

me, while those who do not see me will believe in me. As to what you have written to me about coming to you there, the work for which I was sent hither is now accomplished, and I will ascend to my Father who sent me. When I do ascend to him I will send you one of my disciples to heal you, and whatever illness you are suffering from, he shall cure. And all those who are with you he shall convert to everlasting life. And your city shall be blessed; no enemy shall ever again gain possession of it. While Jesus was saying all this to him, Hannan the scribe was watching him. And with his skill as the king's painter, he set and painted a likeness of Jesus, in superb colours. This he took back with him to King Abgar his master. And when King Abgar saw the portrait, he received it with great delight, and set it in a place of high honour in his palace. Then Hannan the scribe related to him all the things he had heard from Jesus.



'I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVETH'

(JOB XIX, 25)

From St Gregory's Commentary on Job, Bk XIV

Translated by E.H.

BY saying redeemer, not creator, he is clearly announcing one who appeared amongst us in the flesh, long after he had created all things, in order to redeem us from captivity, one who delivered us by his sufferings from never-ending death. And notice with what strong faith in the power of Christ's godhead he pulls himself together; just as St Paul says: 'Even though he was crucified through weakness, yet he lives through the power of God' (2 Cor. xiii, 4), so Job says here: 'I know that my redeemer lives', as much as to say, more openly, 'Any unbeliever can know about his being scourged, laughed at, knocked about, crowned with a crown of thorns, smeared with spittle, crucified, and dead; but I believe with the certainty of faith and I freely and openly declare that he lives after death. For my redeemer lives, whom the hands of wicked men slew.'

But now, blessed Job, would you please openly declare what confidence the resurrection of his body gives you in the resurrection of your own? It goes on, 'And on the last day I am going to rise from the earth'; for the simple reason that our Lord is one day going to perform the same resurrection in us as he has displayed in himself, because the limbs of the body must succeed eventually to the glory of their head. Our redeemer then underwent death so that we should not be afraid to die, and he displayed his resurrection so that we should be confident that we shall rise too. That is why he did not wish his death to last longer than three days, in case resurrection deferred in him should mean all hope of resurrection killed in us.

The prophet puts it about him very well in the psalm, 'He drinks of the torrent by the wayside, therefore shall he lift up his head' (Ps. cix, 7). He was graciously pleased to drink as it were from the river of our sufferings, but by the wayside and not in a permanent abode, because he experienced death in passing, for a mere three days, and was certainly not destined as we are to abide permanently in the death he experienced until the end of the world. His resurrection then on the third day displays what his body the Church is one day to attain to. Meanwhile here are we, destined by the death of our bodies to remain in the dust till the end of the world, while he blossomed again from withered death on the third day, thus giving us a demonstration of his divine power in so renewing his own flesh.

This is well illustrated by Moses in the story of the twelve rods placed in the tabernacle (Num. xvii). When people began showing contempt for Aaron's priesthood, and doubting whether the tribe of Levi which he belonged to was fit to offer the sacrifices, Moses had twelve rods placed in the tabernacle, one for each tribe; and lo and behold Levi's rod blossomed, thus displaying the efficacy of Aaron's office. Now what does this sign mean, if not that all of us, who are to lie in death till the world's end, remain dead withered sticks like the eleven other rods; while Levi's rod flowered again because the body of our Lord, who is our true high priest, after lying briefly in withered death, burst forth again in flowering resurrection? The flowering rod proved Aaron to be the right priest; and the glory of his resurrection shows that our redeemer, who sprang from the tribes of Juda and Levi, is our true mediator and interceder. We have then

good grounds for hoping in our eventual resurrection when we consider the actual glory of our head.

But when some people consider that death undoes the spirit from the flesh, that the flesh turns to mould and the mould breaks down to dust and the dust is resolved into such fine particles as to be practically invisible, they lose hope in there being any possibility of resurrection. One look at some dry bones, and they just cannot believe that such things will ever be clothed again with flesh and burst once more into life. Well, if they cannot keep their faith in the resurrection out of obedience, they surely ought to do so on grounds of reason. After all, what is the world doing every day but copying our resurrection in its own elements? In the course of the seasons we see the trees lose their green leaves and stop producing their fruit; and then lo and behold quite suddenly we notice a sort of resurrection happening in the dry withered branches, leaves unfurling, fruit growing, the whole tree being clothed in renascent splendour. We are continually seeing the tiny seeds of trees committed to the juices of the soil; and from them we see large trees rising up not long after, and producing leaves and berries. Let us consider then one of these tiny seeds, and let us grasp if we can, where in the space of so exiguous a seed has this enormous tree that sprang from it been hiding. Where was the wood, the bark, the green leaves, the ripe fruit? Was all this, I ask you, to be seen in the seed while it lay in the soil? And yet thanks to the hidden skill of the craftsman who arranges all things wonderfully, the roughness of the bark was latent in the softness of the seed, the solid trunk hidden in its tenderness, the juicy fruits in its dryness. Why should it be thought surprising then that he who constructs enormous trees out of the minutest seeds should refashion a man when he wishes to out of the minutest particles of dust?

So I believe then that I am to rise again, but I still want to hear in what form. Is it to be perhaps in some other fine or airy body, or in the same body that I die in? But if I rise in an airy body, it will not in fact be I who rise. Indeed, it cannot be properly called resurrection where it is not what fell that rises. But it is for you, blessed Job, to take away these clouds of doubt. Since you have begun, by the grace of the Holy Ghost, to speak to us about our hope of resurrection, tell us openly if it is really this flesh of ours which is going to rise again.

He goes on, 'And once more I will be fitted into my skin'. The mention of skin takes away all doubt about the reality of the resurrection. This doubt was felt by Eutychius, Bishop of Constantinople, who wrote that our bodies in the glory of the resurrection will be intangible, much finer and more tenuous than the wind or the air. Now indeed our bodies will have a quality of fineness in the glory of the resurrection by virtue of their spiritual power; but they will also be solidly tangible because of their genuine bodily nature. That is why our redeemer showed his disciples his hands and side when they were doubtful about his resurrection; why he gave them his flesh and bone to feel, as he said himself, 'Touch and see that a ghost does not have flesh and bone, as you see that I have' (Luke xxiv, 39).

I pointed out this evidence of the gospel to Eutychius when I met him in Constantinople,¹ and he said: 'The Lord did this to clear the disciples' minds of doubt about the resurrection; he had a tangible body when he showed it to them, but after their minds had been reassured by touching him, every touchable quality in the Lord was resolved into some intangible fineness'. To this I replied, 'It is written, "Christ rising from the dead dies now no more, death will lord it over him no longer" (Rom. vi, 9). But if anything in his body could be altered after his resurrection, it means that the Lord returned to death after rising from it, contrary to the truth stated by Paul.' Then he raised this objection: 'Since it is written "that flesh and blood cannot possess the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. xv, 50), on what grounds can you believe that the flesh really rises?' 'In the sacred text', I said, 'the word flesh sometimes has a physical sense, sometimes a moral one implying fault and corruption. Thus in the physical sense you have "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John i, 14); in the moral sense, implying fault, take this instance, St Paul saying to his converts, "But you are not in the flesh but in the spirit" (Rom. viii, 9). So when he also says that flesh and blood cannot possess the kingdom of God, he wants you to understand flesh in the moral sense, not in the physical. He makes this clear by going on "nor will corruption possess incorruption". So the glory of the heavenly kingdom will be enjoyed by the flesh in the physical sense of this word, but not by the flesh as meaning the

¹ Gregory had been papal apocriary or nuncio there for some years before his own election as Pope.

lusts and passions, because it will be reigning in everlasting incorruption, once the sting has been taken out of death.'

Euty chius answered that be that as it may, he still denied the possibility of the body rising again in tangible form, and he stated his views in a pamphlet. Our protracted controversy over the matter became so serious that there was every likelihood of an open rupture between us. Then the Emperor Tiberius Constantine of pious memory sent privately for us both, and asked what the quarrel between us was about. He heard the arguments of either side, and refuted Euty chius' pamphlet on the resurrection by arguments of his own, and decided that it ought to be consigned to the flames. No sooner had we left his presence than I was seized by a serious illness and Euty chius by a fatal one. When he was dead I refrained from pursuing the matter further, since practically nobody accepted his views. But while he was still alive, and I was in the grip of a violent fever, some of my friends used to visit him, and they told me that he would hold up the skin of his hand before their eyes and say, 'I confess that we will all rise again in this flesh'.



GAMALIEL

We have great pleasure in introducing Gamaliel to our readers, to answer, as far as he can, any questions they may wish to put on matters of doctrine, Bible, liturgy, prayer, morals. We hope that he will be answering readers' questions regularly, if not perhaps quite every month, from now on. All questions that are not answered in our pages will receive a personal reply. The identity of questioners will be concealed under fictitious names, initials, or soubriquets. Questions should be addressed to Gamaliel, c/o the Editor, THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, Rugeley, Staffs.

Q. I have always been baffled by a homily of St Ambrose, in the Dominican breviary, on one of the gospels for a feast of many martyrs; the gospel is the beatitudes from Luke vi. St Ambrose compares St Luke's four beatitudes with St Matthew's eight, and says that the latter in his eight 'has unlocked a mystical number.