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ARTICLE I.

REMARKS ON SOME PHILOSOPHICAL OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE
DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

By Rev. Joseph Tracy, Boston.

THAT the bodies of the dead shall, at some future time, be raised to life, is the obvious doctrine of the Scriptures. This is conceded by all men, whether Christian or infidel. Some, however, maintain that the doctrine cannot possibly be true; and hence they infer that the Scriptures, which teach it, cannot be from God. Others, again, deny the truth of the doctrine; but instead of rejecting the Scriptures, maintain that on this subject, their obvious meaning must be rejected, and that another interpretation must be given them, consistent with the teachings of philosophy. With both these classes of men, our controversy has respect to facts, rather than principles. We readily admit that science may teach us some things with absolute certainty, and that, with respect to those things, it is neither our duty, nor is it possible for us, to believe the contrary. If a professed revelation, when taken in its obvious sense, teaches anything that science demonstrates to be false, we must either find, by fair means, another interpretation, not inconsistent with known truth, or reject the professed revelation, as not from God.

But are we under any such necessity, in respect to the resurrection? Has philosophy proved, or can she prove, that the obvious doctrine of the Scriptures on this subject cannot be true?

Are we thus forced, either to find a less obvious interpretation, consistent with the teachings of philosophy, or reject the Scriptures?

To bring us to such a conclusion, philosophy needs to argue with amazing force. Nothing short of absolute demonstration will answer her purpose. She must produce arguments strong enough to balance and neutralize all the evidences of Christianity. The arguments from history, from miracles, from prophecy, from our own intuitive perception of the truth of the great doctrines of the gospel, from the demand of conscience that we receive it as true, and from our own experience of its power to heal the diseases of the soul, are not lightly to be set aside. Nothing short of an absolute demonstration, in which we know certainly that there is no mistake, can be allowed, on philosophical principles, to justify our apostasy in the face of such evidence. No mere theory, unsupported by facts; no collection of facts which may be imperfect, either because all the facts in the case have not been observed, or because some of them have been observed imperfectly, can be sufficient. The evidence in favor of Christianity is too strong to yield to any imperfect proof.

Nor may we reject the natural and obvious sense of Scripture for any less sufficient reason. It is a well established canon of criticism, that the Scriptures are to be understood in their natural and obvious sense, unless we are absolutely compelled to seek another. It is not allowable for us to say that 'the Scriptures do, indeed, in their obvious sense, teach the doctrine of the resurrection; but we reject it, because another opinion appears to us more probable;' thus exalting our own opinion of the probability of opinions above the authority of the word of God. Nothing short of certain and infallible knowledge that the obvious meaning of Scripture cannot be true, can justify us in rejecting it, and adopting another interpretation, which we perceive to be less obvious. We must be brought to the necessity of finding another meaning, or rejecting the Scriptures altogether, before we can be justified in resorting to forced and unnatural interpretations. We do not admit, as a matter of fact, that such a case ever occurred, or can occur. A certain interpretation may *appear* to certain men or sects to be the most obvious, because their minds are beclouded by ignorance, or distorted by prejudice, and a meaning less obvious *to them* may be the true one; but that Scripture, in the sense which is most obvious to well-informed and candid minds, is ever false, we by no means concede, except hypothetically, for

the sake of argument. On the subject before us, it will not be denied that the Scriptures, taken in the sense most obvious to candid and well informed men, do teach the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. Force is needed, not to make them utter this doctrine, but to prevent it. That force we are not justified in applying, without absolute necessity. The exigency must be one which will justify us in rejecting the Bible, unless we can find another meaning.

Nor can the force of this reasoning be evaded, by an appeal to passages of Scripture which speak of the sun as rising and setting, and the like. The obvious meaning of the writers, in such passages, is not to settle the question of the sun's diurnal motion, but to speak of these phenomena as they appear to the senses; or rather, to designate an event of daily occurrence, by its usual name. The resurrection is an event of a different class, and lies entirely beyond the range of this principle of interpretation. It has no sensible appearance, exhibited before the eyes of all men, and giving rise to a current phraseology. The appeal fails, also, for another reason. Science has *demonstrated* that the phenomena of sun-rise and sun-set are caused by the earth's motion, and not by the sun's. We are compelled, therefore, either to reject the Scriptures, or to receive them in a sense consistent with this known fact. To make the cases parallel, the impossibility of the resurrection of the body must also be *demonstrated*, and we must be made to *know* it, as we know the fact of the earth's rotation on its axis. Apparent probabilities, deriving their plausibility, perhaps, from our own ignorance, will not answer this purpose. We must have *demonstration*. Whether philosophy has furnished it, or can furnish it, is the question before us.

If we receive the Scriptures, the necessity of turning what they say of the resurrection from its obvious meaning, must be evinced by higher testimony than that of the senses. There must be a necessity of *reason*. The obvious meaning must be shown to be irreconcilable, not merely with facts which we suppose our senses have observed, but with those intuitive truths which every rational mind must of necessity believe.

According to the Scriptures, the apostles believed, on the testimony of their senses, that the body of Christ,—the same body which he had before and at his crucifixion,—was actually raised from the dead. Here we need not go over the ground which has been abundantly discussed in treatises on the evidences of Christianity. It will doubtless be conceded, that the apostles were as

well convinced, by the testimony of their senses, of the resurrection of Christ's body, as they ever were of any fact whatever. They knew that he was alive, in that body, after his crucifixion, just as they knew that he was alive in it before. They knew it by seeing him, by hearing him, by conversing with him, in short, by the same testimony of sense, in both cases. They no more suspected, and had no more reason to suspect, an illusion in one case, than in the other. If Christ's body which they saw after his crucifixion, might be a mere phantom,¹ then, on the same principle, the body in which they knew him before his crucifixion may have been a mere phantom. And not only so, but their own bodies may have been nothing but phantoms; and indeed, all human bodies may be nothing but phantoms. Interpret Scripture on this principle, and the doctrine of the resurrection becomes the doctrine of the reproduction of the same phantom that existed before death. Such a doctrine, we suppose, would not be easily overthrown by reasonings about carbon, and nitrogen, and phosphate of lime, and chemical decomposition. If we have only phantom-bodies now, then only phantom-bodies need to be raised; and we do not see how chemical changes, alleged or actual, are to prevent the raising of them.

This argument goes deeper than some may at first suppose. The seeing of Christ by the apostles after his crucifixion, whether fact or illusion, was not a mere casual event. It was brought to pass by the power of God, for the sake of making the very impression upon their minds which it did make. God placed those phenomena before their senses, with the intention of thereby making them believe that the body of Christ had risen from the dead; and they did believe it. Were they right, or wrong? When God speaks to us by sensible phenomena; when he produces phenomena before our eyes for the sake of making us believe a certain proposition, is he to be believed, or not? Does he always speak according to the actual fact, or does he sometimes deal in illusions? If the latter, how are we to distinguish illusions from facts? How are we to know when he exhibits a fact, and when he deceives us with an illusion? How can we know

¹ We do not use the word *phantom* invidiously. If it offends, substitute any more acceptable phraseology in its place. Say that the witnessing of the phenomenon of Christ's risen body by the apostles was subjective, and not objective; or that the eyes of their spirits were opened, to see spiritual objects; or express the idea in any other terms whatever. So long as the idea is retained, the applicability of our reasoning is not impaired.

that all the miracles recorded in Scripture were not illusions? Indeed, what certainty have we, that the whole visible and tangible universe is not an illusion? Even supposing that we have bodies which are not phantoms, how do we know that all the phenomena of death are not illusory? If the body of Christ was miraculously removed from the sepulchre, and a phantom shown to the apostles instead of it, how do we know that the body itself was not carried, with its identity unimpaired, to heaven; and how do we know that the body of every man is not, at death, removed, by a similar miracle, to some place where it may remain in safety till the last day, and a phantom-corpse substituted for it, to be buried, and make the needful moral impression upon the minds of survivors? How do we know that the phenomena of chemical decomposition, and of the dispersion of particles, and of their entering into new combinations, do not all belong to the phantom-corpse, while the true body is saved from any change that can be supposed in the least to affect its identity? Evidently, we can have no such knowledge. We must admit that all this may be, or that the body of Christ, which was crucified, was actually raised to life, and seen by the apostles.

Nor can this reasoning be met, by referring to the appearance of angels in human form, recorded in several places in the Old Testament. In those cases, there was no deception. As soon as attention was called to the question, whether the visible form belonged to a man or an angel, the truth became known. The apostles, on the contrary, "supposed that they had seen a spirit"—a phantom; but were brought to believe that they saw the real body, which had been crucified. And besides; how can it be shown that those angels, whenever they appeared to men, did not make themselves visible by assuming, for the time, real material bodies, such as they appeared to have?

If, then, the body of Christ was raised from the dead, philosophy is bound to take notice of the fact, and to admit that the resurrection of a dead body is not impossible. The argument is forcibly stated by the "philosophic Apostle," to the Corinthians. The substance of the gospel, he says, is this:—That Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. 1 Cor. 15: 3, 4. But if dead men never rise, this cannot be true. You must therefore admit that Christ rose from the dead, or reject the gospel as a fable. Verse 13, 14. But we know that Christ is risen from the dead; and therefore we are authorized to expect the resurrection of others also. Verse 20 and onwards. The ascertained fact,

that the body of Christ was raised from the dead, actually nullifies all arguments against the credibility of the doctrine of the resurrection; just as the first arrival of the Great Western at New York nullified Dr. Lardner's arguments against the possibility of steam navigation across the Atlantic. The doctrine of the resurrection is, henceforth at least, a credible doctrine, and if we find it in the Bible, there is no reason why we should not receive it.

As this is a vital point, let us look at it in still another aspect. What is *matter*? What is *body*? How do we get our idea of *body*? We stand before a tomb-stone, for example. In a certain portion of space, which we regard as its surface, certain phenomena are observed, giving us conceptions of color, shape, resistance to the touch, and other sensible qualities. Our observation of phenomena, however, extends only to the *surface*. Between the interior and our senses, there is no communication; there can be none. If we cut or break the stone, new *surfaces* appear, and exhibit their appropriate phenomena. We then look upon what we suppose *was* the interior; but is not the interior *when we look upon it*. Sense can observe nothing but phenomena at the surface, or, in the language of the old logicians, only the *qualities* of bodies, and not their *substratum*.

Whence, then, comes the idea, which is in all sane minds, of solidity? What puts it into our minds, that the tomb-stone is not a mere phantom,—a mere play of phenomena at certain points of space,—but has a solid interior? The answer is this:—God has so made us, that those sensible phenomena do necessarily excite in us the idea of a solid interior, and enforce a belief of its existence. The phenomena constitute a language which he addresses to our senses, informing us that the substance is there. We do not mean to say that this constitution of our minds is merely an arbitrary appointment of the Divine Will, and that we might have been made otherwise, and still have been rational beings. On the contrary, this law of our minds is evidently a part of our rationality itself. The idea of solid substance, thus excited, is a rational idea, and we are bound, as rational beings, to rely upon it as according to truth. Our senses deal only with sensible phenomena, which are exhibited at the surface; but these phenomena are our testimony, and the only testimony that we can have, of the existence of the solid interior.

Apply these principles to the facts concerning the body of Christ, as seen by the apostles after his resurrection. All the sensible phenomena of a real body were actually exhibited. The facts

which met their senses were in all respects the same as the presence of the real body must have produced. The presence of the real body was evinced to them, in the only way in which the presence of a body is ever evinced to any human being. Doubt whether they saw Christ's real body; and on the same principle you may doubt whether any man ever saw any thing. Observe,—it is conceded on all sides that there was no hallucination; no mere brain-image, existing only in their own diseased imaginations. It is conceded that the sensible phenomena did actually occur, and that the apostles, in the healthy exercise of their senses, correctly observed them. They had, therefore, all the evidence of the presence of a real body, that any person ever has, in any case whatever.

Keeping this in mind, let us look at the chemical argument against the possibility of a resurrection. The dead body, we are told, is decomposed, and its particles enter into new combinations. The lime of the bones of those who fell at Waterloo becomes, first, a constituent part of the wheat that grows over their graves, and then a part of the bodies of other men, so that the same particles belong successively to different bodies. But we ask, how do we know all this? How do we know that lime is a constituent part both of bones and of wheat? By chemical analysis. But how does the chemist know that he is analysing a bone at one time, and wheat at another, and that lime is one of the results? By the testimony of his senses. The sensible phenomena of bone, wheat and lime are exhibited before him, and from them he understands that bone, wheat and lime are actually present. If the sensible phenomena are not proof of the presence of the real substance, then his analysis must go for nothing, and we have no reason to believe that human bodies are decomposed, and parts of them enter into new combinations. If they *are* proof, then the body of Christ was actually raised from the dead, and therefore other resurrections are possible.

None will suspect us of intending, by these remarks, to bring into doubt the conclusions of chemistry. We only mean to say that, resting, as they do, on the testimony of sense, they cannot overthrow the testimony of sense, and therefore cannot disprove a fact which is supported by the strongest testimony that sense can give. They can never overthrow the principle, that when the sensible phenomena are actually exhibited, the real body is present. They can never disprove the resurrection of Christ's body, without nullifying the evidence by which they themselves are

sustained. It being admitted that in the case of Christ's body there was no mistake of the observers with respect to the phenomena, and that the sensible phenomena did actually occur, it follows that the evidence of his real, bodily presence was as complete as the evidence of sense can be. If there were any suspicion of mistake as to the occurrence of the phenomena, the certainty might be increased by a greater number of observers, or of observations; but the supposition of mistake being excluded, and the actual occurrence of the phenomena being admitted, the fact of the real presence of the body becomes invested with all the certainty which the evidence of sense can give; and no science which rests on the testimony of sense for its own support, can be permitted to bring it into doubt.

Now, so far as we have ever read, or heard, or can imagine, all objections against the possibility of the resurrection of the body rest, ultimately, on some supposed testimony of the senses. They are derived from the fact, that men have *seen* bodies burned, or bones decomposed, or something of the kind. They can, therefore, never disprove a fact which is sustained by the highest testimony that sense can give; a fact, indeed, which cannot be called in question without impeaching the credibility of sense as a witness to any thing.

But a question is raised concerning the *identity* of the body before and after the resurrection. Granting that we are to live again in a body, will it be the *same* body in which we lived on earth; or will it be another body?

Here let us recal to mind, that we are arguing with those who admit that the facts narrated in the Scriptures actually occurred; that the Scriptures, taken in their obvious sense, do represent the present and future body as the same; and that no mere appearance of probability, nothing short of absolute knowledge, can justify us in rejecting the obvious sense of Scripture, and forcing another interpretation upon its words. Keeping these things in mind, we remark,

That, the body of Christ, which the apostles saw after his resurrection, was the same body in which he was crucified. The apostles evidently regarded it as the same. It was proved to be the same by all the evidence by which the identity of any object of sense is ever evinced. They knew its identity, just as they knew that the body in which he was crucified, was the same in which they had seen him three days before; just as any one knows any object now before his eyes, to be the same which he

has seen at some previous time. We must admit its identity, therefore, or admit that we know nothing about the identity of bodies in any case whatever. It is conceded, let us remember, that there was no mistake in the observations; that the sensible phenomena by which the body was recognized as the same which had been crucified, did really occur. If, therefore, the ground on which the idea of identity of body rests, is not substantial in this case, then, for the same reasons, it never can be substantial in any case, and we must confess our ignorance whether the same body ever yet existed at two distinct points of time; in other words, that our idea of the identity of bodies is a mere figment of the imagination, not authorized by any thing we know, or can know, of the external world, and therefore, not only this question, but all questions concerning the identity of bodies, may be dismissed at once, as mere nonsense. As the human mind cannot receive such absurdities, we are compelled to admit, in one instance at least, the identity of the body, before death and after resurrection. And if the identity was preserved in one instance, why not in all?

The objector's reply is doubtless ready. The body of Christ "saw no corruption," and therefore could be raised; but most human bodies are either decomposed in the earth, or burned, and thus their "constituent particles" are dispersed; and how can those particles be gathered up again? And, if Omnipotence is exerted to collect them and reconstruct them into a body, how can it be the *same* body as before their dispersion, and not a *new* body, constructed out of the same materials? There is still a further difficulty. During this life, the constituent particles of our bodies are continually changing, the vital power casting off some, for which it has no further use, and taking others into their places, so that the whole are changed in about seven years. A man who dies at seventy, therefore, has had ten different bodies; and after the decomposition of the last, the particles of all those bodies have been dispersed. Which is to be gathered up and reconstructed? And still further;—who, in the resurrection, is to have those particles which have belonged to several human bodies?

Our first reply is, that those who urge such objections, misapprehend the idea of bodily identity. That idea is one which every rational being must of necessity have, as its absence is incompatible with rationality. What, then, is the idea which men intend to express, when they use the words, "the same body?"

Do they mean to assert the identity of the constituent particles? Seldom, if ever, does the thought of constituent particles enter their minds; and yet the whole idea of bodily identity is present. The particles of a man's body, we are told, change ten times in seventy years; and yet, according to the idea of bodily identity, as it exists in all sane minds, the man has all the time "the same body." In perfect accordance with the same idea, all the particles may be changed again, during the process of death and resurrection, and the body yet retain its identity.

We have said that *this* idea of bodily identity exists in all sane minds. We are aware that some have also affixed another meaning to the words, which they esteem more philosophically exact, making them imply identity of constituent particles. But this is not the idea of bodily identity which Christians generally suppose that they find in the Bible. Neither the Scriptures, in their obvious sense, nor the common belief of Christians, assert any closer identity between the present and future body, than exists between the body in manhood and that of the same person in his youth. If it be granted that the identity remains as entire from the age of seventy to the resurrection, inclusive, as it did from birth to the age of seventy, all is granted which the obvious sense of Scripture, or the common belief of Christians, requires.

But this claim of superior philosophical precision in the use of terms is untenable. It rests wholly on an overlooking of the difference between the idea of *body*, and the idea of *certain particles*, of which the body is supposed to be made up. Particles, merely placed in juxta-position, do not constitute a *body*. There must also be a uniting power, combining the several parts into a unity. Subjection to that uniting power is what makes any portion of matter a part of the body. A thorn, thrust into the flesh, is no part of the body, for it is not subject to that uniting power. A tooth, when extracted, the paring of one's nail, or any other portion of matter when removed from the dominion of the uniting power, ceases to be a part of the body. The identity of a body, according to the common sense of mankind, and according to the deepest and most exact philosophy, is found in the identity of that uniting power, and not in the continuous presence of the same particles. Questions, therefore, of the presence or absence of certain particles which once belonged to the body, are altogether irrelevant.

But does not the action of the uniting power terminate at death? To this question, philosophy, without the Scriptures, can give no

answer. We know that, at death or soon after, that power ceases to hold together certain visible portions of the body as formerly; but whether it ceases to act, or whether it still retains its control over certain portions of the matter of the body, and whether it will afterwards resume its control over portions which it has cast off for a time, or whether it will subject to itself other portions of matter, making them parts of the same body; these are questions concerning which philosophy can neither affirm nor deny. The uniting power is not necessarily vital. In many bodies, it is evidently not vital. Nor can philosophy disprove the continued vitality of some portion of the matter of the human body. Nor can it disprove the possibility that the uniting power may be dormant for a time, and again resume its empire over matter, and thus preserve the identity of the body.

But the argument against the possibility of the resurrection, from the dispersion of the constituent particles of the body, is exposed to another difficulty. The whole theory of "constituent particles" is mere hypothesis. We know that little pieces may be cut or broken off from a body, and that little pieces may be cemented together, or otherwise united, so as to form a larger body; but this is not what is meant by the hypothesis of "constituent particles." That hypothesis assumes that every body is composed of certain indivisible atoms, placed side by side, and coexisting as particles in juxta-position. It is a very convenient hypothesis; so convenient that its phraseology has passed extensively into the language of science, and even of common life, and modifies the usual forms of thought on many subjects; as was the case a century ago with the hypothesis of "animal spirits," flowing from the brain along the nerves. Thus we are in the habit of speaking as if the body of an infant were composed of a certain number of particles, placed in juxta-position, and as if growth consisted in adding other particles to the structure.

But these coexisting constituent particles have never yet been shown. They have neither been exhibited to any of our senses, nor proved to exist by facts evidently inconsistent with any other hypothesis. Chemists tell us,—though in the language of avowed hypothesis,—that a drop of water is composed of a certain number of particles of water, each of which is composed of a particle of oxygen and a particle of hydrogen. We know very well, that, of a quantity of water, a certain definite proportion may be made to assume the form of oxygen, and that the remainder will then assume the form of hydrogen. We know, too, that by com-

bustion, these two gases may be made to assume the form of water. All this has been abundantly proved by experiment; but no experiment has ever yet shown oxygen and hydrogen actually coëxisting in water. All known facts are consistent with the supposition, that oxygen, hydrogen and water are only the same substance in three different states. So some maintain that positive and negative electricity are different fluids, and that electricity in equilibrium is a compound of both; while others suppose that electricity, positive, negative and in equilibrium, is the same fluid. And the same principle applies to all chemical combinations and decompositions. None of them ever show the "constituent particles" of matter, either to the senses, or by necessary logical inference.

Nor are we compelled to adopt this hypothesis by any necessity of reason, such as compels us to regard matter as something more than mere sensible phenomena. It is not impossible to think on the subject, without such an assumption. However small a primitive particle may be, it is still, if there are such particles, of *some* size; it is some part of a foot in diameter; for otherwise, no amount of particles could ever constitute a body, having diameter. Being a primitive *particle*, it is of course a homogeneous substance throughout its extent. It is indeed theoretically divisible, in the sense that a mathematical plane, having no thickness, may be imagined to pass through the middle of it; but it is not divisible in the sense of being made up of smaller particles, separable from each other. It is one uniform, continuous mass, from top to bottom, and from side to side. Absolute continuity of substance, not made up of particles, is therefore conceivable, or the theory of constituent particles must be inconceivable; for, according to that theory, every constituent particle is such a continuous substance. But if uniform, continuous masses are possible, reason can set no limits to their size. If a body, the diameter of which is a millionth part of the diameter of a hair, may be one continuous mass, not made up of smaller particles, no reason can be given why the same may not be true of a body whose diameter is twice as great; or ten, or a thousand, or a million times as great; or, indeed, why a continuous substance may not be a foot or a mile in diameter, or large enough to fill the orbit of Saturn. Nor can it be demonstrated that the diameter of a continuous substance must be a fixed quantity, incapable of increase or diminution. For example, if a drop of water is one continuous substance, not made up of particles, and if another drop be added to

it, doubling its size, the union that takes place between them may be such that the continuity shall extend through the whole. So, too, a fibre of muscle in the human body may be one continuous substance, not made up of particles, during all the stages of its growth, and, if fibres ever diminish, of its diminution.

The theory of "constituent particles," therefore, is a mere hypothesis, not proved to be true, either by observed facts, or by reasoning *a priori*. It may be, that no such particles exist; and if so, the identity of a body cannot depend on the identity of its constituent particles.

But our present bodies are material, and our future bodies will be spiritual. How can they, then, be the same?

In reply, we ask, what is meant by a spiritual body? A body not composed of matter? Certainly not. A body must be matter, or it could not be a body.¹ The term *spiritual*, applied in Scripture to the glorified bodies of risen saints, is evidently derived from the term *spirit*, in its original, physical sense, of *wind, breath, air*; and not from *spirit* in its metaphysical sense, of an immaterial, self-conscious agent. It is used as the representative of an idea with which the human mind is not yet furnished. Leaving out of view instances of miraculous appearances, which furnish no ideas except to those who see them, spiritual bodies have never yet been objects of perception to human minds. We have not, therefore, had the indispensable means of forming our idea of such a body; and as the idea is not in our minds, no word can express it to us, any more than the name of a color can con-

¹ There is a difficulty in writing on this point for the public, arising from the fact, that some readers have no conception of spiritual existence. In their minds, spirit is nothing but attenuated matter. That which has not the attributes of matter, appears to them to be nothing. They see nothing absurd in the question, whether spirit may not be so condensed as to become matter, and matter so rarefied as to become spirit. Even the Divine substance is, according to their idea of it, really nothing but attenuated matter, universally diffused. Such persons will find no difficulty in conceiving of a body composed of what they call spirit, though it has all the essential attributes of matter. Such men are really, though they are not always aware of it, materialists. They may talk of spirit, like other men; but whatever words they may use, according to their ideas, nothing exists which has not the attributes of matter. To be consistent, they should deny that any events occur in the universe, except such changes as may happen to matter; they should say that love is nothing different in kind from attraction, and diminishes in proportion to the square of the distance at which it is exerted; and should maintain that the firmness of a wall may be so great as to amount to down-right obstinacy; for if there is no difference in *kind* in the substances, there can be none in the attributes.

vey the idea of that color to a man born blind. Hence, in speaking of such bodies, it was necessary to represent that idea to us by the least objectionable word; and the word chosen was *spiritual*, meaning ærial, or gaseous. The apostle's contrast is not between a material body and an immaterial, but between an "earthly" and an ærial body. Gaseous bodies, we know, actually exist. It is supposed that all matter is capable of assuming the gaseous form; and it is certain that nearly the whole substance of our bodies,—the hydrogen, the nitrogen, the carbon, the phosphorus, the oxygen of the line,—are frequently found in that form. The material elements,—the constituent particles, if such there be,—that now compose our bodies, may exist in other forms, besides those of "flesh and blood." That very matter, or so much of it as may be needed, may form the spiritual bodies in which we are to live hereafter; and the chemical decomposition of the body may be only a part of the process by which the form is changed, while the identity is preserved.

But if so, must not the resurrection take place at death? Not necessarily. Death, indeed, must be regarded as the beginning, or a preliminary, of the process; but its completion may be suspended, we have no means of determining how long. If we believe the Scriptures, the resurrection of Christ did not take place at the time of his death, but on the third day after it; and it seems, for important purposes, to have been miraculously hastened. Lazarus was not raised till the fourth day. This, we know, was not a case of resurrection to immortality, in an incorruptible body. He was evidently raised with a corruptible body, still subject to death; but we cannot suppose that this would have taken place, even by miracle, if he had been raised in a spiritual body, incorruptible, at the time of his death. Philosophy is bound to recognize these facts; and the inference is, that the resurrection does not take place at death. And if not at death, we have no premises from which to calculate the time. It may be years, or centuries. As the resurrection of Christ was hastened, perhaps that of others may be retarded, and like the silk-worm's eggs, they may be kept from waking into active life till the time of their Proprietor is fully come. Perhaps the human race is so constituted, that a given time from its origin in Adam is required, to ripen its several members for incorruptibility.

The apostle refers us, for analogies, to the germination of seeds. Their germination, we know, must wait for favorable circumstances. Wheat, found in an Egyptian mummy, has been made

to grow, after its vital energies had lain dormant three thousand years. Some seeds, after coming to maturity, need the frosts of winter, and then the warmth and moisture of spring, to bring their vitality into action. Germination, too, may be artificially hastened; and the wheat of this year's harvest, and of last year, and of three thousand years, may all be made to grow up together. The process of germination itself, after it has commenced, may go on with greater or less rapidity, as circumstances are more or less favorable, and may be artificially regulated, so that seeds planted at different times shall all spring up at once. Similar principles may regulate the resurrection of the bodies of men. There may be, in ordinary cases, a necessity of waiting for favorable circumstances, such as have not yet occurred; circumstances of which we know not the nature, and cannot predict the occurrence. Various analogies, both in the vegetable and the animal world, allow us to suppose that, in the great multitude of the dead, the process is suspended, or is retarded in different degrees, so as to be completed in all, when the set time shall have fully come.

But what shall we say of instances of violent deaths; of cremation; of those devoured by wild beasts, or by cannibals? Must they not, of necessity, interrupt the process which is to result in the formation of a spiritual body?

In the first place, we say that some of these cases bear equally hard on all theories which admit a future body, to be derived from the present. If we suppose the future body to be evolved from the present at death by a natural process, all analogy would indicate that the process requires death *by old age* in order to its completion. The caterpillar which prematurely dies of disease, or is crushed, never becomes a butterfly. If natural death at full age is the natural process by which the spiritual body is evolved, it would seem that a violent extinction of life by crushing the body while yet immature, must render that process impossible, and thus prevent the result. If, however, the resurrection is a distinct event, occurring, not at death, but afterwards, then none of these things, happening to the body, is demonstrably incompatible with its resurrection. Not knowing what the process is, by which the body becomes spiritual, we cannot know that any of these events must of necessity disturb it. If the body is crushed, its substance still remains. If burned or eaten, we know not what may have taken place in it after death, and while yet entire. If burned, the greater part of it is transformed into gases;

and how can such a transformation hinder its rising as a spiritual, that is, a gaseous body

But are we, in the world to come, to have only gaseous bodies ?

As we have already suggested, the apostle selected this word, spiritual, or gaseous, to convey to our minds the best idea that we are capable of receiving, of a kind of bodies, such as we have never seen. It would be unreasonable to suppose that the idea which the word conveys to our minds now, fully answers to the fact as we shall hereafter find it. Doubtless, the glorified bodies of the saints will be far superior to anything which we are now able to imagine. Yet we may easily imagine a gaseous body to possess important advantages. Observe, it is to be really a *body*, all the parts of which will be combined into one system by one uniting power, and animated and controlled by one intelligent spirit. It may resist whatever would dissever its parts, with a force proportioned to the strength of the uniting power. It may be capable of we know not what degrees of condensation. The carbonic acid gas has actually been condensed into a solid, so that pieces could be seen by the eye and taken in the fingers. It may also be capable of indefinite expansion ; so that the body may be able, at the spirit's bidding, to assume any size that convenience may require. Its form, or the form of any of its parts, may be equally subject to the will. The force which condensed gases may exert, is shown in every explosion, as of gun-powder. By contraction and expansion, the body may be able to change its specific gravity, so as to sink, or ascend, or float, at will, either in an atmosphere like that of our earth, or in that subtile ether, which, as some suppose, pervades the intervals between the different planets and planetary systems. Nor can we easily conceive, that such a body should need sustenance, or "see corruption."

Philosophy, then, is obliged to confess that the doctrine of the resurrection is not within her domain. She can neither disprove the possibility of a future life in the body, nor the possible identity of the future body with the present. Her own light is sufficient to show, that her most plausible arguments to the contrary will not bear the test of a rigid examination. Her own laws of reasoning compel her to admit that, in one instance at least, the dead has been raised, in the same body in which he lived before his crucifixion ; and therefore, that such resurrections are proved, by actual experiment, to be possible. Having brought us to this conclusion, she has done her work, and if we need further know-

ledge, bids us seek it from some other source. Without stultifying her own decisions on subjects amenable to her tribunal, she not only admits, but vindicates, our liberty to believe what the Scriptures teach concerning the life to come. She imposes upon us no necessity for wresting the Scriptures from their obvious sense, or of forcing out hidden meanings from their language by the pressure of violent interpretations: but leaves us free, without restraint from her, to receive and rejoice in whatever of glorious hope we may find set before us in the gospel.

ARTICLE II.

OBLIGATIONS OF THE EASTERN CHURCHES TO THE HOME MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE.¹

By B. B. Edwards, Professor at Andover.

THE reflecting Christian, as he surveys the condition of our country, will be the subject of various and conflicting emotions. There are lines of light bordered by the deepest darkness. While we seem to hear encouraging voices, there are other sounds which whisper that there is little hope. As we are reading the plain language on one leaf of God's Providence, another is turned whose hieroglyphic we cannot decipher. It is somewhat like standing on an eminence a few miles from a great city. We can catch the hum of its mighty population. But the murmur is distant and indistinct. It may be labor awaking to its daily toil, the tokens of a peaceful and prosperous commerce, or it may be that hurrying to and fro which precedes some deciding battle, some anticipated dire calamity.

We sometimes exultingly say that our territory extends from sea to sea. But in passing from East to West, shall we not find the poor remnants of once powerful tribes, far away from the graves of their fathers, and now congregated together as if to come more surely within the grasp of the Shylocks around them?

¹ It is thought best to insert occasionally in this Journal an Article of a miscellaneous character. Yet the bearings of the topic discussed in the following pages upon the objects for which the Bibliotheca Sacra were established, are thought to be by no means indirect or unimportant.—*Ess.*