

## FORMULA FOR THE RISEN BODY OF JESUS CHRIST.

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**H**ALF the trouble with the Rev. Joseph C. Allen in his thoughtful article upon "The Resurrection of Jesus" in the April number of *The Open Court* is an oversight. He has for the time lost sight of what may be called the Formula for the Risen Body of Jesus Christ. That formula may be sufficiently indicated as follows:

*What was natural to Him before His resurrection is now miraculous; what was before miraculous is now natural.*

To partake of food before the resurrection was natural to him, but after it the taking of food was miraculous. Before the resurrection his body was naturally visible, but after it his body was naturally invisible. On several occasions during his ministry the body of our Lord became invisible. Notably so at Nazareth, when he escaped violence by becoming miraculously invisible and so escaping from the midst of his enemies. After his resurrection from the grave his body was naturally invisible to mortal eyes, but it became miraculously visible on several occasions, usually called "manifestations" during the forty days between his resurrection and ascension. While in the natural body Christ manifested his spirit through the body, but afterwards in the spiritual body he manifested his body through the spirit. What was natural to him before is now miraculous; and what was before miraculous is now natural.

So also of bodily fatigue and of sleep. His sitting down at the well of Jacob through exhaustion before his resurrection was natural. But after his resurrection fatigue would have been miraculous. His deep sleep on the Sea of Galilee in the little bark was natural at the time. But after the resurrection sleep would have been miraculous. So, too, of the tears of sorrow shed at the grave of

Lazarus. They were natural to him while in the flesh. But after his resurrection tears would have been miracles indeed.

Before his resurrection the natural way of entering into a room was through the door. After the resurrection he entered, "the doors being shut." It would have been miraculous, indeed, had an open door been needed for the Risen Body. That body was bound by no ties of space. Before the resurrection he rebuked the Tempter who bade him cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, but after it he moves as one free from the restraints of earth.

In fact, the mystery of the Risen Body of our Lord was not obscurely implied by the manner of his resurrection. For the sepulchre was already empty when the great stone was rolled away from its entrance. The stone was rolled away by the angel, not that he *might* come forth, but because he *had already* come forth. The appearance of the angel and the removal of the stone were to announce what had already taken place, and to demonstrate its reality. True, the exact moment when the Lord issued from the tomb is left undefined. But all the church fathers with scarcely an exception held the belief that the resurrection was already accomplished when the angel descended and rolled away the stone. A close reading of the evangelists will support this view. Christ Jesus needed not the angel's aid. He himself burst the bars of death and triumphed over the grave.

The resurrection brought about a change of attitude in Christ. Before it he refused the kingdom of the world which was offered to him by Satan, but after it he bids his ministers proclaim his sovereignty over all the nations. He journeyed with his disciples along the weary way while in the flesh, but not afterwards. In the Risen Body he appointed places of meeting, but he did not journey with his disciples as before. There was now a mysterious awe about his person.

Our contention is that the Risen Body of Jesus Christ revealed to the world a new state of human existence for the body of man. It was strictly a revelation—an unveiling of what before was not known and could not be known. Such a resurrection had never occurred before in the history of the world. Because the Risen Body of Christ, while the same as before his death, was changed. That body, while wholly the same, is now wholly different. This is the point that many miss. When Lazarus rose from the grave, his body was just what it had been before death. It was the same, but without change. On the other hand, the resurrection body, while the same, must be wholly different.

But, men will say, how can a human body be wholly the same and yet wholly changed? A hint of this paradox of change and identity is given in the transformation of insects. The caterpillar bursts the bonds of its silken shroud and enters upon a new mode of existence. The groveling worm becomes a winged insect, glorious in the golden sunlight. It is beyond all doubt the same creature, but now wholly transfigured and transformed.

The typical resurrection body was the Risen Body of Jesus Christ—wholly the same as before death and yet wholly different. It was for this reason totally unlike any previous rising from the grave. We see in the Risen Christ the change which would have passed over the bodies of Adam and Eve, if they had never sinned. We see in the Risen Christ the change which will pass over the bodies of the saints who will be living on the earth when Christ comes back to earth, who are not to die but who shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye. We see in the Risen Christ the change which passed over the bodies of Enoch and Elijah when they were translated—because flesh and blood, or the human body as now constituted, cannot exist in the unseen world. It is not adapted to the new conditions of that existence. We see in the Risen Christ the change which *did not* pass over the body of Lazarus of Bethany, when Christ called him forth. He was the same after his resurrection as before it: the same but unchanged: hence he died again. The natural body, if raised as a natural body, must die again. For flesh *and blood* cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. But the natural body, if raised as a spiritual body, cannot die again. For flesh *and bones* can inherit the kingdom of heaven. It is noteworthy that our Lord changed the common phrase "flesh and blood," common in scriptural speech, to "flesh and bones." The natural body has the former, the spiritual body the latter.

The typical resurrection body, which shall be our own at the last day as we are distinctly told, was unknown and unknowable, till Jesus Christ rose from the dead. For the typical resurrection body, while wholly the same, must needs be also wholly different. Hence it is claimed and truly claimed, that "Christ is become the first fruits of them that slept." The Old Testament resurrections were not typical. Such persons were restored to life unchanged and just as they had been before death. But of the typical resurrection it is written: "Sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. . . . Sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." Till the resurrection of Christ, no natural body had ever been raised as a spiritual body, but the natural body was raised again as a natural

body, and as such again must go back to death. Because the bodies of Enoch and Elijah had never slept in the grave, the spiritual bodies given them at their translation do not invalidate the statement as to Christ being "the first fruits," for it is added, "the first-fruits of *them that slept.*" The Scriptures are marvelously consistent and inerrable.

Modern seances are discredited by our formula, and messages from the dead, because the manifestations of the persons are in all respects identical with what they were in life. But the Risen Body of Jesus Christ, while wholly the same, when risen from the dead, was wholly changed. What was natural to him before is now miraculous; what was before miraculous is now natural.

The key that fits the wards of the lock is the right key, and we commend respectfully the thought of this meditation to our brother, though a stranger to me, the Rev. Joseph C. Allen.