited to our higher pneumatic nature.

The Psychical Body.—Glance for a moment at the statement that the present body is a psychical body. However unsuited to the higher, spiritual, pneumatic nature, the present body is, it is admirably suited to the lower, animal, psychical nature. See how readily and perfectly it obeys the psyche, or animal instincts; how reluctantly and imperfectly it obeys the pneuma, or spiritual instincts. The savage, so completely the creature of circumstance and impulse and instinct, is the type of the psychical man. Notice, also, that if ever a man lives a life that is merely animal, it is the barbarian. And there is no man that finds the present body such a fit instrument of his wants

and instincts and tendencies as the savage. This present body is a well-nigh perfect organ of the psyche. Well, then, may our apostle call it a psychical body.

The Pneumatic Body.—Glance now at the other statement that the coming body is to be a pneumatic body. Bearing in mind that the pneuma, or spirit, is the highest part of man's nature—that part which is made in the image and after the likeness of God, and which makes man but little lower than God himself—that capacity by which he has the sense of God, coming into felt contact with him, apprehending him, knowing him, entering into conscious fellowship with him, becoming a partaker of the divine nature as being a son of the Father of spirits—bearing all this in mind, it needs little argument to show that, in whatever respects this present body is most suited to our psychical, animal nature, in these respects it is most unsuited to our pneumatic, spiritual nature. While the present body is an unobstructed inlet and outlet for the psyche, it is a blockaded port to the pneuma. It is easy to walk by sight, which is the psychical life, for here we have the help of a psychical body; it is hard to walk by faith, which is a pneumatic life, for here we have the embargo of a psychical body. There is a profound philosophy in a temperate Christian asceticism, buffeting the body, and bringing it into bondage; it clarifies and sharpens the spiritual sense and girds up the spiritual powers. But even here the body as now constituted is at best but a miserable organ of what is highest in man's nature, as many an earnest Christian has bitterly felt. And, therefore, like all those who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, he groans within himself, waiting for the adoption, the redemption, of our body. And what a glorious body that redeemed body will be! What its figure or precise nature will be we know not; for the Bible has not revealed it.

But we do know this, for this the Bible has revealed: it

will be a body as perfectly suited to the pneuma, or our higher nature, as the present body is suited to the psyche, or our lower nature. And as the pneuma is incomparably nobler than the psyche, so will the coming pneumatic body be incomparably nobler than the present psychical body. It will be the same body as the present, but as much more glorious as the golden sheaves of autumn are more glorious than the decaying seeds of spring. Blessed then is the light which our passage casts on the future state. True, it does not tell us what the coming body will be. But it tells us, what is more important for us to know, that that body will be perfectly suited to the noblest, divinest part of our nature. It tells us that emancipated, glorified pneuma, or spirit, will be invested with a pneumatic or spiritual body perfectly correspondent to all her majestic wants, perfectly instrumental to all her majestic capacities. It tells us the coming pneumatic body will be in very fact the *Novum Organon* of that celestial realm in a sense transcendently sublimer than any which Francis Bacon ever conceived. It tells us that the then glorified pneuma, girded with a rectified reason, a clarified conscience, a free and regent will, gifted with powers of direct and sacred intuition, endowed with the dynamic force of an immortal growth, gathering eternally fresh accessions of strength and knowledge and love and purity and glory, shall have in her own pneumatic body a perfect and shining vehicle for her measureless advancements. In fine, it tells us that our salvation will be a whole salvation; a complete transfiguration of the entire man, an everlasting beatitude for spirit and soul and body.