

## SOMETHING TO CHEW ON

In the year 1782 in the city of Hanover, Germany, a young princess some twenty-six years of age was laid to rest. She was an infidel, embittered in life, disbelieving the existence of God. At her request, a huge piece of marble was erected over her grave, and inscribed with these words:

"HENRIETTA VON RULINA  
Born in 1756 — Died 1782  
This burial place, purchased to all eternity,  
must never be opened."

Today the piece of marble is overturned, the sepulchre is burst asunder. What happened? A birch seed, buried with the princess, sprouted and finally burst the massive masonry. A birch tree rests upon the remains of an infidel. What a rebuke! If a seed could reveal such mighty power, what are the possibilities and potentialities of the power behind the seed - the spoken word of God.

The question of the resurrection, challenged by Henrietta von Rulina, is no minor point in the teachings of Holy Writ. On the contrary it is vital because upon it depends the truth or falsity of the Christian faith, for "if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." The position is made more vital when we realize the opposition that has been exerted against it within and without the church down through the years. In the time of Christ there were Sadducees who rejected the resurrection and the doctrine of future life; in our day, many believe and teach the spiritual habitation of an ethereal eternity, whilst others claim that death is the end of man.

Paul was faced with this unbelief in his day. As he stood before Agrippa in defence of his right to freedom, he directed the king to the fact that he was being condemned because he believed in the hope of the promise made to the prophets, and that hope was in Christ. He claimed to preach "none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come," that Christ should suffer and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead. Sensing that Agrippa was acquainted with these facts, he asked the question: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" Why are people so incredulous? God has filled all nature with continual emblems of the resurrection. The morning is the resurrection of the day; the spring is the resurrection of the year. Gaze on the butterfly and the moth - both living testimonies to the resurrection power of God.

"Shall this be so? Shall plants and worms come forth to life again? And oh, shall man descend into his grave to rise no more? Shall he, the master of this world, image and offspring of the fontal life through endless ages sleep in dust?" The laws and habits of nature speak to us of a resurrection. How much more shall the image and offspring of the fontal life experience resurrection power.

This brings us to the age-old-question: "If a man die, shall he live again?" Yes, emphatically, says Job. And the grave is the waiting place. In fact Job's hope was staked on this surety. "Yet in my flesh shall I see God." The patriarch did not stand alone in this hope for David exclaimed, "As for me, I will behold Thy face ... when I awake, with Thy likeness." Hear the gospel prophet, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust." Listen to the challenge of Hosea,

"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."

Finally we hear the cry of the prophets confirmed and empowered by the testimony of Christ. "I will raise him up at the last day." The apostle Paul sensed the far-reaching effect of the resurrection truth. He was quick to realize that it was linked with Christ's resurrection and dedicated an entire chapter to this theme. (1 Corinthians 15). Without Christ's resurrection our hope is in vain; with it, victory is assured.

The resurrection of Christ is at once the most important and the best authenticated fact in the history of the world. Over 500 people all testify to having seen the resurrected Christ.

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." We alone hold within our grasp the power to decide where we shall stand.

Anticipating our thoughts Paul says, "Some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" The lesson is found in the grain. "God gives it a body," a spiritual body likened to the glorious body of Christ. In view of these statements we affirm our faith in a bodily resurrection. We may not know the precise nature of this glorified body, but we do know it will be a body. In some way it will be related to the natural body as the harvest reaped is to the grain sown. Hence we may believe that there will be sufficient resemblance so that in the future state we will be able both to recognize others and to be known by them.

Your mind may be concerned as to the possibility of a mutilated body being raised. What of those maimed and killed by war, lost at sea, or on land, even eaten by fish or animals?

In the year 1637 the Shoguns of Japan massacred 11,111 native Christians and buried them on the Island of Anakusa. The heads were severed from the bodies and buried miles apart in order to prevent a resurrection. How futile! How unavailing! Speaking of Adam, God said, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." The Lord does not require the identical dust. Remember: "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." The Lord cares not where your remains are. The record of your character, your life, is the concern of God. "For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory." All atoms of dust are alike, hence in the resurrection it makes no difference whether it comes from valley or from hill. It is not the dust that counts, but the arrangements and organization of the dust. In other words the power to create.

The resurrection of the dead is a reality, a living, vital truth attested by numerous witnesses, demonstrated by and in Christ and held as the hope of the church. The question is a personal one: Is it your hope? Are you prepared? Have you the assurance that should the grave be your portion before Christ comes, you will be called at the resurrection? Let us resolve to make our calling and election sure.