

EASTER QUESTIONS.

SO Jesus Christ, the Son of God, rose from the dead! Now comes the question, Why did Christ rise from the dead?—and how did He rise? And, first, I will say a few words about how He rose from the dead. And this the Bible will answer for us, as it will everything else about the spirit-world. Christ, says the Bible, was put to death in the flesh; but quickened, that is, brought to life, by the Spirit. Now, what is the Spirit but the Lord and Giver of Life,—life of all sorts—life to the soul—life to the body—life to the trees and plants around us? With that Spirit, Christ is filled infinitely without measure; it is His spirit. He is the Prince of Life; and the Spirit which gives life is His Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son. Therefore, the gates of hell could not prevail against Him—therefore, the heavy gravestone could not hold Him down—therefore, His flesh could not see corruption and decay as other bodies do; not because His body was different from other bodies in its substance, but because He was filled, body and soul, with the great Spirit of Life. For this is the great business of the Spirit of God, in all nature, to bring life out of death—new generations out of old. What says David? When Thou, O God, turnest away Thy face, things die and return again to the dust; when Thou lettest Thy breath (which is the same as Thy Spirit) go forth, they are made, and Thou renewest the face of the earth. This is the way that seeds, instead of rotting and perishing, spring up and become new plants—God breathes His Spirit on them. The seeds must have heat, and damp, and darkness; but the heat, and damp, and darkness do not make them sprout; they want something more to do that. A philosopher can find out exactly what a seed is made of, and he might make a seed of the proper materials, and put it in the ground, and electrify it—but would it grow? *To grow it must have life*—life from the fountain of life—from God's Spirit. All the philosophers in the world have never yet been able, among all the things which they have made, to make a single living thing—and they never shall; because, put together all they will, still one thing is wanting—life, which God alone can give. Why do I say this? To show you what God's Spirit is; to put you in mind that it is near you, above you, and beneath you, about your path in your daily walk. And also to explain to you how Christ rose by that Spirit,—how your bodies, if you claim your share in Christ's Spirit, may rise by it too. You can see now, how Christ, being filled with God's Spirit, rose of Himself. People had risen from the dead before Christ's time, but they had been either raised in answer to the prayers of holy men who had God's Spirit, or at some peculiar time when heaven was opened, and God chose to alter His laws (as we call it) for a moment. But here was a Man who rose of Himself. He was raised by God, and therefore He raised Himself, for He was God. You all know what life and power a man's own spirit will often give him. You

may have heard of 'spirited' men in great danger, or 'spirited' soldiers in battle; when faint, wounded, having suffered enough, apparently, to kill them twice over, still straggling or fighting on, and doing the most desperate deeds to the last, from the strength and courage of their spirits conquering pain and weakness, and keeping off, for a time, death itself. We all know how madmen, diseased in their spirits, will, when the fit is on them, have for a few minutes, ten men's strength. Well, just think of a man's own spirit, when it is powerful, can give his body such life and force, what must it have been with Christ, who was filled full of the Spirit—God's Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life.

The Lord could not help rising. All the disease, and poison, and rottenness in the world, could not have made His body decay: mountains on mountains could not have kept it down. His body—the Prince of Life!—He that was the life itself! It was impossible that death could hold Him. And does not this show us why He rose, that we might rise with Him? What did He say about His own death? 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit,' He was the grain which fell to the ground and died, and from His dead body sprung up another body—His glorified body, and we, His Church, His people, fed with that body—His members, however strange it may sound—St. Paul said it, and therefore I dare to say it, little as I know what it means; members of His flesh and of His bones will share in His Resurrection.—*Kingsley.*

IS DEATH A PUNISHMENT OR BLESSING?

THE "American Church Review," for March, contains an article on Death by the Rev. W. E. Wilson, M.A., who has thrown his thoughts into the form of a dialogue. While unable to agree perfectly with the following, which is put in the mouth of one of the speakers, it is highly forcible, suggestive, and to both Good Friday and Easter appropriate for reflection. The question is as to the *nature* and *object* of Death.

"To my mind," began the professor, "the purpose of punishment, at any rate, is by no means the dominating factor in physical death. Death is an expedient the Fall necessitated. My theology begins by postulating such a Supreme Being as I have alluded to, a Ruler of the World who is all love and power, accordingly I look upon death as an ordinance of love and tenderness towards the human race. The idea of punishment is secondary and accidental. In appointing death as the lot of man, the Creator was merely stretching out His hand to snatch away the child who had strayed too near a precipice, beneath which lay a gulf of untold misery. Life on earth was shortened that suffering on earth might be shortened, the hours of toil, the tortures of passion, the possibilities of sin and rebellion abridged and perhaps for ever escaped. The surest way of punishing sin would have been to let man live

on earth for ever. What human creature condemned to live forever amid the trials and pains of life, yet visited sometimes with a dream of slumber in the grave or rest in Paradise, could not exclaim, as he witnessed the brief existence of God's humbler creatures, "Me only cruel immortality consumes." The very general prevalence of what we may call the suicidal instinct adds weight to this argument, as well as the increasing use among highly civilized and finely organized races of over-powering or transporting narcotics, under whose influence the grim realities of life vanish from the mind and another world is entered upon.

The fear of death is a childish thing, for which we have no grounds in reason or revelation. I condemn Taylor's Holy Dying for this reason, that he has ranged round the christian's dying bed the ghastliest and saddest fancies that heathen imagination ever conceived. Now death in the N. T. is not treated in this way. With St. Paul it is the evening hour, when the yoke is lifted and labor done; it is the raising of the anchor for the return voyage, it is the breaking up of the camp after a long war. At the worst it is the relinquishment of self involved in sleep, and then only sleep of the body. "I sleep, but my heart waketh." In short, the notion of death as a punishment, as a bitter and horrible catastrophe to be approached with terror, vanishes *when we view it from the other side.* There we see the shattered vessel coming into port, there life is the river rough with broken ice and perilous current crossed with a trembling heart, but which lands the emancipated slave on a happier freer shore, where chains drop off and darkness and clouds are purged away; for death, like that sacred planet that hangs so near our earthly horizons, is herald of darkness indeed, but also herald of dawn. Death is only the obverse side of life. Life is the *essence* of God's working, death the accident. Life is eternal, for God who gives it is eternal; but death is only permanent as an ordinance of the Creator, until its provisional office shall have been discharged in the rendering back to Him from whose hand it has slipped, of a lost creation."

BAPTIZED FOR THE DEAD.

ONE of the most difficult texts in Holy Writ is the question put by St. Paul touching baptism for the dead. The following is the most reasonable solution of the problem we have met with. The section quoted, is preceded in the Review by an exhaustive and scholarly examination of the various conjectures which have been raised to clear up the question which the writer dismisses as inadequate. He offers the following:

"From these conjectures let us now turn to the latest explanation which, like so many other good things, is substantially patristic—viz. that, as the term resurrection of the dead means only resurrection; so the phrase 'baptism for the dead' is nothing but a full orthodox, and, in this connection, peculiarly

apt and sacramental, not, what catechized for the world's resurrection the name faithful d the risen baptized, to, for al us cannot munion, we are a especial should a course, t Church This ex ments o its liter article t technica the prej fold and just the least, th of S. Pa which v sal Sac Resurr indeed within eration siderat view h Cathol words, of the postul sense i confes theoric ing, e much an em symbo even t Churc great puzzl argun Paul's upon even at all havir apost resur tively be a and that If, o as C Catl it is in tl Am