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Scripture

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CHRIST JESUS WHO DIED OR RATHER WHO HAS BEEN RAISED UP (ROM. 8:34)

He will give us life after two days ; on the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live before Him (Os. 6:3)

Throughout the Old Testament God is revealed as the One Who raises up His Chosen People when they fall. Their repeated falls are so many opportunities for insisting that God ever raises up and saves. The expression 'to raise up' is one of the technical terms to describe God's rescuing or saving of His Chosen People. Promising to rescue sinful Israel, God says, 'Behold I raise them from the place where you have sold them' (Joel 3:7).¹ When Amos laments the downfall of Israel, so great that he despairs of salvation, he uses the same imagery : 'The house of Israel is fallen : she will not rise again. The virgin Israel has collapsed on its land, there is no-one to raise her up' (5:1-2). But the expression 'raise up' is much more frequently used in relation to the intermediaries through whom Divine salvation often comes, and it has an important place alongside such words as 'choose,' 'call' and 'send' in the vocabulary of salvation. When, for instance, God's people encountered difficulties in the early days of their settling in Canaan, God *raised up* judges, i.e. rulers, to rescue them ; the formula is a simple one : 'The Lord raised up judges, and the Lord saved them' (Jud. 2:16), or 'And the Lord raised up a saviour for Israel and saved them' (Jud. 3:9 ; cf. 3:15).

God's chosen instrument of salvation above all others was David : 'David son of Jesse, the faithful one, and the faithful man whom the Lord raised up as anointed one (christ) of the God of Jacob' (2 Kingd. 23:2). God had taken the kingdom away from the house of Saul and had resolved to raise up the throne of David (2 Kingd. 3:10). Moreover He promised that He would *raise up* David's descendants after him (2 Kingd. 7:12 ; 1 Paral. 17:11). To Solomon God promised : 'I will raise up the throne of thy kingdom in Israel for ever' (3 Kingd. 9:5). And in the trials which later afflicted them Israel relied upon

¹ These quotations are from the Septuagint since the Greek Version of the Old Testament is the immediate source of our New Testament vocabulary.

God's fidelity to His promises, hoping and praying that He would raise up another David to save them. God's words of encouragement through the mouth of his prophets were frequently couched in terms of *raising up* another David: 'Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, and I shall raise up to David a righteous shoot. . . . In his days Juda will be saved and Israel will live in security' (Jer. 23:5). Then they will serve God and 'David their king I shall raise up for them' (Jer. 37:9). 'I shall raise up one shepherd over them, and he will shepherd them, my servant David' (Ezech. 34:23). God promised to raise up the tent of David, a source of salvation, as the tent raised up in the wilderness had been (Amos 9:11; cf. Exod. 26:30; Num. 1:51; 7:1). Nor was it only through the Davidic line of kings that God brought salvation to Israel: even Cyrus the Persian, God *raised up* for this purpose (Is. 41:2, 25). And as in time past the greatest and the fundamental act of salvation had been carried out through Moses, so the Jews hoped that God would raise up another Moses, for to date 'No more did there arise a prophet in Israel like Moses' (Deut. 34:10). The grounds for their hope lay in Moses' own promise: 'The Lord thy God will raise up for thee a prophet from the midst of thy brethren like me' (Deut. 18:15).

Thus the hopes of Israel were centred upon God's raising up for them a saviour, whether he be king or prophet, as He had raised up saviours in the past. As instruments in the hand of God they had been true saviours¹; they had brought life and peace and salvation to God's people; thanks to them Israel continued in spite of so many threats to her existence. But none of them had wholly succeeded; they had not brought that eternity of perfect life, of peace and prosperity without end. Every one of them in turn had left Israel with their task not perfectly accomplished. God had raised them up for this work; but each had sunk down again in death. Was death to defeat the work of every saviour God sent to them? 'Man, if he dies, stays motionless; when a human being expires, where then is he? The waters of the seas can disappear, the rivers diminish and dry up: man having lain down will not arise until the heavens wear out' (Job 14:12). But the beginnings of belief in a resurrection from the dead were to be found in later Judaism.² Could not then God raise up Moses or David from the dead? Or rather, could not and would not God raise up a greater than Moses or David, one who would be Moses and David to perfection, the Messiah, that is the Christ?

¹ The unfortunate mistake is often made of regarding the Old Testament as nothing more than the shadow or type of things to come. In fact it is the account of God's real efforts to save His Chosen People, and those efforts were by no means wholly frustrated.

² cf. 2 Mac. 6:9-36; 12:41-6; 14-46; Dan. 12:2-3

The Good News The first apostolic message (Acts 2:14-36) to the Jews¹ who had so long waited for deliverance was that God had indeed raised up a man named Jesus of Nazareth, and had made him Lord and Christ. The crowd which had gathered to hear Peter speak had been made expectant by the spectacle of men upon whom the spirit had been poured. Joel had prophesied that the abundant pouring out of the spirit would be a sign that the Day of the Lord had arrived, but where was the Messiah, if the messianic kingdom had truly begun? Peter's reply to their unspoken question was that God had raised up Jesus, whom only a short time before they had killed. This was the man whom God had commended to them by the signs and prodigies he had worked before their eyes, as, long ago, Moses had turned his staff into a serpent, or suddenly made his hand leprous and as suddenly healed it again, or changed water into blood in order to win the Israelites' faith in him. But they had not believed in Jesus; they had not looked upon him as one raised up by God to save them. Now the claim was being made that God had raised up Jesus again, and this time, from the dead; God had raised up in the past many saviours for His people, but never before from the dead. David had been raised up to be king over Israel, and had declared: 'Thou shalt not let thy holy one see corruption.' Yet David had rotted in his tomb like the rest. If then God had really raised up Jesus from the dead, he must be the David for whom they longed, the David whose rule would never be ended by death. This is exactly Peter's claim: 'This Jesus God raised up, of whom we are all witnesses. He has been exalted by God's right hand, and has received from the Father the promised holy spirit; this he has poured out, as you see and hear' (2:32-3). His exaltation is another proof that he is David the Messiah, for King David did not go up to heaven although 'The Lord said to my lord: Sit at my right hand.'

The outpouring of the spirit upon the disciples was only the first of many signs that the messianic era had come. The people were prepared for Peter's second message (Acts 3:12-26) by the healing of the lame man, and once more the message was that God had glorified his servant Jesus, the holy one, the just one, the giver of life whom they had killed, but whom God raised from the dead. Miracles multiplied: the sick were healed by Peter's very shadow (Acts 5:12-16), and the message was always the same: God had raised up Jesus. He had exalted him as leader and saviour, in order to grant to Israel conversion and remission of sins (Acts 5:30-1). Paul's

¹ The early preaching concentrated upon the salvific action of God and upon the human nature of God made man. Hence the message is couched in terms of 'God raised up Christ from the dead,' rather than 'Christ rose from the dead.'

speech at Antioch in Pisidia places the raising of Jesus within the setting of God's long efforts to save His people (Acts 13:16-41) : the choice of their fathers, the deliverance from Egypt, the giving of judges, the raising up of David. From the latter's descendants God brought¹ to Israel a saviour, Jesus (Acts 13:23). Through their ignorance of the prophets they had had him killed, 'but God raised him up from the dead,' and by doing so God fulfilled His promises perfectly, and Jesus, raised from the dead, is not going to return to corruption. He will therefore be the unailing source of justification (Acts 13:38-9).

The longing for the coming of the Messiah is, according to Peter and Paul, at last fulfilled, and thus the hopes and the promises of the prophets are fully accomplished. But how difficult to show them that this is so, for the reality is not altogether as they expected it to be. God had first of all raised up Jesus and sent him in much the same way that He had sent Moses and David (Acts 3:26). Jesus was the holy one, the just one, the giver of life (Acts 3:14-15); God had anointed him with holy spirit and power, and he had gone about doing good and conquering evil (Acts 10:36-8). But it seemed that, as on so many other occasions, God's plan for the salvation of Israel was destined to be spoiled by the perversity of His people. They failed to recognise their deliverer and had him put to death. But here came the decisive difference: this time God was not to be frustrated; in spite of the seemingly complete ruin of His plan to save them through Jesus, Jesus was to be saviour, death notwithstanding. Thus God raised him up again, and being raised up from the dead, nothing can now frustrate God's plans. God still makes him saviour: He raises him, exalts him, gives him the spirit (2:32-3). The first purpose of the Resurrection is to repair the damage done by the crucifixion, to restore God's plan that Jesus should be saviour of His people (Acts 5:32). It is the Resurrection, therefore, that makes Jesus Lord and Christ and the source of salvation. It is the glorification of God's servant (Acts 3:13). The damage has been repaired and the stage is once more set for salvation if they will now believe in him—something they had failed to do at his first 'raising up.'

But God's raising again of Jesus is not merely a repairing of damage which threatened His plans. It is a new and far more dazzling way of commending Jesus to them, of accrediting him as saviour. For none else, not even David, has God done so wonderful a thing as to preserve him from corruption. Yet is it not of the very nature of credentials that they should be open to scrutiny? If they are to accept Jesus as the Christ, they must accept the fact that God has raised him

¹ *ēgagen*, but there is a variant reading *ēgeiren*—'raised up.'

up : that is the essential truth. On what evidence can they accept it? These men, disciples of Jesus, claim to have seen him after his resurrection, but they make no offer to produce him. In fact Peter says that God has not only raised him up, but that he has been received by heaven until the time when everything will be restored (Acts 3:21). This is something strange indeed : Jesus has been raised up to save Israel, and yet he is nowhere to be seen. He does not present his credentials in person, but through disciples. After seeing Moses work his wonders, the people had believed in him : the Jews had not seen Jesus rise, and yet they were called upon to believe in him if they wished to be saved. This seemed a hard saying. And yet, who could deny the claims of the disciples that the era of salvation had already begun? The pouring out of the spirit, the healing, i.e. 'saving' of the lame man and the many miracles, were clear evidence of their claim. But was it such clear evidence after all? It was the same sort of evidence that Jesus himself had given during his ministry, and it had failed to win faith. Was Jesus more likely to succeed through his disciples where he himself had failed? There was no reasonable ground for calling the testimony of those who had seen the risen Jesus into question, but there had been no reasonable grounds for rejecting Jesus himself. All the apostles could plead, therefore, was that their brethren would not make the same mistake twice ; that they would realise now, as they had failed to realise before, that Jesus was the fulfilment of prophecy. But it was to their faith they must appeal in the last resort. The manifestations of the spirit had failed once : they might fail again.

Hence the fervent appeal for faith : it was only through faith in Jesus that they could be saved. The Jews who had listened to the story of how God had raised Jesus and made him saviour for the second time, must ask how it was to benefit them. The fact that Jesus was an invisible, an absent saviour perplexed them. Moses' or David's saving roles had been clear enough : the people in Egypt had had to gather round Moses and place themselves under his leadership, and they had been delivered ; the Israelites had let themselves be ruled by David and had enjoyed peace and prosperity. But at the very moment of being constituted saviour, Jesus had disappeared. Peter tells them what to do : 'Be converted therefore, and turn back, for the destroying of your sins, in order that the times of refreshment may come from the Lord, and that He may send Jesus the one who has been appointed Christ for you' (Acts 3:19-20). They must gather together in faith and repentance to await Jesus, who has already been made their saviour but whose coming is not yet. The failure of God's plan has so far always resulted from a lack of faith (cf. Ps. 77:22, 32 ;

105:12, 24 ; Num. 20:12 ; Deut. 32:51). But now, at last, let the people believe in the name of Jesus : let them realise that Jesus has the power to save them : that he is Jesus—Saviour—not just in name but in very truth ; and let them display their faith by a baptism which will enroll them into the company of those who await Jesus as saviour.

This would seem to suggest that God, in raising up Jesus from the dead, has made him saviour but that the work of salvation has not yet been accomplished. Is the good news only of salvation to come, at the 'time of refreshment' ? Is the situation simply a repetition of that of the Israelites in Egypt, during the time which elapsed between God's raising up of Moses at Sinai, and Moses' arrival among His suffering people ? True, we have no evidence that the coming of Moses was announced to them beforehand, as the foundation of a firm hope of deliverance ; but if we were to suppose this, would their situation have differed from that of the Jews to whom Peter preached, and indeed from our own situation now ? If the period of waiting were to be a short one, little longer than the time it took Moses to obey God's command and reach Egypt, then the question might not be such a pressing one. But 'the Lord is long a-coming'. 'We shall be saved' or 'we have been saved'—which is correct, or are they both correct ?

This distinction is false when it is God's saving action with which we are concerned. When He is the One Who acts there is no essential difference between past and future ; if God will redeem us, are we not already redeemed ? God is supremely faithful to His word : if He says : 'I have raised up Jesus to save you' then we can say, 'We are saved,' provided that we believe in Jesus and trust ourselves to him. The human mind, so completely imprisoned in the categories of past, present and future, cannot grasp the action of God outside of time ; and thus we must accept both statements, and realise that they are both true. In the earliest Christian catechesis, salvation is for the most part presented as a future event ; founded, indeed, upon certain hope, since the saviour has already been raised up, and will be sent at the appointed time. Yet even in these earliest sermons the fact that we have already been saved is not wholly absent. The manifestations of the spirit are the *effects* of salvation, and they are the work of the saviour : it is he who has poured out the spirit (Acts 2:33), and he has already been made *Kurios* (Acts 2:36). There are already men who have received the spirit, who, in other words, are already saved, and already living in the messianic kingdom. Jesus has already been made 'judge' of the living and the dead, and it is already possible to obtain remission of sins by faith, through his name

(Acts 10:34-43). 'In this man, every believer is justified' (Acts 13:41). In the very same speech in which he urges them to be converted for the destruction of their sins, 'in order that . . . He may send Jesus, appointed Christ for you' (Acts 3:20), Peter declared that 'For you first of all, God raised up his servant and sent him to bless you by turning each of you from his wickedness' (Acts 3:26). One may ask whether Peter is here referring to the first 'raising up' of Jesus, when he was sent into this world, or the second 'raising up' from the dead : but its place at the end of the speech which is surely intended to finish with a message of hope, would suggest that Peter is referring to the Resurrection ; and in this case he can say within a few verses of each other, that God will send the saviour and that He has sent him. Neither of these two aspects must be lost sight of : on the one hand, the raising of Jesus is the act by which he is made saviour, and the *commencing point* for his work of saving us ; on the other hand, it marks the point at which salvation was accomplished, for, as we remarked earlier, the saving action of God is sometimes said to be a 'raising up,' and Jesus was raised up, he was exalted and received the spirit (Acts 2:33) ; God loosed the pains of death for him (2:24) : the saviour has first of all been saved by God : and through him, we who must await salvation, have already been saved. We can try to unite these two aspects which, when judged by ordinary human standards of time seem conflicting ; we can attempt to hide the paradox under a veil of words ; we may say, for instance, that the redemption is accomplished in itself, but not in relation to us. We may introduce the metaphor of the fruit already on the tree and ours for the picking. We may speak of the certain hope of redemption, which is tantamount to its fulfilment. All our efforts will leave us unsatisfied ; but we must never allow those efforts to obscure either term of the paradox : that is a danger against which we must be on our guard.

Paul's Message St Paul is well aware of the paradox ; he never loses sight of it, and like St Peter, he regards the raising up of Jesus as God's action whereby we are given the saviour who *will* accomplish our salvation. The Thessalonians, for instance, have turned away from false gods and are awaiting God's Son from heaven, 'whom He raised from the dead, Jesus who will save us from the coming wrath' (I Thess. 1:10). Paul reassures them that those who in the time of waiting 'fall asleep' will not thereby miss this coming salvation : 'For if we believe that Jesus died and rose up, so also God will bring along with him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus' (I Thess. 4:14). The emphasis here is upon the salvation to come,

of which the Resurrection is the guarantee. But the Thessalonians are already displaying the joy of the holy spirit (1 Thess. 1:6). The Resurrection is for Paul himself the mainstay of his hope in the midst of tribulations: 'Knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and place us at His side with you' (2 Cor. 4:14). Such confidence can be everyone's: 'If you acknowledge on your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him up from the dead, you will be saved' (Rom. 10:9).

But precisely because the Resurrection has already taken place, then we may say that, from another point of view, we have already been saved, for salvation is in the final analysis, salvation from death: from the evil which man fears most, and the final enemy to be overcome (1 Cor. 15:26). And Jesus has been saved from death. In order to understand Paul's teaching in 1 Cor. 15 it is imperative to realise that resurrection from the dead is not considered as a delightful but unessential addition to our salvation; it is a synonym for salvation. The Greek philosophers scorned the notion of the resurrection of the body, and some of the Corinthian converts were themselves saying that there is no resurrection of the dead. They were willing to grant, presumably, that the soul, freed from the prison of its body, enjoyed immortality; but there was no resurrection. Paul states quite clearly that this is a complete denial of the faith, for he does not countenance this dichotomy of man into soul and body: if man, the whole man, as he is in the concrete, does not rise, then we may as well 'eat and drink, for tomorrow we die' (1 Cor. 15:32). To deny the possibility of resurrection is to deny that God raised up Christ from the dead, and such a denial makes our faith vain (1 Cor. 15:15-19). If there be no resurrection, then our hopes, and the efforts to live according to such hopes do not make us better than the rest; we are in fact more to be pitied than they, for our efforts are useless. Paul's argument may strike us as somewhat strange. Why does it follow that God did not raise up Christ, if the dead do not rise? Could not God in His almighty power make an exception in favour of Jesus? Paul is not denying God's power to do as He wills; he is not limiting God to a supposedly immutable law of creation. But he is concerned with the resurrection and hence the salvation of his Corinthian brethren. If the raising of Jesus were simply the exception, if it were nothing more than God's breaking of His own law in favour of one individual, then of what benefit is it to the rest of mankind? If there can be no resurrection of the dead, then God did not raise up Christ, not because any law of nature would have prevented Him from raising up Jesus, but because such an action would have done nothing towards the furthering of His plan to save all mankind. Paul is convinced that

God has planned to save all men in and through Jesus as Christ, and that He accomplished that plan by raising up from the dead as many as are part of Christ, i.e. in Paul's hope, the whole of mankind. If there be no such thing as resurrection from the dead for mankind, then even God could not have raised up Christ. But in reality eternal life is something normal to man, who in the beginning was endowed with immortality ; it is death which is abnormal, introduced by the sin of Adam, and making it necessary for God to raise the dead in order to bring about a return to normality.

The raising up of Christ is the conquest of death, and here is the reason why, in the final analysis, the perfect act of Divine salvation is the raising up of Christ. It was through the man Adam that death came ; through the man Christ there is resurrection of the dead. Granted that we become part of Christ and that we share his name, as formerly we were part of Adam, then we have been saved, we have already been raised from the dead : ' For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all shall be given life ' (1 Cor. 15:22). This truth, the foundation of our faith, must not be obscured by passing difficulties ; it is true that among those whose hope is in Christ, many are fallen asleep (cf. 1 Cor. 11:30), and therefore it would seem that death has not yet been conquered. The fruits of that conquest are indeed only *manifest* so far, in the case of Christ¹ ; we must be patient, for a due order has been set : ' Christ is the first-fruits ; then there will be those who are Christ's at his coming ' (1 Cor. 15:23). If from the point of view of this order we are still awaiting salvation, we do so with the conviction that as Christians we have already been saved in Christ ; if we become and remain one with Christ, then we are as certain of being raised to eternal life, as mankind that remains one with Adam is certain of death. The Christian, though he appear to be no different from Adam, lives in reality not Adam's life, but Christ's. He is not destined to death—Christ did the dying for him—for all men : ' in order that the living may live no longer for themselves but for him who died and was raised for them ' (2 Cor. 5:15 ; cf. Rom. 7:4). ' If the spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you—He who raised up Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through His Spirit dwelling in you ' (Rom. 8:11).

Whether we say that we have been saved or that we shall be saved, our salvation is assured by the resurrection of Christ, provided we become one with him : provided we believe in his name and are baptised. It is no surprise then, to find Paul speaking of the Resurrec-

¹ And of His blessed mother, as we know from the definition of the dogma of the Assumption.

tion and of Baptism in the same breath. The world can say that as surely as a man is born so surely will he die ; Paul can say that as surely as a man is baptised so will he live for ever. Buried with Christ in Baptism, ' in which you also were raised with him through faith in the action of God who raised him from the dead ' (Col. 2:12), Baptism becomes for each one of us our resurrection : we die with Christ, we are buried with him, ' in order that, as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life ' (Rom. 6:4). The descent of the neophyte into the pool, his disappearance under the water, his emergence from the pool : here we have the sacramental presentation of man's being raised from the dead through union with Christ. And it is no mere dramatisation : it is the expression of a reality which can never be altered : ' As for his (Christ's) dying—he died to sin once for all ; as for his living, he lives to God. In the same way do you consider yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but living to God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:10-11). Paul is not unmindful of the sad possibility of this union being broken and therefore of the risen man falling back into death ; but this is man's own responsibility, and does not alter the essential truth that God has already saved him and raised him from the dead, in raising Jesus and placing him at His right hand. This is the hope which is ours, these treasures of glory are our heritage (cf. Ephes. 1:18-23). Are we still going to try and limit our salvation to the time category of past, present or future ? We must choose one or the other in order to be able to speak at all, but let us realise immediately after making our choice, that either of the other two would have been as accurate. Let us imitate the manuscript tradition which cannot always make up its mind : thus in 1 Cor. 6:14 : ' God both raised up the Lord, and He—has raised, reads Vaticanus—will raise, Sinaiticus—raises, Alexandrinus—us up by His power.' They are all true, yet no one of them nor all three together can ever describe the work of God adequately.

It is clear therefore that our salvation stems from the resurrection of Christ. It is God who saves us, and He does so by raising up a saviour Jesus : His first raising up of Jesus was frustrated by the ignorance of His Chosen People ; but again God raised up Jesus, in a way which can never be contradicted ; we have a saviour who cannot fail ; we shall certainly be saved. Yet in raising up Jesus from the dead, God made a man to triumph over death ; He saved him, and in Christ He made all men to rise from the dead, and in Christ He saved us all : ' But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have

been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2:4-6). Long ago, He had delivered the whole of His Chosen People from Egypt in the persons of a few families of Israelites, and every Israelite through the centuries had recalled this when he ate the Pasch. God had raised up Moses as their saviour and those who believed in him were saved; but God had also promised Moses: 'I will make thee and thy father's house into a great nation' (Num. 14:12 LXX). Moses was both saviour and the first-fruits of the saved, and he was both, because God had raised him up. But God had not raised him up from the dead; death had still been able to rob Israel of its saviour, and when the first-fruits had withered through lack of faith the crop had failed. It was the fact that it was a resurrection from the dead which makes Christ the perfect, the final and the indefectible saviour, and which makes our salvation through him eternal and complete. 'If Christ be not risen, then is our faith vain' (1 Cor. 15:17). Our salvation is essentially guaranteed, and indeed already secured by the resurrection of Christ from the dead; if we adhere to him by faith, if we are 'incorporated' into him by Baptism, then we are not only sure of salvation through him, but we are already saved. We have nothing to fear: 'Who will condemn us? Christ Jesus, who died, *or rather* who has been raised up, who is at the right hand of God and who intercedes for us?' (Rom. 8:34).

But if it is rather his resurrection which has destroyed all reason for condemnation, what was the significance of his death? Are we to regard the crucifixion as nothing more than providing the opportunity for the resurrection?

(To be concluded)

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